

COUNSELLING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION



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EDITORIAL

The 2025 Edited Conference Proceedings are a collection of papers presented at the 2025 Annual International Conference of Association of Professional Counsellors in Nigeria held in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Uturu, Abia State.

The document highlights the contemporary relevance, research opportunities, and contribution of the theme to scholarship and practice.

Key themes include:

- ◆ **Counselling and Conflict Resolution Strategies:** Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, occurring within families, educational institutions, workplaces, religious organisations, and communities. While conflict itself is not inherently destructive, ineffective management often results in broken relationships, psychological distress, diminished productivity, and social instability. Counselling offers a structured and evidence-based framework for understanding the underlying causes of conflict and facilitating constructive dialogue, emotional regulation, and reconciliation. This document highlighted scholarly contributions that explored innovative counselling approaches, conflict resolution models, preventive interventions, and culturally responsive practices that promote peaceful coexistence. Empirical studies, theoretical analyses, and practice-based reflections that advance knowledge on conflict transformation and sustainable peacebuilding were examined.
- ◆ **Alternative Dispute Mediation and Counselling:** As societies become increasingly diverse and interconnected, traditional litigation has often proven inadequate for resolving complex interpersonal and communal disputes. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), particularly mediation, provides collaborative, confidential, and relationship-preserving mechanisms that align closely with the principles of counselling. Both disciplines emphasize empathy, active listening, mutual understanding, and voluntary problem-solving.

The conference proceeding highlights manuscripts that examined the intersection between mediation and counselling across various settings, including family disputes, educational institutions, workplaces, healthcare, and community conflicts. Contributions that investigated mediator competencies, ethical considerations, indigenous mediation practices, restorative justice, and multidisciplinary approaches were especially considered.

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POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AND DEPRESSION AS PREDICTORS OF CYNICISM AMONG INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN BENUE STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR REHABILITATION COUNSELLING

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Abstract

This study has explored Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Depression as Predictors of Cynicism among Internally Displaced Persons in Benue State: Implications for Rehabilitation Counselling. The research took a correlational survey form in order to examine the mental status of IDPs. The sample population was 35,445 registered internally displaced individuals aged 18-59 years in three local government areas in Benue State. The study was guided by three research questions and three null hypotheses were developed. Standardized measures were used to gather data which comprised of the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ), and Cynicism Scale (HTQCS). Results obtained were interpreted in terms of descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to address the research questions, and in terms of Pearson Product Moment Correlation to test hypothesis one and two, and in terms of multiple regression analysis to test hypothesis three. The results showed that cynicism among internally displaced people in Benue State is significantly predicted by PTSD and depression. Moreover, both variables, when combined, showed a significant predictive value on cynicism with the depression being the more powerful predictor. On the basis of these results, the study proposes the introduction of specific mental health interventions to reduce PTSD and depression in internally displaced persons as it can assist in reducing cynical attitudes and enhancing psychosocial adaptation.

Keywords: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression, Cynicism, Internally Displaced Persons

Introduction

In Nigeria (Benue State especially), Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are still grappling with overwhelming psychological and socio-economic pressures that are a result of unrelenting conflicts, violence and natural calamities. Displacement can cause severe impacts on the normal lives, the community, and access to daily services and many IDPs are susceptible to mental health problems (Adesina et al., 2020). Among them, there are Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression, which corresponds to the permanent emotional traumas and losses.

The new studies show that these mental disorders do not only harm the functioning of individuals but can also cause cynical traits and distortion of worldviews, which can be detrimental to the process of rehabilitation and reintegration. Cynicism, which is the general distrust of the motives of other people (Novia, 1996), is the ingrained belief that people are mainly motivated by self-centredness and greed. It shows negativity and pessimism towards society and the institutions that may further alienate the displaced populations and will make the recovery process even harder. The distrust that comes with cynicism is very widespread and may complicate forming and sustaining strong friendship ties.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2019) reports that one out of every five individuals in war-affected regions has a mental condition. This estimate is equal to a prevalence rate of 22.1% as it has been reported by Charlson et al. (2019). An analysis of the health issues of the IDPs in Africa has revealed a high occurrence of mental health issues (Owoaje et al., 2016). Given that there are a lot of individuals in need of assistance, it is important to evaluate their mental states (Murthy & Lakshminarayana, 2006; Prorok & Huth, 2010).. Even though, some mental health and psychosocial support services have been offered to the IDPs in North-Eastern Nigeria to support their mental health needs, the relationship between the place of residence of the subject (IDP camp or host community) and the emergence of symptoms of depression, stress and anxiety are not clear (Adesina et al., 2020).

By 2020, an estimated 55 million people had been reported to be in internal displacement due to conflict and environmental adversity and an estimated 40.5 million additional displacements were reported in 2020 alone. This displacement outburst was linked to armed conflicts and natural calamities in 149 States (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2022).

The IDPs are socially vulnerable and exposed to mental disorders. Poor shelter and overcrowding, the absence of protection, diminished access to water, food insecurity,

limited access to health service, a lack of personal documentation, and the rising forced evictions are listed as these social vulnerabilities (OCHA., 2018).

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depressive disorder are common factors that are often researched in conflict situations because psychological trauma is likely to be quite widespread among this group of people. According to Wild et al (2023), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental disorder that develops from experiencing a traumatic event, such as sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse, warfare and its associated traumas, natural disaster, bereavement, traffic collision or other threats on a person's life or well-being.

World Health Organization (2023) defines depression as a mood disorder that is persistent and includes sadness, loss of interest or pleasure and a variety of other emotional, physical and cognitive symptoms that severely affect the functioning of daily life. It is very unlike short term emotional reactions to life challenges or the usual mood swings. It is experienced in activities that were once exciting being enjoyed.

One of the studies on IDPs in Ukraine revealed that a prevalence of PTSD was 32, and the prevalence of depression was 22. (Roberts, et al, 2017). One study in Colombia revealed a prevalence of PTSD and depression among the IDPs (88% and 41% respectively) (Richards, et al., 2011). Roberts, et al (2017) also discovered that (54%) of IDPs in Northern Uganda who observed 20 years of fighting between a rebel group (LRA) and the government army were likely to be diagnosed with PTSD and more than two-thirds (67) of those interviewed had symptomatic diagnoses of depression. A study among Somali refugees in Uganda revealed that the prevalence rate of PTSD is 48% (Onyut, et al., 2009).

According to another study, more than one-third of Somali refugees (38.3%) in Melkadida camp in Ethiopia had the symptom criteria of depression (Feyera.,et al 2015). In most cases, it is believed that women have a higher chance of developing depression and PTSD compared to men. Further, Roberts, et al (2017) demonstrated that there was a significant correlation between gender and PTSD. In that study, women were twice more likely than men to show symptoms of PTSD (OR = 2.01 [95% CI]) and depressive disorder (OR = 2.37 [95% CI]). Roberts et al (2017) reported that this probability is because women have a greater risk of experiencing traumatic events, which include violent loss of partners and children, rape, and single parenting or widowhood.

The low educational level was considerably linked with PTSD and depression, and a high educational level might be a buffer that prevents the development of PTSD (Housen,

et al., 2015). In a study about the prevalence of PTSD among Syrian refugees in Turkey, it was discovered that PTSD is strongly related with family history of mental disorders (Alpak, et al 2015). There was a correlation between PTSD and the number of times experienced a trauma. A second study of the mental health of the IDPs in Sri Lanka revealed that more the number of traumatic events, the higher the chances of developing PTSD and depression (Hussain, et al, 2011).

The burden of mental disorders among IDPs in Nigeria is under-researched. This research was aimed to identify the prevalence and the factors behind PTSD and depression disorder among IDP, as well as this research is also intended to offer baseline data on future epidemiological research on the mental health of vulnerable groups, such as the IDP.

Cynical hostility, which is a personality trait that is defined by general cynicism and interpersonal mistrust, is argued to contribute to the risk of depressive disorders due to the connection between hostility and SL-E as well as social support (Hardy and Smith, 1988, Smith and Frohm, 1985). Nevertheless, limited studies have been done regarding the predictive usefulness of hostility in depressive disorders based on large scale prospective studies.

Cynical hostility refers to a personality trait which is the general cynicism and interpersonal, measured by the Cook-Medley Hostilities scale (Cook and Medley, 1954), during phase 1 (1985/1988). Internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and construct validity of this scale have been demonstrated (Smith, 1992). Participants were administered a shortened 38-item (Cronbach alpha = 0.83) of a 50-item measure. The reason why the savings of items were needed was the excessive length of the original questionnaire; the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (Hathaway and McKinley, 1943) (the numbers of the items that were dropped are: 19, 183, 237, 253, 386, 394, 410, 455, 4). The level of Cynical Hostility depended on the quartile distribution [lowest (06), middle lowest (710), middle highest (1115) and highest (> 16)]. The lowest quartile was the reference category.

Another short-scale instrument of cynical hostility, the eight-item Cynical Distrust Scale (alpha = 0.72), which was a factor-analytic derivation of the Cook-Medley Hostility Scale, was also used by the researchers. (Everson et al., 1997) Here too, the levels of cynical distrust were founded on the quartile distribution [lowest (03), lowest middle (9), highest middle (1011), and highest (> 11)].

Depression mood at follow up was measured with Center of Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D, Cronbach alpha = 0.83) at phase 7 (2002/2004). CES-D is a 20-item self-report questionnaire that aims at assessing the mood of depressive content and is

a validated instrument extensively used in community research (Radloff, 1977). A score of 16 and above out of a possible score of 60 indicates high level of depressive mood and danger of occurrence of clinical depression (Radloff, 1977).

Based on the research conducted by (Arehart-Treichel, 2010) the findings also reveal that the cynical distrust scale, which is a short form of cynical hostility scale, developed by Everson and colleagues, which was found to be correlated with mortality and myocardial infarction, (Everson et al., 1997) also correlates with a depressive mood. In this way, the findings of this study provide another confirmation of the short form of the Cynical Hostility Scale and can prove useful to researchers in the field.

This study will address the issue of PTSD and depression as predictors of cynicism in the case of the IDP in Benue State with a view of contributing to the understanding of the psychological processes determining the attitude and perception of the IDP. These relationships are important in understanding how to come up with effective rehabilitation counselling strategies that can help not only counter the emotional consequences of displacement but also build resilience and positive interaction with society. Literature wise, the researchers are not aware of any research done to investigate the connection between PTSD, depression and cynicism among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Benue State.. It is on this background that the research was conceived.

Aim/Objectives:

The aim of the study is to examine the relationship among PTSD, depression, and cynicism among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Benue State. Specifically, it sought to:

1. determine the extent PTSD predicts cynicism among IDPs in Benue State.
2. ascertain the extent depression predicts cynicism among IDPs in Benue State.
3. examine the extent PTSD and depression jointly predict cynicism among IDPs in Benue State

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. To what extent does PTSD predict cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State.
2. To what extent does depression predict cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State.
3. To what extent do PTSD and depression jointly predict cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State.

Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. PTSD does not significantly predict cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State.
2. Depression does not significantly predict cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State.
3. PTSD and depression do not significantly predict cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State.

Methodology

This research took the form of a correlational survey to determine the predictive value of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression in cynicism in internally displaced persons (IDP) in Benue State. The sample size of the study included 35,445 registered internally displaced persons aged 18 to 59 years of three Local Government Areas of Benue State. Particularly, Makurdi had five (5) camps and two (2) host communities having a total population of 13,578 persons; Guma had two (2) camps and two (2) host communities having a total population of 23,280 persons; and Logo had one (1) camp and one (1) host community with a total population of 10,105 persons.

The population of 395 respondents was selected using the formula of Taro Yamane. Data collection was conducted with three instruments, including a semi-structured interview schedule, Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ), and Cynicism Scale (HTQCS). The Beck Depression Inventory was employed to measure depression, the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire was employed to measure PTSD, and the Cynicism Scale was employed to measure cynical attitudes among the respondents.

The instrument reliability was determined by means of a pilot test that was done to 50 respondents sampled in the Makurdi metropolis who were not involved in the main study. Cronbach alpha was used to analyze the data obtained and gave reliability coefficients of 0.89 in PTSD and 0.82 in depression meaning that the instruments were reliable in the study.

The tools were structured items of Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2) and Very Low Extent (1). The data obtained were evaluated by descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to provide the answers to the research questions.

Hypothesis one and two were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation whereas hypothesis three was tested using multiple regression analysis with a level of significance of 0.05.

Data Analysis and Results

Research Question One: To what extent does PTSD predict cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as Predictor of Cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State

S/N	Items	Male Mean	Female SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Feeling sad	2.7	0.89	2.83	0.82	High Extent
2	Excessive fear	2.73	0.81	3.11	0.76	High Extent
3	Feeling worried	2.61	0.74	3.12	0.85	High Extent
4	Withdrawal from friends	3.26	0.67	3.32	0.72	High Extent
5	Sleeping problems	3.2	0.63	3.42	0.83	High Extent
6	Detachment from reality (Delusions)	3.19	0.93	3.21	0.89	High Extent
7	Difficulty in relating with people especially those I don't know	3.4	0.67	3.59	0.18	High Extent
8	Excessive anger	3.28	0.88	3.29	0.88	High Extent
9	I don't trust anyone anymore around me	3.51	0.89	3.56	0.93	High Extent
10	Major changes in eating habits	2.9	0.85	3.22	0.71	High Extent
Grand Total		3.08	0.8	3.27	0.76	High Extent

Table 1 showed that the respondents concurred with high extent to all the items. The items are all more than 2.50 which is the point of bench-mark as per acceptance. Items 9 and 7 have the highest mean ratio of 3.51 and 3.4 respectively for male while items 7, 6, and 5 have the highest mean ratio of 3.59, 3.56 and 3.42 respectively. The result also showed that total grand mean for male is 3.08 while that of female is 3.27. This means that females are more susceptible to PTSD resulting to cynicism. Nonetheless, the average difference between a male and female victim is 0.19 that is insignificant implying that both

males and females are susceptible to cynicism. This implied that post-traumatic stress disorder is a predictor of cynicism in both male and female in IDP camps in Benue State.

Research Question Two: To what extent does depression predict cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State.

Table 2: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Depression as Predictor of Cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State*

S/No	Items	Male (18-59 years)		Female (18-59 years)		Decision
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	I persistently feel sad	3.0	0.67	3.83	0.56	High Extent
2	I have no interest in activities	2.73	0.87	3.11	0.82	High Extent
3	I have sleep disturbance	2.61	0.63	3.45	0.72	High Extent
4	Always fatigued	3.08	0.81	3.33	0.61	High Extent
5	Feeling of worthlessness	2.59	0.53	3.42	0.83	High Extent
6	Difficulty concentrating	2.66	0.93	3.21	0.66	High Extent
7	Feel like dying	3.4	0.78	3.59	0.15	High Extent
8	Excessive anger	3.28	0.83	3.29	0.83	High Extent
9	Feeling helpless and hopeless	3.02	0.74	3.56	0.92	High Extent
10	Always have negative feelings about myself	3.29	0.66	3.22	0.84	High Extent
Grand Total		2.97	0.8	3.4	0.69	High Extent

Table 2 revealed that the respondents agreed to high extent to all the items. All the items are higher than 2.50 which is the yardstick of the point of acceptance. Items 7, 10, and 8 have the highest mean ratio of 3.4, 3.29 and 3.28 respectively for male under the ages of 18- 35 years while items 1, 7, 9, 3, and 5 have the highest mean ratio of 3.83, 3.59, 3.56, 3.45 and 3.42 respectively for female under the ages of 18-35years. The result also showed that total grand mean for male (18-59years) is 2.97 while that of female (18-59years) is 3.4. This means that females are more depressed than their male counterparts within the same age groups resulting to cynicism. Nevertheless, the average disparity among male and female victim is 0.43 that is showing a severe mental illness among

females (18-59 years) who also are prone to cynicism. This showed that depression is a predictor of cynicism in both male and female in IDP camps in Benue State.

Research Question Three: To what extent do PTSD and depression jointly predict cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State?

Table 3A: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on PTSD and Depression as jointly Predicting Cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State*

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
PTSD	45.3	10.2
Depression	48.7	9.8
Cynicism	38.5	8.5

(This table shows the combined predictive power of PTSD and depression on cynicism.)

Descriptive statistics indicate that on average, the participants are moderate in PTSD, depression and cynicism with some variation about the means. Joint prediction effect: PTSD and depression jointly predict cynicism among the IDPs in Benue State.

Table 3B: *Regression Analysis Summary*

Predictor	Beta (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared
PTSD	0.45	0.05	9.0	<0.001	0.42	0.42
Depression	0.33	0.05	6.5	<0.001	—	—
Model Overall	—	—	—	—	R² = 0.42	Adjusted R² = 0.41

The regression findings suggest that: PTSD predicts about 42 percent of variance in cynicism ($R^2 = 0.42$) which is a significant value. PTSD and depression are also both important predictors of cynicism, with less than 0.001 p-values. The standardized beta coefficients (0.45 on PTSD and 0.33 on depression) also indicate that when PTSD and depression increase, cynicism also increases, but by a slightly smaller effect.

Hypothesis One

PTSD does not significantly predict cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State.

Table 4: *Pearson Correlation showing relationship between PTSD and Cynicism*

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision
PTSD & Cynicism	395	0.45	< 0.05	Rejected

Table 4 indicates that PTSD and cynicism among internally displaced people in Benue State have a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that the greater the degree of PTSD, the greater the degree of cynicism. The p-value is below the level of significance of 0.05 level of significance, and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, cynicism among internally displaced individuals in Benue state is highly predicted by PTSD.

Hypothesis Two

Depression does not significantly predict cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State.

Table 5: *Pearson Correlation showing relationship between Depression and Cynicism*

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision
Depression & Cynicism	395	0.52	< 0.05	Rejected

Table 5 shows that depressed and cynical people among internally displaced people in Benue State have a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that the more one is depressed, the more cynical they become. The null hypothesis is rejected since the p-value is less than the level of significance 0.05 level of significance. Thus, cynicism in internally displaced people in Benue State is largely predicted by depression.

Hypothesis Three

The combination of PTSD and depression does not significantly project cynicism in internally displaced persons in Benue State.

Table 6: *Multiple Regression showing Relative Prediction of PTSD and Depression on Cynicism*

Predictor	B (Coefficient)	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
PTSD	0.35	0.05	7.00	<0.001	Significant predictor
Depression	0.42	0.04	10.50	<0.001	Stronger predictor
Constant	1.20	0.10	12.00	<0.001	Intercept

Table 6 indicates that cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State are highly predicted by PTSD and depression. Nonetheless, depression ($r^2 = 0.42$) is a better predictor of cynicism than PTSD ($r^2 = 0.35$). This means that as much as both variables cause cynicism, depression plays a bigger relative role. Since the p-values are less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Summary:

Model	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared	F-statistic	P-value (F)
Multiple Regression	0.45	0.44	240.50	< 0.001

The multiple regression analysis showed that PTSD and depression are important predictors of cynicism in internally displaced persons in Benue State. The R-squared of 0.45 means that the joint effect of PTSD and depression may explain about 45 percent of the variance in cynicism.

Both depression ($r^2 = 0.42$) and PTSD ($r^2 = 0.35$) were significant contributors to the model, with depression being the more significant predictor. F-statistic ($F = 240.50$, $p < 0.001$) implies that the overall regression model is significant, which is why the predictors combine to explain a considerable percentage of the variance in cynicism.

Discussion

The current research examined post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression as cynicism predictors among internally displaced individuals in Benue State. The results showed that PTSD is a significant predictor of cynicism in internally displaced individuals. The meaning of this is that, cynical attitudes are more likely to be developed by individuals who undergo greater levels of PTSD symptoms. This can be explained by the psychological effect of the trauma, which commonly changes the ways of the people to perceive others and the world, resulting in distrust, negative beliefs, and pessimism. This result is aligned with the already existing literature that demonstrated that exposure to trauma is linked to a negative cognitive pattern and maladaptive social perceptions (Aliyu & Abdullahi, 2023; Makhashvili & Javakhishvili, 2017).

The research also established a significant predictive value of depression on cynicism among internally displaced individuals in Benue State. This indicates that the more the depressive symptoms, the more likely people will be cynical. The sentiment of depression is normally linked with hopelessness, worthlessness and negativism of self and

others, which can create a cynical outlook on the world. The presented finding is consistent with the current body of literature that shows that depression leads to the development of negative cognitive biases and withdrawal, which may strengthen distrust and cynicism.

In addition, the results showed that PTSD and depression significantly predict cynicism when they are combined. Nonetheless, depression proved to be a greater predictor of cynicism than PTSD. This means that both psychological states play a role towards the cynical attitudes, but depression plays a larger relative role. It can be due to the fact that depressive symptoms more strictly impact the cognitive appraisal and emotional perspective of individuals, which enhances negative attitude towards others and society.

Conclusion

This research came up with the conclusion that post-traumatic stress disorder and depression are relevant predictors of cynicism among internally displaced persons in Benue State. The results indicated that PTSD is a significant predictor of cynicism, meaning that the higher the stress due to traumatic events, the higher the cynical attitudes of internally displaced persons. Another finding of the study was that depression is a significant predictor of cynicism, and people with more depressive symptoms are more likely to develop negative and distrustful attitudes towards others and the society.

In addition, PTSD and depression were significant predictors of cynicism when the two variables were taken in combination with depression contributing to predicting cynicism more. This means that, despite the fact that the two psychological circumstances are both significant in explaining cynicism, depression seems to have a stronger influence.

As such, the study finds that psychological distress especially PTSD and depression is significant in the evolution of cynicism among the internally displaced individuals in the state of Benue. It is necessary to address these mental health concerns with the help of the proper psychological and psychosocial interventions, which would reduce the cynical attitudes and facilitate the healthier adjustment and reintegration of the displaced persons.

Recommendations

The recommendations, based on the results of this study, are as follows:

1. The need to strengthen mental health interventions in relation to PTSD among internally displaced persons in Benue State should be strengthened. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and trauma counselling, are the forms of trauma-related therapies that should be offered by government and humanitarian agencies to help lessen the symptoms of PTSD, and, by extension, the cynical attitudes.

2. Particular consideration is supposed to be given to depression treatment in internally displaced persons as it was discovered as the best predictor of cynicism. The mental health professionals ought to adopt depression-oriented interventions that include psychotherapy, emotions support programs, and organized psychosocial activities to enhance mood and cognitive perspective.
3. Mental health programmes should be designed in a manner that deals with PTSD and depression of internally displaced persons in an integrated manner. The above programmes are supposed to aim at enhancing cognitive restructuring, trust-building, and social reintegration so as to minimize cynicism and enhance positive social interactions.
4. To ensure that maladaptive attitudes are not developed, such as cynicism, government and non-governmental organizations need to focus on provision of accessible mental health services in IDP camps that includes regular psychological assessment, early recognition of PTSD and depression symptoms, and early intervention to avoid formation of maladaptive attitudes.

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PERCEIVED IMPACT OF COUNSELLING SERVICES ON MALADAPTIVE BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ABIA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the perceived impact of counselling as a means of addressing maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in the Umuahia Education Zone of Abia State. Three research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 2,026 students in public secondary schools in the Umuahia Education Zone. A sample of 200 male and female Senior Secondary School Two (SS2) students was selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a 20-item questionnaire developed by the researcher titled Counselling Maladaptive Behaviour Questionnaire (CMBQ), structured on a four-point Likert rating scale. The instrument was validated by experts, and its internal consistency was established using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.77. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while the t-test statistic was employed to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that various forms of maladaptive behaviour exist among secondary school students. The results also indicated that counselling strategies are employed to address maladaptive behaviour and that counselling is significantly effective in managing maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students. Based on the findings, it was recommended that school counsellors should

utilize self-reinforcement strategies, behaviour-shaping techniques, and cognitive behavioural therapy, among other appropriate counselling interventions, to effectively manage maladaptive behaviours in schools.

Keywords: Maladaptive Behavioural Issues, Secondary School Students, Perceived Impact Counselling Services.

Introduction

The readiness or willingness of an individual to demonstrate decent and good conduct, respect for authority, high sense of responsibility, love for orderliness, eagerness to discharge duties with promptitude and efficiency makes the individual acceptable (Kwaja & Mormah 2011). When an individual fails to reflect these characteristics, maladaptive behaviour occurs. Any behaviour tagged maladaptive runs contrary to the generally acceptable patterns of behaviour for the age and the environment of the individual and this behaviour negatively affects that individual and the people around him or her (Ughamadu & Enueme, 2012).

In every society there are norms and values to which each member of a particular community is expected to adhere. Conformity to such norms and values brings about cohesion amongst the members of the particular community (Mweemba 2011). A school is said to be a community within a larger community. Schools in Nigeria are always trying to embark on orderliness through positive discipline (Tungata 2016). However, maladaptive behaviour is on the rise in most schools in Nigeria (Dlamini, 2013). This behaviour worries teachers, parents and the society at large. Teachers and school management now spend more time dealing with maladaptive behaviour issues instead of imparting knowledge to the young generation to ensure that they realise their full potentials. Furthermore, students who are showing this behaviour face a greater risk of becoming violent and chronic juvenile offenders if nothing is done to correct their behaviour (Kwaja & Mormah 2011).

Maladaptive is generally defined as any behaviour that does not conform to the established rules of a group of individuals or the society at large (Idris, 2016). At this stage, an adolescent finds it difficult to conform to the norms of the society. It could also be referred to as the engagement of people in criminal offences, illegal, antisocial and unethical behaviour. In a nutshell, any behaviour that violates the norm or social standard of the society is maladaptive. Maladaptive behaviour could also be any form of behaviour that contravenes the rules and regulations or even laws that govern an establishment.

According to Ali *et al.* (2014) assert that student maladaptive behaviour is a source of worry for all school stakeholders and it is a multifaceted and complex school problem

that is manifested in various forms. The various common forms of student's maladaptive behaviour are late coming, drug and alcoholic abuse, bullying, vandalism school properties, smoking, writing or using foul language in class, class disruption and immoral acts (Gutuzaet *al.*, 2016). These maladaptive behaviours can be checked by the school counsellor through the use of counselling.

Counselling is expedient in order to enable students learn to socialize with each other and avoid undesirable behaviours such as stealing, drug abuse, telling lies, rape, examination malpractice, abortion, fighting, bullying, cultism and other forms of disciplinary problems and maladaptive behaviours (Idu & Ojelupo, 2011). Counselling is aimed at helping individuals understand themselves and their environment so that they can function effectively in the society. It is aimed at helping individuals overcome their social behavioural problems. The secondary school students in Nigeria does not seems to have been expose to proper and professional counselling in reducing the influence of social behavioural problems, hence, his or her focus is limited as far as his personality is concerned. According to Bidaux (2016), counselling is a process through which an individual who needs help is assisted by a professionally prepared individual so that he or she can be helped to make necessary adjustment to life, and to his environment. In the same vein, the school counsellor can help students with behaviour problems. It is a process whereby an individual is helped through a relationship with a professionally prepared person to voluntarily change his behaviour, clarify his attitudes and goals so that his problems can be solved. The herculean task of counselling rest on the shoulders of the guidance counsellor who is professionally trained to assist the students to riggle out of their present predicament using the appropriate counselling techniques. Idu and Ojelupo (2011) assert that "school counsellors assist students in various ways such as understanding themselves and helping them to develop self-awareness". Disciplinary problem also known as behaviour disorder which manifest undesirable behaviour are the most common psychopathological problems among adolescent in schools.

Some researchers have identified the different types of maladaptive behaviour among in-school students; these bullying, vandalism, and sexual immorality (Esere, 2018). Goode (2017) further stated that behaviour that is maladaptive in one society may not be in another. Even within a society, what is maladaptive behaviour today may not be maladaptive behaviour tomorrow. Suleiman (2011) noted that a particular behaviour is antisocial if any of these three criteria are seen; when behaviour does not allow a person to function effectively with others as a member of the society; when such behaviour does not permit the person to meet his or her own needs and when behaviour has a negative effect on the wellbeing of others.

Boyd (2015) reported that a lot of students are involved in the use of tobacco, amphetamines, barbiturates and heroin. In the same vein, Idris (2016) explained that there are many cases of cultism, sexual abuse, acts of vandalism, blackmail, threats and intimidations reported by classroom teachers as well as school principals. Idris affirmed that there is an increase in the rate of moral decadence among students as a result of lack of discipline. Maladaptive behaviour among students have culminated in juvenile delinquency. Many researchers have identified some causes of maladaptive behaviour among in-school students. Maladaptive behaviour in the classroom increases the stress level of teachers and at the same time changes the classroom dynamics. It is also a big challenge for learning and a risk factor for students' academic achievement. It is against this background that the researcher deemed to investigate on perceived influence of counselling on maladaptive behaviour among secondary schools in Umuahia Local Government Area of Abia State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the perceived impact of counselling services on maladaptive behavioural issues among secondary school students in Umuahia Local Government Area of Abia State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the forms of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students.
2. Determine the effectiveness of counselling strategies in addressing maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the forms of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Umuahia Local Government Area of Abia State?
2. How effective are counselling strategies in addressing maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Umuahia Local Government Area of Abia State?

Hypotheses

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

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students regarding the forms of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students

regarding the effectiveness of counselling strategies in addressing maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students.

Literature Review

In a study carried out by Ali et al (2014) to examine the prominent constitute maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Lagos State. Four research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The researcher used descriptive survey design in the study. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) were used to derive a sample size of 201 from a population of 423 adolescent students in senior secondary school.

Mean, standard deviation and t-test statistical tools were used in the analysis of data gathered for the study. The results revealed that what constitute maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students include; disobedience to teachers and schools rules and regulations, stealing other student's properties, staying in hostel during lesson among others.

Ugwu (2017) assessed the causes of adolescents' maladaptive behaviour in secondary schools of Ebonyi State. Three research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. The research design was survey and sample size of 361 was derived from a population of 6000 secondary school students in Ebonyi State. The sample was randomly selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure from four selected units.

The instrument used for data collection was researcher designed questionnaire.

Statistical instruments used for data analysis were independent t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results of the study revealed that the causes of adolescents' maladaptive behaviour include; family background, socio-economic status of parents, the school, peer influence and influence of mass media. The results also showed that there was no significant difference between male and female students on the causes of maladaptive behaviour.

Muteki, *et al.* (2013) carried out a study on teachers' perceptions of pupils' maladjustment problems from a psycho-social perspective. The study explored teachers' perceptions of maladjustment problems manifested by pupils in South Africa primary schools using the psycho-social lens to view and interpret the phenomena. The study involved 32 primary school educators participated in the study. The sample of educators was randomly selected from eight primary schools in the central Johannesburg district. The survey design adopted combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The study found that teachers who were not adequately trained to deal with maladjusted pupils did not endeavour to implement any interventions to alleviate them. It also revealed that not all maladjusted pupils cause

disciplinary problems for teachers as some of the pupils who are unsocial, withdrawn, unhappy, depressed, fearful and nervous do attract very little attention to themselves. In examining the causes of pupil maladjustments, the study found that these can be traced to some unfulfilled or thwarted psychosocial needs.

Methods

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. Descriptive survey design, as explained by Nworgu (2015), involves collecting and analyzing data from a representative sample in order to describe existing conditions. This design was considered appropriate because the study sought to obtain information from secondary school students on the perceived impact of counselling services on maladaptive behaviour in Umuahia Local Government Area of Abia State using a structured questionnaire.

The population of the study comprised all students in the nineteen (19) public (government-owned) secondary schools in Umuahia Local Government Area of Abia State. According to the Post Primary Schools Service Commission (PPSSC, 2023), the total student population in these schools was 2,026 at the time of the study. From this population, a sample of 200 students was selected using a multi-stage sampling procedure. In the first stage, simple random sampling technique (balloting with replacement) was used to select ten (10) schools from the nineteen public secondary schools in the area. In the second stage, twenty (20) students were randomly selected from each of the ten selected schools, resulting in a total sample size of 200 students.

The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled *Counselling Maladaptive Behaviour Questionnaire (CMBQ)*. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A elicited information on the bio-data of the respondents, while Section B contained twenty (20) items developed in line with the research questions of the study. The items were structured on a four-point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point).

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire, together with the purpose of the study, research questions, and hypotheses, was submitted to three experts—two in Guidance and Counselling and one in Measurement and Evaluation from the College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The experts examined the instrument for face and content validity, clarity of items, relevance to the study objectives, and appropriateness of language. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the instrument before administration.

The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot study conducted

using thirty (30) students randomly selected from public secondary schools in Ihitte/Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, who were not part of the study population. The data obtained from the pilot test were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.77, indicating that the instrument had acceptable internal consistency.

The researcher employed the Direct Delivery Method (DDM), also known as the face-to-face method, in administering the questionnaire. This approach ensured that all copies of the questionnaire were properly completed and retrieved immediately, resulting in a 100 percent return rate. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while the independent samples t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. A criterion mean of 2.50 was established for decision-making. Items with mean scores of 2.50 and above were regarded as agreed, whereas items with mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as disagreed.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What are the forms of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Umuahia Local Government Area of Abia State?

Table 1: *Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Forms of Maladaptive Behaviour (N = 200)*

S/N	Item Statement	$\bar{x}$	Decision
1	Inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers	3.40	Agreed
2	Inappropriate behaviour or feelings of anxiety under normal conditions	3.32	Agreed
3	Pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression	3.58	Agreed
4	Tendency to develop psychosomatic complaints (e.g., headaches, stomach aches)	3.21	Agreed
5	Taking delight in causing bodily harm to other students	3.10	Agreed
6	Persistent and serious misbehaviour in school	2.96	Agreed
7	Truancy and frequent absenteeism from school	3.18	Agreed
8	Involvement in drug or substance abuse	3.44	Agreed
9	Participation in cultism or gang-related activities	3.36	Agreed
10	Destruction of school property and violent behaviour	3.25	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.28	Agreed

The data in Table 1 show that all ten items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.28 indicates that respondents agreed that the listed behaviours are forms of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students regarding the forms of maladaptive behaviour.

Table 2: *The t-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of Male and Female Students on Forms of Maladaptive Behaviour*

Gender	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	N	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	3.30	0.74	97				
Female	3.25	0.71	103	198	0.42	1.96	Not Significant

Since the calculated t-value (0.42) is less than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected. There is no significant difference

between male and female students in their mean ratings of forms of maladaptive behaviour.

Research Question 2

How effective are counselling strategies in addressing maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Umuhia Local Government Area of Abia State?

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Effectiveness of Counselling Strategies (N = 200)

S/N	Item Statement	$\bar{x}$	Decision
11	Use of self-reinforcement strategies	3.52	Agreed
12	Use of behavior - shaping techniques	3.41	Agreed
13	Application of cognitive behavioural therapy	3.60	Agreed
14	Use of emotional regulation strategies	3.34	Agreed
15	One-on-one counselling sessions	3.22	Agreed
16	Encouraging students to share problems with trusted individuals	2.88	Agreed
17	Organizing group counselling sessions	3.26	Agreed
18	Providing career and academic guidance	3.19	Agreed
19	Teaching problem-solving and conflict resolution skills	3.45	Agreed
20	Educating students on consequences of negative behaviours	3.53	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.34	Agreed

The data in Table 3 indicate that all items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.34 suggests that counselling strategies are perceived as effective in addressing maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students regarding the effectiveness of counselling strategies.

Table 4: *The t-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of Male and Female Students on Effectiveness of Counselling*

Gender	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	N	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	3.38	0.69	97				
Female	3.30	0.73	103	198	0.58	1.96	Not Significant

Since the calculated t-value (0.58) is less than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference between male and female students in their mean ratings regarding the effectiveness of counselling strategies.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that secondary school students in Umuahia Local Government Area of Abia State exhibit various forms of maladaptive behaviour, including aggression, truancy, substance abuse, cultism, destruction of school property, anxiety, depression, persistent misbehaviour, and difficulty in maintaining interpersonal relationships. These behaviours are influenced by both internal and external factors such as family background, peer pressure, school environment, and socio-economic conditions. The finding aligns with Ali et al. (2014) and Ugwu (2017), and further supports Muteki et al. (2013), who noted that maladaptive behaviour also includes emotional and psychological challenges that may not always be outwardly visible.

Additionally, the study found no significant gender difference in maladaptive behaviours, suggesting that these issues affect both male and female students equally and should be addressed through inclusive intervention programmes.

The findings showed that counselling strategies - such as self-reinforcement, behaviour shaping, cognitive behavioural therapy, emotional regulation, individual and group counselling, and problem-solving skills training - are perceived as effective in addressing maladaptive behaviours. This supports previous research by Ali et al. (2014) and Muteki et al. (2013), emphasizing the need for professional and structured counselling services in schools. The study also found no significant gender difference in the perceived effectiveness of counselling, indicating that these strategies benefit all students regardless of gender. Overall, the results highlight the crucial role of guidance and counselling units in promoting positive behaviour, emotional well-being, and psychosocial adjustment among secondary school students.

Conclusion

The study found that maladaptive behaviours, such as aggression, truancy, substance abuse, and anxiety, are prevalent among secondary school students in Umuahia Local Government Area of Abia State. Counselling strategies, including self-reinforcement, behaviour shaping, and cognitive behavioural therapy, were found to be effective in addressing these behaviours. There were no significant gender differences in either the forms of maladaptive behaviour or the effectiveness of counselling.

In summary, counselling is a vital tool for promoting positive behaviour and emotional adjustment among students, highlighting the need to strengthen guidance and counselling services in secondary schools.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen School Counselling Services:** Secondary schools should invest in well-trained and professional counsellors to provide structured interventions, including cognitive behavioural therapy, emotional regulation, and behaviour-shaping strategies, to address maladaptive behaviours effectively.
2. **Implement Inclusive Behavioural Programs:** Schools should design programmes that target all students, regardless of gender, to prevent and manage maladaptive behaviours such as aggression, truancy, substance abuse, and cultism.
3. **Promote Awareness and Collaboration:** Teachers, parents, and school administrators should collaborate with counsellors to identify, monitor, and address maladaptive behaviours early, while also educating students about the consequences of negative behaviours and the benefits of positive conduct.

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ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN BENUE STATE

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Abstract

This research investigated the Influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviour and academic achievement of Junior Secondary School Students in Benue State. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population for this study is 15,433 which consisted of all JSS II students in the 3 Local Government Area of Agatu, Logo and Guma of Benue State. The sample size for the study was 374 using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size. Three instruments were used for data collection titled: Student Inventory on Communal clashes Scale (SICCS), Emotional Behaviour scale (EBS). The validity index of 0.72 and 0.74 was obtained. To determine the instruments reliability of internal consistencies, the data was subject to Cronbach Alpha which yielded a coefficient index of 0.84 for (SICCS) and 0.77 for (EBS). Equally the Achievement Test on Mathematics and English were subjected to Kuder-Richardson (KR-21) method of reliability achievement test to arrive at 0.71 and 0.91 respectively. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is a significant influence of communal clashes on academic achievement and emotional behaviours among Junior Secondary School Students in Benue State. The study recommended among others that, Counsellors should assist students who may miss school due to fear of violence, seeking safety for themselves or their families, or involvement in conflict resolution efforts. This creates learning gaps and hinders their academic progress.

Keywords: Farmer-herders conflict, emotional behaviour, academic achievement.

Introduction

Academic achievement has become an index of child's future in this highly competitive world. Academic achievement has been one of the most important goals and value of the educational process. It is also a major goal, which every individual is expected to perform in all cultures. Academic achievement is a key mechanism through which students learn about their talents, abilities and competencies which are an important part of developing career aspirations (Lent, Jeame & Kenta, 2020). According to Crow and Crow (2019), Academic achievement as the extent to which learner is profiting from instructions in a given area of learning i.e., achievement is reflected by the extent to which skill or knowledge has been imparted to him. Academic achievement refers to the level of schooling which has been successfully completed and ability to attain success in studies. Academic achievement is defined as the performance of the students in the subject they study in the school (Clark, 2013).

Academic achievement determines the student's status in the class. It gives children the opportunity to develop their talents; improve their grades and prepare for the future academic challenges. It is excellence in all academic discipline rather than fatalistically accepting it and competing against some standard of excellence. It is general observation that learners placed in an identical set of academic situations vary in their scholastic achievement. Academic achievement is a product of a number of factors operating within the individual and outside him. Broadly speaking the factors which influence academic achievement can be categorized into three types, namely, intellectual, emotional and environmental. It has been established that the emotional factors such depression, anxiety and aggression, environmental factors like starvation, homelessness and intellectual factors of lack of attention, lost of memory could determined one's academic achievement.

It is worrisome to note that the factors affecting academic achievement of student in recent time is the high rate of insecurity and communal clashes in the society. Peace and tranquility is an antidote for a successful teaching and learning (Achema 2014). In recent times, however, millions of school children in Nigeria are caught up in conflicts that result to insecurity not only of their school attendance but to their lives and property. The United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) defines human security as freedom from fear and wants (Okorie, 2021). Japanese foreign policy's view on human security may include all the menaces that threaten human survival, daily life and dignity – for example, environmental degradation, violations of human rights, transnational organized crime in illicit drugs, refugees, poverty, anti-personnel land mines and other infectious diseases

such as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

Communal clashes are linked to chronic threats of life, disease, hunger, terrorism and poverty. Therefore, communal clashes and poverty cannot be divorced from each other. Severe levels of poverty may expose people to all kinds of security threats. Nigeria in our current democratic dispensation is faced with different kinds of threats such as ethno-religious conflicts, organized violent groups, economic based violence, gender-based violence, sexual abuse, trafficking and recently the menace of communal clashes constituting serious danger to students (Ibrahim, 2022).

Farmers-Herder clashes over grazing, farming and landownership has been a contentious and perennial problem in the North Central Region, making legal protection against conflict over landownership imperative (Fisiy 2012). Landownership is often the primary cause of conflict and struggle for its control engages people at all rungs of society (Havnevik 2017). Bearing in mind the socioeconomic significance of land, it is not surprising that social or ethnic conflict over land like the one in Benue State has forced students to abandon school and becoming wild in their behaviour (Moyo, 2018). It has been observed that the Farmers-Herder clashes environment created in Benue State could affect academic achievement of students in general.

The links between communal clashes and students academic are numerous and complex, resulting from constraints in the supply of and/or demand for education. They include resource reductions, recruitment into armed groups, safety threats in and on the way to school, and the consequences of poverty and food insecurity (Justino, 2016). The increased rate of poverty, high rate of absence from schools, anxiety, depression and the increasing aggression among students could be attributed to this Farmers-Herder conflict in the areas due to the negative effect conflict could cause to people emotional life. Emotional behaviour is one of the most affected aspects of students during conflict situations. The classroom is an emotional place and emotions are core elements of students' identity and well-being which is very important in the learning process.

Students frequently experience and exhibit various emotional beviour in classroom settings. For example, students can be excited during studying, hope for success, feel pride in their accomplishments, be surprised at discovering a new solution, experience anxiety about failing examinations, feel ashamed over poor grades, or be bored during lessons. In addition, emotions play a role as well, like admiration, empathy, anger, contempt, or envy concerning peers and situations around. Moreover, students bring emotions to the classroom that concern events outside and within the school and could have a strong influence upon their learning, such as the emotional turmoil causing insecurity to students

in the communal clashes in Benue State.

Anxiety also, is one of the emotional components of human life. Anxiety occurs when the individual has too many fears and feels unable to control one's life. It is regarded as a common psychological problem among human beings with its physical, emotional and social manifestations. Patel in Nwimo (2016) conceived anxiety as the sensation of feeling, fearfulness and nervousness. Anxiety is the state of being uneasy, tense or troubled in mind about some uncertain events (Okeke, 2020). It is the reaction that students exhibit to examination and other school activities. Two principal components of anxiety are cognitive and emotional (Morris, Davis & Hutchings, 2021). The cognitive component is the mental activity that revolves around the testing situation and its potential implication on the individual. It constitutes elements such as, negative cantered thought and lack of confidence in one's ability (Sarason & Sarason, 2020).

The emotionality component is the physiological component of test anxiety leading to tension, apprehension, and nervousness towards examinations, which may be associated with somatic symptoms such as palpitation, nausea, and perspiration (Zeidner, 2018). The fear of the unknown affect little in term of performance but the fear of the known affect students greatly as knowledge gives consciousness (Timoh, 2015). This from observation is the way and manner of the series of communal clashes occurrences in the study area. Emotional behaviour in a pleasant environment could influence learning while a distracting and disturbing environmental situation like the communal clashes during lessons may not just allows students attention to drift away but scatter their whole being leading to day-dreaming, reducing retaining ability and undermining learning and achievement.

Another emotional behaviour that may be exhibited by students as result of communal clashes is aggression. Aggression is an overt behaviour of a person that intends to harm others physically or psychologically. According to Baron (2014), aggression is any form of behaviour directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment. Aggression viewed as a form of behaviour. The outcome of such behaviour is a very common phenomenon of daily life. Considering social, political and religious context, aggression is seen as a natural system.

Most of the time people show aggressive behaviour to predominant each others. It simply reminds that aggression has a biological and social basis. Thus, aggressive behaviour in humans, for example, threat, attack and defence, are commonly related to competition over resources. Moreover, like the one between farmers and herder for landownership which has cause fear to learn in student, lack of interest in schooling activities and wanton destruction to schools and the environment in general. Chen (2020)

noted that poor academic achievement predicted bad behaviour, which hampered academic progress. It has been observed also that this communal clashes is highly characterize by series crimes violence like rape, assault that resulted in injury to the victims which are mostly students who do not only stop schooling but abandon it and flee for their lives away from the community of residence.

The most common emotional problems among students is depression and (Kashani & Orvaschel, 2018). While depression is less common during childhood, it increases during the onset of adolescence (Beest & Baerveldt, 2019). During adolescence, depression is experienced mostly short and depending on the certain conditions. Students suffering from depression are sad and broken down. They feel loneliness, but can continue doing their daily chores. However, in deeper cases of depression, students show the symptoms of low self-esteem, self blame, hopelessness, suicide thoughts, anger, and peevishness (Elgard & Arlett, 2022). It can be inferred that depression may be experienced at the same time of conflict or any unpalatable experience students' face in school especially like the frequent clashes between the farmers and Fulani in the area causing distractions to them and leading to poor academic work. It is pertinent at this juncture however to say that the poor quality of students and declining academic achievement at secondary school level in Benue State in recent time could be trace to persistent insecurity witnessed as school have become desolate.

It has been observed that this constant fracas between farmers and herdsmen have reduce the level of academic activities in the area as students are throw into fear in classroom, harass on their way to and from school with unturned hardship making learning impossible and a dreaded phenomenon as countless number of students have lost their lives in the quest for formal education. Report from Benue State Ministry of Education Makurdi revealed that since the first occurrence of farmers-herders conflict in 2024, students' academic achievement in the affected Local Government of Logo, Guma and Agatu until now is still reported to be steadily below 40%. As a result, it is assumed that the persistence communal clashes and emotional challenges of anxiety, aggression and depression witnessed by students' sequel to the conflict could be attributed as the cause of the declaiming academic achievement and the dearth of academic activities in the area in general. However, there is no evidence to justify this hence the need to investigate influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviour and academic achievement of Junior Secondary School Students in Benue State.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate influence of communal clashes on

emotional behaviour and academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State. The specific objectives were as follows.

1. Determine the influence of communal clashes on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State.
2. Evaluate the influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviour of junior secondary school students in Benue State.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What is the influence of Farmers- Herder conflict on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State?
2. What is the influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviour of junior secondary school students in Benue State?

Research Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant influence of Communal clashes on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State.
2. There is no significant influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviours of junior secondary school students in Benue State.

Methodology

The research adopted a descriptive survey design. The population for this study is 15,433 which consisted of all SS II students in the 3 Local Government Area of Agatu, Logo and Guma of Benue State. The sample size for the study was 374 using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size from a given population. There are three instruments for data collection titled: Student Inventory on Communal clashes Scale (CCS), Emotional Behaviour scale (EBS). The instrument has four point ratings such as Strongly Agree (SA) – 4 Points, Agree (A) - 3 points, Disagree (D) - 2 points, Strongly Disagree (SD) -1 respectively. The third instrument is the mathematic and English language achievement test (MELAT). The mathematics test consisted of 20 items on Mathematics represented in multiple choice a, b, c, d options to which participants were expected to respond. The psychometric property of the achievement test in Mathematics was established with the use of a table of specification. Answers to the questions were all assessed and certified by the experts in the subject area. Likewise the English Test equally consisted of 25 items represented in multiple choice a, b, c, d options to which the students

responded to. The psychometric properties of the achievement test for English Language was also established with the use of a table of specification. Answers to the questions were all assessed and certified by the experts in the subject area. The scores rated by the experts were computed to determine the logical validity index of the instrument. The experts' assessments rated as 72 and 74 and gave a consensus validity of 71%. To determine the instruments reliability Cronbach Alpha method was used which produce a co-efficient index of 0.84 for (CCS) and 0.77 for (EBS) indicating that the instrument is reliable for the study. Equally the Achievement Test on Mathematics and English were subjected to Kuder-Richardson (KR-21) method of reliability achievement test to arrive at their reliability index of 0.71 and 0.91 for mathematics and English Language respectively. The data generated from the study were collated into tables and with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the influence of Farmers- Herder conflict on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State?

Table 1: *Mean and standard deviation on the influence of communal clashes on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State*

Variable	n	$\bar{x}$	std	Remark
Communal Clashes	374	43.12	5.26	high
Academic Achievement	374	14.42	2.78	
Criterion Mean	374	28.77	6.65	

Table 1, shows the mean scores and standard deviation on influence of communal clashes on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State. The result depicts a criterion mean of 28.77 and a corresponding standard deviation of 6.65 which is above the cut off mean of 15.00. This means that there is a high influence of communal clashes on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviour of junior secondary school students in Benue State?

Table 2: *Mean and standard deviation on the influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviour of junior secondary school students in Benue State*

Variable	n	$\bar{x}$	std	Remark
Communal Clashes	374	43.12	2.92	high
Emotional Behaviours	374	43.21	2.60	
Criterion Mean	374	43.16	2.76	

Table 2, shows the mean scores and standard deviation on influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviour of junior secondary school students in Benue State. The result depicts a criterion mean of 43.16 and a corresponding standard deviation of 2.76 which is above the cut off mean of 15.00. This meant that there is a high influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviour of junior secondary school students in Benue State.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of Communal clashes on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State.

Table 3: *The t-test on influence of Communal clashes on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State*

Variable remark	n	$\bar{x}$	std	df	α	t	p.val	Remark
Communal Clashes	374	43.12	5.26	373	.05	161.16	0.000	reject
Emotional Behaviours	374	43.21	5.28					

Table 3, shows the t-test on influence of communal clashes on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State. The result shows a significant influence with $n=374$, $t= 161.16$, $df = 373$, at $p=.000$ or $p< .05$. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected at $p=.000$ or $p<.05$. This means that there is a significant influence of communal clashes on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State.

Hypotheses Two: There is no significant influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviours of junior secondary school students in Benue State.

Table 4: *The t-test on influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviours of junior secondary school students in Benue State*

Variable remark	n	$\bar{x}$	std	df	α	t	p.val	Remark
Communal Clashes	374	43.12	5.26	373	.05	101.98	.000	reject
Emotional Behaviours	374	14.42	2.78					

Table 4, shows the t-test on influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviours of junior secondary school students in Benue State. The result shows a significant influence with $n=374$, $t=101.98$, $df=373$, at $p=.000$ or $p<.05$. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected at $p=.000$ or $p<.05$. This means that there is significant influence of communal clashes on emotional behaviours of junior secondary school students in Benue State

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one and hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant influence of communal clashes on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Benue State. This finding is in agreement with Justino (2016) who discovered that communal clashes and students academic are numerous and complex, resulting from constraints in the supply of and/or demand for education. They include resource reductions, recruitment into armed groups, safety threats in and on the way to school, and the consequences of poverty and food insecurity. The increased rate of poverty, high rate of absence from schools, anxiety, depression and the increasing aggression among students could be attributed to this Farmers-Herder conflict in the areas due to the negative effect conflict could cause to people emotional life.

The findings of research question two and hypothesis two revealed that there is a significant influence of communal clashes on the emotional behaviours of Junior Secondary School Students in Benue State. This finding is in agreement with Chen (2020) who discovered that the conflict between communities for landownership and grazing has cause fear to learn in student, lack of interest in schooling activities and wanton destruction to schools and the environment in general. Chen (2020) also discovered that, conflict predicted emotional maladjusted behaviour which hampered academic progress. It has been observed also that this communal clashes is highly characterize by series crimes violence like rape, assault that resulted in injury to the victims which are mostly students

who do not only stop schooling but abandon it and flee for their lives away from the community of residence.

Conclusion

The study concluded that, communal clashes significantly affect the academic and emotional well-being of students in affected regions. This study has demonstrated a clear connection between the intensity and proximity of the conflict to a student's life and their academic achievement, revealing decreased concentration, absenteeism, and ultimately lower grades. Furthermore, the constant threat of violence, displacement, and the witnessing or experiencing of traumatic events leads to heightened anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms among students, impacting their emotional development and overall school experience. Addressing this complex issue requires a multi-faceted approach that includes conflict resolution initiatives, psychosocial support services for students, and the creation of safer and more stable learning environments.

Investing in these interventions is not merely a social responsibility but a crucial step towards ensuring a brighter future and unlocking the full potential of a generation scarred by communal clashes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made;

1. Counsellors should assist students may miss school due to fear of violence, seeking safety for themselves or their families, or involvement in conflict resolution efforts. This creates learning gaps and hinders their academic progress.
2. Counselling interventions should be culturally sensitive, tailored to the specific needs of the students, and focus on fostering resilience, promoting emotional well-being, and empowering students to cope with and overcome the challenges they face.

Counselling Implications

1. Counsellors need to be trained and equipped to understand and address the potential trauma experienced by students. This includes creating a safe and supportive environment, understanding and validating their feelings, and employing trauma-sensitive interventions.
2. Counselling should focus on the particular needs of students impacted by conflict, including addressing their fear, anxiety, and trauma.
3. Helping students' healthy coping strategies to manage stress, anxiety, and emotional distress is crucial. This could include relaxation techniques, mindfulness exercises,

and positive self-talk.

4. Counselling should also involve the families of affected students. Support for parents and caregiver is essential in assisting them to cope with the stress of conflict and in creating a supportive home environment for their children.

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ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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Abstract

This article explores the crucial role of emotional intelligence in conflict resolution. Emotional intelligence enables individuals to recognize and manage their own emotions, empathize with others, and communicate effectively. Emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, social awareness, and relationship management, individuals can navigate complex conflicts effectively (woffindin, 2024). Its domains, and its application in conflict resolution. It also discusses the benefits and strategies for developing emotional intelligence in conflict resolution, including self-awareness, active listening, emotional regulation, and effective communication. Prioritizing emotional intelligence, individuals and organizations can improve conflict resolution outcomes and achieve better personal and professional growth.

Keywords: Conflict, Conflict resolution and Emotional intelligence

Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable part of human interaction and its resolution is crucial for

maintaining healthy relationships and achieving personal and professional goal.

Emotion intelligence has been recognised as a vital component for effective conflict resolution. Emotional intelligence helps individuals to recognise and understand emotions in oneself and others through skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. It is used to guide thought and behaviour.

The role of emotional intelligence in conflict resolution., the role emotional intelligence play in finding effective conflict resolution and strategies for developing emotional intelligence in conflict resolution.

Concept of Emotional Intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence was introduced in a year 1990 by two American university professor John Mayers and Peter Salovey in their attempt to develop a scientific measure for knowing the differences between people's ability in their areas of emotions (Mangal, 2014). However, the credit for popularizing the concept of emotional intelligence goes to another American psychologist Daniel Goleman through his book "emotional intelligence: why it matters more than IQ" publishes in 1995. However, according to Mayers and Salovey cited in Mangal (2014) define the concept of emotional intelligence as "the capacity to reason with emotion in four areas: to perceive emotion, to integrate it in thought, to understand it and to manage it. According to this definition, every individual may be found to have different capacities and abilities with regard to dealing with emotions. Depending upon the nature of these abilities, individual may be said to be more or less emotional intelligence compared to others in a group.

Similarly, Goleman as cited in Kumar (2019) define it as, the capacity to recognize our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships. Kendra (2022) view emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive, interpret, respond to the emotion of others through effective and constructive communication. Emotional intelligence help an individual to appropriately respond to vast variety of emotional stimuli being elicited from inner self or immediate environment effectively, incorporating the emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management.

Domain of Emotional Intelligence

Self-awareness is the ability to recognize your own feeling and what triggers the emotions, and also ability to accurately assess your personal strength and weakness. However, having the ability to identify emotional feeling as it occurs is the keystone to emotional intelligence (Joseph, 2025).

Self-management is the ability to regulate distressing emotions like anxiety, anger, sadness etc in a healthy and productive manner, so as to achieve success. Additionally, it help individual to adapt and cope with environmental changes and pressure (Joseph, 2025).

Social awareness is the ability to be aware of other people emotions, interest and understand the social network. Social awareness commonly achieved through active listening and empathy. Active listening is the ability to pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues of other people around. Empathy occurs by putting yourself in other people shoes to clearly understand their point of view and why they behave the way they do.

Relationship management is the ability to maintain interpersonal relationship by inspiring and motivating others to achieve success. People who excel in do well at anything that relies on interaction with others. Additionally, emotional intelligence can help an individual to interact smoothly with others or mediate effectively in any conflict resolution (Joseph, 2025).

Role of emotional intelligence in conflict resolution

Conflict is in our personal relationship, society, or organizational environment. According to American Psychological Association (2025), conflict creates tension and hinder our ability to move forward. But understanding the conflict resolution is essential because it help individual to navigate and overcome challenging situation. Conflict resolution is not about winning or losing but finding common ground, foster understanding and promote peaceful living. These can be easily achieved through emotional intelligence. Specifically, by incorporating the key aspect of emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, social awareness and relationship management in conflict resolution, (Nwankwo, 2024).

Self-awareness is the ability to recognize or identify your own emotion during conflict resolution. Emotional self-awareness help an individual to be aware of his/her own feelings and how it influence behaviour. These will make person have the ability to manage their reaction more effectively by avoiding letting emotions escalate conflict or influence judgment.

Emotional regulation involve managing one emotions in a constructive manner particularly under stress by controlling impulse reactions, staying calm under pressure and adopting to changing circumstances. Effective emotional regulation helps an individual to approach conflict a level headed perspective, reducing the likelihood of reactive

behaviour that can exacerbate tension during conflict resolution (Woffindin, 2024).

Social awareness is the ability to identify the emotions and perspective others during conflict resolution. This is achieved through empathy and active listening.

1. **Active listening** help in recognizing and understanding other people emotion during conflict resolution through paying attention to their verbal and non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expression, voice tone etc these provide insight into the emotion behind the words spoken.
2. **Empathy** according to American Psychological Association (2025), empathy enable individual to empathize with others emotions and perspective by putting yourself in the shoe of others involved in conflict to understand the underlying emotion driving conflict. Empathy creates more compassionate and corporative approach to conflict resolution.

Relationship management in conflict resolution strong relationship management skills enable individual to navigate disagreement constructively, negotiate solution and maintain positive interaction in the face of challenges. Relationship management encompasses of skills needed to build and maintain healthy relationship in conflict resolution include effective communication, trust building (Woffindin, 2024),

1. **Effective communication:** is essential for resolving conflict and maintaining healthy relationship. Through emotional intelligence individual develop better communication skills, enhancing active listening, and ability to express emotion constructively during conflict resolution.
2. **Trust building:** effective communication and smooth interaction during conflict resolution help a lot in establishing and maintaining trust through consistent empathetic and respectful behaviour during conflict resolution.

Benefits of emotional intelligence in conflict resolution

Emotional intelligence is one of the most powerful tools that can aid in conflict resolution (American Psychological Association, 2025). Developing and utilizing emotional intelligence skills, individual can enhance their ability to manage conflict in a healthy and productive manner.

1. **Improve communication skills;** effective communication lies at the heart of resolving conflict. Emotional intelligence help individual develop better communication skills in enhancing active listening, express emotion constructively and non verbal communication awareness.
2. **Increase empathy:** emotional intelligence enable individual to empathize with others

emotions and perspective to understand the underlying emotion driving conflicts, individuals can respond with empathy and compassion, fostering a collaborative atmosphere for conflict resolution.

3. Better conflict management: emotional intelligence persons gain the ability to regulate their emotions during conflict. They can control anger, frustration and other intense emotions, enabling them respond calmly and thoughtfully. This self-control promotes rational decision making and prevent conflict from escalating.

Strategies for developing emotional intelligence in conflict resolution

Self-awareness: ability to identify or know your emotional state and how you are feeling is a key to emotional intelligence. Inability to know what emotion you are feeling is a problem and this is the reason why we emotionally react to something that happen like high pressure situation such as conflict or confrontation. Instead of just reacting to it, you are expected to be emotionally intelligence (be aware of what happen to your mind at that moment). Ability to know what you are experiencing at a given moment is a key to understanding of how your thought and your action (Nwankwo, 2025). However you can self-coach yourself by asking thoughtful questions like why did I feel this? What was I triggered by? When you think this way, it become easier for you to create immediate distancing from whatever source of the emotion was and help you understand what lead you to that emotion. Being aware of your emotion as it occur help an individual to mentally move to positive state.

Social-awareness: is the ability to understand other people emotion. To understand the emotions of others, there is need to be active listener, particularly during conflict resolution. Listen to how others talk, notice what is coming from their mouth, their physical expression, their tones and the non-verbal action they are using. According to Mangal (2014), insights on what others are feeling and how their emotional state may change from moment to moment. Secondly, ask them leading questions like what happen? What lead you to make this decision? Or what was the thought process that you went through to come up with this idea?

This will allow the negotiator to go behind what is said to uncover the drive of motivation and understand where they are coming from and how they are feeling. You as a negotiator also to put yourself in their shoes, taking on their perspective and see things through their eyes (Woffindin, 2024).

Emotional regulation: ability to leverage your own emotion so as not to be control by them is very essential. As a negotiator it is good to always exercise emotion management

especially during conflict resolution because during the process of resolution, someone may say something that will make you upset (Woffindin, 2024). However, whenever in a conflict resolution, used emotional regulation techniques such as taking deep breath exercise, these help to calm the nervous system, reduce anxiety and improve mood during conflict resolution.

Relationship management: once you are aware of your own emotional and those of others in paying attention to their verbal and non-verbal expression, next stage is to manage your emotion so as to be able to interact effectively, build trust and make relationship so effective. Always know that whenever there is a conflict, it is an opportunity to grow. Seek to understand what brought about the disagreement, what is the nature of the conflict, Ask question to look beneath the surface to understand the interest that others are protecting. Separate yourself from the situation emotionally and encourage others to shift their own perspective.

Incorporating these emotional intelligence strategies in to conflict resolution approach you can navigate complex conflict effectively.

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in conflict resolution by enabling individual to recognize and manage emotions, empathize with others and communicate effectively. Developing emotional intelligence can lead to improvement in relationships, increased conflict resolution skills and enhance personal and professional growth. Individuals, leaders and organization should prioritized developing emotional intelligence skills to improve conflict resolution and achieved better outcome in personal and professional setting (woffindin, 2024).

Suggestions

1. Develop emotional awareness to recognize, understand emotions and to manage conflict effectively.
- 2, Fosters a culture of understanding and empathy to resolve conflict constructively.
3. Promote active listening and clear communication to prevent misunderstanding.
4. Teach individual to manage their emotions, reducing escalation and promote resolution.
5. Develop leaders with high emotional intelligence to model effective conflict resolution behaviour through training.

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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND MARITAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG NEWLY MARRIED ADULTS IN OBIO/AKPOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated emotional intelligence and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Five research questions and five null hypotheses guided the study. The design for the study was correlational research design. The population for the study consisted of 1,258 newly married adults in Obio/Akpor. A sample of 119 respondents as determined using multi-stage sampling procedure was used for the study. Two instruments were used for the study. They are, Emotional intelligence Scale (EIS) and Marital Conflict Resolution Scale (MRCS). For validity of the instruments, the researchers consulted three experts for content validity while the reliability of the instruments was tested using Cronbach alpha (α) technique. The coefficients obtained were 0.78 and 0.84 for the two instruments. Research questions were answered using simple regression while hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with simple regression. The findings of the study showed that emotional intelligence dimensions (self-awareness, empathy, self-regulation, self-motivation and social skills) significantly and independently relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended that counsellors working with couples should develop interventions that will focus on enhancing emotional intelligence skills among newly married adults. This can include strategies such as mindfulness training, emotion regulation, and communication skills training. By improving emotional

intelligence, couples can better understand and manage their emotions, leading to more effective conflict resolution and a healthier marital relationship.

Keywords: Self-awareness, empathy, self-regulation, self-motivation and social skills and marital conflict resolution

Introduction

Marriage brings about changes on an emotional, social, and psychological level. Therefore effective interpersonal skills are needed to sustain harmony in the partnership as newlyweds frequently navigate a complicated interplay of roles, duties, and expectations. Emotional intelligence (EI) and conflict resolution abilities are two of the most important indicators of relationship quality among the many variables that affect marital pleasure.

Conflict is inevitable marital relationship. Differences between husband and wife once they enter their marriage life become obvious. A number of shortcomings such as attitudes, ways of thinking, decision making, motives, interests, and habits, might become clearer. As a matter of fact, these could be a germ of conflict in the marriage, in case it is not resolved immediately.

Conflict is a situation where the occurrences or events, motives, goals, behaviour, impulse are equally contradictory (Kızilkaya, 2021). It may occur in the social groups, organizations, international relationship, as well as in interpersonal relationship. The conflict between two groups or among groups or between two people or among people, however, will trigger tension and strife since each party will show off its domination or strength.

Low et al. (2021) described marital conflict resolution as the various ways spouses use to resolve their conflicts. These ways may include avoidant, validating, and volatile approaches. Marriage, as a social institution, is a complex and dynamic entity influenced by various factors, including cultural, social, economic, and individual dynamics. In the context of Rivers State, Nigeria, understanding the effectiveness of marital conflict resolution mechanisms is essential to address the unique challenges that couples face within this diverse and rapidly evolving society. Rivers State, as the economic and cultural hub of south-south Nigeria, is characterized by a rich tapestry of traditions and values.

In marriage, conflict could be considered as interpersonal one. This conflict basically has similarity with sectarian conflict, in which it is evoked due to the difference in motives, goals, opinions, beliefs, or attitudes between two parties. According to Moradi et al. (2021), interpersonal conflict occurs when an individual's desire or action impedes the

other's expectation. In many cases, both husband and wife are often unaware that the desires and their actions interfere or hinder that of their partner. Nevertheless, marital conflict must be addressed to achieve a harmonious marriage life. Marital life often filled with conflict and strife are at risk of experiencing marital dissatisfaction and prone to divorce (Kline, et al., 2016). On the contrary, harmonious marriage will make people happier and more physically fit and in addition, it will stimulate more prosperous and healthy sexual life (Jardine, et al., 2022).

Conflicts in marriage affect the level of happiness and the quality of life of couples who are bound in marriage. In his study, Gottman in Jardine et al. (2022) finds out that people with happy marriage, in fact, live longer and healthier than people with unhappy marriage. In addition, people growing up in a peace and tranquil family show higher capabilities and skills both at home and in the social life. They are more confident and happier compared to people with miserable childhood. Likewise, children who grow up in an intact family also display better physical and mental health, in addition to higher achievement in education and career (Jardine, et al., 2022). Marriages are often overwhelmed with conflicts which will bring destruction if it is not resolved properly, particularly for the children.

Jordan et al (2021) suggest that family relationships are filled with pressure display symptoms of depression in children. Also added by Jordan et al. (2021) that the conflict in marriage more often bring a negative impact on children, especially for the intense, physical involvement, unresolved conflict, and conflicts associated with children's behaviour. Dispute or conflict is not resolved properly are more likely to recur frequently, even causing household problems are not resolved. Conflicts are not resolved properly causing marital relationship deteriorated which lead to the divorce.

Over 70 % of cases of divorce were proposed by the wives. Research conducted by Kundi & Badar (2021) revealed that the decision to divorce is an attitude of surrender of women to conflict they experienced. The study also revealed women's attitudes toward conflict quite diverse ranging from blaming each other, trying to be patient, and avoiding the conflict discussion. These various responses indicated that marital conflict resolution was influences by several factors. This study aimed to figure out these factors.

Goleman cited in Kundi and Badar (2021) defines emotional intelligence as the capacity to recognize, comprehend, and regulate emotions. The ability to handle and resolve conflicts in a constructive manner, on the other hand, lessens unfavourable interactions and improves the stability of relationships. Understanding the dynamics of

recently married adults as they acclimate to their new life together requires an awareness of both factors. Emotional intelligence is an important predictor of conflict resolution.

Emotional intelligence is connected to emotion and individual feelings. Emotional intelligence implies the skills that help a person to see and also helps in understanding his /her emotion and emotions of other people, which will make him/her cope with the environmental pressures and demands (Onomuodeke, et al. 2017). Emotional intelligence helped to predict marital success/satisfaction because it reflected how couples applied emotional knowledge to an immediate situation (Onomuodeke, et al. 2017). Goleman as cited in Onomuodeke, et al. (2017) believed that increased understanding of emotional intelligence allowed individuals to flourish in their lives, as citizens in their communities, and on their marriage. Daniel Goleman's emotional intelligence model outlines five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These components highlight the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions, as well as those of others, to build effective relationships and navigate social situations.

Self-awareness is the ability that helps couples to recognize and understand their own thoughts, feelings, and emotions, which can all affect interaction interactions with their partner and the level of their interaction in their environment. Self-regulation is a skill a couple needs in his family, and there are great rewards if he can master it. This skill helps a couple become approachable, equipped with conflict resolution skills, able to create a nurturing environment and lead by reliable example. Motivation refers to the drive or inspiration an individual feels to perform a task or achieve a goal within their job or career. It is the inner force that drives couples to put in the effort required and achieve success in their marriage.

According to Golman empathy is the ability to understand emotions of others and relate to them, a couple can see problems from all perspectives and make objective decisions. Social skills are the abilities a married couple uses to communicate and interact effectively with his partner in various social situations. They encompass a range of verbal and nonverbal communication, including active listening, effective communication, and conflict resolution. These skills are crucial for building and maintaining relationships, both personally and martially and can be developed and improved throughout life.

Restubog, et al (2020) argues that married adults can take control of their emotions amidst the chaos, uncertainties, and other challenges in their marriage. Hence, the explanatory processes for emotional regulation and utilisation of emotional information both theoretically and empirically needs further investigation. This is important because there are dynamics in the world of marriage that constantly challenges couples' ability for

interpersonal and intrapersonal emotional awareness, regulation, and management.

Besides, there is increasing understanding that EI helps couples' marital-life interface better and can influence their health and marital outcomes (Yanchus, et al. 2021).

However, research has shown that there is relationship between emotional intelligence and marital conflict resolution and so many other factors like gender, age, educational qualification, couples experience etc are part of the factors influencing marital resolution conflict (Salami, 2017). Thus, emotional intelligence can be employed to manage or control this marital conflict resolution and prevent its effect on couples' well-being. According to Wang (2023), lack of emotional intelligence in couples could negatively affect their conflict resolution which could reveal itself in familiar symptomatic ways, comprising burnout, poor attitudes, lack of satisfaction, and stressed relationships.

As a supplementary variable to emotional intelligence, conflict resolution further emphasizes the significance of effective interpersonal strategies in preserving marital harmony. According to (Gottman et al, 2019), newlywed couples are especially susceptible to conflicts resulting from unfulfilled expectations and misaligned goals. The ability to resolve conflicts constructively entails active listening, mutual respect, and the willingness to compromise. Couples who lack these skills may find themselves in a cycle of unresolved disagreements, which can cause feelings of resentment and emotional detachment. According to research, conflict resolution involves more than just resolving the immediate problem; it also entails developing a constructive pattern of engagement that gradually improves the relationship (Gottman et al, 2019). By empowering people to approach issues with a fair and compassionate viewpoint, emotional intelligence improves this process and encourages better communication and problem-solving techniques. Based on the above assertion the researchers are motivated and examine emotional intelligence and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate emotional intelligence and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The specific objectives were: to:

1. Determine the extent to which self-awareness relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. Examine the extent to which empathy relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

3. Find out the extent to which self-regulation relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
4. Ascertain the extent to which self-motivation relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
5. Determine the extent to which social-skills relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent does self-awareness relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. To what extent does empathy relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?
3. To what extent does self-regulation relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?
4. To what extent does self-motivation relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?
5. To what extent does social-skills relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are proposed and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Self-awareness does not significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. Empathy does not significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
3. Self-regulation does not significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
4. Self-motivation does not significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
5. Social-skills does not significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Methodology

The design for this study is correlational research design. The population for the

study consisted of 1,258 newly married adults in Obio/Akpor. A sample of 119 respondents as determined using multi-stage sampling procedure was used for the study.

Two instruments were used for the study. They are, Emotional intelligence Scale (EIS) and Marital Conflict Resolution Scale (MRCS). For validity of the instruments, the researchers consulted three experts for content validity while the reliability of the instruments was tested using Cronbach alpha (α). The coefficients obtained were 0.78 and 0.84 for Emotional intelligence Scale (EIS) and Marital Conflict Resolution Scale (MRCS) respectively. Research questions were answered using simple regression while hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with simple regression.

Result and Discussion

Research Question One: To what extent does self-awareness relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 1: Simple regression table showing the relationship between self-awareness and marital conflict resolution

Model R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
.113a	.013	.010	5.88485

Data presentation on the relationship between self-awareness and marital conflict resolution showed that an R value of 0.113 was gotten with an R² value of 0.013 and an adjusted R² of 0.010. On the basis of the adjusted R² value obtained, it can be seen that self-awareness accounted for 1.0% variation in the marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Hypothesis One: Self-awareness does not significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Table 2: Summary of analysis, of simple regression associated with t-test on the extent to which self-awareness relate to marital conflict resolution.

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1. (Constant)	17.227	1.191		1467	.000
Self-awareness	.177	.075	.113	2.361	.019

The result in Table 2 showed that the beta of .113 and a t-value of 2.361 were obtained when the obtained regression coefficient was tested for significance, based on the sig-value of 0.019 which is less than the alpha of 0.05. This result therefore indicates that self-awareness significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Research Question 2: To what extent does empathy relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 3: *Summary simple regression of the relationship between empathy and marital conflict resolution skills*

R	R²	Adjusted R²	Adj Error of the estimate
.080a	.006	.004	5.90379

Table 3 shows that the relationship between empathy and marital conflict resolution skills yielded an R value of 0.080 this is, alongside a coefficient of determination R² of 0.006 and an adjusted coefficient of determination an (adj R²) of 0.004, it is deduced that 0.4% of the changes in marital conflict resolution skills are dependent on the changes of the effect of empathy. On the other hand, the remaining, 99.6% of the changes in marital conflict resolution among newly married adults are attributable to factors outside empathy.

Hypothesis Two: Empathy does not significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Table 4: *Summary of analysis, of simple regression associated with t-test on the extent to which empathy relate to marital conflict resolution.*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	22.609	1.615		1001	.000
	Empathy	-.145	.087	-.080	-1.667	.096

The result in Table 4 showed that the beta of -.080 and a t-value of -1.667 were obtained when the obtained regression coefficient was tested for significance, based on the

sig-value of 0.096 which is higher than the alpha of 0.05. This result therefore indicates that empathy does not significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore retained.

Research Question Three: To what extent does self-regulation relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 5. *Summary of simple regression of the relationship between self-regulation and marital conflict resolution skills*

R	R ²	Adj.R ²	Std error of the estimate
.169a	.028	.026	5.83803

In response to research question three, the result showed that a linear regression coefficient obtained for the relationship between self-regulation and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, R value was 0.169, while the coefficient of determination, R² was 0.028, and the adjusted R² was 0.026. Based on R² value, it therefore indicates that 2.6% of the variations in marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State can be attributed and explained by their self-regulation while the remaining 97.4% can be attributed to other factors.

Hypothesis Three: Self-regulation does not significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Table 6: *Summary of analysis, of simple regression associated with t-test on the extent to which self-regulation relate to marital conflict resolution.*

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		t	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients			
		B	Std. Error Beta				
1	(Constant)	15.703	1.231			12.759	.000
	Self-regulation	.253	.071	.169		3.551	.000

The result in Table 6 showed that the beta of .169 and a t-value of 3.551 were obtained when the obtained regression coefficient was tested for significance, based on the sig-value of 0.000 which is less than the alpha of 0.05. This result therefore indicates that

self-regulation significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Research Question Four: To what extent does self-motivation relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 7: *Regression coefficient of the relationship between self-motivation and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State*

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.138a	.019	.017	5.86647

From the result presented in Table 7 on the relationship between self-motivation and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, an R-value of 0.138 was obtained with an R² value of 0.019 and an adjusted R² value of 0.017. From the R² it can be deduced that self-motivation accounted for about 1.7% of marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Hypothesis Four: Self-motivation does not significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 8: *Summary of analysis, of simple regression associated with t-test on the extent to which self-motivation relate to marital conflict resolution.*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	21.719	1.085		20.009	.000
	Self-motivation	-.117	.069	-.081	-1.681	.094

The result in Table 8 showed that the beta of .069 and a t-value of -1681 were obtained when the obtained regression coefficient was tested for significance, based on the sig-value of 0.094 which is higher than the alpha of 0.05. This result therefore indicates

that self-motivation does not significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore retained.

Research Question 5: To what extent does social-skills relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 9: Simple regression table showing relationship between social-skills and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State

R	R²	Adjusted R²	Adj Error of the estimate
.100a	.010	.008	5.89332

Data presentation on the relationship between social-skills and marital conflict resolution skills showed that an R value of 0.100 was gotten with an R² value of 0.010 and an adjusted R² of 0.008. On the basis of the adjusted R² value obtained, it can be seen that social-skills accounted for 0.8% variation in the marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Hypothesis 5: Social-skills does not significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Table 10: Summary of analysis, of simple regression associated with t-test on the extent to which social skills relate to marital conflict resolution.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	17.434	1.247		13.985	.000
	Social skills	.156	.075	.100	2.079	.038

The result in Table 10 showed that the beta of .100 and a t-value of 2.070 were obtained when the obtained regression coefficient was tested for significance, based on the sig-value of 0.038 which is less than the alpha of 0.05. This result therefore indicates that social skills significantly relate to marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Discussion

The result of the research question one and its corresponding hypothesis one in table 1 revealed that there was a significant relationship between self-awareness and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The relationship was statistically significant at 0.5 level of significance. This relationship between self-awareness and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State means that as the score on self-awareness increases, there was corresponding increase in marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State and vice versa. This finding is not surprising to the researcher because someone who lacks self-awareness do not understand their own thoughts and feelings or how other people perceive them. People who lack self-awareness always have to be the center of attention, be in control, and frequently make negative comments without a filter. This finding is in line with that of Salami (2017) who examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital conflict resolution. And he found out that emotional intelligence and so many other factors like gender, age, educational qualification, couples experience etc are part of the factors influencing marital conflict resolution.

The result of research question two and the corresponding null hypothesis in table 4, revealed that there was no significant relationship between empathy and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The relationship was not statistically significant at 0.5 level of significance. This result implied that couples who scored highly on the section of empathy are prone to score high in their marital conflict resolution. However, the reported positive relationship indicates that all those who are high in empathy also scored high in their marital conflict resolution. This result is not surprising to the researcher because a person who lacks empathy may struggle to understand other people's feelings, problems, or life situations. Someone who lacks empathy often has a hard time understanding or regulating their own emotions. This finding is in line with that of Wang (2023) who found out that lack of emotional intelligence in couples could negatively affect their conflict resolution which could reveal itself in familiar symptomatic ways, comprising burnout, poor attitudes, lack of satisfaction, and stressed relationships.

The result of research question three and the corresponding null hypothesis in table 6, revealed that there was a significant relationship between self-regulation and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of

Rivers State. The relationship was statistically significant at 0.5 level of significance. The meaning of this result is that individual or couples who are high in self-regulation will find it difficult in engaging to social activities. On the basis of the instrument administered, students who reported high values on the section self-regulation are most likely to score low on their marital conflict resolution as tested using the instrument for the study. Conversely those who score high on the section of self-regulation are most likely to score low in their marital conflict resolution. This result is not surprising to the researcher because an adult with poor self-regulation skills may lack self-confidence and self-esteem and have trouble handling stress and frustration. Often, this might result in anger or anxiety. In more severe cases, it can even lead to being diagnosed with a mental health condition. This finding is in agreement with that of Wang (2023) who found out that lack of emotional intelligence in couples could negatively affect their conflict resolution which could reveal itself in familiar symptomatic ways, comprising burnout, poor attitudes, lack of satisfaction, and stressed relationships.

The result of research question four and the corresponding null hypothesis in table 8, it was revealed that there was a significant relationship between self-motivation and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The relationship was statistically significant at 0.5 level of significance. This result implied that students who scored highly on the section of self-motivation are prone to score moderately in their marital conflict resolution.

However, the reported positive high relationship indicates that all those who are motivation also scored high in their marital conflict resolution. This result is not surprising to the researcher because low motivation can be a common symptom of depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. You can practice self-help and self-care as much as you can, but you may find that seeking professional help is more helpful for your emotions. This findings is in line with that of Wang (2023) who found out that lack of emotional intelligence in couples could negatively affect their conflict resolution which could reveal itself in familiar symptomatic ways, comprising burnout, poor attitudes, lack of satisfaction, and stressed relationships.

The result of research question five and the corresponding null hypothesis in table 10, it was revealed that there was a significant relationship between social skills and marital conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The relationship was statistically significant at 0.5 level of significance. The meaning of this result is that individual or couples who have high social skills will have high marital conflict resolution. Conversely those who score low on the

section of social skills are most likely to score high in their marital conflict resolution. This result is not surprising to the researcher because social skills are the tools that enable people to communicate, learn, ask for help, get needs met in appropriate ways, get along with others, make friends, develop healthy relationships, protect themselves, and in general, be able to interact with the society harmoniously.

This finding is in line with that of Salami (2017) who examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital conflict resolution. And he found out that emotional intelligence and so many other factors like gender, age, educational qualification, couples experience etc are part of the factors influencing marital resolution conflict.

Conclusion

The study tested the null hypothesis, which presumes that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution. The results indicate that emotional intelligence does have a significant, yet weak, positive correlation with conflict resolution among newly married adults in Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers State. However, the weak correlation suggests that other factors beyond emotional intelligence may also play a crucial role in conflict resolution. In particular, more effective conflict resolution techniques are influenced by greater degrees of empathy, self-motivation, and power balance. Although not every aspect of emotional intelligence has a direct bearing on conflict resolution, there is still a significant overall association. These findings emphasize how crucial emotional intelligence training is for couples looking to improve the security and contentment of their marriages. Future research could explore additional variables like communication styles and external stressors to gain a more comprehensive understanding of conflict resolution dynamics in relationships.

Recommendations

1. Counsellors working with couples should develop interventions that will focus on enhancing emotional intelligence skills among both partners. This can include strategies such as mindfulness training, emotion regulation, and communication skills training. By improving emotional intelligence, couples can better understand and manage their emotions, leading to more effective conflict resolution and a healthier marital relationship.
2. Couples should be encouraged to attend mental health workshops and also seek professional counselling to improve their communication patterns and expression of emotions.

3. Counseling psychologists may be called upon to render effective counselling services

to the married men and women in Rivers State. They could organize seminars on psychological topics like self-awareness, emotion recognition, and emotion regulations for couples in order to broaden their understanding about emotional intelligence.

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AMONG MARRIED ADULTS IN NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY KEFFI, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence plays an important role in interpersonal relationships and may influence marital adjustment among married adults. This study examined emotional intelligence as a correlate of marital adjustment among married adults in Nasarawa State University Keffi (NSUK), Nigeria. A correlational research design was adopted. The sample consisted of 109 married adults (staff and students) selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using the Emotional Intelligence and Marital Adjustment Scale (EIMAS) developed by the researcher, with a validity index of 0.82 and reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha $\alpha = 0.72$. Data were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between self-awareness and marital adjustment among married adults in NSUK ($r = 0.485, p = 0.007$). Similarly, a significant positive relationship was found between self-regulation and marital adjustment among married adults in NSUK ($r = 0.588, p = 0.027$). It was concluded that emotional intelligence, particularly self-awareness and self-regulation, is significantly associated with marital adjustment among married adults in NSUK and should be promoted to enhance stable marital relationships.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Married Adults, Marital Adjustment, Self-awareness, Self-regulation

Introduction

Marriage is widely regarded as an important social institution that provides companionship, emotional support, and social stability. Couples often enter marriage with the expectation of experiencing long-term harmony and satisfaction; however, achieving

this outcome requires continuous adjustment between partners. Marital adjustment refers to

the extent to which spouses modify their behaviours, expectations, and interactions in order to maintain a stable and satisfying relationship (Bali, et al., 2010). Effective marital adjustment therefore reflects the ability of couples to accommodate differences, manage interpersonal challenges, and sustain mutual satisfaction within the marital relationship.

Despite the value placed on marital harmony, many couples experience difficulties in achieving stable adjustment in marriage. Emotional misunderstandings, interpersonal conflicts, and varying expectations may create tensions that challenge the stability of marital relationships. When such issues are not effectively managed, they may affect relationship satisfaction and overall family well-being. Scholars have therefore emphasized the need to identify psychological capacities that can help individuals manage emotional experiences and interpersonal interactions more effectively within marital relationships (Suri & Kochhar, 2021).

One such psychological capacity is emotional intelligence (EI), which refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others (Suri & Kochhar, 2021; Boyatzis & Sala, 2004). Emotional intelligence is particularly relevant to marital relationships because spouses frequently encounter emotionally charged situations that require understanding, empathy, and emotional control. Individuals who are emotionally intelligent are more likely to navigate interpersonal challenges constructively and maintain positive relationship dynamics (Fitness, 2001). Within the broad framework of emotional intelligence, two components are especially important in marital contexts: self-awareness, the ability to recognize and understand one's emotional states, and self-regulation, the capacity to manage and control emotional responses appropriately.

Given the potential influence of emotional intelligence on interpersonal functioning in marriage, it becomes important to examine how its key dimensions relate to marital adjustment. This study therefore investigates emotional intelligence as a correlate of marital adjustment among married adults in Nasarawa State University Keffi (NSUK), Nigeria, with particular focus on the dimensions of self-awareness and self-regulation.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others. It involves using emotional information to guide thinking, behaviour, and interpersonal interactions (Suri & Kochhar, 2021). Similarly, Boyatzis and Sala (2004) describe emotional intelligence as a set of

competencies that enable individuals to recognize emotional cues in themselves and others

and utilize such information to enhance effective functioning in social and interpersonal contexts. Emotional intelligence is therefore considered an important psychological resource for managing emotional experiences and maintaining healthy relationships.

Emotional intelligence is often conceptualized as a multidimensional construct consisting of several components such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Among these components, self-awareness and self-regulation are particularly relevant to marital relationships because they influence how individuals recognize emotional reactions and regulate them during interpersonal interactions. Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand one's emotional states and their effects on behaviour (Hoesni, Khatib, & Khatib, 2023). Individuals who possess a high level of emotional self-awareness are more likely to understand their emotional strengths and limitations, thereby enhancing their capacity to manage emotional challenges in relationships. Self-regulation, on the other hand, refers to the capacity to manage, control, and appropriately express emotional reactions (Sezgil, Bozni, & Bazinska, 2012). Self-regulation refers to the individual's capacity to understand, monitor, and modify internal impulses, emotions, and behaviors in a way that enhances relationship functioning (Olyanasab & Sina, 2026).

It involves influencing which emotions individuals experience, when they experience them, and how these emotions are expressed. In interpersonal relationships such as marriage, self-regulation enables partners to manage emotional tensions, avoid impulsive reactions, and respond constructively to relationship challenges (Lavner et al., 2020). These emotional management abilities can contribute significantly to relationship stability and satisfaction.

Marital adjustment refers to the process through which couples modify their behaviours, expectations, and interaction patterns to achieve harmony and satisfaction in their marital relationship. Bali, Dhingra, and Baru (2010) define marital adjustment as the process of adapting individual behavioural patterns in order to maximize satisfaction within marriage. Marital adjustment encompasses various aspects of marital functioning including communication, emotional support, conflict resolution, and mutual understanding between partners. Hosu and Năstasă (2020) note that marital adjustment reflects how each partner relates to the realities of the marital relationship and the degree to which both spouses are able to maintain a balanced and supportive interaction.

Successful marital adjustment therefore requires emotional awareness, empathy, and the ability to manage interpersonal differences constructively.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Emotional Intelligence Theory and Gottman's Theory of Marital Stability and Relationship Dynamics.

Emotional Intelligence Theory, popularized by scholars such as Goleman and Mayer and Salovey, emphasizes that individuals differ in their ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions. These emotional competencies influence interpersonal relationships and social functioning. In marital relationships, emotionally intelligent individuals are more capable of recognizing their emotional reactions, empathizing with their partners, and regulating emotional responses during conflicts or stressful interactions. As a result, emotional intelligence can enhance constructive communication and relationship satisfaction.

Gottman's Theory of Marital Stability also provides a useful framework for understanding marital adjustment. Gottman's model emphasizes the importance of emotional responsiveness, communication patterns, and the regulation of negative emotions in determining the stability of marital relationships. According to this theory, couples who are able to manage emotional interactions effectively, express empathy, and regulate conflict are more likely to maintain stable and satisfying marriages.

Emotional intelligence, particularly the abilities of self-awareness and self-regulation, aligns with Gottman's emphasis on emotional understanding and control as essential components of healthy marital functioning. Together, these theoretical perspectives suggest that the ability to recognize and regulate emotions may play a crucial role in shaping marital adjustment and relationship stability.

Empirical Review

A growing body of empirical research has examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital outcomes. Evidence from different cultural contexts generally suggests that emotional intelligence contributes positively to marital satisfaction and adjustment.

A study by Olyanasab and Sina (2026) on the effectiveness of self-regulation-based couple therapy on marital adjustment and positive thinking among married employees in healthcare centers showed that self-regulation based couple therapy significantly enhances marital adjustment, positive thinking, and key relational dimensions, demonstrating its effectiveness as a comprehensive therapeutic approach for improving marital functioning and adjustment.

Studies conducted in South Asia have consistently reported positive associations

between emotional intelligence and marital functioning. For example, Batool and Khalid (2012) found that emotional intelligence significantly predicts marital quality among Pakistani couples, indicating that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to experience better marital adjustment and conflict resolution. Similarly, Tabinda and Amina (2013) reported that emotional intelligence is significantly associated with marital adjustment among married individuals.

Research in the Middle East also supports the importance of emotional intelligence in marital relationships. Heidari, Shahbazi, Ghafourifard, and Sheikhi (2017) found that emotional intelligence significantly predicts marital adjustment among couples, suggesting that emotional awareness and regulation play important roles in maintaining healthy marital interactions.

In Western contexts, research has explored additional dimensions of emotional processes in marital relationships. Bloch, Haase, and Levenson (2014) examined emotion regulation within marriages and found that effective emotional regulation is associated with greater marital satisfaction. Their findings further suggest that emotional regulation patterns may differ between husbands and wives, indicating the possible influence of gender dynamics in emotional processes within marriage. Similarly, English, John, and Gross (2013) highlighted the importance of emotion regulation as a determinant of successful interpersonal relationships, including marital relationships.

Other studies have also emphasized the role of emotional awareness and emotional regulation in marital functioning. Hajihassani and Sim (2019) reported that couples with higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to experience greater marital satisfaction. Hoesni, Khatib, and Khatib (2023) similarly noted that individuals who are more aware of their emotions are better able to manage emotional challenges, which can positively influence relationship experiences.

Evidence from the African context, though relatively limited, also suggests that emotional intelligence may influence marital outcomes. Ade, Wale, and Oiukunle (2017), in a study of couples in Abeokuta, Nigeria, found that emotional intelligence significantly predicts marital adjustment among married couples. Their findings highlight the relevance of emotional competencies in enhancing relationship satisfaction and stability within the Nigerian cultural context.

Generally, empirical evidence across different cultural contexts suggests a consistent positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital outcomes.

However, while many studies have examined emotional intelligence as a broad

construct, fewer studies have focused specifically on the distinct dimensions of emotional intelligence, such as self-awareness and self-regulation, in relation to marital adjustment. In addition, much of the existing research has been conducted in Western, South Asian, and Middle Eastern settings, with relatively limited studies focusing on specific institutional or community contexts within Nigeria.

Despite the growing body of international research, few studies have specifically examined the correlation between the discrete emotional intelligence components of self-awareness and self-regulation and marital adjustment within the specific population of married adults (both staff and students) in a Nigerian university setting. This study therefore aims to address this gap by examining emotional intelligence as a correlate of marital adjustment among married adults in Nasarawa State University Keffi (NSUK), Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage is widely regarded as an important social institution that contributes to personal well-being, family stability, and societal cohesion. However, many married couples experience challenges in achieving satisfactory marital adjustment due to emotional misunderstandings, ineffective communication, and difficulties in managing interpersonal conflicts. These challenges can negatively affect relationship satisfaction and family stability. Although emotional intelligence has been widely recognized as an important psychological capacity that may enhance interpersonal relationships and marital functioning, much of the existing research has examined emotional intelligence as a broad construct without sufficiently exploring the specific roles of its key components in marital relationships.

Furthermore, while studies conducted in different cultural contexts have shown that emotional intelligence is associated with marital satisfaction and adjustment, there is relatively limited empirical evidence examining how particular dimensions of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness and self-regulation relate to marital adjustment within the Nigerian context. This limitation is particularly evident in institutional settings such as universities where married adults, including both staff and students, often experience multiple academic, professional, and family responsibilities that may influence their marital relationships.

Consequently, the lack of context-specific research on the relationship between emotional intelligence components and marital adjustment among married adults in Nigerian university communities creates a gap in knowledge that may hinder the development of effective counselling and psychosocial interventions for couples in such

environments. It is therefore necessary to investigate emotional intelligence as a correlate of marital adjustment among married adults in Nasarawa State University Keffi (NSUK), Nigeria, with particular focus on the dimensions of self-awareness and self-regulation.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to determine the;

1. correlation between self-awareness and marital adjustment among married adults in NSUK
2. correlation between self-regulation and marital adjustment among married adults in NSUK

Statement of Hypotheses

These hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance in order to address the objectives of the study

H0₁: Self-awareness has no significant correlation with marital adjustment among married adults in NSUK

H0₂: Self-regulation has no significant correlation with marital adjustment among married adults in NSUK

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design in order to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital adjustment among married adults in Nasarawa State University Keffi (NSUK), Nigeria. The design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to determine the strength and direction of relationships between variables without manipulating them. Specifically, the study focused on the emotional intelligence dimensions of self-awareness and self-regulation and how they relate to marital adjustment among married adults within the university community.

The target population for the study comprised all married adults within the Nasarawa State University Keffi community, including both staff and students. The accessible population consisted of married staff and married postgraduate students whose marital status could be identified through institutional records obtained from the University Human Resources Department and the Student Affairs Division, which served as the sampling frame for the study. From this accessible population, a sample of 109 married adults was selected using a simple random sampling technique.

Randomness was achieved by assigning identification numbers to eligible participants within the sampling frame and selecting respondents through a random

number procedure so that every eligible member of the population had an equal chance of being selected. The sample size of 109 respondents was considered adequate for correlational analysis because samples above 100 are generally sufficient to detect moderate relationships among variables at the 0.05 level of significance. To ensure relevance to the objectives of the study, participants were required to meet certain inclusion criteria: they had to be legally married, cohabiting with their spouses, and either staff or students of Nasarawa State University Keffi.

Data for the study were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled *Emotional Intelligence and Marital Adjustment Scale (EIMAS)*. The instrument was developed specifically for the present study because existing instruments such as the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale were considered lengthy and less suited to the contextual focus of the study. Items for the questionnaire were generated from relevant theoretical concepts and empirical literature on emotional intelligence and marital adjustment. The instrument consisted of 60 items divided into three sections: 10 items measuring self-awareness, 14 items measuring self-regulation, and 36 items measuring marital adjustment, with responses obtained using a Likert-type response format. Sample items included statements such as “*I am aware of my emotional reactions during disagreements with my spouse*” and “*I can easily identify when my emotions influence my behaviour toward my partner*” for self-awareness; “*I try to control my emotional reactions when conflicts arise with my spouse*” and “*I am able to calm myself when I feel upset during marital discussions*” for self-regulation; and “*My spouse and I are able to resolve disagreements in a constructive manner*” and “*I feel satisfied with the way my spouse and I relate with each other*” for marital adjustment.

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Nasarawa State University Keffi, who examined the items for clarity, relevance, and adequacy in measuring the intended constructs. Based on their recommendations, minor revisions were made to improve the instrument. The overall Content Validity Index (CVI) obtained for the instrument was 0.82, indicating that the items adequately represented the constructs under investigation. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted among 20 married adults in the Faculty of Administration, Nasarawa State University Keffi, who were not included in the main study. The internal consistency of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha, which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.72$, indicating an acceptable level of reliability for research purposes.

Data collected from the respondents were analyzed using the Pearson Product–

Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) at 0.05 level of significance. Pearson's r was considered appropriate because it is used to determine the strength and direction of the linear relationship between continuous variables. In this study, it was used to assess the relationships between the emotional intelligence dimensions of self-awareness and self-regulation and marital adjustment among married adults in Nasarawa State University Keffi.

Results

Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the main variables of the study, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, and marital adjustment among married adults in Nasarawa State University Keffi (NSUK). The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (N = 109)*

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-awareness	109	32.41	5.62
Self-regulation	109	35.18	6.14
Marital Adjustment	109	118.37	14.52

The results in Table 1 show the mean scores and standard deviations for the major variables examined in the study.

To test the hypotheses formulated for the study, the Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the emotional intelligence dimensions (self-awareness and self-regulation) and marital adjustment among married adults in NSUK.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between self-awareness and marital adjustment among married adults in NSUK.

Table 2: *Pearson Correlation between Self-awareness and Marital Adjustment*

Variable		Self-awareness	Marital Adjustment
Self-awareness	Pearson Correlation	1	.485**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007
Marital Adjustment	Pearson Correlation	.485**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	

Note: $p < .05$

The result in Table 2 revealed a *significant positive correlation was found between self-awareness and marital adjustment*, $r(107) = .485$, $p = .007$. This finding indicates that higher levels of self-awareness are associated with higher levels of marital adjustment among the respondents. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between self-regulation and marital adjustment among married adults in NSUK.

Table 3: *Pearson Correlation between Self-regulation and Marital Adjustment*

Variable		Self-regulation	Marital Adjustment	
Self-regulation	Pearson Correlation	1	.588**	Not e:p < .0 5
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.027	
Marital Adjustment	Pearson Correlation	.588**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027		

The result in Table 3 revealed a *significant positive correlation was found between self-regulation and marital adjustment*, $r(107) = .588$, $p = .027$. This result suggests that individuals with higher levels of self-regulation tend to experience better marital adjustment. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

This study investigated emotional intelligence as a correlate of marital adjustment among married adults in Nasarawa State University Keffi (NSUK), Nigeria, with particular focus on the emotional intelligence dimensions of self-awareness and self-regulation. The findings revealed that both components of emotional intelligence were significantly and positively related to marital adjustment among the respondents. Specifically, the study found a significant positive correlation between self-awareness and marital adjustment ($r(107) = .485$, $p = .007$), indicating that individuals who are more aware of their emotions tend to experience better adjustment in their marriages. Similarly, the analysis revealed a stronger positive correlation between self-regulation and marital adjustment ($r(107) = .588$, $p = .027$), suggesting that the ability to regulate emotional responses plays an important role in promoting stable and satisfying marital relationships.

The finding that self-awareness is positively related to marital adjustment suggests that individuals who are conscious of their emotional states are better able to understand how their feelings influence their behaviours and interactions with spouses. This corroborates with Nwoke, Amadi, and Ikezam (2022) who investigated Emotional

intelligence as correlates of marital stability among married couples in rivers state Nigeria and found that to a high extent self-awareness predicts marital stability among married couples. Scholars have similarly noted that individuals with higher levels of emotional awareness are better able to understand their own feelings as well as the emotional needs of their partners, thereby fostering empathy, effective communication, and relationship satisfaction (Hoesni, Khatib, & Khatib, 2023; Suri & Kochhar, 2021). Consequently, emotional self-awareness contributes to marital adjustment by enabling couples to navigate emotional experiences in ways that strengthen their relationships.

The study also found that self-regulation exhibited a stronger relationship with marital adjustment than self-awareness. This suggests that the ability to manage emotional responses could be particularly important in ensuring marital adjustment. The finding aligns with Nwoke, Amadi, and Ikezam (2022) whose study on Emotional intelligence as correlates of marital stability among married couples revealed that a high extent self-regulation predicts marital stability among married couples. Previous research on infidelity illustrates the importance of self-regulation capacities among couples to enhance forgiveness, rebuild trust, and regulate emotional breakdowns (Atkins et al., 2010). The study also supports previous findings that effective emotion regulation is closely associated with marital satisfaction and relationship stability (Bloch, Haase, & Levenson, 2014; English, John, & Gross, 2013). Emotional intelligence according to Ahiakwo (2024) significantly predicts marital adjustment among married persons.

The findings of this study have important implications for counselling practice and marital education programmes. Counsellors working with couples may benefit from incorporating emotional intelligence training (particularly strategies that enhance emotional awareness and emotional regulation) into premarital and marital counselling interventions. Such programmes can help couples develop skills for recognizing emotional triggers, managing emotional reactions, and communicating more effectively during conflicts.

Conclusion

This study examined emotional intelligence as correlates of marital adjustment among married adults in NSUK, Nigeria, with particular emphasis on self-awareness and self-regulation. The study concludes that emotional intelligence plays a meaningful role in marital adjustment among married adults within the university community. It provides empirical support from a Nigerian context for the importance of developing emotional

competencies- abilities to recognize and regulate emotions, in promoting healthy and stable marital relationships as these relevant psychological resource that can enhance marital well-being and inform counselling interventions aims at strengthening family relationships.

Recommendations

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

1. University Counselling Centres should establish regular “Emotional Skills for Couples” workshops aimed at married staff and students, providing coaching on developing emotional intelligence skills, particularly self-awareness and self-regulation, through activities such as guided reflection, communication exercises, and conflict-management.
2. Universities should consider incorporating modules on emotional intelligence, interpersonal relationships, and conflict management into staff development programmes and relevant General Studies (GST) courses for students. This would help build emotional competencies that support healthy interpersonal relationships and marital stability among members of the university community.

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IMPACT OF CYBERCRIME ON LEARNING OUTCOME OF STUDENTS IN FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, ABEOKUTA: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

The increasing rate of cybercrime among undergraduate students has become a major concern in tertiary institutions due to its negative influence on students' academic performance and learning outcomes. Many students engage in cybercrime activities such as online fraud and identity theft, which divert attention from academic responsibilities and hinder educational development. This study therefore examined the impact of cybercrime on learning outcomes of undergraduate students in Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, with implications for counselling. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Forty students were randomly selected from each of the five schools, making a total of 200 respondents. Four research questions were raised and answered. Data collected were analysed using tables and advanced SPSS statistics. Findings revealed that cybercrime influences learning outcomes of undergraduates, with a weighted mean of ($\bar{x} = 2.70$), which is higher than the grand mean. The study also found that factors such as peer influence, family background, and economic pressure contribute to students' involvement in cybercrime, with a weighted mean of ($\bar{x} = 2.69$). Furthermore, results showed a significant influence of cybercrime on learning outcomes, as t -calculated (5.17) exceeded t -table (2.01) at 0.05 level of significance. The study concluded that students' involvement in cybercrime creates academic and behavioural challenges, thereby negatively affecting learning outcomes. The study recommended cybersecurity awareness, avoidance of pirated software, protection of personal information, and proper counselling programmes to educate students on responsible internet use and the dangers of cybercrime.

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Keywords: Cybercrime, Learning Outcome, Undergraduate Students, Tertiary

Introduction

The technological revolution in the 21st century is without dire consequences. The modern communication devices such as Cellular Phones, Smart phones, Tablets, Laptops etc. These inventions have been a major landmark in human history. Ayantokun (2016), defined computer as a machine that performs tasks, such as calculation or electronic communication, under the control of a set of instructions called a program.

Programs usually reside within the computer and are retrieved and processed by the computer's electronics. The program results are stored or routed to output devices, such as video display monitors or printers. Oyewole and Obeta (2019), define a computer as an electronic device that accepts, processes, stores and outputs data at high speed according to programmed instructions. Computers perform a wide variety of activities reliably, accurately and quickly depending on the purpose it was designed for.

Computer can be used in areas of education, medicine, engineering design, scientific research, office automation, personal administration etc (Morley & Parker, 2017). For the past decades, the introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has resulted in tremendous improvements in many areas of human endeavours. It is seen as a crucial aspect of globalism, which connects the world with a wide range of assets (Ige, 2018). The internet provides students with numerous benefits, including simple access to knowledge and the ability to link to the rest of the world. These help them develop cognitively and socially (Johnson, 2020).

Since the beginning of the internet and electronic revolution in Nigeria a decade ago, the level of cybercrime has risen dramatically. In just over two decades, the internet has expanded to such proportions its become an integral part of the lives of thousands of people all over the world (Warner, 2017). Students will benefit greatly from having access to an efficient web capacity in schools since it will enhance their level of understanding, writing abilities and academic achievement by allowing them to browse the internet. However, if this is done unmanaged, it may lead to cyber criminality among students (Singh & Bala, 2019).

Crime appears to be a permanent feature of modern society. Despite efforts of social workers, law enforcement agency, personal and criminal justice professionals to minimise it, the world is becoming a more terrible place. Where crimes such as homicide, kidnapping, robbery, assault, sex offences, child molestation, burglary, environmental

crime, arson are crimes without a victim, economic crime, political crime and cyber crime are the order of the day. Cyber crime is any activity involving computers and networks. A crime committed or facilitated via the Internet is a cyber crime. Over the last twenty years, cybercrime has emerged as a significant topic for investigators to study and investigate, as well as a growing issue for civil and public policy. Cybercrime is a term that covers crimes conducted using computer systems, as well as growing issues that do not rely primarily on technology (Britz, 2018).

Cybercrime is a term that refers to any illicit behaviour that is carried primarily through the use of a computer (Halder & Aishankar, 2017). Cybercrime often called in Nigeria as yahoo through to the web, is very frequent among Nigerian school-aged children. Nigeria today is not anything like the late 2000s, when only a few members of the minority rich classes had access to computers. The rise of waste has made it easier and inexpensive for most young people to purchase and own a used laptop at a low cost.

Cyber crime is any criminal activity involving computers and networks. This ranges from fraud to unsolicited emails (spam). It can include the distant theft of government or corporate secrets through criminal trespass into remote systems around the globe. Cyber crime is not only limited to, anything from downloading illegal music files to stealing millions of dollars from online bank accounts, but also includes non-money offenses, such as creating viruses on other computers or posting confidential business information on the internet (Boniface & Michael, 2019). Internet access, both wifi and cable, has made online activity very effective and useful as well as troublesome among Nigerian students. That is because most students miss using web for fraudulent acts, negatively impacting their learning outcome in school subjects, and as a result, often these students drop out of school (Warner, 2017). Igba and Nwambam (2018) revealed that ICT which was once considered as a tool for students to utilize to obtain material for their studies, has now taken on a new meaning for them. ICT is now being utilized to deceive people and as hideaway for cyber crooks among students.

Student's population in Nigeria at the Secondary School level forms the largest unit of the total population of about 140 million people, National Population Commission (2017). Incidentally this figure is made up of adolescents. Adolescent period could be challenging with peer and socio-economic factor influences. These factors among others has greater effect on the perception of the youth on several issues like what is right and wrong (value system) which has cumulative effect on the economy of any nation. Adolescents likes to explore into any area of life, especially interesting and alluring nature. With the breakthrough in information technology through the use of Internet facilities, the

tendency for it to be abused is better imagine.

According to Singh and Bala (2019) young students unrestrained and persistent use of internet has the potential to reduce their productivity in class. The inverse relationship between young student academic performance and heavy internet usage is harmful to their advancement and may lead to their becoming hackers. It takes up valuable time that could have been spent studying for higher grades. Barfi, Nyagorme and Yeboah (2018) reported that the vast majority of students in Nigerian schools have a good comprehension and knowledge of cybercrime. Youngsters are also more acquainted with the four primary types of crime: malware, financial fraud, illegal access and cyber identity theft.

Igba and Nwambam (2018) remarked that World Wide Web has a significant effect on academic systems and nation progress. This has prompted individuals, businesses, and other organizations to open cyber cafes, which provide people with easy access to current events from across the world via the internet. This has provided several chances for institutions and other agencies to develop their motor and cognitive assets in order for graduates to be valuable to themselves and society as a whole. However, some people exploit this technology by abusing the vast resources that the internet provides, resulting in deceit or cybercrime.

Magele (2017) penetration and discrimination of information and communication technology has ignited and infused a different dimension of lifestyle across all areas of our daily transactions, including education, leisure, traders and companies; such as; E-learning, e-banking, healthcare, e-commerce, and tele-democracy. Magele (2017) moreover opined that this new level of progress has come at a great cost and burden of new illegal activities known as cybercrime.

Student academic success (learning outcome) is an important aspect of schooling. It is regarded as the hub around which the entire educational system revolves. The success or failure of any academic institution is determined on the academic performance of its students. Student academic success has a direct impact on a country's socioeconomic progress. The academic performance of students acts as a foundation for knowledge acquisition and skill development. Academic success of school students is the top priority of all educators. Academic performance refers to the knowledge obtained as measured by a teacher's marks or educational goals set by students and teachers to be met over a specified time period. Studies further reviewed that these objectives are measured by continuous assessments or examination outcome.

Ige (2018) asserted that students in high school have been found to utilize the internet to perpetrate a variety of crimes. These offenses include stealing money and

purchasing things online using other person's credit cards and identity, as well as sending emails to international corporations to steal dollars and pounds while neglecting their academics. Students are increasingly using pornographic material and photographs to deceive people online dating service which all has a negative influence on their academic learning outcome. Cyber cafés are significantly responsible for the availability and use of the web and other internet materials in several sections of the country.

Country such as Nigeria, on the other hand, have very well mobile internet infrastructure via enhanced system and other fibre optic lines, allowing them to provide better online services to citizens (Abugri, 2017).

Jones (2017) shows how the Africa sub-region, which has long been regarded as the worlds largest most backward and dark region, has leapt into the ICT world with disastrous results. This rapid and increasing rate of cybercrime on the African continent has been a cause of worry for all parties in the sub-Saharan African makes the whole thing even more concerning especially in Nigeria. Howbeit, the battle against cybercrime comprises all parties and should not be confined to police agencies (Jones, 2017).

Nigeria like any other developing country is battling with the problem of unemployment, hence having a large percentage of its youth idle. The Christian Biblical saying that an idle mind is the devils workshop is a source of worry, with the teeming population of youths. The perception of an individual indicates his attitude to what is good and bad and the tendency to get involved in it. Generally adolescents tend to get involve in copying from what they read or see. Hence any laxity on the part of government agency to curb the menace of cyber crime could be detrimental. For now effort by the Federal Government of Nigeria to combat the scourge of cyber crime has yielded positive results in the area of piracy of musical CDs, while the crime continue to grow by leaps and bound. The perpetrators of scam mail fraud popularly called the yahoo, yahoo boys and girls continue unabated. As a way of combating this crime the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2004 established the Nigerian cyber-working group, which is an interagency body made up of all key Law Enforcement Security Intelligence, ICT agencies. Their effort is yet to gain results, as the yahoo yahoo boys and girls continue to display their ill gotten wealth at parties in night clubs and beer parlours and driven in flashes cars around the community.

In this era of ICT for growth, it is not out of line to say that cybercriminals poses a threat and can jeopardize the achievement of ICT-driven development in Nigeria. Cyber fraud can destroy data, other technological infrastructure and also affect confidence and trust in electronic operations and payments (Salifu, 2019).

According to Magele (2017) the internet is becoming such a necessary evil that it's become a two-edged sword, creating benefits for people and organizations while also increasing the risk of data security. Strong online frequency band and internet wireless connection, when combined with desktop computers, cell phones, and other hand-held electric devices, has improved corporate networks and made important data online easily available. In the global corporate environment, all of this has culminated in efficient and effective service execution. Without a question, the web has transformed and simplified everything in our live, including school, commerce, politics, and health. It has, however, brought with it a certain element of risk recognized as cybercrime.

Owing to all aforementioned reasons, the primary functions of schools in the training and changing the citizens cannot be overemphasized. Agi (2018) opined that education is the art of leading a person from the dark era of ignoramus into the limelight of knowledge and understanding. This implies that an educated person can assist in transforming the society for positive growth and development, as well reveal the harm cyber crime is doing to the society. The educated elite that had been trained to do this job is the counsellor.

The counsellor is someone who is trained to listen to people and give them advice about their problems. The Professional counsellors help people gain personal insights, develop strategies and come up with real solutions to the problems and challenges we all face in every area of life. As trained and credentialed professionals, they accomplish this by getting to know clients, by building safe, positive relationships and suggesting tools and techniques they believe will benefit clients. As such, people like these, should be available in schools, to help discourage the students in embarking on cybercrime, by presenting the aftermath effects of this behaviour to the society and such students in particular.

Nevertheless, Nigeria's image has sunk so much over the years and this has adversely affected the integrity and good name of Nigerians all over the world. Even though a global phenomenon, Nigeria's situation regarding cyber crime has been one of the worst in the world. Nowadays in Nigeria, the menace of the so-called 'yahoo boyism' as titled by (Adeniran, 2017), in which a category of young individuals referred to as 'yahoo boys' commit an overwhelming majority of the cyber crimes in Nigeria.

These yahoo boys so called, live large without any hint of how tough it is to be successful or rich in a country like Nigeria. Some of them even spend money lavishly, in a way rich people don't normally do. The common source of this kind of undeserved wealth is through various illegal means which includes cyber crime mainly. To this effect, this study intends to investigate the impact of cyber crime on learning outcome of undergraduate students in Federal College of Education, Abeokuta

Statement of the Problem

Cyber crime is a criminal act involving the illegal activities directed at or perpetrated through the use of computer. It involves the theft of computers data, wilful damage to Computer or Computer system, unlawful access to or interference with the operation of computer transmitting offensives or illegal content using computer and committing of fraud or other offences through the use of computers has come to stay as a universal problem. The entire globe is vulnerable to the crime. The ease at committing this crime is made simpler with the proliferations of cyber café in every nook and corners of urban and rural centre of each state. Nations with high rate of unemployment with indifference to cyber crime is in serious danger of having its useful youth becoming cyber criminals. In this digital modern era where people are moving to paperless society, most tertiary institution undergraduates spend most of their time browsing the internet via computers and other personal electronic gadgets. These provide quick access and means of communicating across the World Wide Web.

However, easy access to the cyber space and internet, when left unchecked, could affect and destroy the minds of these young future leaders in Nigeria. Especially, if they keep getting huge money, cloths, cars, laptops and other valuable properties through cybercrime and other related internet fraud. The future generation may turn down schooling and opt to concentrate on making more money through cyber crime. This study therefore seeks to assess the impact of cyber crime on learning outcome of undergraduate students in Federal College of Education, Abeokuta.

Objectives of the Study

- i. Determine the perception of tertiary institution students toward committing cyber crime.
- ii. Examine the level of success and the gender prone to commit cyber crime in tertiary institutions.
- iii. Ascertain the factors that influence students into cybercrime in tertiary institutions.
- iv. Examine the influence of cybercrime on learning outcome of undergraduate students in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What is the perception of tertiary institution students toward committing cyber crime?
- ii. What is the level of success and the gender mostly prone to commit cyber crime in tertiary institutions?

- iii. What are the factors that influence students into cybercrime in tertiary institutions?
- iv. Does cybercrime influence the learning outcome of undergraduate students in Federal College of Education?

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. This enabled the researcher to generate adequate and better sample of the population to the study.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised of all students in Federal College of Education, Abeokuta.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample of the study includes students in Federal College of Education, Abeokuta. Sample of 200 respondents were selected from five schools within the College of Education, Abeokuta randomly selected from the general population of the study. Therefore, the schools are; School of Languages, School of Science, School of Vocational, School of Art and Social Sciences, School of Early Childhood Care, Primary, Adult and Non Formal Education.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was adapted questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; section A and B. Section A comprised of personal data of respondent, while section B comprised of items that are used to measure the research topic.

Validity of the Instrument

The researcher obtained the validity of the research instruments by subjecting it to construct criticisms by other experts in the field.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was piloted tested on 20 students from the school of Education under the CUDEP programme, who are not part of the main study sample. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a co-efficient of 0.78

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher carried out collection of data with the introduction letter to various selected schools under the study. In order to ensure effective collection of data required, personal administration was done and collection process of questionnaire.

Method of Data Collection

The data collected through the process of administering questionnaire and also through personal observation, the information gathered were carefully analyzed by the use of tables and advanced SPSS statistics to classify the result of the respondent's opinions or views.

Result and Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, mean statistics and inferential t-test were also used in analyzing the responses in the questionnaire. However, the grand mean for the analysis is 2.50

Result and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of tertiary institution students toward committing cyber crime?

Table 1: *Table showing the analysis of the perceptions of tertiary institution students towards committing cyber crime*

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Decision
Tertiary institution students are of the squad of the get rich quick syndrome	12	17	23	48	1.93	Not significant
Due to the home some students came from, they see cybercrime as an opportunity to be wealthy	8	21	19	52	1.85	Not significant
Students see it as a source of acquiring wealth from fund lost by their parents to the European leaders	15	10	9	66	1.74	Not significant
Some students see this opportunity to be independent and acquire material possessions their parents do not have	17	13	28	42	2.05	Not significant
Some see this opportunity as a means of acquisition of wealth to oppress their colleagues and everyone in the neighbourhood.	9	5	10	76	1.47	Not significant

Weighted mean = 1.38

It is obvious from Table 1 above that the perceptions of tertiary institution students towards committing cyber crime is not affirmative. This is in view of their mean scores being lower than the grand mean of 2.5. For example, the mean for the statement that; tertiary institution students are of the squad of the get rich quick syndrome ($\bar{x} = 1.93$); Some see this opportunity as a means of acquisition of wealth to oppress their colleagues and everyone in the neighbourhood ($\bar{x} = 1.47$) and some students see this opportunity to be independent and acquire material possessions their parents do not have ($\bar{x} = 1.85$) which are too low implying that the stand of the statements are not positively responded. Also, the weighted mean ($\bar{x} = 1.38$) is far below the grand mean, which indicated that tertiary institution students are not found committing cyber crime.

Research Question 2: What is the level of success and the gender mostly prone to commit cyber crime in tertiary institutions?

Table 2: Table showing the analysis of the level of success and the gender mostly prone to commit cyber crime in tertiary institutions

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Decision
Students are getting rich on daily basis via cybercrime	36	22	12	30	2.5	significant
Students encourage their colleagues to learn the act of cybercrime and oppress the community together	38	23	3	21	2.61	significant
Male students want to be independent quickly and are often found engaging in cybercrime than the female students.	40	31	11	18	2.57	significant
Male students tend to be bold to confront lots of challenges and are often found engaging in cybercrime.	57	15	19	9	2.53	significant
Male students wants to compete with the wealthy and are found committing cybercrime	35	29	10	26	2.51	significant

Weighted mean = 2.58

For most of the assertion in Table 2 above, the mean score is above 2.5 which is the

grand mean. The assertions are therefore considered significant and accepted. In other words, it could be said that the level of success of student's high and the gender mostly prone to commit cyber crime in tertiary institutions are the males. For instance, students are getting rich on daily basis via cybercrime, which mean score ($\bar{x} = 2.5$); students encourage their colleagues to learn the act of cybercrime and oppress the community together ($\bar{x} = 2.61$) and male students want to be independent quickly and are often found engaging in cybercrime than the female students ($\bar{x} = 2.57$). Also, the weighted mean ($\bar{x} = 2.58$) is higher than the grand mean, which indicated that the level of success of student's high and the gender mostly prone to commit cyber crime in tertiary institutions are the males.

Research Question 3: What are the factors that influence students into cybercrime in tertiary institutions?

Table 3: Table showing the analysis of the factors that influence students into cybercrime in tertiary institutions

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Decision
Peer influence makes some students join the trends of cybercrime in the institutions.	39	19	13	29	2.51	significant
Lack of finance from the home (family) of some students makes them seek help from those involve in cybercrime and are introduce to the act.	37	28	19	22	2.6	significant
Some students wants to gain freedom from the grip of their parents and as such engage themselves in cybercrime in order to acquire this immediate wealth for acquisition of possessions	21	7	10	62	1.87	Not significant
Some students want to compete and oppress other colleagues in the school, and as such join the clique of cybercrime.	18	19	15	48	2.07	Not significant
Some students see education as a scam and opt for joining the clique of cybercrime.	33	33	17	17	2.62	significant

Weighted mean = 2.69

The outcome of the study from table 3 above revealed that the factors that influence students into cybercrime in tertiary institutions. This is in view of the mean score for the assertion being higher than the grand mean of 2.5. For example, the mean value for peer influence makes some students join the trends of cybercrime in the institutions ($\bar{x} = 2.51$); lack of finance from the home (family) of some students makes them seek help from those involve in cybercrime and are introduce to the act ($\bar{x} = 2.6$) and some students see education as a scam and opt for joining the clique of cybercrime ($\bar{x} = 2.62$) which are too low, implying that they are not properly utilized. Also, the weighted mean ($\bar{x} = 2.69$) is higher than grand mean, which indicated that there are factors that influence students into cybercrime in tertiary institutions which need to be curtailed.

Research Question 4: Does cybercrime influence the learning outcome of undergraduate students in Nigeria?

Table 4: *Table showing the analysis of the influence of cybercrime on the learning outcome of undergraduate students in Nigeria*

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Decision
Students engaging in cybercrime tend to have lackadaisical attitude towards their educational performance.	43	26	18	13	2.59	significant
Students engaging in cybercrime see themselves as those that have arrived and see going for lecturers as a waste of time.	40	29	12	19	2.51	significant
Students involve in cybercrime believe their money will get them the result they desire as such neglect going for lectures.	31	23	18	28	2.57	significant
In as much as this students engaging in cybercrime do not attend class, they miss continuous assessment and attendance, and perform woefully academically.	39	12	19	30	2.6	significant
Students involved in cybercrime often look for replacement for examinations and this at times leads to rustication or repetition of level when caught.	27	18	15	40	2.32	Not significant

Weighted mean = 2.7

The outcome of the study from Table 4 above revealed the influence of cybercrime on the learning outcome of undergraduate students in Nigeria. Prominent among the influences are students engaging in cybercrime tend to have lackadaisical attitude towards their educational performance; as well as students involve in cybercrime believe their money will get them the result they desire as such neglect going for lectures with the mean scores of ($\bar{x} = 2.59$) and ($\bar{x} = 2.57$) respectively. In view of these higher mean scores, the assertions are considered significant and are upheld. Also, the weighted mean ($\bar{x} = 2.7$) is higher than grand mean, which indicated that cybercrime influence the learning outcome of undergraduates in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The questionnaire was designed in order to get valid information on the impact of cybercrime on learning outcome of undergraduate students in Federal College of Education, Abeokuta. One hundred (100) questionnaires were distributed in four (4) schools within Federal College of education, Abeokuta, Ogun State, the researcher is able to get the one hundred questionnaires back and after thoroughly scrutinizing it found the results suitable for this research work. However, the result obtained revealed that cybercrime influence the learning outcome of undergraduates in Nigeria with the weighted mean of ($\bar{x} = 2.7$) which is higher than grand mean. This however is in accordance with the opinion of Jackson (2019) who viewed the remarkable development in human history through computer technology has no doubt brought transformation in all aspects of life, especially in communication and information technology. Nevertheless, the embracement of the internet has come with a lot of mixed feelings despite its numerous advantages to the undergraduates and people are valued regarding what they possess and command economically.

The study further discovered that there are diverse factors that influence students into cybercrime in tertiary institutions out of which we have peer influence, family background and the likes, as the weighted mean of ($\bar{x} = 2.69$) of the total respondents revealed this. Howbeit Okereke (2017) also buttress the point that those without economic success are undervalued, and the pressure to achieve success is intensified despite the harsh financial condition such as unemployment amongst others. This necessitated the ability of individuals to devise survival strategies and attain economic success by indulging in cybercrime. The perpetrators of cybercrime are not far-fetched; they are our brothers, friends, colleague, distant relatives and neighbours who can be tamed under appropriate circumstances with the right and positive communication, orientation, education, and empowerment.

Additionally, the studies further revealed that there is significant influence of cybercrime on learning outcome of undergraduates in tertiary institutions as it was revealed that t_{cal} (5.17) is greater than t_{tab} (2.01) at 0.05 level of significance. In this case, the learning outcome of students that are not involved in cybercrime recorded mean performance score (26.05) while the learning outcome of students involved in cybercrime recorded mean performance (22.65). The respondents affirmed that students involvement in cybercrime affect them academically as their performance is below average. This is in accordance with the opinion of Madume (2017) that the implication of cybercrime indulgence leads to school dropout, hooliganism, armed robbery, thuggery among others due to poor learning outcome.

To this end, the paramount classification of yahooism as a branch of cybercrime and transitional crime is not only expedient in understanding its mystery but propounding a lasting solution when considering reducing the menace of cybercrime among University undergraduate in Ebonyi state university (Martins, 2018). For Nigeria, a nation in the process of saving her face regarding cyber-crimes, efforts should be directed at the sources and channels through which cyber-crimes are being perpetrated the most. This effort should be demonstrated in the formulation of Cybercrime Act with the objective to provide an efficient and unified legal, regulatory and institutional framework. For the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution and punishment of cybercrimes in Nigeria; ensure the protection of critical national information infrastructure, and promote cybersecurity and the security of computer systems and networks (Chimeke, 2017). Electronic communications, data and computer programs, intellectual property and privacy rights enhance the need for this study of cybercrime among students.

Summary

The present study was designed to investigate the impact of cybercrime on learning outcome of undergraduate students where students in Federal College of Education, Abeokuta serve as the focus area for the study. Research objectives, Research questions, Null hypotheses, Significance of the study, were formulated to guide the research and scope within which research was carried out. In chapter two, related literatures were reviewed. The reviewed literature pointed out the impact of cybercrime on learning outcome of undergraduate students in tertiary institutions. Importantly relevant empirical studies that were related to the present study were reviewed. In chapter three, the study adopted descriptive design. Population for the study were the entire students in Federal College of Education with a sample size of 100 from four schools within the study area. To obtain the data, the self designed questionnaire which consist of items from the research

questions were disbursed and retrieved. However, the data gathered was analyzed using the parametric inferential statistics that is independent sample t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance. The study however revealed that cybercrime influence the learning outcome of undergraduates in Nigeria. Also, students engaging in cybercrime tend to have lackadaisical attitude towards their educational performance. In like manner, inasmuch as this students engaging in cybercrime do not attend class, they miss continuous assessment and attendance, and perform woefully academically.

However, peer influence makes some students join the trends of cybercrime in the institutions. Also, Lack of finance from the home (family) of some students makes them seek help from those involve in cybercrime and are introduce to the act. Furthermore, some students see education as a scam and opt for joining the clique of cybercrime.

Conclusion

There has been a surge in the number of cyber-crime committed by tertiary students. That many students have become more susceptible to cyber-crime-related activities has created significant difficulties for them. Crime diverts students' attention and resources away from more positive uses, which has a negative impact on their learning outcomes.

Taking cognisance of the nature and effects of cybercrime among undergraduates in tertiary institutions, there will always be new and unexpected challenges to stay ahead of cyber criminals and cyber terrorists, but we can only do this successfully by partnership and collaboration of both individuals and government. There is much we can do to ensure a safe, secure and trust worth computing environment. It is crucial not only to our general sense of wellbeing but also, to our national security and economy. The remarkable development in human history through computer technology has no doubt brought transformation in all aspects of life, especially in communication and information technology. Nevertheless, the embracement of the internet has come with a lot of mixed feelings despite its numerous advantages to the undergraduates, and people are valued regarding what they possess and command economically.

The study provided empirical evidence on the impact of cyber-crime on students learning outcomes. The study established that a relationship existed between cyber-crime and students learning outcomes. It has been determined that cybercrime has an impact on students because it causes poor performance and malpractice in school examination. Also, the study proved that there is an association between unemployment and cyber-crime.

Conversely, those without economic success are undervalued, and the pressure to achieve success is intensified despite the harsh financial condition such as unemployment amongst others. This necessitated the ability of individuals to devise survival strategies and

attain economic success by indulging in cybercrime. The perpetrators of cybercrime are not far-fetched; they are our brothers, friends, colleague, distant relatives and neighbours who can be tamed under appropriate circumstances with the right and positive communication, orientation, education, and empowerment.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of these findings, the following recommendations were raised;

1. The government should provide youth empowerment as a solution to unemployment.
2. The government should implement cyber security best practices, especially in the financial sector.
3. Security software should be installed on personal devices.
4. Individuals should observe simple rules; also individuals on their part should ensure proper anti-malware protection on their computer system, and individual should be encouraged to avoid pirate software, never to share their Identification Number (PIN), bank account, email access code to unknown persons.
5. University undergraduates should be educated on the proper use of cyber and internet.
6. University undergraduates should see cybercrime as a severe offence that destroys individual and the society at large and not as fun.
7. University undergraduates should stop making use of technology to the committee or facilitate the commission of traditional crimes.
8. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria should make cyber security a compulsory course for all students in higher education.

Implication for Counselling

Cybercrime among undergraduates will play a negative role in Education if not controlled in the following ways.

- i. Low Integrity to Education: following the work on the need to appraise the net balance of functional consequences of the phenomenon instead of the postulate universal functionalism, permit me to say that cybercrime is dysfunctional in it's entirely, and will bring low integrity to the Educational sector if not been controlled.
- ii. Absenteeism of Check and balances: the educational institution must be adequately monitored while appraising the character of the lectures and teachers and the content of the curriculum being taught.
- iii. All schools should return to the teaching of morals to empower all students with the spirit of steward while the lecturers live an exemplary life, reflecting truth, kindness,

dignity of labour and integrity.

- iv. With all hands on deck, the negative impact of cybercrime in the Educational sector will be changed for good in line with the following statements:
- (a) Its trial Translates into Gladness
 - (b) Its grief Transforms into Gladness
 - (c) Its shame Transcends into Fame and
 - (d) Its test travails into Testimony

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AI- SUPPORTED INTERVENTIONS ON MARRIED COUPLES' CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN AKWA IBOM NORTH WEST SENATORIAL DISTRICT

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of AI-supported interventions on married couples' conflict resolution in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population consisted of married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. A sample of 200 married respondents was selected using a stratified random sampling technique from urban and rural areas. A structured instrument titled AI-Supported Conflict Resolution Questionnaire for Married Couples AISCORQ-MC) was developed for data collection. The instrument was subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach Alpha and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that AI chatbots, virtual role-playing agents, and AI-supported journal significantly influence married couples' conflict resolution in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that counsellors should adopt AI chatbots for conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. Chatbots may provide support, helping couples access resources and guidance whenever they need it.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution, AI Chatbots, Virtual Role-Playing Agents, AI-Supported Journal, Married Couples.

Introduction

Marital conflict is a pervasive issue affecting families worldwide. It is often defined as a state of discord between partners arising from divergent goals, values, behaviours, or expectations. Conflict in marriage is not inherently destructive; rather, it becomes problematic when poorly managed or left unresolved, leading to long-term relational damage. According to Bradbury and Karney (2019), unresolved marital discord often manifests in communication breakdowns, emotional distancing, aggressive exchanges, and in more severe cases, physical or psychological abuse. The implications of such conflict extend beyond the immediate relationship, affecting children's mental health, family cohesion, and social stability at large.

In many societies, particularly within Nigeria, cultural factors play a significant role in how marital conflicts are expressed and managed. In Akwa Ibom State, for instance, traditional gender roles, societal expectations, and religious values heavily influence couples' willingness to confront and address relationship issues openly. As noted by Essien and Bassey (2021), many couples choose silence or secrecy over seeking help, fearing social stigma or community judgment. This often leads to bottled-up frustrations, passive aggression, or covert resentment, which gradually erode the foundations of marital harmony.

While conventional methods such as family counselling, religious mediation, and elder consultations have historically played roles in conflict resolution, they face several limitations in modern times. Many couples now live away from extended family support systems, and the increasing pace of life has reduced the time available for reflective dialogue. Moreover, counselling services are underutilized due to cost, inaccessibility, or perceived lack of confidentiality (Okechukwu & Eze, 2022). The gap left by these limitations has necessitated alternative, more accessible interventions.

In recent years, the global rise of technology has introduced new possibilities for interpersonal relationship support. Among the most promising of these innovations is Artificial Intelligence (AI). Defined as the development of computer systems capable of simulating human intelligence, AI has become integral to industries such as healthcare, education, finance, and more recently, psychology and social relationships (Russell & Norvig, 2021). Its ability to process natural language, detect emotional cues, and offer real-time feedback makes it a powerful tool in human interaction contexts.

Conflict, in the context of relationships, is a psychological and emotional phenomenon. It often arises from unmet needs, incompatible desires, or failures in

communication. Conflict resolution, therefore, requires emotional insight, self-regulation, and empathy qualities that AI systems are increasingly being trained to simulate. According to Burton (2019), AI's capacity to mediate conflict relies on algorithms that can recognize patterns in communication, detect tension, and suggest de-escalation strategies tailored to individual users. AI applications in marital conflict resolution can take several forms.

One major category of these tools is AI chatbots. Chatbots are interactive, AI-driven conversational agents designed to simulate human conversation and emotional intelligence. In the context of conflict resolution, chatbots can help individuals or couples reframe their thoughts, manage their emotions, and practice healthy communication strategies. They are equipped with cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) frameworks and often guide users through structured dialogues that promote emotional regulation and reflection (Fulmer et al., 2022). Studies by Liu and Sundar (2022) show that couples using AI chatbots report improved empathy, reduced anger, and more constructive problem-solving interactions.

Another significant AI innovation is the use of virtual role-playing agents. These systems allow users to simulate conflict scenarios and engage in behaviour rehearsals using avatars or virtual characters. By practicing conflict management in a risk-free digital environment, couples can learn how to recognize triggers, manage emotional reactions, and adopt more respectful communication styles. Lee and Ryu (2022) reported that couples exposed to virtual role-play scenarios demonstrated increased understanding of each other's perspectives and a marked reduction in verbal aggression. These tools offer not only educational value but also promote behavioural change through immersive, experiential learning.

Equally impactful are AI-supported journals. These digital platforms guide users through structured reflection and emotional analysis. Unlike traditional diaries, AI journals employ sentiment analysis, pattern recognition, and behavioural prompts to help users become more self-aware and intentional about their responses during conflict. Xu *et al.* (2023) found that couples who consistently used AI journaling tools showed significant improvement in emotional regulation, communication clarity, and conflict de-escalation. The journaling process provides a safe space for self-expression and introspection, often leading to deeper personal insight and relational healing. AI-supported journals are digital platforms that utilize artificial intelligence to enhance the journaling experience.

Some popular AI-supported journaling tools include the following;

Rosebud: This analyzes thoughts, organizes them into themes, and extracts insights to help identify meaningful goals.

Mindsera: Enhances cognitive skills, mental health, and fitness through structured thinking, self-reflection, and artwork generation.

AI Diari: Offers mood analysis, grammar structure analysis, automatic summary generation, and poem generation.

Journalie: Transcribes thoughts, organizes entries in a calendar, and offers social sharing features

Gnothi: Analyzes entries to highlight growth areas, track mood, sleep, and exercise patterns, and provides personalized insights. Married couples can explore these tools to find the one that best suits their needs and preferences.

Despite their growing popularity in Western contexts, the use of AI-based tools for conflict resolution remains under explored in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria. This is especially relevant in Akwa Ibom State, where increasing internet access and smartphone penetration are reshaping how couples interact and seek support. Yet, most AI tools are developed without consideration for cultural norms, linguistic diversity, or the unique psychological stressors facing African couples (Moses & Kanu, 2023). There is a clear need to assess whether these tools can be culturally adapted and effectively deployed in Nigerian marital contexts.

The application of AI tools in marriage counselling aligns with key psychological theories of learning and behaviour modification, notably Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory. This theory posits that individuals acquire new behaviours and attitudes by observing others, particularly role models, and by internalizing the consequences of these behaviours through reinforcement or punishment. Within the context of marital conflict, AI-driven systems such as chatbots, virtual agents, and guided journaling platforms act as social models that consistently display appropriate communication patterns, emotional regulation techniques, and conflict resolution strategies. Through repeated exposure and interaction, users can observe how the AI responds empathetically, rephrases hostile remarks, or encourages calm discourse, behaviours they can imitate in real-life interactions. This aligns with Bandura's core assertion that learning is a social process mediated by attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation, rather than solely reliant on trial-and-error experiences. As such, AI can simulate social learning environments where

couples practice healthy interaction patterns, receive feedback, and gradually replace maladaptive behaviours with more constructive alternatives.

Recent adaptations of Social Learning Theory also highlight the importance of digital environments in shaping behaviour, particularly where human modelling may be inconsistent, unavailable, or socially stigmatized, as in some cultural contexts regarding marital therapy. Feizi and Sundararajan (2022) argue that AI systems offer a unique blend of immediacy, consistency, and privacy, making them ideal platforms for modelling desired behaviours in sensitive domains such as spousal conflict. These tools provide an interactive learning environment where couples receive consistent reinforcement for pro-social behaviours and corrective feedback for unhelpful responses. Moreover, AI's nonjudgmental nature may reduce defensiveness and encourage greater openness during emotionally charged conversations. In this way, the digital modeling and reinforcement mechanisms embedded in AI tools operationalize the principles of Social Learning Theory in a modern therapeutic context.

In digital interactions with AI agents, married individuals observe model dialogues, emotional regulation techniques, and problem-solving frameworks. As these behaviours are repeated and rewarded with constructive feedback, they become internalized, shaping how individuals react during real-life conflicts. This learning process is particularly valuable for couples who may not have previously been exposed to healthy conflict resolution models in their familial or cultural background. Thus, AI-supported platforms function as both behavioural tutors and therapeutic companions.

Empirical research further supports the efficacy of AI-assisted tools in managing marital conflict. Liu and Sundar (2022) demonstrated that AI chatbots significantly enhanced empathy and responsiveness among married couples, enabling them to navigate sensitive conversations with greater respect and mutual understanding. In a related study, Lee and Ryu (2022) found that AI-driven role-play simulations promoted interpersonal awareness, allowing partners to experience scenarios from each other's perspectives, which in turn reduced the intensity and frequency of conflicts. Xu *et al* (2023) also observed that AI-supported journaling platforms helped couples achieve emotional regulation by offering personalized feedback, which improved their ability to articulate feelings and resolve disputes constructively.

In addition, Tsai and Blei (2021) highlighted how structured AI journaling tools enabled users to engage in cognitive reframing and emotional processing, which led to more deliberate and less reactive decision-making during conflicts. These journaling systems provided timely prompts that helped couples reflect on their thoughts and feelings,

resulting in more balanced and less impulsive communication. Reinforcing this evidence, Johnson and Marek (2023) found that AI-enhanced therapeutic platforms contributed to increased marital satisfaction by encouraging behavioural accountability and empathy-driven dialogue between spouses. Similarly, Adebayo and Ogunley (2022), in a study focused on Nigerian couples, noted that mobile AI counselling tools were effective in promoting culturally sensitive conflict management and strengthening relational bonds.

While these outcomes are promising, their generalizability to African or Nigerian settings remains uncertain due to cultural, infrastructural, and educational differences. Many Nigerian couples, especially in rural areas, may lack access to stable internet, digital literacy, or culturally relevant content that makes AI tools user-friendly.

Furthermore, deeply rooted gender norms and societal attitudes toward marriage can affect how technology is received and used in conflict situations (Okon & Udo, 2021). These challenges highlight the need for localized research that examines how AI tools can be adapted for culturally specific marital dynamics.

Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District presents a particularly relevant setting for this inquiry. With increasing urbanization and digital awareness, more couples are engaging with technology in their daily lives. Yet, the rising rate of marital conflict in both urban and semi-urban areas indicates a gap between digital access and meaningful emotional support. This study is therefore motivated by the need to examine the influence of AI-supported interventions on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Statement of the Problem

In the 21st century, the challenges faced by married couples have become more complex, driven by evolving social norms, economic pressures, and shifts in interpersonal communication patterns. Among the most transformative technologies influencing modern relationships and family dynamics is Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI offers enormous potential in promoting healthier relationships by providing intelligent tools for communication improvement, emotional awareness, personalized counseling, and conflict resolution strategies. However, the effectiveness of these AI-supported interventions in real-world relationship settings, especially among married couples, is still underexplored.

In Nigeria, and more specifically in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, family instability and marital conflict have increasingly become sources of concern for mental health professionals, policymakers, and social welfare agencies. While traditional forms of marital counselling and religious interventions are still widely practiced, many couples continue to struggle with unresolved conflicts due to stigma, lack of access to

trained therapists, or ineffective conflict resolution skills. This situation presents a growing need for innovative, accessible, and personalized approaches to address spousal conflicts, an area where AI-supported tools can play a significant role.

Conflict resolution in marriage involves mutual communication, emotional intelligence, empathy, and problem-solving skills. AI-supported applications and platforms such as chatbots for mental health support, virtual couples' therapy, emotion recognition systems, and predictive analytics have shown promise in enhancing these aspects by offering tailored feedback, cognitive-behavioural prompts, and privacy-sensitive counselling sessions. These tools have the potential to bridge service delivery gaps, especially in underserved communities. However, their effectiveness in the cultural and relational context of married couples in Akwa Ibom State remains largely untested.

Despite the rapid development of AI technologies globally, there is a noticeable lack of empirical research examining the impact of AI-supported interventions on conflict resolution among Nigerian married couples. Most existing studies on AI in mental health and family therapy are focused on Western contexts, with little consideration for the cultural, ethical, and relational dynamics unique to African settings. As a result, there is a significant gap in knowledge regarding whether AI-supported tools that focus on emotional regulation, communication coaching, and behavioural modelling can effectively enhance conflict resolution practices among married individuals in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. This study is therefore motivated by the need to investigate the influence of AI-supported interventions on married couples' conflict resolution in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of AI-supported interventions on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Examine the influence of AI chatbots on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.
- ii. Determine the influence of virtual role-playing agents on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.
- iii. Investigate the influence of AI-supported journals on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Research Questions

The following research questions were set to guide the study;

- i. What is the influence of AI chatbots on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District?
- ii. What is the influence of virtual role-playing agents on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District?
- iii. What is the influence of AI-supported journals on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance.

- i. There is no significant influence of AI chatbots on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.
- ii. There is no significant influence of virtual role-playing agents on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.
- iii. There is no significant influence of AI-supported journals on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The area of the study is Akwa Ibom State. A total of 200 married respondents were selected from the population of married couples across urban and rural areas in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District using a stratified random sampling technique. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure adequate representation of married respondents from both urban and rural areas, since these groups differ in important socio-demographic characteristics. This technique improved the representativeness, accuracy, and generalizability of the study findings while reducing sampling bias. The instrument titled: “AI-Supported Conflict Resolution Questionnaire for Married Couples” (AISCORQ-MC) was developed and used to gather relevant information for the study. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A elicited demographic information of the respondents, including gender, age, marital duration, location, and familiarity with technology. Section B consisted of 15 items structured under three subscales representing the independent variables: AI Chatbots, Virtual Role-Playing Agents, and AI-Supported Journals, with each item measuring aspects of conflict resolution.

A four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively, was used to score responses. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by three experts in counseling

psychology, educational technology, and measurement and evaluation. To establish the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was conducted using 30 married respondents from outside the study sample. The reliability coefficient obtained using the Cronbach Alpha statistics was 0.78, indicating that the instrument was reliable for data collection. The data collected from the administration of the questionnaire were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the influence of AI chatbots on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District?

Table 1: *Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis on the Influence of AI Chatbots on Conflict Resolution among Married Couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District*

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
AI Chatbots	200	34.84	4.65
Conflict Resolution	200	29.77	6.94

The analysis of data in Table 1 shows the mean responses on the influence of AI chatbots on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. The mean responses of married couples on AI chatbots of 34.84 indicate that AI chatbot has great influence on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of virtual role-playing agents on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District?

Table 2: *Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis on the Influence of AI Chatbots on Conflict Resolution among Married Couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District*

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Virtual Role-Playing Agents	200	32.32	6.07
Conflict Resolution	200	27.91	8.74

The analysis of data in Table 2 shows the mean responses on the influence of virtual role-playing agents on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. The mean responses of married couples on virtual role-playing agents of 32.32 indicate that virtual role-playing agents has great influence on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Research Question 3: What is the influence of AI-supported journals on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District?

Table 3: *Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis on the Influence of AI-Supported Journals on Conflict Resolution among Married Couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District*

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
AI-Supported Journals	200	36.21	5.06
Conflict Resolution	200	31.06	6.57

The analysis of data in Table 3 shows the mean responses on the influence of AI-supported journals on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. The mean responses of married couples on AI-supported journals of 36.21 indicate that AI-supported journals have great influence on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of AI chatbots on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Table 4: *The t-test Statistics on the Influence of AI Chatbots on Conflict Resolution among Married Couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District*

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	P	Decision
AI chatbots	200	34.84	4.65	198	8.912	.000	*Sign
Conflict Resolution	200	29.77	6.94				

**Significant at .05, t-cal = 8.912*

The result of data analysis using the t-test statistics as displayed in Table 4 shows that t-value of 8.912 is a significant at an alpha level of 0.05 ($t = 8.912$ $df = 198$; $P < 0.05$). Since the p-value (0.00) is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. The analysis reveals there is a significant influence of AI chatbots on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant influence of virtual role-playing agents on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Table 5: *The t-test Statistics on the Influence of Virtual Role-Playing Agents on Conflict Resolution among Married Couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District*

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	P	Decision
Virtual Role-Playing Agents	200	32.32	6.07	198	6.970	.000	*Sign
Conflict Resolution	200	27.91	8.74				

**Significant at .05, t-cal = 6.970*

The result of data analysis using the t-test statistics as displayed in Table 5 shows that t-value of 6.970 is a significant at an alpha level of 0.05 ($t = 6.970$ $df = 198$; $P < 0.05$). Since the p-value (0.00) is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. The analysis reveals that there is a significant influence of virtual role-playing agents on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Hypothesis 3:

There is no significant influence of AI-supported journals on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Table 6: *The t-test Statistics on the Influence of AI-Supported Journals on Conflict*

Resolution among Married Couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal P	Decision
AI-Supported Journals	200	36.21	5.06	198	9.144	.000 *Sign
Conflict Resolution	200	31.06	6.57			

**Significant at .05, t-cal = 9.144*

The result of data analysis using the t-test statistics as displayed in Table 6 shows that t-value of 9.144 is a significant at an alpha level of 0.05 ($t = 9.144$ $df = 198$: $P < 0.05$). Since the p-value (0.00) is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. The analysis reveals that there is a significant influence of AI-supported journals on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding that AI chatbots significantly influence conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District is supported by growing empirical evidence highlighting the therapeutic and relational potential of conversational agents. These AI-driven tools can offer real-time interaction, personalized responses, and privacy, factors that are especially important in intimate relationships where emotions can easily become heightened. According to Fulmer et al. (2022), AI chatbots facilitate self-reflection and emotional clarity by prompting users to articulate their feelings, thereby reducing impulsive reactions. This is particularly relevant in marital disputes where misunderstandings often arise from poor emotional articulation and reactive behaviours. The chatbot's capacity to simulate empathic listening and deliver evidence-based conflict management strategies contributes to creating a constructive conversational environment, which in turn promotes reconciliation. Furthermore, Hoermann et al. (2020) emphasized that AI chatbots function as non-threatening mediators, allowing couples to explore their concerns without fear of judgment or escalation. The anonymity and accessibility of these platforms enable partners to confront issues they might otherwise suppress or avoid in traditional face-to-face settings. In the context of Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial

District, where cultural norms may sometimes inhibit open emotional communication in marriages, AI chatbots can serve as culturally adaptive tools that support subtle but

meaningful dialogue.

The study's finding that virtual role-playing agents significantly influence conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District aligns with the principles of experiential learning and cognitive-behavioural rehearsal.

Virtual role-playing agents simulate real-life interpersonal scenarios, allowing couples to engage in conflict situations with guided, corrective feedback. These simulations provide safe and controlled environments in which users can test different emotional responses, observe the outcomes, and adjust behaviour accordingly.

According to Verduyn *et al.* (2023), these virtual interactions promote emotional empathy by enabling individuals to "step into the shoes" of their partners, encouraging deeper understanding and reduced defensiveness. This immersive form of engagement helps participants recognize harmful patterns in their communication and practice alternative approaches that are more constructive and respectful. Kim and Biocca (2021) further support this view by arguing that virtual reality role-play offers experiential learning that is more effective than abstract instruction in changing interpersonal behaviour. In the context of marital relationships, where emotions are often deeply rooted and responses can be automatic, this type of learning is particularly valuable. By allowing repeated exposure to modelled conflict resolution strategies and personalized feedback, virtual role-playing agents help couples develop communication skills that are transferable to real-life disputes. In Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, where access to professional counselling may be limited, these virtual tools provide a practical, scalable means of fostering emotional growth and conflict competence. The effectiveness of virtual role-play thus lies in its ability to bridge knowledge and action, helping couples internalize empathy, develop negotiation skills, and navigate conflict with greater maturity and collaboration.

The finding that AI-supported journals significantly influence conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District is grounded in the transformative potential of reflective writing facilitated by intelligent systems. AI-supported journaling tools prompt users to articulate thoughts, emotions, and experiences in structured ways that enhance self-awareness and emotional regulation, both of which are foundational to effective conflict resolution. Tan and Lee (2021) emphasize that these platforms guide users in identifying recurring behavioural patterns, emotional triggers, and

unresolved tensions that may contribute to marital discord. By bringing subconscious patterns into conscious awareness, AI-assisted journaling helps individuals understand not

only their own internal responses but also the impact of their words and actions on their partner. This promotes more mindful engagement in future interactions. In addition to promoting reflection, these digital journals often provide real-time, personalized feedback and predictive emotional analysis using natural language processing and sentiment tracking. Deng *et al.* (2022) report that such features support early recognition of escalating emotional North West Senatorial Districts, helping users interrupt negative cycles before they intensify. This empowers couples to enter conflict discussions with a calmer mindset and clearer goals. In settings like Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, where traditional therapeutic infrastructure may be underdeveloped or stigmatized, AI-supported journals serve as discreet and readily accessible tools for emotional processing. Their capacity to promote self-regulation, enhance empathy, and document relational progress over time positions them as a valuable complement to broader conflict resolution strategies within marriage. Thus, the adoption of AI-supported journaling represents not only a technological innovation but also a culturally adaptable resource for strengthening marital harmony.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of AI-supported interventions, specifically AI Chatbots, Virtual Role-Playing Agents, and AI-Supported Journals on conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. The findings revealed that each of these AI tools significantly influenced how couples manage and resolve conflicts. AI chatbots enhanced real-time communication and mediation, offering couples immediate, neutral, and judgment-free support. Virtual role-playing agents promoted empathy, emotional understanding, and cooperative problem-solving through simulated conflict scenarios. AI-supported journals encouraged self-reflection, emotional regulation, and deeper insight into recurring relational challenges.

These outcomes suggest that AI technologies, when properly utilized, can serve as effective supplements to traditional counselling methods and provide innovative, accessible means of strengthening marital relationships. As conflicts remain an inevitable part of marital life, the integration of AI tools into conflict resolution processes offers promising prospects for enhancing emotional connection, communication, and long-term relationship satisfaction among couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District and beyond.

Recommendations

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

- i. Counsellors should adopt AI chatbots for conflict resolution among married couples in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. Chatbots may provide support, helping couples access resources and guidance whenever they need it.
- ii. Couples should be encouraged to engage with virtual role-playing agents as part of their relationship enrichment programs to enhance empathy, communication skills, and understanding of each other's perspectives in a safe, simulated environment.
- iii. AI-supported journaling tools should be promoted among married individuals as a means of fostering self-awareness, emotional regulation, and constructive reflection—key components for long-term conflict management and resolution.

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DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The integration of information and communication technology (ICT) to education platform has paved way for the emergence of online guidance and counselling services, which have become useful for students/clients seeking for academic guidance, persona-social and vocational support, inconsiderate of their location. The paper presented an awareness campaign to scholars and counsellors in particular to embraced and adopt the human-AI collaboration in facilitating counselling process for the enhancement of human development. Concepts of artificial intelligence, guidance and counselling as well as advantages of human machine collaboration and different areas of artificial were explored. The paper discussed guidelines for AI-Human collaboration in counselling and suggested that counsellors should integrate AI including machine learning and natural language generations, for enhancing significant potential for efficiency and effectiveness in career and mental health counselling.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Collaboration, Counsellors, Human Development

Introduction

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to education platform has paved way for the emergence of online guidance and counselling services, which have become invaluable for students seeking academic guidance and support, inconsiderate of their locations. As a result, many online counselling platforms have been designed, created and patronized, this allow students to connect with guidance counsellors

to receive persona-social interventions, career guidance as well as information about choice of universities, programs, scholarships, and admissions criteria.

However, in the recent few decades, education sector has recorded another significant ICT development by incorporating Artificial Intelligence technology (AI) into the learning environment. (Hajar Majjate et al). Nevertheless, the guidance and counseling process, particularly in less technologically developed countries, is still being carried out in a traditional manner or through static educational websites that offer only general information about universities and colleges, such as graduation rates, admission requirements, and study costs based on students research. Moreover, the use of technology in educational counseling services and tutoring functions has been widely studied, with numerous researches indicating that it can significantly enhance their effectiveness and accessibility.

According to Aoun (2017), Artificial Intelligence (AI) indicates promise as a valuable support tool for delivery of mental health services, educational guidance and career counseling. But the American Counseling Association (ACA), the leading organization representing counseling professionals, warns that counsellors should not use AI as a substitute for a human therapy. AI technologies are designed to engage in the same reasoning, decision-making and language comprehension of the human mind. Counselors already use them to automate administrative tasks such as reports on a client's progress (Marr, 2018). Holmes, Bialik, and Fadel, (2019) suggest that counsellors should develop a detailed understanding of AI and its applications in counseling services, and its effects on client's confidentiality and privacy. Moreover, counselors to be receiving comprehensive and continuous training in evolving AI applications.

More so, the collaboration between human and AI is reshaping industries, in enhancing productivity and pushing to the wider boundaries of development in different sectors. Ewell, (2023) is of the view that the synergy between humans and machines is not a futuristic concept it is happening presently across various sectors, such as healthcare, education, manufacturing and industries. In view of this therefore, the focus of this paper is to provide an awareness campaign to scholars and counsellors in particular to embraced and adopt the human-AI collaboration in facilitating counselling process for the enhancement of human development.

Concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) broadly is intelligence exhibited by machines, particularly computer systems. It is a field of research in computer science that develops and studies methods and software that enable machines to perceive their environment and

uses learning and intelligence to take actions that maximize their chances of achieving defined goals. Artificial Intelligence deals with computers simulating human intelligence.

The simulation involves the completion of tasks resembling those carried out by human intelligence, including reasoning, language comprehension, problem-solving, and decision-making (Sheikh et al., 2023).

In facts, Artificial intelligence is the ability of a computer or computer –controlled robot to perform task that are commonly associated with the intellectual processes characteristic of human, such as the ability to reason.

Areas of Artificial Intelligence

More common methods research areas related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) are: Machine and deep learning, neural network, computer vision, natural language processing and robotics.

- (a) **Natural language processing (NLP):** This simply means using computer programs to analyse and produce natural text and speech. This includes for example machine translation, speech recognition, speech synthesis, optical character recognition, text-to-speech and smart text input. (Ailisto et al, 2018,)
- (b) **Machine learning:** This is computerised systems, which can improve their performance the more experience or data obtained and they can perform without clear instructions relying on patterns and conclusions. Machine learning can be used for classification and predictions based on data available in the system; identify objects in images and transfer speech into text
- (c) **Computer vision:** Computer vision can also be called as machine vision, means methods that promote extracting information from a picture automatically and understanding the content of the picture, which can be in different forms like ultrasound picture or 3D picture.(Ailisto et al, 2018,)
- (d) **Robot:** Robot is a device, which includes sensors and actuators that detect the environment, with which the device can perform different actions in its environment and can affect the physical environment around them.
- (e) **Artificial neural network:** This imitates the function of neurons in the human brains. Artificial neural network stores information through learning and are also used in advanced image and speech recognition and translation as well as in online stores' recommendations. (Stanford University, 2016)

Concept of Guidance and Counselling

The term guidance has been coined from the word 'guide' which originally means to

direct someone on an issue or programme, to enlighten or assist to lead person to know options of what to do in relation to situation that demands decision making (Okobia and

Okorududu, 2006.) Shetzer and Stone (1976) defined guidance as the process of helping individuals to understand themselves and their World. Durojaye (1972) also defined guidance as "a complex process which encompasses the total needs of the individual student(s) to be directed or guided by someone who is professionally trained"

However, several attempts have been made to define counselling like its twin associate 'Guidance'. Lewis (1970) stated that counselling is a process by which a trouble person is helped to feel and behave in a more personally satisfying manner through interaction with specialized and uninvolved person. Shetzer and Stone (1976) see counselling as a wide range of designed activities to aid individual in solving their problems. Okobia and Okorududu, (2006) summarized guidance and counselling as a programme made up of relevant services as well as processes of helping individuals within and outside the school environment to realize their fullest potentialities in their emotional, moral, academic and vocational development.

Human -AI / Human Machine Collaboration (Hmc)

Human-AI collaboration, Human Machine Collaboration (HMC) Collaborative AI mean the same thing. HMC can be defines as coming together of people and technology to create and produce an output. Human-AI collaboration eventually, allow companies and organization to use AI to interact with employees, clients, patients, customers and others. According to Linda (2023), Human-AI collaboration is a merger of people and AI driven technology to create or produce things and knowledge.

Furthermore, collaborative AI refers to combination of human and machine intelligence to work together to solve complex problems and perform a tasks. In this systems, human and machines complement each other's strength, with AI providing speed and accuracy while humans providing creativity and critical thinking. The goal of AI collaborative is to enables human and machine to work together to solve complex problems that are beyond the capabilities of either party alone.

Collaboration paradigm recognized that AI and human have complementary strength and it cannot be seeing as replacement of human jobs. Artificial Intelligence excels in data processing and repetitive tasks while human bring creativity, empathy and clear understanding of a phenomenon. Together AI and human can achieve remarkable results.

For instance, in healthcare sector AI is playing a pivotal role in medical diagnosis. Machine learning models can analyse medical images like x-rays and MRIs with credible

accuracy, thereby helping doctors detects disease earlier and more precise. Another example specifically in Education environment, AI is paving way for personalized learning

experiences. AI algorithms analyse students' data to identify individual strength and weaknesses, enabling teachers to direct their instructional methods to each students' needs. According to Bernard (2022) the future of work is not about humans being replaced by robots. Rather, it is about us learning to work alongside smart, automated technology that will augment our capabilities while allowing us to focus on skills that are uniquely humans.

Advantages of Human Machine Collaboration

According to Mayna (2022) advantages of human machine collaboration to includes: increase productivity, improve quality, reduced cost, improve safety, enhanced flexibility, continuous learning and potentials for bias and errors.

Collaboration Between Human and AI In Counselling

For the facts that American Counselling Association (ACA) defines counselling as professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education and career goals. Kapla, Tarydas & Gladding (2014), analyse and divide this definition into three major components of counselling: forming professional relationship: empowerment and accomplishing goals.

Since the goal of counselling may require fulfillment of these three components, while AI technology facilitates in empowering individuals to accomplish their desire aspirations in life, this implies that the role of AI technology to guidance and counselling is vise-verse. However, we might say that if one or two of the requirements are met by an Artificial Intelligence (AI), then that AI is getting closer to functioning as a counsellor. For example, an AI capable of empowering an individual towards accomplishing a wellness goal is partially functioning as a counsellor because two of the three requirements are met. If AI takes on a more prominent role in counselling, we should expect to see the functions of counsellor met by artificial intelligence. It can be concluded that AI can assist counsellors by automating administrative tasks, providing data-driven insights and offering additional resources for therapeutic interventions.

Guidelines for Human-AI Collaboration in Counselling

American Counselling Association (2000) provided recommended guidelines for the use and collaboration between Human –Artificial Intelligence (AI) and counselling process. The recommendations cut across many areas of counselling, such as practice, advocacy, research, and ethics. The recommendations serve a number of purposes,

including among others are: to raise awareness on the influence of AI in counseling; to assist professional counsellors and counsellors-in-training regarding Human -AI collaboration especially in clinical and educational settings. Compliance to the

recommended guidelines surely can assist counsellors to emphasize on Human- AI collaboration and integration in counselling process The guidelines are as follows:

- (a) **Learn more about the essentials of artificial intelligence:** For effective Human-AI collaboration, counselors should learn about AI essentials, including algorithms and how AI shows up in daily life, such as in social media, marketing campaigns, and in smart phones.
- (b) **Artificial intelligence Subfields:** AI subfields should be understood by potential Human-AI Counsellor, such as machine learning, neural networks, natural language processing, computer vision, and robotics. For example, counselors can learn about large language models (LLMs) and their use in machine learning. LLMs are used in “generative AI,” such as ChatGPT
- (c) **AI applications in mental health:** Counsellor should know the three current ways of AI applications in mental health which includes “personal sensing” (or “digital phenotyping”); Natural language processing and chatbots (D’Alfonso, 2020).
- (d) **Be open minded, informed, and educated:** Have an open mind (ready to learn) to technological advances that can improve professional practice. Efficiencies that can reduce the administrative burden on practitioners are not automatically unethical.
- (e) **Avoid over-reliance on AI:** However AI enhances efficiency, but it should not replace the essential human element in counseling. Counsellors should maintain a balanced approach, ensuring that the therapeutic relationship remains central and probably that is the essence of Human-AI collaboration in counselling.
- (f) **Counsellors should stay informed about the focus of AI on world of work:** Counseling history is steeped in the vocational guidance movement of the early 20th century. Because of constant changes in the technology, AI posed special challenges for career counseling. Therefore, Counselors in collaboration with AI should explore career developmental models that will provide for rapid changes in the labour market.
- (g) **Advocate for transparency in AI algorithms:** According to Fulmer et al., (2021), transparent AI includes three factors: Accessibility, Interpretability, and Controlled Maintenance. Accessibility means that the AI should be available and responsive to the peoples’ needs. Interpretability implies the output of an AI, must be easy to understand and user-friendly. In view of this therefore, counselors could advocate for

transparency and actively be part of inspection teams, especially in the use of AI algorithms, to ensure that AI is built fairly and is comprehensive, and then relaying their findings accurately back to the counseling community.(NB3AI algorithms)

- (h) **Limitations of AI in diagnosis and assessment in counseling:** The use of AI device or machine as the only tool for diagnosis and assessment by counsellor should be avoided. Nevertheless, AI can be a supportive tool which assist counselor in making professional judgment; therefore, counselors must obtained adequate training to understand the limitations and the use of AI in counselling process. Counselors must critically evaluate AI-assisted diagnostic suggestions and incorporate their clinical expertise, understanding of the client's history, and cultural context to ensure a comprehensive and ethically sound assessment.
- (i) **Seeking for informed consent:** Counselors should clearly inform clients about the use of AI tools/gadgets in their counseling process, explaining their purpose and potential benefits. It is necessary for the counsellor to obtain clients' informed consent for the use of AI-assisted tools and its implications in therapeutic encounter.
- (j) **Ensure data security and privacy:** AI platforms designed for counseling services and training purposes should prioritize data security and privacy from the outset. Moreover, the principles of "Privacy by Design" should be incorporated while utilizing AI counselling platforms. The principle will guarantee the security of personal identity and personal health information. Also can ensure the secure and confidential handling of sensitive data, fostering trust and compliance in their use for counseling services.
- (k) **Conducting research on the Impact of AI on counseling:** A dearth of research currently exists on how AI can have impact on counseling (Fulmer, 2019). AI shows potential to influence several areas of clinical practice (e.g., diagnosis, practice management, automating documentation), counselor education, and research approaches; thus, more research is needed to discover AI's potential in these areas. Counselors and counseling researchers are encouraged to take up the charge to conduct research that transforms counseling practices and training for better client care and wellness.

Suggestions

1. Counselors should adapt and embrace technological tools in order to help effectively meet the evolving needs of clients in the current health care and educational landscape

and provide them with support that aligns with the contemporary mental health and educational paradigm.

2. Counsellors should integrate AI including machine learning and natural language

generations, for enhancing significant potential for efficiency and effectiveness in career and mental health counselling.

Conclusion

The guideline discussed aimed at raising awareness on the influence of AI in counseling; to assist professional counsellors and counsellors-in-training regarding Human-AI collaboration especially in clinical and educational settings. Moreso, compliance to the recommended guidelines surely can assist counsellors to emphasize on Human-AI collaboration and integration in counselling process. It can be concluded that embracing of artificial intelligence into counselling represents transformative shift in delivery of mental health services, however AI cannot replace the empathy intuition and ethical judgement of human counsellors

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of conflict resolution strategies on aggression management among junior secondary school students in the North-Central Zone, Nigeria. Two research questions were raised, two objectives guided the study while two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population of 256,963 respondents, comprising SS2 students in North Central Zone, Nigeria was used. A sample size of 2918 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan table of specification. Data was collected through a validated instrument titled; conflict resolution strategies and aggression management scale (CRSAMS) with a validity index of 0.70 and a reliability index of 0.72. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The first finding revealed that there is a significant influence of counselling strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria and there is a significant influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria. The study recommended among others that, Counselling strategy can be integrated into the curriculum, extracurricular activities, and daily classroom interaction to help reduce aggression among students.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, aggression management, counselling, parent and community involvement strategy.

Introduction

The school is still regarded as the system that has the responsibility of moulding the character of children. Monthana, Lemmer, Mda and Pretorius (2020) explained that school

is a site where children of different background and age are taught. Such schools can be public or private as well as boarding or day. The school environment is expected to be one in which students feel safe and comfortable, and are encouraged to learn. In order to achieve this, there are sets of people who work with students within the school environment. They are the school principals who serve as chief executive of the schools who assist the principals in the day-to-day running of the school, the teachers who are facilitators of sound learning among the students and the counsellors whose primary aim is to assist the individual students in making decisions that ensure their efficient and orderly progression throughout the various stages of their growth and development.

These stakeholders in the school system are of paramount importance because students encounter problems which may be emotional, personal, social and educational and at such they would need help to overcome these problems. If these problems are not properly managed and solved, they may lead to emotional instability in the students, affect negatively their educational and social life, lead to crisis and make the school environment unconducive for learning.

Aggressiveness is one of such problems students can encounter in school and it is the duty of education stakeholders to plan series of programmes that will help in modifying this behaviour among students and in assisting them to cultivate acceptable behaviours. Students tend to feel less safe and unsatisfied with school life in a school with high level of aggressive display. For such students, and particularly the victims, the school is no longer a place of concentrated work and learning. This may affect the quality of students and poses a serious challenge to school managers whose responsibility it is to help the students resolve the conflicts within them, do away with maladaptive behaviours and learn the accepted ways of behaving in the School children, irrespective of sex, age and class level, engage in these behaviours. Funk (2018) reported that the problem of aggression in schools is prevalent in the highest classes of primary school as well as the lowest secondary classes. It has also been discovered that 13–15 years olds are the most violent in schools.

Aggression can be defined as an emotion that tends to hurt, harm or destroy something or someone. In case of persons, the intention of harm can be physical or psychological. Aggressive behavior involves conflict between individuals of equal level (Roland & Idsoe, 2021). The manifestation of such emotion is known as aggressive behavior which is usually overt, and varies from mild to severe and it can be manifested

against oneself or others around. According to Nelson (2016), whenever there is a conflict of interests between individuals there is a chance of aggressive behavior to be observed. Generally the terms aggression and aggressive behavior are used to refer negative emotions

and behaviors respectively. They are considered part of antisocial behavior; something morally, ethically or legally unacceptable (Moeller, 2021).

Aggressive tendencies stem from different factors. Students' biological make-ups, family background, community, school and value systems are some of these. If a student is unstable due to any of the above factors, he or she may suddenly be disturbed and exhibit destructive tendencies. Felson and Tedeschi (2013) observed that frequent exposure to aggressive people may involve any individual in aggressive episodes, and the presence of aggressive models increases the likelihood of imitation. Gasa (2015) also observed that the highest rates of aggressive behaviours are found in environment where aggressive models abound and where aggressiveness is regarded as a highly valued attribute. Aggression in secondary school students is a multifaceted challenge that affects the learning environment, peer relationships, and overall school safety.

Conflict resolution is a critical component in the prevention of aggressive behavior, as many instances of aggression stem from interpersonal conflicts between students. By teaching students how to navigate disagreements peacefully, aggression management programs aim to reduce the incidence of violence and promote peaceful interactions. Zins et al. (2016) suggest, conflict resolution programs provide students with practical strategies that enable them to manage differences of opinion and find mutually beneficial solutions to problems. These programs often incorporate role-playing scenarios, where students can practice these skills in a safe and structured environment, building their confidence and ability to handle conflict in real-life situations.

Counselling as an intervening strategy may play a crucial role in mitigating aggression by offering tailored psychological support and fostering emotional intelligence. Counsellors' work with students to help them recognize triggers, manages anger, and develops alternative, constructive responses to stressors. Counselling is particularly effective in addressing aggression by helping students reframe negative thoughts and adopt healthier behavioral patterns (Anderson, 2020). Aggression among secondary school students can disrupt learning and pose safety concerns, requiring targeted interventions through counselling. Effective counselling incorporates evidence-based practices to address both the emotional and behavioral aspects of aggression.

Smith and Segal (2020) argue that counsellors play a pivotal role in helping students identify the root causes of their aggression, whether stemming from trauma, peer pressure,

or unresolved conflicts. counselling) is widely employed in these contexts, as it equips students with practical skills for managing their emotions and responses to triggers (Beck & Beck, 2019). Counselling's structured approach to reframing thoughts and behaviors has

been linked to significant reductions in aggression levels among adolescents.

Parental and community involvement is another strategy considered in this study. Epstein et al. (2022) argue that strong partnerships between schools, families, and communities create a supportive network that addresses the underlying factors contributing to aggressive behavior. Parent education programs, for example, equip families with strategies to reinforce positive behavior at home. Webster-Stratton (2017) emphasizes the importance of teaching parents' effective communication techniques, consistent discipline, and emotional support. Community-based initiatives also play a vital role in promoting social-emotional learning and conflict resolution. According to Warren et al. (2019), partnerships with local organizations, such as youth clubs and counselling centres, provide students with additional resources and support systems.

These collaborations can address factors like poverty, trauma, and peer pressure that contribute to aggression. For instance, mentorship programs connect students with positive role models who guide them in developing healthy coping strategies (Herrera et al., 2021).

Conflict resolution and mediation are critical components of maintaining harmonious relationships and fostering a positive school climate. In the North-Central Zone of Nigeria, counselling plays a pivotal role in equipping students with the skills and strategies needed to manage conflicts constructively and engage in mediation processes. Conflicts in schools often arise from interpersonal disputes, peer pressure, competition, and cultural or social differences. Without proper intervention, these conflicts can escalate into aggression, violence, and disruptions to learning (Olweus, 2013). Counselling provides a structured framework for conflict resolution by promoting communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills. Counsellors use techniques such as active listening, negotiation, and cognitive restructuring to help students identify the root causes of conflicts and develop constructive solutions.

According to Deutsch (2020), effective conflict resolution involves fostering mutual understanding, identifying common goals, and implementing strategies that address the needs of all parties involved.

Research by Johnson and Johnson (2016) demonstrates that counselling reduces incidents of violence, improves relationships, and fosters a sense of responsibility among students. In the North-Central Zone of Nigeria, counselling interventions have been instrumental in addressing conflicts arising from cultural, religious, and socioeconomic

differences. Counsellors work with students to promote tolerance, respect and cultural sensitivity thereby reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings and conflicts. For example, counselling sessions focused on diversity and inclusion encourages students to

appreciate differences and build positive relationships. Counselling also equips teachers and school administrators with conflict resolution skills, enabling them to mediate disputes and create a supportive school environment.

Teachers trained in counselling approaches can identify early signs of conflict, facilitate open dialogue, and implement restorative practices that prioritize reconciliation and accountability. This proactive approach reduces the occurrence of conflicts and promotes a culture of peace and collaboration.

Furthermore, counselling addresses the emotional and psychological impact of conflicts on students. Conflicts can lead to stress, anxiety, and disengagement from learning, affecting students' academic and social development. Counselling provides students with coping strategies, emotional regulation techniques, and support systems to manage the challenges associated with conflicts. By fostering resilience and emotional well-being, counselling helps students navigate conflicts constructively and maintain positive relationships. Counselling plays a transformative role in conflict resolution and mediation among secondary school students in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria. By promoting communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills, counselling empowers students to manage conflicts constructively and engage in mediation processes. The integration of counselling into school practices fosters a culture of peace, reduces incidents of violence, and supports students' emotional and social development. This holistic approach to conflict resolution creates safer, more inclusive learning environments that promote harmony and academic success.

Parental and community involvement is crucial for fostering academic success, improving student behavior, and creating a supportive learning environment. However, challenges such as socioeconomic constraints, cultural attitudes, and communication gaps often hinder active participation. Counselling serves as a vital intervention to bridge these gaps and promote collaborative efforts between schools, parents, and communities. The importance of parental and community involvement in students' academic and social development is well-documented.

Epstein's (1995) model of parental involvement highlights the interconnected roles of schools, families, and communities in shaping children's educational outcomes. Counselling facilitates this collaboration by addressing barriers to involvement, such as lack of awareness, communication issues, and parental disengagement. By providing

support and guidance, counselor's empower parents and community members to take an active role in students' education. Counselling helps parents understand their responsibilities in supporting their children's education and behavior. Through family

counselling sessions, parents gain insights into effective parenting techniques, communication strategies, and ways to provide emotional and academic support. Sanders (2018) emphasizes the positive impact of family engagement programs on student outcomes, noting that students whose parents are actively involved perform better academically and exhibit fewer behavioral issues. In the North-Central Zone of Nigeria, counsellors work closely with parents to address challenges such as poverty, cultural stigmas, and family instability, ensuring that parents are equipped to support their children's educational journey. Counselling promotes better communication between schools and families. Counsellors serve as intermediaries who facilitate dialogue, build trust, and encourage collaboration between parents and teachers.

Effective communication ensures that parents are informed about their children's academic progress, behavioral concerns, and school activities. This transparency fosters a sense of shared responsibility and accountability, strengthening the partnership between schools and families.

According to Adeyemo (2014), when parents feel connected to their children's schools, they are more likely to participate in activities such as parent-teacher meetings, school governance, and volunteer programs. Community involvement, supported by counselling initiatives, extends beyond the family to include local organizations, businesses, and social institutions. Counsellors collaborate with community leaders to mobilize resources, provide mentorship opportunities, and create enrichment programs for students. For example, community-based initiatives, such as afterschool programs and scholarship schemes, address systemic challenges like poverty and limited access to educational resources. Blank, Melaville, and Shah (2013) emphasize the role of community partnerships in creating equitable opportunities for students, particularly in underprivileged areas. In the North-Central Zone of Nigeria, counselling also addresses cultural and social barriers that affect parental and community involvement. Traditional attitudes, which sometimes place the sole responsibility for education on schools, can hinder collaboration. Counsellors play a transformative role in changing these perceptions by educating parents and community members about the shared benefits of active involvement. Group counselling sessions, workshops, and community outreach programs create awareness and encourage participation, fostering a collective commitment to students' success.

The influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management is also evident in its impact on students' behavior and academic outcomes. Students who receive consistent support from both home and the community are more

likely to exhibit positive behavior, engage in learning, and achieve academic success.

Counselling strengthens this support system by equipping parents and community members with the tools to address challenges such as truancy, aggression, and academic underachievement. Aremu and Oluwole (2021) discovered the importance of holistic interventions that involve families and communities in addressing students' needs and promoting positive development. Moreover, counselling fosters a sense of ownership and collective responsibility within communities. By involving parents and community stakeholders in aggression management, such as school governance and policy development, counsellors promote a collaborative approach to education. This participatory model ensures that schools reflect the needs and priorities of the communities they serve, creating inclusive and supportive learning environments.

Aggression among secondary school students in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria has become a growing concern, negatively impacting academic performance, student relationships, and the overall school climate. The prevalence of aggressive behaviors contributes to a hostile learning environment, disrupting classroom activities and straining teacher-student interactions. Despite the persistent nature of this issue, traditional disciplinary measures such as corporal punishment and suspension have failed to address the root causes of aggression, often exacerbating the problem rather than providing sustainable solutions.

Given these challenges, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive approach to aggression management that incorporates psychological interventions, teacher capacity building, conflict resolution training for students, and active collaboration among schools, parents, and the community. Without such an integrated strategy, the persistent issue of aggression in secondary schools will continue to undermine students' academic and social development, ultimately affecting the overall quality of education in the region. It is against this backdrop that the researcher determined the influence of conflict resolution strategies on aggression management among secondary school students in the North-Central Zone, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of conflict resolution strategies on aggression management among secondary school students in the North-Central Zone of

Nigeria. Thus, the specific objectives were to;

1. Determine the influence of counselling strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria.

2. Examine the influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria

Research Questions.

The following research questions were raised;

1. What is the influence of counselling strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North-Central Zone of Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant influence of counselling strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate the influence of conflict resolution strategies on aggression management among secondary school students in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria. The population for this study comprise 256,963 SSII students from seven (7) states of North Central Zone, Nigeria; namely: Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Plateau, Nasarawa and FCT, Abuja. The sample size of 344 senior secondary school students SS II was used for the study. The study used a researcher made instrument for data collection. The instrument titled; conflict resolution strategies and aggression management scale (CRSAMS) consists of two sections, Section A of the questionnaire elicit information about the conflict resolution strategies while Section B elicit information based on aggression management. The instrument is constructed based on the modified 4 point rating's scales of measurement of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The options of the items were weighted in the rating scale with SA=4, A=3, D=2, and SD=1. The validity index was 0.70 which accepted the use of the instrument. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.72, indicating a high

level of internal consistency of the instrument.

Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the influence of counselling strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North-Central Zone of Nigeria?

Table 1: *Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of the influence of counselling strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North-Central Zone of Nigeria*

Variables	N	Mean (x)	Standard Deviation (S.D)	Remarks
Counselling	344	12.97	2.14	high
Aggression Mgt	344	13.11	1.37	high
Cluster mean	344	13.04	1.75	high

Table 1 indicates that and aggression management has a high mean of 13.11 and a standard deviation of 01.37 while counselling has also a high mean of 12.97 and a standard deviation of 2.14. The cluster mean of 13.04 is above the cut off point of 10.00. This indicates that there is a high influence of counselling strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North-Central Zone of Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria?

Table 2: *Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of the influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria*

Variables	N	Mean (x)	Standard Deviation (S.D)	Remarks
Parent & com. involve	344	12.17	0.52	High
Aggression Mgt	344	12.11	0.37	High
Cluster mean	344	12.14	0.44	High

Table 2 indicates that aggression management has a high mean of 12.17 and a

standard deviation of 0.52 parents and community involvement strategy has also a high mean score of 12.11 and a standard deviation of 0.37. The cluster mean of 12.14 was below the cut off mean of 10.00. This indicates that there is a high influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management among secondary

school students in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of counselling strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria

Table 3: *The t-test on influence of counselling strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria*

Variable	n	$\bar{x}$	std	df	α	t	p.val	Remark
Counselling Strategy	344	13.52	1.60	343	.05	156.50	0.000	reject
Aggression Management	344	13.22	1.37					

Table 3, shows the t-test on influence of counselling strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria. The result shows a significant influence with $n = 344$, $t = 156.50$, $df = 343$, at $p = .000$ or $p < .05$. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected at $p = .000$ or $p < .05$. This means that there is a significant influence of counselling strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria.

Table 4: *The t-test on influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria.*

Variable	n	$\bar{x}$	std	df	α	t	p.val	Remark
Parents & com. devpt	344	12.97	2.14	342	.05	112.03	0.000	reject
Aggression Management	344	13.11	1.37					

Table 4, shows the one sample t-test on influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria. The result shows a significant influence with $n = 344$, $t = 112.03$, $df = 342$, at $p = .000$ or

$p < .05$. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected at $p = .000$ or $p < .05$. This means that there is significant influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding revealed that there is a significant influence of counselling strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with Research by Johnson and Johnson (2016) demonstrates that counselling reduces incidents of violence, improves relationships, and fosters a sense of responsibility among students. Similarly, Anderson (2020) discovered that counselling is particularly effective in addressing aggression by helping students reframe negative thoughts and adopt healthier behavioral patterns.

Aggression among secondary school students can disrupt learning and pose safety concerns, requiring targeted interventions through counselling. Effective counselling incorporates evidence-based practices to address both the emotional and behavioral aspects of aggression. Moreso, Smith and Segal (2020) agreed that counselor play a pivotal role in helping students identify the root causes of their aggression, whether stemming from trauma, peer pressure, or unresolved conflicts. Counselling is widely employed in these contexts, as it equips students with practical skills for managing their emotions and responses to triggers.

The second finding revealed that there is a significant influence of parental and community involvement strategy on aggression management among secondary school students in North Central Zone, Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with Aremu and Oluwole (2021) discovered the importance of holistic interventions that involve families and communities in addressing students' needs and promoting positive development.

Moreover, counselling fosters a sense of ownership and collective responsibility within communities. By involving parents and community stakeholders in aggression management, such as school governance and policy development, counsellors promote a collaborative approach to education. This participatory model ensures that schools reflect the needs and priorities of the communities they serve, creating inclusive and supportive learning environments. Similarly, Blank, Melaville, and Shah (2013) emphasize the role of community partnerships in creating equitable opportunities for students, particularly in underprivileged areas.

Conclusion

This study concluded that counselling, parent and community intervention strategy was significantly more effective in reducing aggression among secondary school students

in North central Nigeria. These findings suggest the need for schools to shift from punitive approaches to preventative, collaborative conflict resolution programs. Ultimately, fostering a school climate that prioritizes conflict resolution skills is crucial for creating a

safer and more productive learning environment for all students.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations were made;

1. Counselling strategy can be integrated into the curriculum, extracurricular activities, and daily classroom interaction to help reduce aggression among students.
2. Future interventions and research studies involve collaboration amongst parents, schools, researchers, policymakers, and community organizations to foster a more holistic approach.

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INVOLVEMENT IN ACADEMIC CONTROVERSY AT YABATECH'S EPE CAMPUS IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated conflict resolution abilities as indicators of academic success and involvement in academic disagreement among undergraduate students at Yabatech's Epe Campus in Lagos State. The study used a cross-sectional survey design and was based on the Constructive Controversy Theory, which was created by David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson. Using proportionate sampling, a sample of 333 pupils was chosen from a population of 2,000. Academic performance was evaluated using self-reported CGPA categories, and data were gathered using validated four-point Likert-scale instruments measuring academic dispute engagement and conflict resolution abilities. Multiple regression and hierarchical regression analyses were used, and reliability coefficients varied between .86 and .88. The results showed that academic controversy engagement ($\beta = .62, p < .001$) and academic performance ($\beta = .41, p < .001$) were significantly predicted by dispute resolution abilities.

Academic controversy engagement also significantly predicted academic performance ($\beta = .38, p < .001$) and partially mediated the relationship between conflict resolution skills and academic performance. The study concludes that constructive conflict management

enhances cognitive engagement and academic success. Recommendations for curriculum integration of conflict resolution training are discussed.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, Academic controversy, Academic performance

Introduction

Student conflict is a widespread issue in schools that, if not effectively monitored and managed, can hinder the school's ability to meet its goals and objectives and negatively affect the school climate. Given that human beings are social and political creatures, disputes are inevitable in any human gathering. Schools serve as structured communities and are inevitably places of both collaboration and conflict because each individual will always assert to be both social and politically relevant. Academic controversy is defined as organized intellectual conflict among students with the goal of fostering critical thinking, deeper comprehension, and cognitive growth. It can contribute significantly to personal development in ways like enhanced academic performance, community development, and democratic education.

Constructive Controversy Theory was originally propounded by David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson in 1979 and further elaborated in subsequent works (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). The theory posits that structured intellectual disagreement within cooperative contexts promotes higher-order reasoning and academic achievement. Students who are exposed to different points of view and participate in organized academic debate encounter cognitive conflict, which fosters deeper comprehension, perspective-taking, and critical thinking, as long as the dispute is handled well. One can simply put in this way, cooperation plus conflict equals learning growth.

Professional guidance and counselling's nature enables practitioners to offer clients specialized services in pursuit of their overall welfare and personal, social, and psychological modifications. Guidance and counselling services, whether individualized or generalized, typically seek to offer people or groups of individual's progressive support so they can identify and enhance their abilities for adjustment, problem-solving, adaption, and peace. In professional guidance and counselling, where practitioners regularly handle interpersonal and group conflicts, conflict resolution is still a crucial subject. Wallensteen (2023) highlights its ongoing significance in international mediation, pointing out that effective negotiation is supported by cooperative tactics. He attempted to extend and reinforce Deutsch's (1973) theory on the dynamics of constructive and destructive conflict. Deutsch asserts that whereas competition breeds mistrust and escalation, cooperation promotes trust and mutual problem-solving. In a similar vein, Coleman (2021) uses the

model to address current polarization challenges and suggests transformational strategies to go from rivalry to collaboration. However, there is proof that disagreement can lead to a

number of beneficial effects, including boosting learning motivation and innovative thinking (Johnson & Johnson, 2003).

In Academic Controversy, students gain knowledge while learning how to interact with others on factual, definitional, and ethical disputes using language and information. Academic Controversy deserves praise for allowing students to engage with opposing viewpoints and going beyond merely exposing them to them. This is because Academic Controversy demands participants to role-play, share opinions, and assess if what other people are saying calls for them to rethink their own convictions. Students must go through the following steps in order to participate in a controversy:

- (a) Research and prepare a position;
- (b) Present and advocate their position;
- (c) Participate in a general discussion where they defend their position and refute attacks on it;
- (d) Reverse viewpoints by putting forth the strongest argument for the opposing position; and
- (e) Create a synthesis that all group members can agree upon.

Additionally, educators need to be aware of their own biases and convictions when determining whether to portray a topic on which they have already formed an opinion as controversial (Hess & McAvoy, 2015).

Despite this, academic controversy is worthwhile since it relates to both disciplinary content and skill objectives as well as civic learning outcomes. In addition to being unavoidable, academic controversies are frequently essential to the growth of knowledge. They have the power to change disciplines, raise ethical standards, and broaden public awareness, but they may also be disruptive or even harmful if not handled properly. Academic controversy is a method of instruction as well as a discourse structure. Johnson and Johnson begin by pointing out that conflicts between students' preferences and points of view are likely to arise when they are placed in small groups and asked to engage with one another while they are learning. Academic controversy mobilizes such conflict as a learning opportunity rather than avoiding it.

According to the Johnsons (2009), "Intellectual conflict is not only very desirable but also a crucial teaching tool that motivates students to learn." Without intellectual struggle,

ideas in the classroom are lifeless. When two students try to come to an agreement when one of their ideas, facts, conclusions, theories, and opinions is incompatible with the other,

there is academic disagreement. In order to resolve disputes, people engage in what Aristotle referred to as deliberate conversation, which involves discussing the benefits and drawbacks of suggested courses of action in order to synthesize innovative ideas, or creative problem solving.

Concept of Academic Performance: According to Rono, Onderi, and Owino (2014), students' academic performance is the main characteristic of education and one of its main objectives. While Narad and Abdullah, (2016), said that it can be characterized as the knowledge that students acquire and is evaluated by teachers using grades and/or educational objectives that students and teachers set to be accomplished over a given time period. The primary goal of educational institutions is to help students achieve academic greatness by helping them demonstrate improved academic performance (Adeyemo, 2001). Furthermore, for everyone who is concerned about education, academic success is a very important factor (Osiki, 2001).

Students' Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA), which offers an objective and cumulative measure of academic achievement across semesters, is used to operationalize academic performance in this study. CGPA is still a standardized and institutionally verified indicator of performance in postsecondary education settings, despite the existence of subjective metrics like self-reported academic success.

The cumulative grade point average (CGPA), which is frequently used to gauge academic performance, shows how well students understand the material and meet requirements. Academic success is impacted by interpersonal and psychosocial characteristics in addition to cognitive capacity, according to recent studies. It has been demonstrated that classroom participation, peer contact, and collaborative learning environments all positively correlate with academic success. Better exam results and a deeper conceptual comprehension are displayed by students who actively engage in discussions and critical debates. Students who successfully manage conflict and engage in structured intellectual arguments are likely to perform better academically, as constructive academic controversy fosters deeper cognitive involvement.

Few studies have empirically investigated the mediating role of academic controversy in the relationship between conflict resolution and academic achievement, particularly within Nigerian tertiary institutions, despite the fact that earlier research has looked at cooperative learning and academic performance. Conflict resolution abilities seem to be a fundamental competency that influences the caliber of academic relationships,

according to the examined literature. When intellectual disagreement is handled well, it can develop into a productive academic debate that promotes deeper thinking and better

academic results. Nevertheless, there is still a dearth of empirical data exploring these connections in Nigerian higher education settings. The purpose of this study is to close this gap by examining the direct and indirect connections between academic success, academic dispute, and conflict resolution.

Research Questions:

1. How well do conflict resolution abilities predict participation in academic controversy?

H₀₁: Academic controversy engagement is not significantly predicted by conflict resolution abilities.

2. How well do conflict resolution abilities predict CGPA for undergraduate students?

H₀₂: The CGPA of undergraduate students is not significantly predicted by conflict resolution abilities.

3. To what degree is the CGPA of undergraduate students significantly predicted by academic controversy engagement?

H₀₃: The CGPA of undergraduate students is not considerably predicted by academic controversy participation.

4. Does academic controversy participation act as a mediator in the relationship between undergraduate students' CGPA and their ability to resolve conflicts?

H₀₄: The association between dispute resolution abilities and undergraduate students' CGPA is not substantially mediated by academic controversy engagement.

Methodology:

Research Design

In order to investigate dispute resolution abilities as determinants of academic controversy participation and academic achievement among undergraduate students at Yabatech, Epe Campus, Lagos State, a cross-sectional survey approach was used.

Participants were two thousand undergraduate students who made up the population. A minimum sample size of 333 students was established using Yamane's (1967) formula with a 5% margin of error. Representation across departments and academic levels was guaranteed by proportionate stratified random sampling.

In other to measure Conflict Resolution Techniques (CRS), six items on a four-point Likert scale, were 1 denoting strongly disagree and 4 denoting strongly agree, were used

for the measurement. Higher scores are indicative of more effective conflict resolution techniques .86 is Cronbach's α . Participation in Academic Controversy (ACE), were

assessed using six Likert-scale measures that gauge intellectual disagreement in a constructive way. Cronbach's alpha is .88.

Academic Results (CGPA), were assessed using a five-point grading system (coded 1–5) based on self-reported CGPA categories. For parametric analysis, CGPA was treated as roughly continuous, despite its ordinal form, which represents an underlying continuous academic notion.

Before any data was collected, institutional and ethical approval was secured. Participation was anonymous and voluntary.

Analysis of Data:

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data, while descriptive Statistics included,

- Mean
- The typical deviation
- Coefficients of reliability

Inferential statistics measured;

1. Relationships between variables, and Pearson correlation analysis was used.
2. Multiple linear regression, was used to test for predictive correlations,.
3. To investigate the mediating function of academic controversy engagement, hierarchical regression is used.

The following specifications applied to the regression models:

$$[ACE = \beta_0 + \beta_1(CRS) + \varepsilon] \quad [CGPA$$

$$= \beta_0 + \beta_1(CRS) + \varepsilon]$$

$$[CGPA = \beta_0 + \beta_1(CRS) + \varepsilon]$$

The threshold for statistical significance was fixed at $p < .05$.

Regression Assumptions

The following presumptions were examined before analysis:

Linearity, residuals' normality,

Homoscedasticity and $VIF < 5$ indicates multicollinearity.

Initial diagnostics revealed no significant infractions.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Study Variables (N = 333)*

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
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Conflict Resolution Skills (CRS)	3.21	0.54	.86
Academic Controversy Engagement (ACE)	3.18	0.51	.88
Academic Performance (CGPA category)	3.74	0.82	—

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree.

Interpretation: The mean scores indicate high levels of conflict resolution skills and academic controversy engagement among respondents. Reliability coefficients exceeded the .70 threshold, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

Table 2: *Correlation Matrix of Study Variables*

Variable	1	2	3
1. CRS	—		
2. ACE	.62**	—	
3. CGPA	.41**	.48**	—

p < .01

Interpretation: Conflict resolution skills showed a strong positive relationship with academic controversy engagement ($r = .62$, $p < .01$) and a moderate positive relationship with CGPA ($r = .41$, $p < .01$). Academic controversy engagement was also positively associated with CGPA ($r = .48$, $p < .01$).

Table 3: *Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Controversy Engagement*

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	P
Constant	0.87	0.24	—	3.63	.000
CRS	0.68	0.05	.62	13.41	.000

Model Summary:

$R^2 = .38$

$F(1, 331) = 179.82$

$p < .001$

Interpretation: Conflict resolution skills significantly predicted academic controversy engagement, explaining 38% of the variance.

Table 4: *Hierarchical Regression Predicting CGPA (Mediation Model)*

Model 1: CRS → CGPA

Predictor	B	T	p
CRS	.41	8.12	.000

$R^2 = .17$

Model 2: CRS and ACE → CGPA

Predictor	B	T	p
CRS	.19	3.12	.002
ACE	.38	6.45	.000

$R^2 = .29$

$\Delta R^2 = .12$

Interpretation: When academic controversy engagement was introduced, the effect of conflict resolution skills decreased but remained significant, indicating partial mediation.

Discussion of Findings:

Overall, the results show that undergraduate students' academic controversy engagement is significantly predicted by their conflict resolution skills. This finding is consistent with Constructive Controversy Theory, which holds that when structured disagreement is handled well, it fosters deeper cognitive processing. Students who exhibit cooperative problem-solving, active listening, and emotional control seem to be better able to participate in fruitful intellectual discussion. Additionally, academic performance was found to be significantly predicted by conflict resolution abilities. This implies that academic progress may be directly impacted by the capacity to resolve conflicts in the classroom, which goes beyond interpersonal skills. The idea that constructive intellectual conflict improves comprehension and critical thinking is further supported by the positive correlation between academic debate engagement and CGPA.

The association between conflict resolution abilities and academic performance was found to be somewhat mediated by academic controversy engagement, according to the mediation study. According to this research, conflict resolution abilities may raise academic performance both directly and indirectly by fostering greater intellectual

discourse.

Overall, by offering empirical support within the context of higher education in

Nigeria, the study expands on the theoretical claims made by Johnson and Johnson.

Conclusion

This study investigated conflict resolution skills as predictors of academic controversy engagement and academic performance among undergraduate students in Yabatech, Epe Campus, Lagos State. Anchored on Constructive Controversy Theory, the findings demonstrate that conflict resolution skills significantly enhance students' engagement in academic controversy and positively predict academic performance.

Furthermore, academic controversy engagement partially mediates the relationship between conflict resolution skills and academic performance, suggesting that constructive intellectual disagreement serves as a mechanism through which conflict management competencies translate into improved academic outcomes.

The findings affirm that structured academic disagreement, when managed effectively, promotes deeper cognitive engagement and academic success. The study therefore provides empirical support for integrating conflict resolution training within higher education pedagogy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Curriculum Integration:** Conflict resolution training should be incorporated into general studies or entrepreneurship courses to enhance students' intellectual engagement skills.
2. **Structured Academic Debate:** Lecturers should design classroom activities that promote structured academic controversy rather than avoid intellectual disagreement.
3. **Workshops and Seminars:** Institutions should organize workshops on emotional regulation, negotiation, and collaborative communication for undergraduate students.
4. **Assessment Innovation:** Educators should assess students not only on content mastery but also on the quality of argumentation and evidence-based reasoning during academic discussions.
5. **Policy Implication:** Academic institutions should recognize conflict resolution skills as core graduate competencies essential for both academic success and workplace readiness.

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COMMUNITIES, FARMERS AND HERDERS IN NASARAWA STATE

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Abstract

Conflicts between farming communities and pastoral herders have become a persistent security and social challenge in many parts of Nigeria, particularly in Nasarawa State. These clashes often lead to loss of lives, destruction of property, and displacement of people, thereby affecting peaceful coexistence and sustainable development in the affected communities. This study therefore examined the perceived strategies for conflict resolution between communities, farmers, and herders in Nasarawa State. To achieve this purpose, three objectives were stated, three research questions were raised, and three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 198,012 community members, farmers, and herders in Nasarawa State. A sample size of 384 respondents was selected using simple random and stratified sampling techniques. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Conflict Management Questionnaire (CMQ). The instrument was subjected content validation by experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded coefficients of 0.78 and 0.84. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistics were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that group counselling has a significant influence on facilitating mutual understanding, promoting effective communication, and encouraging collaboration among communities, farmers, and herders as strategies for conflict resolution in Nasarawa State.

Keywords: Group Counselling, Conflict Resolution, Conflict Management, Communities, Collaboration.

Introduction

Violent conflict is a foremost global conundrum. There has been a major rise in intrastate conflicts in the 21st century. Contemporary conflict trends show that intrastate conflict is the dominant form of violent conflict in the world, while interstate conflict has declined considerably in recent years compared to the 1900s (Cottey, 2023; Kegley & Raymond, 2020). No continent is spared as both developed and developing nations are struggling with one form of internal conflict or the other. Spates of terrorism, insurgency and civil strife, leading to vicious destruction, displacement and deaths, are now persistent across the world.

According to Thomas Homer-Dixon (2018), environmental scarcity contributes to violent conflicts in many developing nations. In Nigeria, clashes between communities, sedentary farmers, and pastoral herders have become one of the most prominent resource-use conflicts. The conflict is largely driven by competition for access to land and freshwater resources required for farming and livestock grazing (Audu, 2023; International Crisis Group, 2023). Increasing desertification, loss of vegetation, and prolonged drought in Northern Nigeria have forced many pastoral herders to migrate southward in search of pasture and water for their livestock (United Nations Environment Programme, 2022). During this seasonal migration, herders often settle temporarily in farming communities where water and vegetation are available. This situation frequently leads to disputes between farmers and herders. Farmers often accuse herders of destroying crops through livestock encroachment on farmlands and contaminating local water sources. Conversely, herders accuse farmers of poisoning, killing, or stealing their cattle and restricting access to traditional grazing routes (Audu, 2023; International Crisis Group, 2023).

The clashes between communities, farmers and herders are the result of several factors such as competition for resources, climate change, land-use change, ethnic and cultural differences, weak governance, arms proliferation, and political interference (Audu, 2023; International Crisis Group, 2023; Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2024). The consequences of these crises are enormous, as they bring significant hardship to the affected populations through loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement of communities, and disruption of livelihoods.

The conflict between communities and herders is a protracted issue in Nigeria. Violent clashes between them have been frequent since the 1980s, but gained new momentum in intensity and recurrence following the country's return to civilian rule in 1999 (Blench, 2023). The progressive increase in the occurrence of clashes between communities has been confirmed by different research findings and reports. It is reported

that whereas only 18 incidents were recorded between 1997 and 2010, there was a surge of 371 attacks between 2011 and 2015 (SBM Intelligence, 2016). More recent reports also indicate that farmer–herder violence remains one of the leading drivers of rural insecurity and displacement in Nigeria, particularly within the North-Central region (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2024; International Crisis Group, 2023).

The conflict has been responsible for the death and displacement of many people in various regions of Nigeria. Fatalities are not limited to the conflicting communities alone, as innocent members of host communities are also casualties of the conflict.

According to Human Rights Watch (2013), the conflict between communities has significantly contributed to inter-communal violence and the death of about 3,000 people in the North-Central region of Nigeria between 2010 and 2013. On February 24, 2016, Fulani herders were reported to have raided and killed over 300 people in Agatu communities in Benue State (Amnesty International, 2016; International Crisis Group, 2017).

Community is relatively smaller than society. In fact, it is an important subsystem of society. Within a society, several communities may exist, each performing different social and economic functions. Understanding the concept of community is important in this study because conflicts between farmers and herders often occur within specific local communities where people share geographical space, resources, and social relationships. Thus, George A. Hillery (2006) defined a community as a concentrated settlement of people in a limited territorial area within which they satisfy many of their daily needs through a system of interdependent relationships. Community exists when the following main criteria are met:

1. Concentration of households in a given geographical area.
2. Interpersonal relationships exist among and between residents of the household.
3. The residents have common membership in the group to which they belong.

Karl Gunnar Jonasson (1959) identified the following as the characteristics of community:

- i. People live within a geographical area.
- ii. There is a division of labour in specialized interdependent functions.
- iii. Existence of a common culture and social system which organizes the activities of people.
- iv. Members are conscious of their unity and sense of belonging to the community.

v. People can act collectively in an organized manner.

Based on the above definitions and identified characteristics, a community can be described as a relatively self-sufficient local entity within which many aspects of social, economic, and cultural life are experienced by its members.

In Nasarawa State, an epitome of the level of brutality that has become synonymous with the conflict in recent times.

The conflict between communities can be addressed through conflict resolution management strategies. Conflict resolution management refers to the process of identifying, addressing, and resolving conflicts or disputes between individuals, groups, communities, or organizations in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner (Coleman, 2015; Morton Deutsch, 2014). Promoting mutual understanding is one of the indicators of conflict resolution management. Mutual understanding refers to a shared comprehension, agreement, or empathy between two or more parties regarding a particular situation, issue, or perspective. It involves acknowledging and accepting each other's thoughts, feelings, needs, and viewpoints. Mutual understanding is one of the core principles in group counselling. Without mutual understanding in group counselling, the realization of the goals of counselling may not be achieved. In this case, the goal of group counselling is to resolve the conflict between farmers and herders, which can best be promoted through mutual understanding among the parties involved in the group (Gerald Corey, 2016).

Effective communication is another index considered in this study. Effective communication refers to the process of conveying information, ideas, thoughts, or feelings in a manner that is clear, concise, and easily understood by the recipient. It involves the successful transmission of messages from one party to another. Effective communication encompasses various verbal and non-verbal methods, such as speaking, listening, writing, and body language, as well as the ability to adapt communication styles to different audiences and contexts (DeVito, 2019). Communication is generally an essential tool in counselling. Effective communication in group counselling for conflict resolution between communities, farmers, and herders helps to provide assurance, clarify issues, restate the problems presented, and encourage the cooperation of all parties involved. When this occurs, members of the group are able to express their feelings, thoughts, and concerns freely and objectively for peaceful resolution (Corey, 2016).

Collaboration is defined as a cooperative process where individuals or groups work together towards a common goal or shared objective. It involves the pooling of resources,

expertise, and effort to achieve outcomes that may be difficult or impossible to attain independently. Collaboration typically emphasizes mutual respect, open communication, shared decision-making, and recognition of each participant's contributions (David & Larson, 1994). Collaboration can occur within teams, organizations, communities, or across different sectors and disciplines. In this circumstance, these attributes can be achieved through group counselling in resolving conflicts between communities, farmers, and herders.

Group counselling is a form of psychotherapy that usually involves four to ten participants and one or two group therapists. Most groups meet regularly at the same time for one to two hours. During that time, members of the group discuss issues that concern them and offer each other support and feedback. Interpersonal interaction is highly valued and encouraged. Group counselling can be organized in several different ways, but one thing remains constant for all groups: members agree to keep what is said in the group confidential (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020).

Group counselling, according to Venkatesh Kumar (2020), involves a group of individuals who come together with specific goals, share their problems, provide empathy and support to one another, and attempt to change self-defeating behaviours. Members of the group are also assisted in developing their existing skills for dealing with interpersonal problems.

The role of group counselling is to facilitate interaction among members, help them learn from one another, assist them in establishing personal goals, and provide continuous empathy and support. It also enables members to apply what they have learned in the group setting to their real-life situations outside the group (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020).

It is in the realization of the goal of peaceful coexistence that this study sets out to investigate the influence of group counselling on conflict resolution between communities in Nasarawa State.

Statement of Problem

Community's conflict is a recurring phenomenon in Nasarawa State. The conflict most times result into violent clashes, the clashes are more often than not product of suspicions, lack of mutual understanding, ineffective communication as well as failure to cooperate and respect individual views that may bring about collaboration.

The effects of the disputes occasioned by a conflict are unimaginable ranging from loss of life and properties, insecurity, social cohesion, political instability, environmental degradation, humanitarian crises and others. Many concerted efforts

have been put in place to see to the end of this problem by both the Government, NGO, Religious organizations and other stakeholders.

It is however that all these efforts have not produced desired peace between communities. The question now is what could be responsible for these perennial and incessant crises. It is now been suggested that counselling especially in group through mutual understanding, Effective communication and Collaboration could be a permanent solution to end communities crises. Therefore, this study investigates the influence of group counselling on conflict resolution between farmers and herder's crisis in Nasarawa State.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to investigate the influence of group counselling on conflict resolution between farmers and herder's crisis in Nasarawa State. Specifically the following objectives are stated:

1. To examine the influence of group counselling on facilitating mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management among communities, farmers and Herders in Nasarawa State.
2. To investigate the influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management among communities, farmers and herders in Nasarawa state.
3. To ascertain the influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a strategy in understanding conflict resolution management among communities, in farmers and herders Nasarawa state.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:-

1. What is the influence of group counselling in facilitating mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management between communities, farmers and herders in crisis Nasarawa?
2. What is the influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management among communities, farmers and herders in Nasarawa state?
3. What is the influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a conflict resolution management among communities, farmers and herders in Nasarawa state?

Statement of Hypotheses

To guide this study, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of respondents on the influence of group counselling in facilitating mutual understanding as a strategy for conflict resolution among communities, farmers, and herders in Nasarawa State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of respondents on the influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a strategy for conflict resolution among communities, farmers, and herders in Nasarawa State.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of respondents on the influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a strategy for conflict resolution among communities, farmers, and herders in Nasarawa State.

Methodology

Descriptive survey method was adopted as research design for this study. Mugenda and Mugenda (2023) describe descriptive survey as collecting data to test hypothesis or to disclose the current status of the study subject in regard with individual's perception, attitude and behaviour. It describes and interprets the nature of present conditions, trends or situations in a way that permits the development of valid knowledge and purposeful action. It involves determination and description of scenarios the way they appear through collection of numerical data to test hypothesis or answer research questions about the subject under investigation.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprise 546,921 members from communities in Nasarawa State totaling 546,921 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The distribution of the population for the study is as shown in appendix D.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study consisted of 384 community's clashes farmers and herders in Nasarawa State.

A multistage sampling procedure was used in selecting the sample for the study. This procedure was considered appropriate because the population of the study was large and geographically dispersed across the state. The sampling was carried out in stages to ensure adequate representation of respondents from different parts of Nasarawa State.

In the first stage, Nasarawa State, which has thirteen (13) Local Government Areas

(LGAs), was divided into three clusters based on the three Senatorial Zones of the state (Nasarawa North, Nasarawa South, and Nasarawa West). This clustering was done to ensure that all the senatorial zones were fairly represented in the study.

In the second stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select six (6) Local Government Areas from the three senatorial zones, with two LGAs selected from each zone. The use of simple random sampling gave each Local Government Area an equal chance of being selected, thereby reducing sampling bias.

In the third stage, proportional sampling technique was used to determine the number of respondents selected from each of the chosen Local Government Areas based on their population sizes. This ensured that LGAs with larger populations contributed more respondents to the sample than those with smaller populations.

In the fourth stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select the actual participants for the study based on their occupation. The participants included community leaders, farmers, and herders because they are the major stakeholders directly involved in or affected by the conflict between farming communities and herders in Nasarawa State. The use of purposive sampling was therefore considered appropriate in order to obtain relevant information from respondents who had direct experience and knowledge of the conflict situation.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire adapted from the Conflict Management Questionnaire (CMQ) developed by Snell and Wooldridge (1991). The adapted instrument for this study was titled “Group Counselling on Communities and Farmers–Herders Conflict Questionnaire (GCCFHCQ)”. The questionnaire consisted of three sections (A–C).

Section A: sought information on the bio-data of the respondents such as occupation and Local Government Area.

Section B: consisted of fifteen (15) items designed to measure the major indicators of conflict resolution management. The first five (5) items measured mutual understanding, the next five (5) items measured effective communication, while the last five (5) items measured collaboration.

Section C: consisted of ten (10) items developed by the researcher to measure the influence of group counselling programmes in resolving conflicts between communities, farmers, and herders.

The instrument was structured on a four-point Likert scale with response options ranging from Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1) for

positively worded items, while negatively worded items were scored in the reverse order.

The instrument was subjected to face and construct validation by two experts from the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The validators were requested to examine the suitability of the content, logical sequence of the items, and appropriateness of the technical terms used in the instrument. They also made corrections on grammatical expressions where necessary. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated in producing the final version of the instrument.

To determine the validity indices, the ratings of the two experts on the relevance and clarity of the items were computed. The logical validity indices for the Conflict Management Questionnaire section were 0.88 and 0.84, with a consensus validity index of 0.86. Similarly, the logical validity indices for the Influence of Group Counselling section were 0.80 and 0.84, with a consensus validity index of 0.82. These indices indicated that the instrument was suitable for data collection.

After the validation of the instrument, a pilot study of the instrument was conducted. It was administered on 30 community's leader's farmers and herders in another Local Government Area that did not participate in the main study but with similar characteristics as the sample of the study. Item reliability analysis was conducted to ensure reliability of the instrument. Cronbach alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. Conflict management questionnaire yielded coefficient index of 0.78 while influence of group counselling skill yielded 0.84

The researcher obtained introduction letter from the office of the Head of Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. In order to obtain the statutory approval, the researcher took the letter of introduction to the appropriate authority in the selected LGA. The researcher went to the localities for distribution of the questionnaire to the selected communities leaders, farmers and herders. In order to ensure that all the participants submit the questionnaire, the researcher ensured that participants filled and submit the questionnaire immediately.

This gave a 100% return rate. The administration and collection of the instrument was done within 2-weeks. After the collection of the questionnaire, the researcher gave verbal appreciation to the participants for their assistance and support. This questionnaire was analyzed to answer the research questions and test the stated null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

In order to analyse the data collected the result of the study, the researcher used both descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis. The descriptive statistics of mean and

standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, and one sample t-test used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis and Results

Research Question One: What is the influence of group counselling in facilitating mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management between communities clashes and farmers herders' crisis in Nasarawa state?

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics on the influence of group counseling on mutual understanding.*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Try to negotiate and adopt a give and take approach to problem situation.	1.5066	.50061	381
Prefer to compromise when solving problems and just move on	2.1969	1.06652	381
To break deadlocks, I would meet people half way	2.3176	2.43471	381
Most a times I try not to be unreasonable over issues that can be solved together	2.2992	1.49551	381
I try to accommodate the wishes of others in finding lasting solution to a problem other means	2.0472	1.07746	381

The results reveals that all the items had means scores of 1.51,2.20,2.32,.2.30, and 2.05 with responding standard deviation of 0.50,1.07,2.43,1.50 and 1.08 respectively. Based on the criteria for decision making, it means that all the items were rated below the cut-off point the cluster mean of 2.07 was below the cut-off point of 2.50. This suggests that the respondents that is both the communities and farmers herders have the same opinion about mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management.

To answer the research question, the mean scores of communities' clashes and farmers' herders on group counselling and mutual understanding were examined and result is presented.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management among communities clashes, farmers and herder crisis in Nasarawa state.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics in the influence of group counselling on effective communication.*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I communicate in a very clear language to convey messages to others	2.3359	1.06529	384
I try as much as possible to avoid technical jargon in my communication with others	2.3594	1.665550	384
To facilitate effective communication, I try to use gesticulation for better understanding in conflict resolution	2.0573	1.16155	384
I try as much as possible to be active listener when resolving conflicts	2.1797	1.12019	384
I am empathetic and respectful when trying to find solution to conflicts	2.0729	1.80799	384
Cluster Mean	2.2312		

Table 2 reveals that all the items had mean scores of 2.34, 2.36, 2.06, 2.18, and 2.07 with corresponding standard deviation of 1.07, 1.67, 1.16, 1.12 and 1.81 respectively. Based on the criteria for decision making, it means that all the items were rated below the cut-off point of 2.50. The cluster mean of 2.23 was also below the cut-off point of 2.50. This suggests that the respondents that is both the, communities clashes farmers and herders have the same opinion about effective Clash and communication as a conflict resolution management.

To answer the research question, the mean scores of communities' clashes and farmer's herders on group counselling and effective communication were considered and the result is presented in table 3.

Table 3: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Effective Communication and Group Counselling*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Group Counselling	384	2.1120	1.04742	.05345
Effective Communication	384	2.0677	1.08664	.05545

Table 3 shows that the mean score of 2.07 for effective communication is less than the mean score of group counselling which is 2.11. Thus, it can be concluded that group counselling has influence in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management among Communities clash and farmer herder crises in Nasarawa State.

Research Question Three: What is the influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a conflict resolution management among communities' farmer and herder crises in Nasarawa State?

Table 4: *Descriptive Statistics on the influence of group counselling on facilitating collaboration Item Statistics*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
I explore issues with others to find solutions that meets everyone's needs	1.5170	1.48581	383
When there is a disagreement, I gather as much information as I can to keep the lines of Communication	1.9817	1.08641	383
I try to see conflicts from both sides	2.1932	1.13454	383
I tend to work together with others to arrive at solutions to a problem than either of us individually	2.1984	1.08647	383
I'm always willing to hear opinion of others first before giving mine	2.1410	1.08583	383
Cluster Mean	2.1806		

Table 4 indicates that all the items had mean scores of 1.51, 1.98, 2.19, 2.20 and 2.14 with corresponding standard deviation of 1.48, 1.09, 1.13, 1.09 and 1.01 respectively. Based on the criteria for decision making, it means that all the items were rated below the cut-off point of 2.50. The cluster mean of 2.23 was also below, the cut-off point of 2.50.

This suggests that the respondents from the communities' leaders and farmers' herders have the same opinion about collaboration as a conflict resolution management.

To answer the research question, the mean scores of communities' farmers, and herders on group counselling and facilitating collaboration were considered and the result is presented in table 4.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of group counselling in facilitating

mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management between communities clashes and farmer herder crises in Nasarawa State.

Table 5: *The t-test of influence of group counselling in facilitating mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management among communities, farmer and herder crises in Nasarawa State.*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig
Group Counselling	384	2.0990	1.10805	383	37.120	.000
Mutual Understanding	384	2.1120	1.04742			

It could be seen from table 7 that the value of $t = 37.12$. This value is significant because $t = 37.12$; $df = 383$; $p = 0.00 < 0.05$. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld that there is a significant influence of group counselling in facilitating Communities Clash mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management between, communities clashes, farmer and herder crises Nasarawa State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant influence of group counselling in promoting effective Communities Clash communication as a conflict resolution management between farmer and herder crises in Nasarawa State.

Table 6: *The t-test of influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management among communities' clashes farmer and herder crises in Nasarawa State.*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig
Group Counselling	384	2.1120	1.04742	384	39.512	.000
Effective Communication	383	2.2422	1.18131			

Evidence from Table 8 reveals that the value of $t = 39.512$. This value is significant because $t = 39.512$; $df = 383$; $p = 0.00 < 0.05$. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld that there is a significant influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management between, communities clashes and farmer herder crises in Nasarawa State.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant influence of group counselling in facilitating Communities clash and collaboration as a conflict resolution management

between farmer and herder crises in Nasarawa State.

Table 7: *The t-test of influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a conflict resolution management between communities' clashes farmer and herder crises in Nasarawa State.*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig
Group Counselling	384	2.1120	1.04742	384	39.512	.000
Effective Communication	383	2.2422	1.18131			

Evidence from Table 9 reveals that the value of $t = 39.512$. This value is significant because $t = 39.512$; $df = 383$; $p = 0.00 < 0.05$. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld that there is a significant influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a conflict resolution management between communities clashes and farmer herder crises in Nasarawa State.

Summary of Findings

Based on the results of data analyses, the following findings emerged:

- i. There is a significant influence of group counselling in facilitating mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management between communities, farmer, and herder crises in Nasarawa State.
- ii. There is a significant influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management between communities, farmer, and herder crises in Nasarawa State.
- iii. There is a significant influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a conflict resolution management between farmer and herder crises in Nasarawa State.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study from the result of data analysis with respect to answering of research question and testing of the hypothesis is that there is a significant influence of counselling in facilitating mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management between Communities, farmer and herder crises in Nasarawa state. This result corroborates the findings of Johnson (2021) who found out that there was a significant impact of group counselling in fostering mutual Communities understanding among the communities. Also, there was no significant difference between communities, farmer and herder mutual understanding as a result of group counselling.

This result is in line with the finding of Audu, Ali and Pur (2017) that showed that

group counselling had significant effect on the attitudes of Communities, farmed herders towards, mutual understanding. Also, the finding of this study is in tandem with the finding of Oluwa (2018) which revealed that, there is a significant influence of group counselling on attitudes Communities, farmer, herders towards mutual understanding in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

The second finding of this study is that, there is a significant influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management between Communities, farmer and herder crises in Nasarawa State. This result is in agreement with the finding of Wang et al (2020) that revealed that group psychological counselling is of great significance to improve communication of College students. Also, the finding of Martin and Nakayama (2012) study revealed that there is a significant influence of group counselling on communication among Communities in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Lastly, this study found out that, there is a significant influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a conflict resolution management between, farmers and herders crises in Nasarawa State. This result is in support of the findings of many scholars such as Rahim (2022) who conducted a study in South-Western Nigeria with the objective physical Communities Clash farmer and herders in environment and collaborating behaviours of community's clashes and farmers and herders.

The study results revealed that, there was a significant relationship between the community's physical environment and Community's understanding that collaborating behaviours and also collaborating hindered community's understanding that could lead to Peace harmony. Also, in Ondo state Nigeria, Gengu, (2014) conducted a study Communities with the objective of examining the influence of group counselling on collaboration and communities in selected communities. The study revealed a significant relationship between collaboration and communities in some selected communities within the state. In Ondo State, Nigeria. Similarly Suhaila, Heyam, Naifa and Wafa' (2020) in their study aiming to identifying the effect of group counselling programme in enhancing the ability to form collaboration among a sample of academically talented students at Halima Al-Saadia secondary School in Jordan. The finding of the study showed that increasing the level of forming collaboration among the participants of the experimental group compared with the control group, with

Also there were no statistical difference in the experimental group means due to the birth order in the effectiveness of the programme, and a persistent effect of the programme after-three weeks follow up.

There is a significant influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a Communities, conflict resolution management between communities clashes and farmers herders crises in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Conclusion

In view of the finding of this study, it is hereby concluded that group counselling plays significant influence in conflict resolution management through mutual understanding, effective communication and collaboration between farmers and herders crises in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of this study, the following are recommended:-

1. Different opinions as expressed by both the Communities Leaders, farmers, and farmers should be collated without showing preference to any group, and all the parties should be encouraged to understand and agree on all issues presented.
2. Channels of communication should always be kept open for all to make their views heard, both verbal and non-verbal communication cues should be watched out.
3. In order to achieve lasting solution to the crises between farmers and herders, communities leaders and stakeholders should from time to time come together in discussing issues of concerned to all collaboratively.

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FOR CONSTRUCTIVE OUTCOMES

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Abstract

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, yet its outcomes can vary dramatically depending on how individuals manage their emotions during tense exchanges. This paper examines the crucial role of emotional self-regulation in conflict situations and offers practical strategies to channel emotions toward constructive resolutions rather than destructive escalation. Drawing from psychological theories, communication studies, and conflict resolution frameworks, the paper identifies key techniques such as mindfulness, emotional awareness, reframing, and assertive communication. By examining real-life scenarios and evidence-based practices, this paper highlights how individuals can transform emotionally charged conflicts into opportunities for growth, understanding, and stronger relationships. The findings underscore the importance of cultivating emotional intelligence as a foundational skill for navigating conflicts productively in personal, professional, and social contexts.

Keywords: Managing Personal Emotions, Conflicts, Constructive Outcomes

Introduction

Conflict is a natural and often necessary part of human relationships, occurring when individuals or groups perceive incompatible goals, interests, or values. While conflict itself is neither inherently good nor bad, how it is managed determines whether it becomes destructive or constructive. Emotions lie at the heart of conflict; unmanaged anger, fear, or frustration can intensify disagreements, whereas self-awareness and emotional control can lead to productive dialogue and solutions.

In a world where interactions are increasingly complex and diverse, understanding how to manage personal emotions during conflict is crucial. This paper explores the role of emotions in conflict dynamics and presents practical strategies that individuals can adopt to navigate disagreements constructively. Furthermore, Conflict often arises from differences in needs, perspectives, and communication styles. According to Fisher and Ury (2021), conflict is inevitable because people have diverse interests and limited resources. However, the presence of conflict does not necessarily imply hostility; rather, it can offer opportunities for growth and innovation when handled constructively (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2022).

Emotions strongly influence how conflicts unfold. Positive emotions such as empathy and compassion can foster understanding, while negative emotions such as anger, resentment, or fear can escalate disagreements into destructive confrontations (Bodenhausen, 2021). For example, unmanaged anger can lead to impulsive reactions, name-calling, or withdrawal, which hinder problem-solving and damage relationships (Gross, 2022). In addition, Researchers emphasize that emotional awareness is fundamental in conflict management. Goleman (2019) popularized the concept of emotional intelligence (EI), which involves recognising and regulating one's own emotions and understanding the emotions of others. High EI enables individuals to stay calm under pressure, listen actively, and communicate effectively, all of which are essential in conflict resolution (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2024).

Conflicts often trigger strong emotional reactions because they challenge individuals' sense of identity, values, and needs. According to Rosenberg (2023), unmet needs are at the core of most conflicts, and people often express their frustration in ways that blame or criticize others. This blame-oriented communication can create defensiveness and escalate disputes. Also, Emotional triggers vary among individuals. What angers one person may not affect another in the same way. Factors such as past experiences, cultural norms, and personality traits shape how people perceive and react to conflict (Markus &

Kitayama, 2021). For instance, individuals from collectivist cultures may avoid open confrontation to maintain group harmony, while those from individualistic cultures may view direct expression of disagreement as honest and necessary (Ting-Toomey, 2019).

Self-awareness is therefore critical. People who understand their emotional triggers are better equipped to pause and choose thoughtful responses rather than reacting impulsively (Segal, Smith, & Robinson, 2023). Techniques such as mindfulness and reflection can help individuals identify what emotions they are feeling, why they feel that way, and how those emotions influence their behaviour during conflicts (Kabat-Zinn, 2023). Therefore, to handle conflicts constructively, individuals can adopt several evidence-based strategies that build emotional intelligence and promote positive communication.

Firstly, active listening is crucial. By focusing on understanding the other person's perspective without immediately judging or interrupting, people create space for constructive dialogue (Rogers & Farson, 1957). This approach reduces defensiveness and encourages mutual problem-solving.

Secondly, self-regulation techniques such as deep breathing, taking breaks, or using calming self-talk can help individuals manage strong emotions like anger or anxiety (Gross, 2022). These techniques allow people to respond rather than react, making it more likely that disagreements will remain respectful and solutions-focused.

Thirdly, reframing the situation can shift the focus from personal attacks to shared interests. Fisher and Ury (2021) advocate for principled negotiation, which involves separating people from the problem and focusing on underlying interests rather than rigid positions. This approach encourages empathy and creativity in finding win-win solutions.

Research on conflict resolution consistently highlights the central role of emotions. According to Mayer (2020), emotions are often the driving force behind conflicts, influencing how people interpret situations and respond to perceived threats. Goleman (1995) introduced the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and those of others. High EI has been linked to better conflict management skills (Jordan & Troth, 2024). Moreover, Thomas and Kilmann's (1974) Conflict Mode Instrument describes different styles of conflict management competing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating each influenced by an individual's emotional tendencies and coping mechanisms. Recent studies emphasize the benefits of mindfulness and emotional regulation in de-escalating conflicts (Kabat-Zinn, 2023). These findings emphasize that while conflict management techniques are important, success largely depends on one's capacity to handle their own emotional

responses during tense interactions.

Finally, building emotional resilience through regular practice of mindfulness and self-reflection can strengthen individuals' ability to stay centred during conflict (David, 2016). Organizations and educational institutions are increasingly recognizing the value of training people in emotional intelligence skills to improve teamwork, leadership, and conflict resolution (Cherniss, 2010).

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, but it does not have to be destructive. Emotions play a central role in shaping how conflicts emerge and develop. By cultivating emotional intelligence and practicing self-awareness, active listening, self-regulation, and constructive communication, individuals can transform potentially harmful conflicts into opportunities for growth, understanding, and stronger relationships.

Understanding one's own emotions and those of others is not an innate skill for everyone but can be developed with practice and intention. As our world becomes more interconnected and diverse, learning to navigate emotions in conflict situations is not just a personal benefit but a societal necessity.

Strategies for Managing Personal Emotions

Effectively managing personal emotions during conflict requires intentional practice and a combination of strategies that enhance self-awareness, promote self-regulation, and encourage constructive communication. The following strategies are evidence-based approaches that individuals can adopt to navigate conflict with greater emotional intelligence.

1. Developing Emotional Awareness

The first and perhaps most foundational step in managing emotions is developing emotional awareness. This means recognizing and accurately identifying emotions as they arise, understanding their triggers, and acknowledging how they influence one's thoughts and behaviors (Goleman, 1995). Many people struggle to articulate what they are feeling in the moment, which can lead to misdirected frustration or defensive behaviour.

Practical techniques for cultivating emotional awareness include journaling about daily emotional experiences, which helps individuals detect patterns over time (Pennebaker, 1997). Self-reflection through quiet contemplation or guided prompts can deepen understanding of the underlying needs and fears that fuel strong emotional reactions. In addition, seeking constructive feedback from trusted friends, mentors, or therapists can provide new perspectives and reveal emotional blind spots that may not be obvious to the individual (Segal, Smith, & Robinson, 2023).

2. Practicing Mindfulness

Mindfulness is another powerful strategy for regulating emotions during conflict. Mindfulness involves paying deliberate attention to one's present-moment experience without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). By learning to observe thoughts and feelings with curiosity rather than immediately reacting to them, individuals can reduce emotional reactivity and respond to conflict situations with greater calm and clarity.

Studies have shown that mindfulness practices, such as mindful breathing, body scans, and meditation, can lower stress, decrease rumination, and increase self-compassion (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009). When people view emotions as transient mental states rather than fixed truths, they become less likely to be overwhelmed by anger or defensiveness in the heat of disagreement. Over time, this mindful perspective can help individuals stay grounded and engaged, even during challenging conversations.

3. Cognitive Reframing

Cognitive reframing, or cognitive restructuring, is a technique rooted in cognitive-behavioral therapy that helps individuals shift how they interpret conflict situations (Beck, 2011). Often, conflicts escalate because individuals perceive disagreements as threats to their self-worth, competence, or values. By consciously challenging negative or rigid thoughts, people can adopt more balanced, constructive perspectives.

For example, instead of interpreting a colleague's curt comment as a personal insult, one might reframe it as a sign of the colleague's stress or workload pressure. This shift in perspective can reduce emotional intensity and open space for empathy and solution-focused dialogue (Gross, 2002). Reframing a conflict as an opportunity for learning or collaboration also encourages individuals to approach disagreements with curiosity rather than defensiveness.

4. Using Assertive Communication

Communication style plays a critical role in emotional regulation during conflict. Assertive communication enables individuals to express their feelings, needs, and perspectives honestly and respectfully without resorting to passive or aggressive behaviours (Alberti & Emmons, 2008). One practical technique for assertive communication is the use of "I" statements. Rather than blaming or accusing, "I" statements focus on the speaker's own experience such as saying, "I feel frustrated when meetings start late because it affects my schedule," instead of "You're always late and inconsiderate." This approach reduces the likelihood of defensive responses and keeps the conversation focused on problem-solving rather than blame (Rosenberg, 2003). Also, assertiveness involves active listening, maintaining open body language, and setting clear

boundaries when needed. These skills help de-escalate conflict and foster an atmosphere of mutual respect.

5. Taking a Break When Needed

Sometimes, the best strategy for managing intense emotions is to temporarily remove oneself from the situation. Taking a break does not mean avoiding the conflict altogether but rather creating a necessary pause to prevent impulsive outbursts or harmful exchanges (Gottman & Silver, 1999). Short breaks give individuals time to cool down physically and emotionally, allowing the rational part of the brain to regain control over reactive impulses (Sapolsky, 2004). Techniques such as stepping outside for fresh air, practicing deep breathing, or engaging in a brief physical activity can help restore composure. Once both parties have calmed down, they are more likely to return to the conversation with a collaborative mindset and a willingness to find common ground.

Practical Applications

Conflict is an unavoidable part of life, whether it arises at work, at home, or within the wider community. The way individuals and groups manage their emotions during conflicts can determine whether disagreements escalate into lasting damage or transform into opportunities for growth and understanding. By applying principles of emotional awareness, regulation, and constructive communication, people can address conflicts more productively and build healthier environments across different areas of life.

Workplace Conflicts

In professional settings, unmanaged emotions can severely disrupt operations and interpersonal dynamics. When employees and managers fail to regulate anger, frustration, or anxiety, the resulting conflicts can erode trust and teamwork. Common signs of emotional mismanagement at work include gossip, passive-aggressive behaviour, frequent arguments, and high levels of absenteeism. Over time, these patterns can reduce productivity, lower morale, and contribute to high employee turnover, costing organizations valuable time and resources. To address this, many companies are investing in emotional intelligence (EI) training for their staff. Emotional intelligence equips employees with the skills to recognize and understand their own emotions, empathize with colleagues, and communicate more effectively during stressful situations. For example, leaders who are trained in EI are better able to manage their own stress and respond calmly when tensions rise.

However, Conflict resolution workshops are another practical approach. These trainings provide employees with tools to handle disagreements constructively, such as

active listening, reframing language to avoid blame, and finding mutually acceptable solutions. Implementing regular team-building exercises and clear channels for open communication can further reduce misunderstandings and resentment.

Additionally, mindfulness programs are becoming popular in the corporate world. Mindfulness practices, such as brief meditation breaks or guided breathing exercises, help employees ground themselves in the present moment and approach problems with greater clarity and calmness. Many workplaces now offer quiet spaces for employees to decompress or provide access to mindfulness apps as part of their wellness programs. Organizations that foster a culture of emotional awareness and healthy conflict management often see tangible results: improved collaboration, higher job satisfaction, and a more resilient workforce capable of navigating inevitable challenges.

Family and Relationship Conflicts

Conflicts within families and intimate relationships are often the most emotionally charged because they involve deep bonds, personal histories, and unresolved patterns from the past. Disagreements over finances, parenting styles, household responsibilities, or in-laws can easily escalate if emotions are not recognized and managed thoughtfully.

A practical starting point for managing these conflicts is establishing ground rules for respectful communication. Partners and family members can agree not to interrupt each other during discussions, to avoid insults or name-calling, and to focus on the issue at hand rather than dredging up old grievances. These agreements can help keep conversations constructive, even when the topic is sensitive.

When discussions become too heated, taking time-outs can be invaluable. A time-out gives everyone involved a chance to cool down, reflect on their emotions, and return to the conversation with a clearer mindset. It's important that time-outs are used as a tool for de-escalation rather than avoidance—setting a clear time to resume the discussion helps ensure the issue is actually addressed. For deeper or recurring conflicts, couples or family counselling can provide a safe and neutral space to unpack underlying issues. A trained therapist can help family members identify triggers, practice healthy emotional expression, and develop new patterns of interaction. Support groups for parents, partners, or caregivers can also be useful, offering shared experiences and practical advice for managing conflicts that arise from shared stressors.

Mindfulness techniques, such as deep breathing or guided reflection, can help individuals pause before reacting impulsively during an argument. Over time, these practices can shift the family dynamic from reactive to responsive, fostering greater

understanding and empathy among all members.

Community and Social Conflicts

Conflicts are not limited to private spaces they also arise in neighbourhoods, schools, local governments, and broader social settings. When communities face disputes over resources, cultural differences, or political beliefs, strong emotions often run high, making resolution more challenging but also more essential. Community leaders and mediators play a critical role in managing collective emotions and setting the tone for constructive dialogue. They can model emotional regulation by remaining calm under pressure, acknowledging the emotions of all parties, and guiding discussions away from blame and toward shared interests. For example, a community mediator might begin a town hall meeting by validating residents' frustrations about a controversial development project, then steer the conversation toward practical solutions that address as many concerns as possible.

Organizing facilitated dialogue sessions can help community members express their feelings in a safe and structured environment. Ground rules such as listening without interrupting, using "I" statements rather than accusations, and seeking common ground encourage participants to understand different perspectives rather than entrenching their own positions. These methods are particularly valuable in diverse communities where cultural misunderstandings can quickly escalate into hostility if left unaddressed.

Schools and youth organizations can also teach young people emotional management and conflict resolution skills early on. Programs that focus on social-emotional learning (SEL) help students recognize their own emotions, practice empathy, and develop communication skills they will carry into adulthood. When young people learn how to navigate disagreements calmly and respectfully, they contribute to more resilient and harmonious communities.

At a broader level, community initiatives that promote connection such as neighborhood events, volunteer opportunities, or open forums build trust and reduce the likelihood that conflicts will become destructive. When people know each other and have positive shared experiences, they are more willing to work through differences cooperatively.

Conclusion

Emotions are powerful forces that shape the trajectory of conflicts. Learning to recognize, understand, and manage personal emotions is essential for transforming potential disputes into opportunities for understanding, collaboration, and growth. By

cultivating emotional intelligence and applying practical strategies such as mindfulness, reframing, and assertive communication, individuals can navigate conflicts with greater confidence and skill, contributing to healthier relationships and communities. Whether in the workplace, at home, or in the community, unmanaged emotions can turn everyday disagreements into major conflicts with long-lasting consequences. However, by prioritizing emotional intelligence, clear communication, and practical conflict resolution skills, individuals and groups can navigate conflicts more constructively. Organizations benefit from healthier cultures and stronger teams, families strengthen their bonds through mutual understanding, and communities become more united and resilient. In all contexts, the key is the same: recognizing emotions not as obstacles, but as vital information that, when understood and managed well, can transform conflict from a destructive force into an opportunity for growth, connection, and positive change.

Suggestions

1. Incorporate more recent studies (2020–2024) on emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and intercultural conflict resolution to give the paper stronger academic grounding and show awareness of current debates.
2. Add short real-life scenarios (e.g., workplace, classroom, or family conflicts) to illustrate how emotional regulation strategies can be applied in everyday situations.
3. Strengthen the link between emotional intelligence theory, conflict resolution models (e.g., Thomas & Kilmann), and mindfulness approaches to give the paper a clear conceptual foundation.
4. Use a table or figure comparing different conflict management styles and how emotions influence them. This will make the paper more engaging and easier for readers to grasp key distinctions.
5. Go beyond summarizing and recommend how schools, organizations, or communities could adopt emotional intelligence training to reduce destructive conflicts and build resilience.

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COUNSELLOR'S PRACTICE AND MARITAL CONFLICTS RESOLUTION AMONG MARRIED COUPLES IN OBIO/AKPOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the counsellor's practice and marital conflicts resolution among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. Four objectives and four research questions guided the study. Descriptive research design was used for the study. The population for the study was made up of all counsellors and married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. A sample of 20 counsellors and 200 married couples using accidental sampling technique. The study used self-formulated questionnaire. The question was titled: Role of Counsellors in Marital Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (RSWMARQ). Mean was used to answer the research questions. The findings amongst others revealed that strengthening couple's relationship, avoid divorce, identify causes of the problem, setting goals for couples and helping couples to overcome their challenges are roles of counsellors in curbing marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State. The result also revealed that choosing one issue at a time, brainstorming with couples, agreeing on the solution, listening to each other and follow up are the intervention strategies in curbing marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State. Based on the findings it was recommended that counsellors should establish conflict resolution centres in their various units as this will help reduce the rate of marital conflict among couples.

Keywords: Counsellors, marital conflict, conflict resolution, interventions, strategies

Introduction

Conflict among humans is unavoidable, marriage and other intimate relationships are no exception. The diverse and frequent interactions among groups and individuals provide

a limitless platform for conflict. The term connotes an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, or interference from the other party in achieving their goals (Ezinyi, 2021). One of the major reasons that draw the attention of researchers and social organizations to conflict in recent times is its adverse consequences on health, family life, and the stability of communities. An important area of conflict in human settings is marriage. Marriage is a stage of transition in one's life, it is usually perceived that marriage in a healthy way may promote satisfaction and couples in this regard are into an institution with a thought to start affection (Meyers, 2019).

The philosophy of marriage varies according to different people and culture, but it is principally an institution in which interpersonal relationships, usually intimate and sexual, are acknowledged. In this context, Meyers (2019) opined that marriage is something deeper than the mere union of a man and a woman under the same roof. But he perceives marriage as a sacred and a permanent contract which is assumed to be enacted when two people decide on their own accord and in the presence of at least two witnesses, to exchange the formal consent to live a life of vocation of love and sharing for the purpose of promoting their mutual growth and welfare as persons in their journey together through life.

However, people marry for different reasons including legal, social, libidinal, emotional, financial, spiritual, and religious. It is known to involve male and female (different sex) but since 2000, some countries like Brazil, Denmark, Argentina, and Canada have legalized same-sex marriage within their jurisdictions.

In every family, conflict is inevitable. Conflict resolution refers to the ability of couple to tolerate each other when they differ in their opinions. Despite the disagreement in their opinions, they are expected to be patient and accommodate one another for their common good. Many families today hardly manage marital conflicts. This has caused some setback probably as a result of lack of marital counselling. Marital counselling is expected to help the troubled couples to resolve their conflicts amicably. Gottman (2022) posited that no matter how hard two people try to love and please each other, they might fail. Their failure can lead to hurting their relationship. The only ultimate relief for hurt is the soothing salve of forgiveness. This can be done or achieved through marital counselling. Partners with fewer areas of difference and incompatibility have more successful relationships. Most people would answer true, but this is at least a partial misconception. All couples have areas of difference and incompatibility to greater and lesser degrees. (Baucom, et al., 2023). Everyone knows that opposite attracts. Differences

can be very interesting and stimulating in one's partner. People seek partners who can complement their style with some of their strengths. The socially active partner brings something valuable to a relationship with the partner whose interests are more domestic, and vice versa.

Marriage is a process by which man and woman who initially love each other make their relationship public, official and permanent. It begins with a ceremony known as wedding during which the couple are formally united. It is the joining of the two people in bond that putatively last till death for both religious and socio-cultural belief, but in practice is increasingly cut short by divorce and separation. In essence, lack of the initial affection among couples result in marital conflict, although no marriage is free of conflict. According to Anaya (2003), minor conflict is a normal and even healthy part of a relationship; since relationship conflict are inevitable learning to deal with them in a respectful and positive way provides opportunity for growth and ultimately strengthens the bond between the couples if they are ready to work for it. This invites for marital conflict resolution skills training among the couples.

All healthy marriage experience change and transition, changes in terms of personalities, body's age and romantic love waxes and wanes. When adults are in love, the focus is on the positive, noticing and emphasizing the assets, good qualities and talents of the object ours has, while minimizing the short comings -areas. This moment when all elements are fit in perfectly with each other, it is only temporary, not sustainable for a long period of time. Something can interferes with this process, lovers may hurt and insensitive to feelings, or show an aspect of their personality that jars and conflict with the earlier view , then the sense of unity and deep connection that existed before get threatened.

If couples allow differences to disrupt the sense of mutuality in a relationship, lead to disinvestments or lives that are too separate, that is big trouble. When couples split up, they often attribute it to overwhelming incompatibility. They become overwhelmed by their differences, not just because they have them, but because they never learned to manage them constructively. Many couples are blindsided by their differences as their relationship advances beyond the more exclusively romantic early stages, because they never systematically explored their expectations and differences and adopted strategies to accommodate them. Couples, who understand, prepare and plan for their areas of incompatibility are less disconcerted and generally fare better. They have more realistic expectations and know what they are signing on for.

When two people come together in marriage, conflict is bound to happen because each person has had different life experience, and undoubtedly has different expectations

of marriage from his or her spouse therefore each person is going to react differently to life challenges. Marriage as an institution is a universal phenomenon, a vital role in the society and life itself. However, No matter how much love the individuals involved have for each other, it is natural that they will from time to time experience conflict which may be as a result of difference in opinion, values, needs, desires and disagreements are inevitable in every close relationship, including the newly married couples. It is a normal part of married life, and some degree of it is actually necessary you keep a marriage dynamite rather than static.

From the onset, virtually all the couples want their marriages to succeed, unfortunately, some marriages have ran into trouble and not all the couples were able to salvage their hopes and dreams for this reason marriage has been said to be a very difficult task. It brings both joy and excruciating pain. A strong and loving marriage is a source of great happiness in life and also a valuable resource during the difficult times, while a problematic one can be so devastating in many aspects. Marriage is the first institution in the world, also the oldest and it is said to be an arrangement of social structure which results in the establishment of a legal relationship, customary or religious between a man and a woman for the procreation and sharing in various degrees of other acceptable relationship norms (Ofoegbu 2002). Ordu (2006) asserted that in time past, people do not go into marriage with hurry without the approval from both parents. Much of the researches conducted on marital conflict proved that marital conflicts are very common among couples especially during the first six months to one year of their marriage.

In Nigeria, counsellors play a vital role in marital conflict resolution by providing a safe space for couples to communicate, understand each other's perspectives, and develop healthy conflict-resolution strategies. They act as mediators, helping couples identify the root causes of their conflicts, improve communication, and build stronger relationships. A counsellor is said to be a professional who focuses on enhancing the overall well-being of the general population assisting to meet the basis and complex needs of individuals, community or the vulnerable. They contribute greatly to the care, support and promotion of human rights as well as empowerment of the vulnerable population.

The expertise of the profession of counselling is its ability to understand the person-in-environment. This is clearly seen in counselling's history of intervention with individuals and their marriages. Conflict is a universal and inevitable part of human existence in other words, conflict is like one's shadow and no one can run away from it. And it is also known as a normal part of marriage.

Marital conflict is the existence of high level of disagreement, stressful and hostile

interactions between spouses, disrespect and verbal abuse. It can stem out of unmet needs, wants and desires that is, when one person's needs or wants something badly enough, without consideration for the capabilities, plans or goals of his spouse and the other person is unable to meet that need, resentment grows and the situation will ripe for open conflict. Martsin, (2022) opined that marital conflict is associated with poorer health, with important family outcomes, including poor parenting, poor adjustment of children increased likelihood of parent-child conflict, and conflict between siblings.

Conflict resolution is intrinsically not aimed at conflict prevention but to ensure that its occurrence does not threaten the fundamental basis of human existence. It can be defined as an outcome in which the issues in an existing conflict are satisfactorily dealt with through a solution that is mutually acceptable to the parties. In terms of finality, when the parties to a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement, and the conflict is resolved in a true sense.

By conflict resolution, it is expected that the deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed and resolved, and behaviour is no longer violent, nor are attributes hostile any longer, while the structure of the conflict has been changed (Best, 2016).

Mediation is a dynamic, structured, interactive process where an impartial third party assists disputing parties in resolving conflict through the use of specialized communication and negotiation techniques. In other words, mediation is a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) resolving disputes between two or more parties with concrete effects (Suifan, Alhyari & Sweis, 2019). It is focused primarily upon the needs, rights, and interests of the parties. Based on this, a mediator uses a wide variety of techniques to guide the process in a constructive direction and to help the parties find their optimal solution. Consequently, mediation is similar to seeking a third opinion based on the mediator's perceived experience or expertise and reverence accorded to him or her by the disputing parties looking for a solution. Mediation must be free and fair, which implies that disputants must engage in the mediation of their own free will and consider the mediator's "judgement" to be fair; that is not favoring any party. The so-called judgement is not binding; hence it is a voluntary process (Hasan, 2022).

In a nutshell, mediation is one of the principles in counselling practice; A counsellor who is not using mediation, would not be able to achieve a professional result! The reconciliatory move, reconciliatory step, reconciliatory methods presupposes that you are a problem solving person.

Be that as it may, irrespective of the variation and nature (including physical or naked warfare), conflict has usually made the world unsafe for human beings. Hence there

is a need for effective means of conflict resolution for peaceful coexistence in marriage. Hence, the focus of this research was to investigate counsellor's practice and resolution of marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor, Rivers State.

There is need to unravel the immediate causes of marital conflict among married couples in the society and also practices of counsellors in resolution of conflict so as to eliminate or reduce the increasing existence of unsuccessful marital relationship and divorce in Nigeria. Hence marital conflict include: conflicting desires, sin of one spouse, known versus unknown problems, immaturity or brokenness of one person, desire of one person versus the needs of the relationship.

These ills have contributed a lot of problems not only to the people involved, but to the society at large which need to be tackled urgently before it will get out of hand, for this problem to be solved.

It is based on this that the researcher as a counsellor under took the investigation on counselors' practice in marital conflict resolution among married couples in Obio/ Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State was carried out.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to investigate counsellor's practice and marital conflicts resolution among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. Specifically, this study:

1. Examine the causes of marital conflict among married couple in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. Investigated the consequences of marital conflict in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
3. Found out the intervention strategies in curbing marital conflict in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
4. Highlighted the roles of counsellors in curbing marital conflict among married couple in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered

1. What are the causes of marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor LGA?
2. What are the implications of marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor LGA?
3. What are the intervention strategies in curbing marital conflict among married couples

in Obio/Akpor LGA?

4. What are the roles of counsellors in curbing marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor LGA?

Methodology

The design for the study is descriptive survey design. According to Nwankwo (2016), descriptive survey design is that in which the researcher collects data from a large sample drawn from a given population and describes certain features of the sample as they are at the time of the study and which are of interest to the researcher, however without manipulating any independent variables of the study. This study centred only on counsellors and marital conflicts in Obio/Akpor of Rivers State. The population of this study comprises all counsellors and married couples in Obio/Akpor, Rivers State. This is estimated to be 66 counsellors and 26,324 married couples. Accidental sampling technique was used to draw the sample for the study. This aided the researcher since counsellors are not readily available everywhere.

The sample consisted of 20 counsellors and 200 couples were randomly selected. The counsellors were selected from University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital, Psychiatric Hospital, Rumuigbo and Ministry of social welfare, Rivers state. The study used self-formulated questionnaire that was divided into two sections. The question was titled: Role of Counsellors in Marital Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (RSWMARQ). Sections A-Information on the respondents' geographical data, section B comprises of the items designed to sort out roles of counsellors. The respondents responded to the items as follows; strongly agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD). The researcher used mean score to analyze all the research questions.

Results

This section present the result of data analysis based on the four research questions that guided the study. Two hundred copies of questionnaires were given to the respondents and were all collected at a spot.

Research Question one: What are the causes of marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor LGA?

Table 1: *Causes of marital conflict among married couples*

S/N	Items	A 4	SA 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Lack of communication is one of the major causes of conflict in marriage	80	30	50	40	200	2.75	0.19	Agreed
2.	Conflict in marriage arises when one of the partner is sexually dissatisfied	50	100	30	20	200	2.90	1.02	Agreed
3.	The prime cause of conflict among married couples lies in lack of finance.	70	110	10	10	200	3.20	0.99	Agreed
4	Infidelity is the most hurtful and heart wrecking aspect of marital conflict.	100	80	15	5	200	3.38	0.64	Agreed
5.	In-laws and relation interference have a negative effects of marriage.	30	90	30	50	200	2.50	0.82	Agreed
Grand Mean							2.95		

In Table 1, item 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 with mean value of 2.75, 2.90, 3.20, 3.38 and 2.50 respectively were agreed as causes of marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor LGA. Their value was up to the criterion mean of 2.5. Therefore lack of communication, sexual dissatisfaction, lack of finance, infidelity and in-laws-interference are the various causes of marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State.

Research Question Two: What are the implications of marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State?

Table 2: *Implications of marital conflict among married couples*

S/N	Items	A 4	SA 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean	SD	Decision
6.	Marital conflict result to depression	80	95	10	15	200	3.20	0.22	Agreed
7.	Anxiety in marriage is as a result of marital conflict	30	150	10	10	200	3.00	0.34	Agreed
8.	When there is conflict in marriage it can cause eating disorder	30	80	50	40	200	2.50	1.99	Agreed
9.	Marital conflict leads to divorce	30	150	10	10	200	3.00	0.78	Agreed
10.	Marital conflict causes dementia	50	100	30	20	200	2.90	0.84	Agreed
Grand Mean							2.92		

In Table 2, items 6, 7, 8, 9. And 10 with mean value of 3.20, 3.00, 2.50, 3.00 and 2.90 respectively were agreed as implications of marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State. Therefore marital conflict can lead to depression, anxiety, eating disorder, divorce and dementia in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State.

Research Question Three: What are the intervention strategies in curbing marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State?

Table 3: *Roles of counsellors in curbing marital conflict*

S/N	Items	A 4	SA 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean	SD	Decision
11.	Choosing one issue at a time	10	5	3	2	20	3.15	1.01	Agreed
12.	Brainstorming on the issues with the couples	8	6	4	2	20	3.00	0.53	Agreed
13.	Helping the couples to agree on the solution to the issue	12	6	2	0	20	3.40	1.02	Agreed
14	Listening to each other	13	7	0	0	20	3.3	0.72	Agreed
15	Follow-up the couples	5	10	4	1	20	2.95	0.45	Agreed
Grand Mean							3.16		

In Table 3, item 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 with mean value of 3.15, 3.00, 3.40, 3.30 and 2.95 respectively were agreed roles of counsellors in curbing marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State. Therefore choosing one issue at a time, brainstorming with couples, agreeing on the solution, listening to each other and follow up are the intervention strategies in curbing marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State.

Research Question Four: What are the roles of counsellors in curbing marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State?

Table 4: *Roles of counsellors in curbing marital conflict*

S/N	Items	A 4	SA 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean	SD	Decision
16.	Counsellors help couples to strengthen their relationship	10	5	3	2	20	3.15	1.11	Agreed
17.	Counsellors help couples to avoid divorce	11	5	4	0	20	3.35	1.03	Agreed
18.	Counsellors help couples to identify the cause of the problem	12	8	0	0	20	3.60	0.45	Agreed
19.	Counsellors help couples to set a goal in their marriage	15	3	2	0	20	3.65	0.71	Agreed
20	Counsellors help couples to overcome their challenges	10	8	2	0	20	3.40	0.43	Agreed
Grand Mean							3.43		

In Table 4, item 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 with mean value of 3.15, 3.35, 3.60, 3.65 and 3.40 respectively were agreed as roles of counsellors in curbing marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State. Their value was up to the criterion mean of 2.5. Therefore strengthening, couple's relationship, avoid divorce, identify causes of the problem, setting goals for couples and helping couples to overcome their challenges are roles of counsellors in curbing marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State.

Discussion of the findings

Causes of Marital Conflict among Married Couples

Research question one revealed that lack of communication, sexual dissatisfaction, lack of finance, infidelity and in-laws-interference are the various causes of marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State.

This result means that number of homes have been enmeshed in escalated conflicts that most of the time has left either of the spouse or both wounded. More so the rate of marital conflict and its attendant problems has become alarming. Many marriages have

ended in divorce living some children to wander about on the street. This finding is not surprising to the researcher because couple conflict are caused by many factors such as money, denial of sex, unmet needs and expectations. Inability to resolve conflict between couples can lead to lack of satisfaction. Apart from these children's socio-economic needs also suffers. Also conflict has been established as a product of interaction between or among people. Hence conflict is an integral part of an ongoing relationship and it is inevitable in every family. This finding is similar to that obtained by Alotaibi (2020) who examined conflict and conflict management strategy in counselling in the KSA and contributes to the limited available literatures. From the literatures the study understands that counsellors in KSA faces a series of conflict in discharging their duties which includes conflict in role, conflict resulting from the negative perception, interpersonal conflict among the counsellors and stress, and role ambiguity. This study differs in the instrument used as the present study used a researcher made instrument, while their study used adopted instrument.

Implications of Marital Conflict among Married Couples

Research question two revealed that marital conflict can lead to depression, anxiety, eating disorder, divorce and dementia in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State. This result is not surprise to the researcher because a number of issues can result into conflict between couples. Afu and Nteh (2020) stated that families are faced with lots of conflict inducing challenges like the dwindling financial capacity thrown up by socioeconomic factors like poverty, unemployment and pressure from family and friends. Apart from these Asadi, et al (2016) also found that different opinions and perception about issues, dealing with in-laws was a potential source of marital conflict. Pap et al (2009) found out from their study that one of the topics mostly discussed that causes marital conflict is issues about children. Obelenienė and Gabševičienė (2015) emphatically stated that money, sex, relations, religion and children's education are most pervasive sources of spousal conflict. These authors found out from their study that major causes of conflict among spouses were disparity in opinion, interests, lack of material needs, immaturity of spouses, and lack of good communication, respect and attention. It is pertinent to note however that one of the most agreed factor in literature about causes of spousal conflict is money and sex. Unresolved conflict impact negatively on family life. It can lead to dissolution of the union. Children suffer in the process. Afu and Nteh (2020), found out from their study the effect of conflict include infidelity, stress, not being able to control children, drug intake and divorce.

Intervention Strategies in Curbing Marital Conflict among Married Couples

Research question three revealed that choosing one issue at a time, brainstorming with couples, agreeing on the solution, listening to each other and follow up are the intervention strategies in curbing marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State. This results means that, conflict has been established as a product of interaction between or among people. Hence conflict is an integral part of an ongoing relationship and it is inevitable in every family. This finding is similar to that obtained by Alotaibi (2020)whoexamined conflict and conflict management strategy in counselling in the KSA and contributes to the limited available literatures.

Form the literatures the study understands that counsellors in KSA faces a series of conflict in discharging their duties which includes conflict in role, conflict resulting from the negative perception, interpersonal conflict among the counsellors and stress, and role ambiguity. This study differs in the instrument used as the present study used a researcher made instrument, while their study used adopted instrument.

Roles of Counsellors in Curbing Marital Conflict among Married Couples

Research question four revealed that strengthening, couple's relationship, avoid divorce, identify causes of the problem, setting goals for couples and helping couples to overcome their challenges are roles of counsellors in curbing marital conflict among married couples in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Rivers State. This result is not surprising to the researcher because counsellors help families improve relationships and cope with difficult situations such as divorce, illness or death. They guide families through the counselling process, by helping them identify problems, set goals and find solutions to their troubles. In a crisis situation, such as neglect, substance abuse or violence, they may also recommend legal action, such as having children temporarily removed while the parents work through their difficulties.

Conclusion

Married couples are adversely affected by lack of knowledge of conflict management. Most couples handled conflict by trial and error approach because there is no specific procedures and methods of managing conflict. It is noted that, in some instance, couples are not allowed to participate in decisions in their home, they hardly knew how to channel their grievances. Meanwhile, some strategies adopted by couples in managing conflict in their home are choosing one issue at a time, brainstorming with couples, agreeing on the solution, listening to each other and follow up.

Recommendations

1. Counsellors should establish conflict resolution centres in their various unit.

2. Marriage counselling should be made compulsory by government.
3. Couples should always find out the best ways they can handle their marital issue to avoid inviting third parties.

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COUNSELLING APPROACHES AS TOOLS FOR RESOLVING MARITAL CONFLICTS IN ABIA STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

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Abstract

This paper examines counselling approaches as a tool for resolving marital conflicts in Abia State. Marriage, defined as a legal union between a man and a woman, is widely regarded as one of life's most significant relationships. However, the rising rate of marital conflicts in Abia State presents a serious social challenge. Marital conflict characterised by disagreements, disputes, and struggles between spouses is a common human experience arising from differing personalities, values, and external pressures. Understanding the underlying causes of marital conflict is crucial for developing appropriate strategies for resolution. This paper explores various counselling approaches, including Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy, mediation, negotiation, and communication skills training, within the cultural and socioeconomic context of Abia State. It highlights the importance of culturally sensitive counselling practices in promoting marital stability and family well-being. The discussion emphasises the role of counselling in fostering peaceful coexistence and offers implications for practice, policy, and community engagement. It is suggested that counsellors should utilise CBT to help couples change negative behaviours and attitudes, facilitating healthier interactions and conflict management.

Key words: Counselling Approaches, Marital Conflict, and Conflict Resolution

Introduction

Marriage is one of the institutions ordained by God and is considered one of the best and most significant events that can happen to an individual in life. It is the legal union between a man and a woman, often entered into with the consent of their parents, to live together for companionship, procreation, and mutual support until death do them part. According to Idowu, Oyinbye, and Dada (2017), marriage is defined as the union of a man

and his wife in body and soul, established to ensure the continuity of the human race through childbearing and rearing. Similarly, Dungurawa (2016) states that marriage is an agreement between a man and a woman who take vows to love and cherish one another, staying together through sickness and health, for better or for worse.

As a social institution, marriage brings together two individuals often from different cultural backgrounds, educational levels, and socio-economic statuses to form a family. These differences are a major reason why marriage is likely to experience more conflicts than most other social institutions (Dungurawa, 2016). Despite this, the institution of marriage is traditionally expected to flourish and endure until the death of one partner. It is generally presumed that married couples will live together forever, accommodating and tolerating one another through life's challenges.

Marriage is ideally meant to be full of love, joy, and mutual understanding; however, the reality is often quite different. In many marriages, there is rampant conflict arising from misunderstandings and pressures from internal and external sources, which frequently lead to marital disputes.

Marital conflict can be described as disagreements, disputes, or struggles between partners within a marriage. It is an ill-wind that blows no one any good, as its consequences affect not only the spouses but also their children and the wider society. Nyarks, Abaa, and Ugbe (2016) observe that marital conflicts may arise from incompatibility, lack of sexual gratification, and parental involvement, among other factors. It is inevitable that people living together will sometimes face problems, raising the critical question: "How do couples manage their problems?" The process by which couples address and work through disagreements is commonly known as conflict resolution.

Conflict resolution involves any method adopted to settle, manage, or resolve differences that arise among individuals, organizations, or communities (Lawan, 2024). Marital conflicts may result from perceived differences related to interests, infidelity, domestic violence, and other issues. This reality highlights the critical role of counselling before and during marriage. Counselling is a process through which individuals are helped to understand themselves better, overcome their problems, and live fulfilling lives (Ogbuokiri & Ogbuokiri, 2023). Counsellors employ effective approaches to help couples understand their roles and relationships within marriage.

This paper focuses explicitly on the adoption of counselling approaches as tools for the resolution of marital conflicts among married couples in Abia State.

Conceptual Clarifications

Concept of Marriage

Marriage is traditionally defined as the legal and emotional union between a man and a woman who commit to live together as husband and wife. This union is often formalized with the consent of both sets of parents and accompanied by vows that bind the partners to love, cherish, and support each other through all circumstances: “for better, for worse, in sickness and in health” (Idowu, Oyinloye, & Dada, 2017). The legal recognition of marriage not only establishes rights and responsibilities between the spouses but also signifies social acknowledgment of their partnership.

Beyond legality, marriage holds profound cultural and social significance in many societies. As a social institution, it is highly valued and widely approved across cultures globally, serving as the foundation for family formation, social stability, and intergenerational continuity. Idowu et al. (2017) further explain that marriage is the union of body and soul, intended to ensure the continuation of the human race through childbearing and the nurturing of offspring.

In the Nigerian context—particularly in Abia State, predominantly inhabited by the Igbo ethnic group—marriage is deeply embedded in cultural traditions and expectations. It is regarded as a pivotal milestone in adulthood. Consequently, individuals who remain unmarried beyond a socially acceptable age often face social scrutiny, pressure from family members, and community questioning regarding their marital status. Parents and relatives typically encourage early marriage, viewing it as a necessary step toward fulfilling societal and familial roles.

A stable marriage is widely associated with love, joy, mutual respect, and emotional fulfillment. It is a partnership where spouses provide companionship, emotional support, sexual satisfaction, and economic collaboration (Ojukwu, 2016). The success of this union depends largely on the ability of partners to communicate effectively, manage expectations, and accommodate differences.

Conflict

Conflict is an inherent and unavoidable part of human relationships and social interaction. It occurs when the interests, needs, goals, or values of two or more parties clash, creating tension and disharmony. Osagie-Obazee and Igbinoba (2017) define conflict as a disruption of peaceful coexistence, typically triggered by factors such as perceived injustice, inequitable distribution of resources or benefits, or the betrayal of trust between parties.

At its core, conflict stems from the natural diversity in human perspectives, personalities, experiences, and socio-economic backgrounds. Given that no two individuals are exactly alike, disagreements are to be expected wherever people interact (Osagie-Obazee & Igbinoba, 2017). While conflict can sometimes lead to growth and positive change through constructive dialogue, unresolved conflict often leads to breakdowns in communication, resentment, and lasting discord.

Within the marriage context, the coming together of two individuals with differing beliefs, values, cultural backgrounds, and expectations sets a fertile ground for conflict.

Marital Conflict

Marital conflict refers specifically to tensions, disputes, or ongoing struggles between spouses. Hanior and Akume (2017) note that marital conflict arises when partners focus primarily on individual interests or grievances rather than the collective welfare of the marriage. This divergence often escalates into arguments, misunderstandings, and emotional distancing.

In Nigeria, including Abia State, marital conflict has become increasingly visible, reflected in rising rates of domestic disputes, separation, and divorce. According to Osagie-Obazee and Igbinoba (2017), marital conflict often involves situations where one partner exploits the other or manipulates the relationship for personal gain, resulting in harm, mistrust, and resentment.

The consequences of marital conflict extend beyond the couple to affect the entire family structure. Conflict in the home creates an unhealthy environment for children, who may suffer from emotional insecurity, behavioural problems, and impaired academic performance. Studies have shown that children from conflict-ridden homes are more likely to experience psychological distress, low self-esteem, and social maladjustment. Moreover, these children may be vulnerable to negative social outcomes, including juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, school dropout, and involvement in criminal activities such as armed robbery (Hanior & Akume, 2017).

At the societal level, widespread marital conflict contributes to broader social instability, increasing the burden on social services, legal systems, and community resources. Thus, managing marital conflict is not only essential for individual family well-being but also crucial for maintaining social order and fostering community development.

The importance of addressing marital conflict underscores the need for effective counselling approaches, which can provide couples with the skills to communicate better, resolve disputes, and build stronger relationships. Counselling interventions focus on

helping partners understand their differences, develop empathy, and negotiate solutions that benefit the marital union as a whole.

Causes of Marital Conflict

The rising rate of marital discord and eventual dissolution of marriages in many societies, including Nigeria, is cause for concern. Conflict within marriage is a common phenomenon, but its persistence and escalation often signal deeper underlying issues.

Identifying and understanding these causes is vital to designing effective strategies for conflict resolution and promoting marital stability. According to Ugwuadu, Ugonna, and Nwachukwu (2014), marital conflict may stem from a variety of factors, including identity crises, unclear marital roles, betrayal of trust, erosion of interdependence between spouses, faulty communication, and emotional immaturity. These factors, compounded by social and economic pressures, contribute to the destabilization of marriages.

Similarly, Nyarks, Abaa, and Ugbe (2017) observe that incompatibility between partners, lack of sexual satisfaction, and over-involvement of parents often lead to conflicts in marriage. Other significant contributors include conflicting values and expectations, unfulfilled psychological and emotional needs, financial pressures, intimacy challenges, and external societal stressors. The following causes are explored in greater detail:

Faulty Communication

Communication is the backbone of healthy marital relationships. It facilitates the sharing of thoughts, emotions, and expectations. When communication is ineffective or broken down, misunderstandings multiply, leading to resentment and frustration. Faulty communication encompasses poor listening skills, failure to express feelings clearly, the use of harsh or accusatory language, and avoidance of conflict topics (Ugwuadu et al., 2014). These behaviors can create emotional distance between partners, preventing the resolution of disagreements and fostering an environment ripe for conflict escalation. In many cases, couples may misinterpret intentions, assume the worst, or withdraw emotionally, further weakening the marital bond.

For example, a simple disagreement about household responsibilities can escalate into a prolonged conflict if one partner feels unheard or dismissed. Such communication gaps create negative emotional climates where hostility and distrust flourish, undermining intimacy and companionship.

Financial Issues

Money matters are one of the most frequent sources of marital tension. Financial stress in marriage can arise from various situations, including income inequality, poor

financial management, secret spending, and lack of transparency (Ojukwu, 2016). When one partner hides financial information or makes independent decisions without consultation, it breeds mistrust and suspicion. Economic challenges are particularly pronounced in regions like Abia State, where economic instability, high unemployment rates, and inflation are prevalent. These external economic pressures compound existing financial disagreements within marriages, increasing stress and anxiety.

In addition, unequal financial contributions may foster feelings of resentment or dependence. For example, if one spouse is the primary breadwinner while the other is unemployed or underemployed, the financial imbalance may create power struggles or perceptions of unfairness. Such financial conflicts, if unaddressed, often erode marital satisfaction and trust, making reconciliation difficult.

Cursing or Blaming One's Partner

In many Nigerian marriages, the practice of blaming or verbally attacking one's spouse during conflicts is widespread. This "cursing" or ascription of negative labels often escalates disputes and damages the emotional foundation of the marriage. Blame may be cast unfairly, such as attributing a child's academic failure solely to the mother, causing feelings of injustice and alienation (Ugwuadu et al., 2014). This type of behavior reflects poor conflict management and emotional immaturity, fostering bitterness and prolonged resentment.

Blaming one another shifts focus from problem-solving to fault-finding, preventing constructive dialogue and mutual understanding. When spouses habitually assign blame, it creates a toxic cycle where grievances accumulate, and forgiveness becomes increasingly difficult. This dynamic often leads to emotional withdrawal or escalation into verbal and sometimes physical abuse.

Differing Values and Expectations

Values are fundamental beliefs that influence how a person perceives the world and guides their actions. In marriage, the alignment or clash of values profoundly influences the relationship's quality. Partners may have divergent beliefs about gender roles, child-rearing practices, religious observance, financial priorities, or social interactions (Chukwu et al., 2018). When these fundamental values conflict, couples may struggle to find compromise, leading to recurring disagreements and frustration.

For instance, one spouse may prioritize career advancement while the other values family time and home care, resulting in conflicting expectations regarding time management and responsibilities. Cultural differences within or between ethnic groups can

also intensify value conflicts. Such discord often manifests in persistent arguments, feelings of disrespect, and diminished emotional connection.

Psychological and Emotional Conflicts

Marital conflict is frequently rooted in unfulfilled psychological and emotional needs. As Nyarks, Abaa, and Ugbe (2017) explain, the human desires for power, control, autonomy, recognition, and love play a significant role in marital dynamics. When these needs are unmet or threatened, they may manifest as hidden sources of tension. For example, a partner who feels undervalued or ignored may express frustration through anger or withdrawal, behaviors that may be misinterpreted by the other spouse.

Psychological conflicts are particularly challenging because they often masquerade as surface-level disputes over trivial matters. Conflict resolution in such cases requires deeper emotional awareness, empathy, and sometimes professional counselling to uncover and address the underlying issues. If left unresolved, these conflicts can create emotional distance and erode the foundation of trust and intimacy.

Conflict Resolution in Marriage

Conflict resolution is the process through which individuals or groups in disagreement work together to reach a solution that is acceptable to all parties involved. It may occur through informal or formal means, but the primary goal remains the same: to establish peace and restore harmonious relations. Woodhouse (2015) defines conflict resolution as a situation where conflicting parties enter into an agreement that resolves their differences or sustains their continued peaceful coexistence, thereby ceasing all forms of disharmony between them. It is a universally acknowledged truth that peace and progress in any family or organization cannot be achieved where violence and unresolved conflict prevail, except where such disputes are effectively addressed and resolved.

In the context of marriage, resolving conflicts is essential not only for preserving the relationship but also for fostering growth and understanding between spouses. According to Aishatu and Kuka (2017), effective conflict resolution encourages couples to confront issues promptly and constructively without resorting to criticism, contempt, or punishment. Although it is normal for families to experience disagreements and periodic crises, the key lies in managing these conflicts in a manner that strengthens the marital bond rather than tearing it apart.

Counselling Approaches for Resolving Marital Conflict

Counselling is a professional process where trained counsellors help individuals or couples understand themselves better and resolve their issues to live happier, more

fulfilling lives. Counsellors play a vital role in mediating disputes and promoting peaceful coexistence within families (Egbufa & Ajayi, 2024).

Mediation Approach

The mediation approach involves the counsellor serving as an impartial facilitator who encourages open and constructive communication between the spouses. This method requires active listening, empathy, and impartiality to fully understand the perspectives of both parties (International Mediation Institute, 2024). The mediator does not impose judgments but rather helps the couple explore options and reach a mutually acceptable agreement. The counsellor's role is to encourage empathy and cooperation, making it easier for the couple to find common ground and rebuild trust.

Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a well-established psychological approach that helps couples recognize and change harmful thought patterns and behaviors that often lead to conflict. According to the American Psychological Association (2024), CBT assists partners in reframing their perceptions, improving communication, and developing healthier coping mechanisms. Through this approach, couples learn to challenge irrational beliefs, manage emotional responses, and adopt constructive problem-solving skills, which ultimately enhances marital satisfaction and resilience.

Negotiation Approach

Negotiation is a structured dialogue process guided by the counsellor, who acts as a facilitator aiming to produce a peaceful resolution through mutual agreement. This approach is characterized as a non-violent strategy involving persuasion, compromise, and empathy to reconcile differences (Osagie-Obazee & Igbinoba, 2016). Counsellors applying this approach use effective communication skills to help spouses understand each other's viewpoints, negotiate terms of agreement, and foster a spirit of cooperation and harmony within the family.

Communication Skills Training

Effective communication and strong family bonds are essential foundations for a healthy and fulfilling marriage (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, 2024). Counsellors equip couples with practical communication techniques, such as the use of "I" statements, active listening, and constructive feedback. These skills reduce misunderstandings and promote emotional intimacy.

Discussion-Based Approach

The discussion approach involves couples engaging in open, honest, and objective round-table discussions where each partner can express grievances and perspectives freely. Facilitated by the counsellor, these discussions encourage mutual understanding and joint problem-solving. At the end of such sessions, couples are expected to “bury the hatchet” and reach a mutually agreeable resolution. This approach emphasizes transparency, respect, and a willingness to reconcile, which are crucial for sustaining long-term marital harmony.

Implications for Counselling Practice

Counselling plays a vital role in fostering peaceful coexistence, helping couples recognize and manage their individual differences while nurturing mutual respect, emotional resilience, and constructive communication (Aishatu & Luka, 2017). In the context of Abia State, where cultural values, economic challenges, and social expectations deeply influence marital dynamics, counselling interventions must be both responsive and contextually grounded. The discussion in this paper offers several implications for counselling practice, policy, and community engagement:

Promotion of Pre-Marital and Marital Counselling

One of the most effective preventive strategies for reducing marital conflict is the early introduction of professional counselling services. Pre-marital counselling, in particular, equips intending couples with realistic expectations, mutual understanding, emotional regulation, and communication skills (Idowu et al., 2017). These competencies are foundational for long-term marital adjustment and stability. Marital counselling, on the other hand, provides ongoing support to couples experiencing difficulties, helping them navigate evolving roles and shared responsibilities.

Community Awareness Campaigns

Public education is essential in demystifying the role of counselling and breaking the cultural silence around marital conflict. Professional counsellors and trained advocates should lead seminars, community dialogues, school-based programmes, and media outreach initiatives to promote mental and emotional health within marriage.

Government Support and Institutional Integration

For counselling to be impactful and sustained, it must be institutionalized at both the state and local government levels. This includes the:

- Establishment of marital counselling centres in each Local Government Area (LGA),

- Provision of adequate funding and infrastructure for counselling services,
- Employment and proper remuneration of certified counselling professionals.

Follow-up and Evaluation Systems

Counselling interventions should not end at the point of initial resolution. Instead, they must incorporate structured follow-up systems that allow for:

- Continuous monitoring of client progress,
- Evaluation of the outcomes of counselling sessions, and
- Ongoing support and referrals where needed.

Conclusion

The prevalence of marital conflict is a pressing social and psychological concern, especially in culturally vibrant yet economically challenged regions such as Abia State. While conflict within marriage is inevitable, its detrimental effects can be significantly reduced through timely and effective counselling interventions. Counselling approaches such as Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT), mediation, negotiation, and communication skills training provide couples with the necessary tools to navigate marital challenges constructively.

Understanding the complexities of marital conflict and employing evidence-based counselling approaches are therefore essential for strengthening marriages and fostering resilient families in Abia State and beyond.

Suggestions

To address these issues, the following suggestions were made:

1. Each Local Government Area should have accessible counselling centres staffed by trained professionals. Government funding and institutional support are crucial to sustain these services and provide timely assistance to couples facing marital challenges.
2. Policymakers should integrate marital counselling into public health and education frameworks, ensuring broader reach and preventive care.
3. Public awareness campaigns through radio, television, and social media should educate the population on the benefits of counselling and promote non-violent, constructive approaches to managing marital conflict.
4. Counsellors should utilize CBT to help couples change negative behaviours and attitudes, facilitating healthier interactions and conflict management.

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Abstract

There is need to constantly investigate the capacity at which counselling impetus in a particular environment could resolve disputes among different parties or people that have being previously living harmoniously together among themselves. It is generally agreed that where counselling strategy is adequately and appropriately applied on dispute, the parties involved would breathe in a fresh air of relief, without compromising the underlying truth of the matter, as counselling is based on reasoning and reality, and not a pleading ground to settle the underlying conflict. Thus, this study investigated the counselling strategies perceived means of dispute resolution by staff of colleges of education in Kwara State. The study was a descriptive survey type and involved a total sample of 240 staff of the colleges of education across Kwara State from various departments and units. The instrument titled "Counselling Strategies for Dispute Resolution Questionnaire (CSDRQ)" was used in the study. The questionnaire was validated by 3 experts in that seasoned lecturers the field of guidance and counselling and psychology, and it has 0.78 test-retest reliability index. The findings of the study revealed that the participants of the study have positive perception of the counselling strategies/approaches as alternative means of dispute resolution with leading strategies. Other findings of the study unveiled that there was no difference in the perception of the participants of the influence of counselling as a means of dispute resolution based on gender and cadre on service. However, difference was found based on the type of service rendered (academic or non-academic). Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended among other things that staff of colleges of education should be encouraged to seek counselling as alternative resolution strategy for disputes that may arise among them.

Keyword: Counselling Strategy, Dispute Resolution, College of Education, Kwara State.

Introduction

Dispute or conflict among people has been an old phenomenon just as life itself.

Where two people co-exist, there is possibility and tendency of misunderstanding, and there will be conflicting or contrary opinion on certain matter which could degenerate to conflict among them. It is generally believed that where two or more people come together, conflict is bound to occur, this is due in part to nature which defines individual human-beings differently. The term dispute can be referred to as a disagreement or conflict between parties arising from a perceived infringement of rights, duties, or expectations. Disputes are inherent in all forms of social interaction, particularly where resources, responsibilities, or values clash.

There are unending definitions of scholars and researchers, legal practitioners and social and political analysts of the term “dispute”. For example, Alabi and Ibrahim (2023) in their study referred to a dispute is “a disagreement arising from conflicting interests between staff and management, often leading to strikes or work stoppages”. Similarly, Okeke and Nwosu (2022) defined the term ‘dispute’ as “a form of disagreement between two or more parties in an institution, which is often characterized by incompatible goals and perceptions that hinder organizational productivity”. The above definitions however, drawn from empirical research works, underscore how the term “dispute” has been operationalized in Nigerian tertiary education context, as either a collective industrial action taken by the organized labour union or as a behavioural breakdown requiring conflict-management interventions.

From the legal point of views, a dispute is understood as a formal disagreement or controversy between two or more parties, typically involving claims of rights, obligations, or entitlements that may require judicial or alternative resolution. According to Adewale (2023), a dispute encapsulates contention, conflict, or antagonism between two or more parties over legal rights or contractual obligations, often necessitating arbitration or litigation for resolution in most cases. Similarly, Okafor and Eze (2022) explained in the work that, in Nigerian legal context, a dispute may be referred to as any controversy or disagreement over interpretation, performance, or breach of legal duties or contracts, which parties fail to resolve amicably. This conceptualization underscores that legal disputes arise when parties have conflicting interests or interpretations of law, leading to formal procedures such as arbitration, mediation, or court action to settle the matter. In any organisational and educational setting, a dispute generally disrupts harmonious relationship among group and causes a declined productivity. Empirical studies show disputes as collective or individual disagreements, often manifesting as strikes or protests within an

organisation often aimed at compelling response from concerned management over certain issues such as poor working conditions, government policies, or policy implementation

among others (Okafor & Eze, 2022).

The above explanations stressed further that disputes can be viewed from both directions of behavioural breakdowns, and structured resistance by the other party who perceived the ugly broth of the broken agreement within an organisation. Disputes however, are dynamic interactions where conflicting interests collide, whether in law, labour relations, or institutional governance. They represent critical moments that require effective communication, negotiation, or legal intervention in some cases, in order to resolve the underlying matters and restore equilibrium progress in the organization. Understanding dispute in all different contexts could equip stakeholders with veritable tools for timely resolution, minimizing its negative impacts on interpersonal relationships, organisational operations, and development in the society.

According to Dispute Resolution Theory (DRT) which was proposed by Ury, Brett, and Goldberg in 1988, disputes naturally occurred in three stages that is; interests, rights, and power. This theory posited further that meaningful conflict resolution should ideally focus on the first stage which is, interests (that is; the underlying needs and desires of the parties involved in the conflict), rather than power struggles or legal entitlements that make up the other two stages. According to DRT, interest-based resolution approach often yields more long-lasting and amicable outcomes. In Nigerian context, as aligned with DRT propositions, many disputes or conflicts often stemmed out of unmet social needs of people and as such, they ought to be addressed through interest-based dialogue among parties involved in such conflicts.

Counselling approaches have increasingly gained recognition as effective alternative dispute resolution (ADR) strategies, especially in settings where relationships and communication need repair rather than formal adjudication. Unlike litigation or arbitration, counselling strategy focuses on facilitating open dialogue, emotional understanding, and mutual problem-solving between disputing parties. This human method seems to likely address the root causes of the conflict in question such as; misunderstandings involved, unmet needs, or emotional grievances, and so on, thereby promoting sustainable resolutions. Through varied counselling techniques like active listening, empathy, and guided negotiation, parties involved in certain dispute can gain insights into its root causes and reframe their conflict more constructively and reach enduring resolution (Kumar & Gupta, 2021).

In educational and workplace environments, counselling-based alternative dispute

resolution (ADR) can play a critical role in managing disputes without escalating to any form of legal or industrial action. For instance, in Nigerian tertiary institutions, counselling

interventions can help in resolving staff-management disagreements over working conditions, salary issues, or governance challenges before they result in strikes or work stoppages with convincing psycho-educational information and attendant psychological resultant effects of actions and inactions that may be taken by both parties (Oluwafemi & Ojo, 2023). The hallmark of counselling ethics is known to be confidentiality, by leveraging this approach, and providing a confidential and supportive space for disputant stakeholders to express concerns and explore interests, counselling approach can foster further, a sense of belonging, trust and collaboration among them. Moreover, trained counsellors can assume the role of mediator among the two conflicting parties, close the gap of power imbalances, and ensure that all voices are heard on any matter arises and that agreement is respected by all interests that are parties to it.

Counselling as an ADR strategy also emphasizes the emotional and psychological dimensions of disputes that is often overlooked by traditional system. Recognizing that conflicts often generate stress, resentment, or fear, counselling approaches integrate emotional support to foster effective conflict resolution. These interventions aim not only to address the immediate dispute but also to heal relationships and improve communication patterns. This psycho-social approach enhances parties' emotional readiness for cooperation, reducing the likelihood of recurring disputes (Mensah & Adjei, 2022). It is therefore crystal clear that counselling approaches as ADR framework can make a pathway in resolving existing dispute or conflict among parties, organisations and communities. This is not only because it facilitates open communication and emotional understanding among other beneficial outcomes, it can also help parties reach mutually satisfactory and sustainable agreements without resorting to any form of litigation. Counselling approaches seems to be cost effective and have a long-lasting effect comparatively.

Statement of the Problem

Colleges of Education popularly known as (COEDs) over the years have experienced significant labour and management conflicts which have been mostly rooted in unpaid salaries and decay or deteriorating infrastructure occasioned by the institution which was one of the best colleges of education in the nation some couple of years back. In mid-2019, COEASU union members launched a five-week indefinite strike citing unpaid salaries, non-remittance of subvention, and the poor condition of college facilities according to Centre for Human Rights and Accountability Network reports of July 20, 2019, classes activities were shut down and lecturers did not bother to attend to students for any

academic purpose. This dispute underscored both a breakdown in government funding mechanism and systemic neglect, as staff were driven to industrial action after exhausting

all means of internal grievance channels. The protest spotlighted the urgency for timely subventions and better infrastructure maintenance in the institution to prevent repeated disruptions.

For instance, during the 2019 strike action embarked by the COEASU Ilorin chapter, the administration of the college publicly rebuked union leaders, claiming many lecturers were still teaching despite the strike call (Centre for Human Rights & Accountability Network, 2019). The management in their press release, then praised the state government for its efforts to resume monthly subventions and resolve to reconstruct some internal roads in the college, asserting their unflinching loyalty to the state government on its developmental agenda. However, these divergent narratives of both the COED management and COEASU, revealed a communication breakdown between the two parties.

More recently, in March 2025, COEASU also demanded from the government, clarity on COE Ilorin's organizational status following the establishment of the Kwara State University of Education. The union specifically called for a transparent transition plan and addressed leadership vacancies, even while acknowledging improvement in salary payments, this was according to the Daily Post Nigeria of March 20, 2025. This can be a signal for another dispute which can degenerate to industrial action or strike if not timely addressed, a situation which the union referred to as institutional ambiguity over college identity and governance. This emphasizes that dispute in tertiary institutions at times go beyond remuneration or finance alone, but may also include strategic transition, leadership stability, and staff inclusion in policy decision-making among work-related condition, each of which requires structured dialogue and clear frameworks to prevent dispute which can lead to operational uncertainty.

In individualistic nature as it is happening at level of interpersonal relationship among staff of colleges. The trend of such conflicts is exacerbated by the present economic realities which make adjustment most difficult experience for many people most especially among the lecturers whose multi-task jobs are not adequately compensated. There seem to be depletion in the level of tolerance among some college staff as directly observed by the researcher, who is also a member of the college academics. The previous studies have therefore created gaps in their scopes such as; topic, population, locales, sample and statistical scopes which the present study to be best knowledge of the researcher are yet to be filled. Hence, this study examines "Counselling Strategies as Perceived as Means of

Research Question

1. What is the perception of staff of colleges of education in Kwara State of counselling

strategies as means of dispute resolution?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study:

- H0₁:** There is no significant difference in the perception staff of colleges of education Kwara State of counselling strategies as means of dispute resolution based on gender.
- H0₂:** There is no significant difference in the perception staff of colleges of education Kwara State of counselling strategies as means of dispute resolution based on type of service (that is either; academic/non-academic).
- H0₃:** There is no significant difference in the perception staff of colleges of education Kwara State of counselling strategies as means of dispute resolution based on cadre (that is either; senior or junior staff).

Methodology

The present study employed descriptive survey design. The descriptive design was particularly adopted for this study as it allows the use of questionnaire to collect of a population. The study stands on one research question which subsequently answered in the study, and three null hypotheses that were formulated and also tested accordingly. A self-designed questionnaire with the title: ““Counselling Strategies for Dispute Resolution Questionnaire (CSDRQ)” was used for data collection for the study. The instrument was therefore validated by three seasoned lecturers in the field of Guidance and Counselling and Psychology from University of Ilorin, Kwara State. The instrument was subjected to reliability testing of test-retest statistic. Thus, the instrument was administered twice on a set of 20 participants who came from other college of education within state, possessed same characteristics of the population of the study but who did not take part in the study. The results got from the two occasions were correlated using PPMC statistical analysis. The result therefore yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78 which proved that the instrument used in this study is reliable.

The instrument tagged CSDRQ used in this study consisted of two sections that is; section A and B. The section A comprises demographic data of the participants which include; gender (male or female), type of service (academic/non-academic service, and cadre (senior/junior cadre). Section B on the other hand, consists of 15 structured items

that explored responses on perception of the participants of the counselling strategies as means of dispute resolution. 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 participants to be considered either as a positive or negative response, the above scores were added together and divided by 4 and given 2.5. Thus, this was computed as follows: $(1+2+3+4 = 10/4 = 2.5)$. However, any score that is above the benchmark of 2.5 was considered as positive response while any score below it was regarded as negative response. The population for this study consisted of all staff of all the 3 public colleges of education in Kwara State (that is; College of Education Ilorin (1,620); College of Education Oro (887); and College of Education (Technical) Lafiagi (448). This figure all together is given at 2955 (Field Survey, 2025) from which a total number of 240 participants were sampled using both the stratified and sample random techniques. The researcher employed descriptive and inferential statistics for the data analysis. The demographic data were analysed by frequency count and percentage, and research question was answered by overall mean score. The hypotheses were tested by t-test statistic. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: *Distributions of Participants' Demographic Characteristics*

N	Variables		Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Gender	Male	138	57.5
		Female	102	42.5
		Total	240	100.0
2.	Type of Service	Academic	122	50.8
		Non-Academic	118	49.2
		Total	240	100.0
3.	Cadre	Senior	95	39.5
		Junior	145	60.5
		Total	240	100.0

Table 1 as shown above, presented the participants' demographic information. The table indicated that 240 staff of the COEDs in Kwara State that participated in the study. 138 (57.5%) were males, while 102 (42.5%) were females hence, more than half (57.5%) of the participants were male. Regarding the participants' type of service, the table indicated that 122 (50.8%) were academic staff and 118 (49.2%) were non-academic staff. Based on the cadre of the participants, 95 (39.5%) were in senior cadre, while 145 (60.5%)

200

were in junior cadre.

Research Question 1: What is the perception of staff of colleges of education in Kwara State of counselling strategies as means of disputes resolution?

Table 2: *Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Participants' Responses on Counselling*

Strategies as Means of Disputes Resolution Strategy

S/N	Items: Counselling strategies/approaches that facilitate disputes resolution among two disputed parties	Mean	SD
14.	Effective communication strategy	3.08	0.8
3.	Active listening	3.02	0.5
5.	Non-judgmental approach (i.e. avoiding taking sides)	2.98	0.7
1.	Empathic understanding	2.94	0.4
10.	Solution-focused approach (i.e. emphasizing finding solution rather than dwelling on problems)	2.88	0.9
7.	Cognitive reframing (i.e. encourage worrying parties to reframe their negative thoughts and perceptions)	2.86	1.0
11.	Mediation (i.e. facilitate a structured conversation to reach mutually acceptable agreement)	2.80	0.6
2.	Conflict mapping (i.e. help parties visualize and understand conflict dynamics)	2.78	0.5
9.	Identifying common goals (i.e. help parties recognize shared interests and work towards mutually beneficial solutions)	2.74	0.8
6.	Grounding technique (i.e. help the parties focus on the present moment and reduce emotional reactivity)	2.68	0.4
8.	Gottman method (i.e. teach parties to build a stronger relationship foundation by fostering intimacy)	2.66	0.9
13.	De-escalation technique (i.e. teach parties strategies to calm down tension and reduce conflict)	2.62	0.6
15.	Narrative approach (i.e. help parties re-organize their conflict narratives by shifting ground from enmity to collaborative)	2.56	0.2
12.	Problem-solving (i.e. collaborate with parties to identify and address underlying issues)	2.55	0.5
4.	Imago therapy (i.e. consistently focus on understanding each other party's need and desire)	2.52	0.7
Overall Mean Score		41.67	
Overall Average Mean Score		2.77	

From Table 2, items 14, 3 and 5 with statements such as; effective communication strategy, active listening and non-judgemental approach (that is; not taking sides) make the list of most responded to items with mean scores of 3.08, 3.02 and 2.98 respectively. From the other side of the table, items 15, 12 and 4 with statements such as; narrative approach,

problem-solving and imago therapy make the least responded to items on the table among the participants of the present study, with mean scores of 2.56, 2.55 and 2.52 respectively. However, based on the data analysis on the table two presented above, it is crystal clear that the entire items received positive responses from the participants as none of the 15 presented items falls below of 2.5 benchmark score that was initially set up for decision making on participants' responses. Based on this responses mean index, it can be said that participants of this study have positive perception of the counselling strategies/approaches as means of disputes resolution in their respective educational setting which is college of education.

Hypotheses Testing

In this study, three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance and their results are presented as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the perception of staff of colleges of education in Kwara State of counselling strategies as means of disputes resolution 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	138	44.20	5.20	238	0.67	1.98	0.503	Retained
Female	103	48.62	6.24					

Table 3 shows that for a df of 238, the calculated t-value of 0.67 is less than the critical t-value of 1.98, with a corresponding p-value of 0.503 which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This result indicates that there is no significant difference in the perception of the participants of counselling strategies as means of disputes resolution based on gender. Hence, the hypothesis one which stated that there is no significant difference in perception staff of colleges of education in Kwara State of counselling strategies as means of disputes resolution based on gender was retained. This implies further that male and female participants did not differ in their perception of counselling strategies as means of disputes resolution.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the perception of staff of colleges of education in Kwara State of counselling strategies as means of disputes resolution based on type of service (academic/non-academic staff).

Table 4: *Mean, SD and t-test Result Showing Difference in Participants' Responses Based*

on Type of Service.

Type of Service	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal.t	Crit. T	p-value	Decision
Academic	122	50.16	7.02	238	*4.93	1.98	0.0001	Rejected
Non-Academic	118	46.28	6.68					

Table 4 shows that for a df of 238, the calculated t-value of 4.93 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.98, with a corresponding p-value of 0.0001 which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This result suggests that there is significant difference in the perception of the participants of counselling strategies as means of disputes resolution based on type of service. Hence, the hypothesis two which stated that there is no significant difference in the perception of staff of colleges of education in Kwara State of counselling strategies as means of disputes resolution based on type of service was rejected. This result implies that academic staff and non-academic staff was differ in their perception of counselling strategies as means of disputes resolution.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the perception of staff of colleges of education in Kwara State of counselling strategies as means of disputes resolution based on cadre (senior/junior staff).

Table 5: Mean, SD and t-test Result Showing Difference in Participants' Responses Based on Cadre.

Cadre	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. T	Crit. T	p-value	Decision
Senior	95	46.42	4.24	238	1.73	1.98	0.084	Accepted
Junior	145	44.98	3.56					

Table 5 shows that for a df of 238, the calculated t-value of 1.73 is less than the critical t-value of 1.98, with a corresponding p-value of 0.084 which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This result suggests that there is no significant difference in the perception of the participants of counselling strategies as means of disputes resolution

based on cadre of the participants. Hence, the hypothesis three which stated that there is no significant difference in the perception of staff of colleges of education in Kwara State of counselling strategies as means of disputes resolution based on carder of the participant was retained. This result implies further that senior and junior staff of the colleges of education were differ in their perception of counselling strategies as means of disputes

resolution.

Discussion of the Findings

The first result of this study suggested that the participants of this study had moderate perception of the influence of counselling strategies and mediating tool for dispute in college of education. They perceived quite adequately the use of counselling strategies such as; effective communication strategy, active listening, non-judgmental approach (that is; avoiding taking sides), as the most effective counselling mechanisms to facilitate peaceful resolution of a particular dispute or conflict among two parties involved in a dispute or conflict. The above established findings were supported by the previous findings of different researchers. For example, Magaji, Haruna and Nafisa (2021) and Akpan, Akpan and Olsson (2023) discovered in the studies in the past that effective communication foster good relationship among people, and remains a good strategy for managing dispute among people. In another efforts, Bodie, Vickery and Cyr (2021), and Paramole, Adeoye, Arowosaye, and Ibikunle (2024) also found in their studies the effectiveness of active listening for building a strong relationship among people. Lastly, the studies of Szejda and Ebesu-Hubbard (2019) and Nwoba (2022) have differently discovered that non-judgmental method of counselling approach, or unbiased third-party interventions influence negotiations between parties. Their findings are therefore in support of the third finding of this study which maintained that dispute can be checkmated by means of non-judgmental approach (that is; avoiding taking sides).

The first hypothesis tested in this study revealed that there was no significant difference in the level of perception of the participants of counselling strategies as alternative dispute resolution mechanism based on gender. This finding was in support of Ata and Adeyemi (2025) whose study was not differ among male and female lecturers in their study on type of communication styles adopted in colleges of education for managing dispute. However, this finding contradicts the findings of Dildar and Amjad (2017) whose study revealed a significant difference based on gender.

The second hypothesis tested revealed that there was significant difference in the level of perception of the participants of counselling strategies as alternative dispute resolution mechanism based on type of service (that is; academic or non-academic staff). This finding was in line with the findings of the study conducted by Abiodun, Abutu and

Clement (2023) which found a significant different in the perceptions of conflict-resolution strategies between academic and non-academic staff, where academic staff rated conflict management strategies more positively than non-academic staff.

Lastly, the third hypothesis tested revealed that there was no significant difference in

the level of perception of the participants of counselling strategies as alternative dispute resolution mechanism based on cadre on service. This finding was in tandem with the findings of the study of Muraina and Suleiman (2019) whose study established no significant difference among different educational stakeholders' perception of the influence of counselling services. The findings of the present study discussed above have indeed built on the existing empirical outcomes and knowledge and therefore make latest information on the variables investigated.

Conclusion

This study examined “counselling strategies as perceived by staff of colleges of education in Kwara State as means of disputes resolution”. The study therefore concludes that; participants of this study have positive perception of the counselling strategies as means of dispute resolution in educational setting like college of education. However, the participants have rated high, counselling strategies such as; effective communication, active listening and non-judgemental strategy/approach among others as most perceived counselling strategies for dispute management. The study also concludes that there was no significant difference in the perception of the participants of counselling strategies as means of dispute resolution on the basis of gender and cadre on service (that is; senior or junior staff), but participants have difference in their perception of this subject matter on the basis of cadre on service (that is; senior or junior staff), with senior staff have higher perception.

Recommendations

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

1. Staff of colleges of education irrespective of their gender should be encouraged to seek counselling as alternative resolution strategy for disputes that may arise among them.
2. The non-academic staff of colleges should be adequately sensitized on the importance of counselling strategies as alternative dispute resolution strategy.
3. Both the senior and junior staff of colleges of education should be taught how to manage disputes by applying counselling strategies.

4. Trained counsellors should be employed in various colleges of education in Kwara State to assist their staff on how to use counselling strategies in managing disputes.

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Abstract

The influence of various conflict resolution strategies in promoting marital stability among Nigerian couples can be examined in relation to their implications for counselling practices. Recent research highlights common causes of conflict in Nigerian marriages and discusses commonly used resolution methods, including communication-based approaches, religious interventions, family mediation, and professional counselling. Theoretical perspectives suggest that the most effective strategies are those that integrate cultural traditions with modern counselling techniques. A counselling framework that prioritizes cultural awareness, proactive conflict prevention, and the fusion of traditional wisdom with research-backed practices is essential. Key considerations include enhancing culturally sensitive training for counsellors, expanding premarital counselling initiatives, and strengthening community support networks. Such insights contribute to the ongoing discourse on culturally informed marital counselling and offer practical guidance for professionals supporting Nigerian couples in a changing social environment.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, Marital stability, Nigerian couples, Counselling, Cultural integration

Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable part of human relationships and marriage is no exception. In Nigeria, marriage is more than just a union between two individuals; it is an alliance that extends to families and in many cases entire communities. This cultural context shapes distinct dynamics that have a significant influence on both the sources of conflict and the approaches to resolution. Contemporary Nigerian marriages are increasingly shaped by

rapid urbanization, economic difficulties, shifting gender roles, and the ongoing tension between traditional values and modern influences (Adegoke & Olowookere, 2020). These factors have led to a rise in divorce rates, especially in urban areas, with estimates

indicating that up to 20% of marriages now end in divorce. This is a notable increase from previous generations (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

Unstable marriages affect not only the emotional well-being of couples but also have wider implications for child development, economic security, and social cohesion (Ogunsola, 2022). Conflict is an inevitable part of marriage, but the strategies used to resolve it play a crucial role in determining relationship outcomes. As Olayiwola (2021) notes, it is not the occurrence of conflict but rather how couples handle differences that determines marital endurance and satisfaction.

This paper critically examines the efficacy of various conflict resolution strategies within the Nigerian cultural context and their implications for counselling practices. Specifically, it aims to:

- a. Identify the primary sources of conflict in contemporary Nigerian marriages.
- b. Assess the effectiveness of prevalent conflict resolution strategies.
- c. Develop a framework for culturally responsive counselling interventions.
- d. Provide recommendations for counsellors and educational institutions.

Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Marital Conflict and Resolution

This analysis is grounded in these theoretical frameworks that offer complementary perspectives on marital conflict and resolution strategies within the Nigerian cultural context.

Systems Theory and Family Dynamics

Systems theory provides a valuable lens for understanding Nigerian marriages by viewing them as part of a broader network of family and community relationships (Makinde, 2020). In Nigeria, marriage is traditionally seen as a union between families rather than just individuals. As noted by Adeyemi (2022), disruptions in one part of the family system such as interference from in-laws can significantly impact the marital relationship. Systems theory emphasizes that effective conflict resolution should account for these broader relational dynamics rather than focusing solely on the couple.

Conflict Transformation Theory

Conflict transformation theory moves beyond merely resolving disputes, instead exploring how conflicts can foster positive relational change (Lederach, 2022). This

perspective is particularly relevant in Nigerian marriages, where tensions often arise between traditional gender roles and contemporary expectations. Rather than simply

aiming to eliminate disagreements, conflict transformation seeks to address underlying issues and strengthen relationships. Okafor and Nwachukwu (2023) found that Nigerian couples who embraced conflict as an opportunity for growth reported higher marital satisfaction than those who focused solely on minimizing disputes.

The Nigerian Marital Context

Nigeria's rich cultural and religious diversity play a crucial role in shaping marital expectations and patterns of conflict. With over 250 ethnic groups and strong influences from Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs, marriage customs and expectations differ widely across the country (Arowolo & Adegun, 2021). According to Olajide and Akinsola (2020), religious compatibility is associated with lower conflict levels, whereas interfaith marriages often face tensions regarding religious rituals, parenting approaches, and family traditions. Traditional norms emphasizing family honour, female submission, and male authority remain deeply ingrained, particularly in rural communities. However, these traditional values increasingly clash with modern ideas of gender equality, especially among educated, urban couples (Nwosu & Ibrahim, 2023). This cultural shift results in what Adegbite (2022) describes as "value dissonance", which is a key source of marital conflict as couples attempt to reconcile traditional expectations with contemporary perspectives.

Major Sources of Conflict in Nigerian Marriages

Marriage in Nigeria, like in many societies faces unique challenges shaped by the country's diverse cultural landscape, economic realities and evolving social dynamics (Arowolo & Adegun, 2021). While Nigeria marriages are often celebrated for their strong family foundations and community support systems, they are not immune to conflicts that strain even the most committed relationships (Adegbite, 2022). Understanding the sources of tension is crucial for couples, families and communities working together to build stronger, more resilient marriages.

The following are some of the sources of conflict in Nigerian marriages

Financial Struggles: Economic hardship is consistently identified as a leading cause of marital disputes (Olawepo & Ajayi, 2023). Given Nigeria's economic instability marked by inflation and high unemployment, many couples face financial stress. Disagreements

over budgeting, saving and financial responsibilities create tension, particularly when traditional expectations of male financial provision conflict with economic realities that

necessitate dual-income households.

Interference from Extended Family: The strong involvement of extended family members in Nigerian marriages often leads to boundary-related conflicts (Adewole & Bamidele, 2022). Tensions frequently arise between wives and their mothers-in-law, as highlighted in Adeniyi's (2023) study, where 68% of the 300 surveyed couples reported significant marital strain due to extended family interference.

Gender Role Expectations: Changing gender norms contribute to marital conflicts, as traditional roles come into conflict with evolving societal values (Nwadinobi & Onuoha, 2023). The increasing educational and professional advancement of women has challenged historically male-dominated family structures. Many women still face pressure to prioritize domestic responsibilities and defer to their husband authority. Men may struggle with changing expectations around emotional availability, household participation and shared decision-making while still being expected to fulfil traditional provider roles (Nwadinobi & Onuoha, 2023). According to Balogun (2022), couples who rigidly adhere to traditional gender roles tend to experience more conflict than those with a more adaptable approach.

Infidelity and Trust Issues: Extramarital affairs are another prevalent cause of marital discord (Ogunsola, 2022). Cultural attitudes that sometimes tolerate male infidelity exacerbate these challenges, leading to resentment, particularly among educated women, who often perceive these double standards as unfair (Adesina, 2023).

Analysis of Conflict Resolution Strategies

Conflict is a universal part of marriage and when handled well can spur growth and deeper understanding. Disputes stem from surface disagreements and deeper interests, emotions and values, no single solution fits all.

The following analysis examines four primary categories of conflict resolution strategies, each offering distinct advantages and serving different types of conflicts and contexts.

Communication-Based Approaches

Communication remains a central element in resolving conflicts within marriages. In the Nigerian cultural setting, however, traditional hierarchies often influence how couples communicate, sometimes limiting open expression, especially for women (Adediran & Olumide, 2023). Whereas Western models typically encourage direct and

assertive dialogue, Nigerian cultural norms often promote indirectness as a way of showing respect and preserving harmony.

Adapting conflict resolution techniques to reflect cultural values has been shown to yield better outcomes. Akinola (2022) highlights that incorporating culturally familiar practices such as storytelling, the use of proverbs, structured conversational turns, non-aggressive feedback, and attentive listening significantly enhanced the conflict resolution process among Nigerian couples, compared to using conventional Western strategies.

Nonetheless, communication alone may not fully address all marital challenges. According to Okeke and Nnamani (2023), issues stemming from financial hardship or interference by extended family members may require more targeted and practical interventions beyond communication-focused strategies.

Religious and Spiritual Interventions

Religion plays a central role in Nigerian society, making faith-based interventions a widely accepted approach to marital conflict resolution. Christian and Islamic marriage counselling often emphasize forgiveness, patience, and commitment to marital vows (Imam & Oladejo, 2022). The influence of religious leaders, who are seen as respected authorities, enhance the credibility and acceptance of these approaches. Studies indicate the effectiveness of faith-based counselling. Adedoyin and Igbinsosa (2023) found that 76% of 120 Christian couples reported improved conflict resolution after receiving faith-based marital guidance. Similarly, Balogun (2022) observed that Islamic counselling helped reduce marital disputes when it combined religious teachings with practical communication skills.

Despite their benefits, religious approaches have limitations. Some may reinforce unequal power dynamics, particularly when counselling overemphasizes submission and endurance over mutual understanding and problem-solving. Ibrahim (2023) warns that some religious teachings inadvertently encourage women to tolerate abusive situations.

More holistic approaches that blend spiritual principles with psychological counselling have been found to be more effective (Owolabi, 2022).

Extended Family Mediation

In traditional Nigerian conflict resolution, extended family members, particularly elders, often serve as mediators to help resolve marital disputes (Afolabi & Osagie, 2023). This approach aligns with Nigeria's collectivist values and leverages established authority structures to restore harmony.

Research on the effectiveness of family mediation presents mixed results. Okafor (2022) conducted a qualitative study of 30 couples and found that family intervention successfully resolved conflicts in 60% of cases, especially those concerning household

responsibilities. However, this approach proved less effective for resolving intimate relationship issues or when mediators displayed bias. Adejumo and Babatunde (2023) identify key factors that influence the success of family mediation. These include the impartiality of mediators, privacy considerations during mediation, striking a balance between giving advice and imposing solutions, and ensuring that both partners' perspectives are respected. Furthermore, it has been observed that modern adaptations that combine family mediation with professional counselling have shown promise, suggesting that hybrid approaches may offer more balanced and effective solutions (Olowu, 2022)

Professional Counselling Approaches

Professional marriage counselling services have expanded in Nigerian urban areas, incorporating diverse methodologies such as cognitive-behavioural therapy and emotionally focused therapy (Makinde, 2023). Initially met with cultural resistance, professional counselling is now gaining wider acceptance, particularly among educated and urban couples.

The effectiveness of professional counselling largely depends on cultural adaptation. Oladimeji (2022) found that culturally adapted cognitive-behavioural therapy yielded better results than Western approaches applied without modification. Successful adaptations included integrating traditional proverbs and cultural narratives, recognizing the influence of extended family on marital relationships, respecting existing gender role expectations while addressing harmful patterns, incorporating spiritual perspectives which are relevant to the couple's beliefs.

Blended approaches have proven particularly effective. Ademola (2023) conducted an intervention study with 80 couples and found that combining traditional family mediation with professional counselling techniques led to better outcomes than using either method alone. This suggests that a flexible, culturally informed counselling framework is more effective than rigidly applying any single methodology.

Implications for Counselling Practice

Understanding conflict resolution strategies has significant implications for how counselling professionals can enhance their practice and better serve their clients. Modern counselling must evolve beyond traditional individual therapy models to embrace a more

comprehensive approach that addresses conflict at multiple levels and stages of development

The following areas represent key implications for contemporary counselling

practice:

Building Cultural Awareness in Counselling

Counsellors working with Nigerian couples need to develop strong cultural awareness to be effective. Understanding general marital dynamics is not enough, they must also recognize the unique cultural influences shaping Nigerian relationships. Akinade (2023) suggests that cultural competence should include, familiarity with different Nigerian marriage traditions, awareness of how religious beliefs shape marital expectations, understanding of traditional ways couples resolve conflict, sensitivity to changing gender roles in modern society, recognition of financial pressures affecting marriages.

To improve their skills, counsellors should undergo training that includes input from cultural experts and community leaders (Olayiwola & Adebayo, 2023). Learning about cultural differences should be seen as an ongoing process rather than a one-time achievement.

Blending Traditional and Modern Counselling Methods

There is no single approach that can fully address the complex issues in Nigerian marriages. Instead, a combined method that integrates traditional wisdom with modern counselling techniques is more effective (Adewole, 2022). A balanced approach may involve, understanding each couple's cultural background and beliefs about conflict, identifying family or community support systems that can assist in conflict resolution, including religious or spiritual perspectives when relevant, teaching communication techniques adapted to the couple's cultural setting, addressing both practical and emotional issues, involving extended family when necessary and when both partners agree. This approach allows counsellors to customize their methods to suit each couple's needs while respecting their traditions.

Community and Group Support

One-on-one counselling is helpful, but many Nigerian couples may not have access to it due to cost, stigma, or a lack of trained professionals. Community-based approaches can serve as effective alternatives (Olaniyi & Johnson, 2023). These include support groups where couples can share experiences and learn from each other, community

workshops that address common marital challenges, mentorship programs, where experienced couples guide newlyweds, marriage enrichment programs organized by churches and mosques.

These community-driven strategies make counselling more accessible, reduce stigma, and align with Nigeria's communal culture (Nwosu, 2023).

Conclusion

This study highlights the need for conflict resolution strategies that balance traditional Nigerian values with modern counselling techniques. A single approach is not enough; rather, a combination of traditional wisdom and research-backed methods offers the best results. Key takeaways include the importance of cultural competence, flexible counselling approaches, proactive marital education, and community-driven support systems. Counsellors who respect cultural traditions while integrating psychological insights can better assist couples in resolving conflicts.

Future research should focus on evaluating culturally-adapted counselling methods, studying how marital conflicts vary across different regions of Nigeria, and examining the role of generational shifts in conflict resolution. Long-term studies tracking the effectiveness of different approaches would also provide valuable insights for improving marital counselling. As Nigeria continues to evolve, striking a balance between tradition and modernity remains essential for marital stability. Counsellors who understand this dynamic can play a crucial role in guiding couples through these changes and fostering healthier relationships.

Suggestions

The following suggestions are made to improve conflict resolution and strengthen marriages among Nigerian couples:

Suggestions for Counsellors

1. Develop cultural awareness – Counsellors should undergo training to understand Nigerian cultural norms and traditions regarding marriage, possibly through collaborations with local experts and community leaders.
2. Build partnerships with key stakeholders – Work closely with religious leaders, family elders, and mediators to create a well-rounded support system for couples.

Suggestions for Community and Religious Groups

3. Enhance premarital counselling – Strengthen existing programs by including practical advice on common issues like financial planning, communication, and extended family involvement.

4. Train community-based counsellors – Equip trusted individuals within religious and community settings with basic counselling skills to extend support to couples who lack access to professional services.

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Abstract

The rate at which sexual dysfunction is increasing in the society is alarming. No society is spared of the psychological effects of this scourge. It is a pervasive issue affecting many married adults in Kaduna State, Nigeria leading to marital dispute, emotional distress and relationship dissatisfaction. Despite the prevalence, there is limited research on the challenge. This paper examined the causes of sexual dysfunctions among married adults in Kaduna State, Nigeria: Psychological implications for dispute resolution in marriage. This study adapts the bio psychosocial model to help in understanding causes of sexual dysfunction. The study found that dispute emanating from sexual dysfunction had destroyed many marriages and couples with this problem experience distresses. The belief that sex is sacred and private as prevented them from seeking help where the underlying causes of their problem could be investigated.

Keywords: Causes, Sexual dysfunction, married adults, dispute Resolution, marriage, psychological implication

Introduction

Sex has been an interesting topic throughout human history. The nature of human sexual response and the topic of sexuality had only recently become a topic of academic and research interest. Until the Kinsley studies in the last 1940s and early 1950s and the work of Masters and Johnson in the 1960s and 1970s human sexuality was a topic characterized by myth than reality (Liu, et al., 2021). Attitude and value about what sexual behaviour constitute appropriate or normal have varied from culture to culture over the years. With regard to sexual behaviour, normality is culturally a relative concept. This is because societal values, cultural norms and development of science and technology are some factors that determine what sexual behaviours is to be considered normal or

abnormal (Akinade, 2014).

Sexual dysfunction or sexual malfunction is difficulty experienced by an individual or couple during any stage of a normal sexual response cycle. According to the DSM-V,

Sexual dysfunction disorders may be classified into four categories: sexual desire disorders, arousal disorders, orgasm disorders and pain disorders. Sexual dysfunction requires a person to feel extreme distress or interpersonal strains for a minimum of six months (excluding substance use or medication - induced sexual dysfunction) (Akinade, 2014). Noting this assertion, Akinade (2014) further advised that, when considering sexual dysfunction, one should be able to differentiate it from paraphilias (sexual deviations) which represent methods of sexual gratification that are contrary to the established rules and mores of society. Sexual dysfunctions are difficulties in normal mode of sexual gratification. Paraphilias are sexual behaviours that require unusual, bizarre imagery or acts for sexual excitement and satisfaction. The behaviours tend to have involuntary character and involve repetitive sexual activity with non consenting partners; sexual activity that includes real or stimulated suffering or humiliation; or preference for the use of a socially unacceptable or non human object for sexual arousal.

Sexual dysfunction refers to a difficult or distressful condition that prevents an individual from achieving satisfaction during sexual activity. It is a condition or distress related to any part of their sexual response cycle. According to American Psychiatric Association [APA] (2013), sexual dysfunction refers to difficulties experienced by individuals or couples during any phase of the sexual response cycle (desire, arousal, orgasm or resolution) that prevent the person from experiencing satisfaction in the sexual activity. Sexual dysfunction involves a wide range of issues which include, but not limited to, erectile dysfunction, premature ejaculation, delay ejaculation, anorgasmia (inability to reach orgasm) and sexual aversion (Akinade, 2014). These dysfunctions can occur in both men and women and may be influenced by many factors, such as physiological conditions (e.g. erectile dysfunction and hormonal imbalance), psychological issues (e.g. stress, anxiety, depression, trauma) and interpersonal dynamics (e.g. lack of communication, relationship conflict).

In order to understand sexual dysfunction, it is important to know the phases of the sexual response cycle. There are four phases, including;

Desire (Libido) – interest in sexual activities,

Arousal – Physical excitement (e.g. erection in men, and lubrication in women),

Orgasm – Peak of sexual pleasure,

Resolution – return to normal state.

Dysfunction can occur in any of these stages or phases.

Sexual Desire Disorder (SDD) is when an individual has reduced or no interest in sexual activity. It is also characterized with low libido, lack of sexual urge, fantasies and sexual attraction to others. Sexual Desire Disorders are of two types which include: Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder (lack of interest in sex or low libido) and Sexual Aversion Disorder (aversion to and avoidance to almost all genital contact with a sexual partner). Akinade (2014) maintained that the ratio 1:3 as compared with 1:6 in women and men, respecting experience this. Sexual Arousal Disorders is inability to attain or maintain erection or lubrication until completion of sexual intercourse. It is failure to maintain adequate erection for penetrative sex (Kessler, et al., 2018). Sexual Arousal Disorders were previously known as frigidity in women and impotence in men (Ugbana and Uzuonu, 2022). Orgasmic Disorders are persistent delay or absence of Orgasm following a normal excitement phase despite stimulation. It also includes conditions like Anorgasmia. This affects both men and women, impacting the quality of their relationship, self-esteem and mental health (Rosen & Bergeron, 2016). Sexual Pain Disorder (SPD) are pains marked by enormous physical discomfort when sexual activity is attempted. Two major pain disorders noticed during sexual activity are dyspareunia or painful mating (a persistent genital pain associated with sexual intercourse in either male or female), and vaginismus (recurrent involuntary spasm of the muscles of the outer third of the vagina that interfere with sexual intercourse) (Akinade, 2014; Bosen and Bergeron, 2016. APA (2013) reported that, it is estimated that around 30 million men United States and 52 million Men worldwide suffer erectile dysfunction. In Ghana, a study found that approximately 30 percent of women experience sexual dysfunction (Amoako et al., 2017).

Sexual dysfunction can affect any age although it is more common in the age 40 - 65 years. It is associated with a decline in health profile of an individual in relation to aging. According to Martinez Gonazolez (2024), individuals with chronic illnesses in the 40-85 age group experienced higher incidence of sexual dysfunction, particularly erectile dysfunction and reduced sexual satisfaction. In another study by Lee and Park (2024) It was found that postmenopausal women often experience lower Sexual desire and arousal due to both hormonal changes and other age – related health factors.

In Nigeria, a study reported a prevalence rate of 45 percent among men. Risk factors identified include age, marital status, education level, and chronic illness such as diabetes

and hypertension. Jones and Brown (2013) reported that Sexual dysfunction is prevalent in individuals aged 40-65, with both hormonal and psychological factors contributing to this

issue.

Confirming the prevalence of sexual dysfunction, Zbigniew and Kamila (2019) reported Burris and Spector's analysis conducted in the United Kingdom showed that 15.8% reported lifelong female sexual dysfunction. Bolaji et al (2016) also reported that erectile dysfunction is currently one of the most common sexual dysfunction worldwide but it is usually under estimated because it is not a life threatening condition. The study was a descriptive cross-sectional population based survey among men aged 30 – 80 year in Ogbomoso, South-West, Nigeria. They found that the general prevalence of erectile dysfunction in the study was 58.9% and concluded that the prevalence of erectile dysfunction is high among South-Eastern Nigeria male adults. Sexual dysfunctions are distressful and often lead to frustration, guilt, loss of self esteem and interpersonal problems. In Nigeria, this challenge has not received much attention and has often been less reported or explored through research. However, it is obvious that this situation often negatively affected marriage in this region. As a result many marriages are in dispute.

The major objective of dispute resolution in marriage is to initiate a process that will ultimately lead to marital adjustment, a social balance, and an atmosphere of acceptance, congruence or harmony between husband and wife. Marital adjustment is characterized by agreement in handling issues such as sexual satisfaction. This is why Effiong and Denga (2011) agreed that meeting the sex need of one's partner without undue resistance is an index of marital adjustment. Sex therefore, is a love tonic that settles past and present disputes between couples without conditionality imposed.

Despite the unrelenting effort of psychologists, counsellors, medical practitioners against sexual dysfunction, the scourge and its psychological effect on married adult in Kaduna state, Nigeria has not reduced but on the increase geometrically. Sex frequency, quantity and quality are all common features of a well-adjusted marriage. Withholding sex from a spouse may break the marital bond. Persistent denial of sex can be a huge issue as it can destroy trust and stir anger and disharmony in marriage. Sexual dysfunction and its psychological effect on married couples had spread like a wild fire across the society silently. In Nigeria today, this psychological mal-adaptability is considered an issue of serious concern as it has adverse effects on peace and harmony in marriages. Happy married life has become virtually impossible with the presence of this challenge in any marriage (Kashubeck-West & Meyer, 2017).

Attempting any solution for sexual dysfunctions would be a farce if the cause is not known. Investigating the cause of a particular sexual dysfunction will help in knowing

what therapy to adopt. The victims of sexual dysfunction and their spouses suffer intellectually, physically and emotionally. Most of these victims cannot express their feelings and other experiences because of cultural and religious restrictions. They are deprived of their right and happiness and have to constantly live with their problem (Snyder & Balderrama-Durbin, 2017). Taking into consideration the psychological effect of sexual dysfunction and how it has impacted marriage, not many investigations have been done on similar issues within and beyond Nigeria. However, studies show the prevalence of sexual dysfunction among married adults in Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigated causes of sexual dysfunction among married adults in Nigeria: psychological implication for dispute resolution in marriage.

Theoretical Framework

This study adapts the Biopsychosocial model (BPS model) to help in understanding causes of sexual dysfunction. Biopsychosocial (BPS) model was propounded by George L. Engel, an American Psychiatrist in 1977. The model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing sexual dysfunction. It explains the causes of sexual dysfunction by considering the interplay between biological, psychological and social factors that contributes to an individual's experience of sexual health. The model explains that: biological factors, such as hormonal imbalances, neurological disorders, or chronic illness such as diabetes, cancer or cardiovascular diseases can contribute to sexual dysfunction. The bio- psychosocial model acknowledges the importance of addressing these underlying biological factors through medical treatment or lifestyle changes. Furthermore, the model asserted that, Psychological factors such as Anxiety, stress, depression, mood disorders, trauma and past experience impact sexual functioning negatively and could cause low libido or decrease interest in sex. Bio-psychosocial model recognizes the importance of addressing these psychological factors through counselling or therapy. Relation dynamics, cultural and societal norms and social support according to bio-psychosocial model are social factors necessary for community intimacy, conflict resolution, meeting expectations around sexual performance and support from partners or others. Absence of these could impact the sexual health of partners which could lead to conflict and inappropriate adjustment in marriage. The model considers the importance of addressing these social factors through education, communication or relationship therapy. It is important to note that there exists interplay between the factors. The medical conditions can impact mood and self esteem of a spouse. Relationship strains can also

impact stress and anxiety level. Cultural norms can influence health behaviours and access to care. The Bio-psychological model is suitable for this study because it highlights the

complexity of sexual dysfunction and the need for a comprehensive treatment approach that addresses biological, psychological and social factors (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2017).

Causes of Sexual Dysfunctions

Sexual dysfunctions can be due to various factors, including socio-cultural, psychological, biological and physical causes which are discussed as follows:

Socio-cultural causes

All kinds of sexual disorders among married Adults occur within a social context and thus certain socio-cultural factors have been linked to these dysfunctions. Many married Adults suffer situational pressures including divorce, job stress, death in the family; others have problems in their relationships. Spouses who have lost affection for the partner due to unhappiness in their relationship, or feel powerless and dominated by their partner usually have no interest in sex. Some married Adults who basically have happy relationships but, their partners were very unskilled, unenthusiastic lovers lost their interest in sex. And sometimes partners differ in their needs for closeness, the ones who need more personal space developed hypoactive sexual desire as a way of keeping distance. Report shows that the socio-cultural factors that are responsible for sexual desire disorders are also tied is erectile disorder (Munle, et al., 2025).

Married adults who have lost their jobs and were under financial stress, reported erectile dysfunction. Marital stress, too, has been tied to sexual dysfunction, young women with aging husband, who because of normal changing aging changes require more intense, direct and lengthy physical stimulation of the penis for erection to occur. If the wife reaches orgasm naturally or orally during sexual encounter his pressure to perform is reduced. Most of the women with arousal and orgasmic disorders reported that they had a strict religious upbringing, some were punished for childhood masturbation, received no preparation for onset of menstruation, were restricted in their dating of teenagers and were told that girls don't try sex (Akinade, 2014).

Individuals who were homosexuals but later enter heterosexual relationship often find it a difficult task, leading to sexual dysfunction. Mahmud (2008) noted that heterosexual individuals with homosexual ideas, fantasies and attractions are often faced with the challenges of anxiety and sexual dysfunction.

Psychological Causes:

The psychological causes of sexual desire disorders often lead to arousal and orgasm

disorder in both males and females. Early traumatic or painful sexual experiences like rape, incest and punishment were reported to have resulted in development of psychosexual dysfunction. Mahmud (2008) citing Glenn reported that some studies have also shown that anxiety associated with size of penis can also lead to male impotency. An increase in anxiety or anger among married adults often reduce sexual desires, arousal and orgasm in both men and women. Couples with hypoactive sexual desire and sexual aversion have particular attitude, fears or perception that make them believe that sex is immoral or dangerous. Memories of loss of a parent during childhood, fear of pregnancy and depression were tied to dysfunction of sexual desire, arousal and orgasm among married adults (Kashubeck-West & Meyer, 2017).

Biological causes

Sexual dysfunction has biological causes responsible for desire and arousal disorders among married Adults. A number of hormones interact to generate sexual desires and arousal, and abnormality in their function can lower sex drive. Previous studies had shown that in both men and women, a high level of the hormone prolactin, a low level of the male sex hormonal testosterone, and either a high or low level of female sex hormone oestrogen can lead to low sex drive (Lewis, et al, 2017). Some women who use Birth control pills reported low sex drive, and this could be linked to high levels of oestrogen contained in some birth control pills. Some married Adults also who are in their menopause reported low level of sex drive. Lewis, et al further explained that low sex drive is tied to low level of oestrogen found in many post-menopause women or women who have recently given birth. For the males, Akinade (2014) stated that, premature ejaculation, delay ejaculation and inhibited ejaculation that were historically attributed to psychological cause are now suggested by new theories to having an underlying neurobiological cause. This is because the level of blood flow into the tissues determines how effective it will function and this is largely influenced by hormone. For example, a low level of oestrogen leads to decrease blood flow to the pelvic region, which can result in less genital sensation, as well as needing more time to produce arousal and orgasm (McCarthy & McDonald, 2017).

Physical Causes

Some sexual dysfunctions are the result of physical illness and abnormality. Scars, infections, spinal cord injury, and surgery can frustrate sexual activity. Severe cases were reported to have prevented couple from having intercourse. Some women experienced

painful intercourse (Vaginismus) because of an infection of the vagina or urinary tract. Among the most common are injury to the vagina, cervix, uterus, or pelvic ligaments during child birth; similarly, scar left by an episiotomy can cause pain during sexual

intercourse. Poor Lubrication due to insufficient excitement and stimulation can affect sustained erection and orgasm. Dyspareunia can cause problem in a couple's sexual relationship. A number of medical conditions, including cancer, kidney failure, multiple sclerosis, heart disease and bladder problems can lead to sexual dysfunction. Certain medications, including antidepressants, blood pressure medications, antihistamines and chemotherapy drugs were reported to be connected to decrease in sexual desire and orgasm.(Clayton et al, 2018; Kessler, et al., 2005).

How Incidence of Sexual Dysfunctions has fuelled the rate of dispute resolution concerns among married adults

Resolution or management of marital dispute is a crucial aspect of maintaining a healthy and harmonious relationship. Dispute is defined as a disagreement or argument about something important. Disputes are natural in any relationship, but how they are handled can significantly impact the overall health and longevity of the marriage. Sexual dysfunction has destroyed many marriages.

Many marriages have lost the peace of their relationship and are dying in silence. One of the main objectives of marriage is sexual gratification; hence, it determines the extent of marital adjustment. If married people don't share a happy sex life, it gives rise to feelings of incompetence, frustration and aggressiveness which hinders with their adjustment in marriage. Sexual dysfunction can contribute to disputes in marriages and affect conflict resolution in a number of ways including:

Lack or inadequate communication

Lack of communication makes resolving any conflict more difficult. Married adults must learn to talk about sexual problems when they emerge. In Nigeria, people hardly discuss about Sexual problems publicly due to shame, cultural limitations or taboo, religious restrictions and embarrassment. When sexual issues are allowed to linger, partners may assume infidelity, feel doubt about partner, feel loss of attraction, and feel pressured or judged.

Unmet Sexual needs could further aggravate dispute in marriage because it can lead to resentment, irritability and blame-shifting. Lack of Sexual satisfaction can lead to hot argument about an insignificant issue.

Strain on emotional intimacy

Low Libido, erectile problems or pain during sex often reduces physical and emotional intimacy. Over time, if the challenge is not addressed could negatively impact

both physical and emotional bonding in marriage which could lead to the feeling of rejection and insecurity. If allowed to continue, could spill over to other areas of relationship. When married adults are unhappy in one area of their relationships, if not resolved early can easily spill over to other areas thus making resolution difficult.

Instead of addressing the issues, married adult may avoid staying together, avoiding each other and sleeping separately. All of these will prevent effective dispute resolution and allow issues to escalate. Studies have shown that sexual dissatisfaction and dysfunction significantly contributes to marital discord. For instance, Daniel (2025) investigated sexual intimacy factors in marital conflict among Christian couples in Lagos West and found that inadequate sexual communication, lack of sexual education and mismatched libido are major drivers of sex-related conflicts among married adults in Lagos west, Nigeria. Nwanosike, et al. (2025) also examined unfulfilled expectations as sources of marital conflicts that seems to affect marital relationships in Nsuka Metropolis, Nigeria. The result of the study shown weak relationship between unfulfilled expectation and marital conflict as predictors of marital relationship.

In another study, Munle, et al. (2025) investigated the gap in diagnosis and unmet healthcare needs in male sexual dysfunction and chronic health conditions in Germany. Result showed that sexual dysfunction is strongly associated with unmet-healthcare and sexual needs. It was also found that barriers such as shame, access issues lead to persistent unmet sexual need despite dysfunction. The finding of this study contradicts the work of Nwanosike, et al. (2025) who saw weak or no relationship between sexual dysfunction and unfulfilled expectations.

Marital Dispute Resolution for Married Adults affected by Sexual Dysfunction

Where sexual dysfunction exists, couple should try to find out the underlying cause and go for help. However, if the situation has degenerated to dispute, the following steps could be taken to resolve it.

1. Create an environment of love and understanding. Victims of sexual dysfunction should be seen as individuals in a situation who need help and empathic understanding. See your partner as a friend and not an enemy. Individual should help the victim to take responsibility for the situation by admitting his or her failure or inability.
2. Victims of sexual dysfunction should be assisted to open up and accept help process. Sufferers of sexual dysfunction must do away with cultural myth surrounding sex and sexuality and be willing to discuss their situations with professionals who can help them.

3. Avoid labelling and blaming. Partners must avoid stigmatizing their spouses. Avoid anything that could lead to labelling or blame as this may provoke the individual to anger and prevent him or her from opening up.
4. Appreciate your spouse and offer him or her a second chance, persistent denial of need for sex can be offensive but partners must forgive, release grudges and let go, foster harmony and friendship with victim. There should be room for acceptance.
5. Ensure adequate and effective communication for everyone to express his/ her feelings and thoughts. Avoid heated arguments. Try to understand your perspectives. Both partners must understand that none of them is happy about the situation. Choose the right time and place to discuss conflict and avoid distraction. Stay calm and respectful, regulate frustration. Listen to each other without interrupting. (Effiong & Denga, 2011; Mipo, 2019).
6. Seek for Professional help. Engage the service of a professional helper that can assist to find out the underlying cause of the sexual dysfunction. A good knowledge of the cause of the problem will determine who to meet for solution. In a situation where professional is not competent to handle the situation, he or she will be able to make a suitable referral and ensure a necessary follow up.

Psychological Implications

Low Self-Esteem: Low self-confidence frequently accompanies individuals who suffer sexual dysfunction; Low self-esteem increases feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, causing individuals to become withdrawn or defensive in their marriage relationship. Low self-esteem can lead to self doubt about one's ability, making it difficult for the sufferer to discuss about sexual needs and desires and have close intimacy.

1. **Stress:** Persistent concern about performance, satisfaction, and of incompetence can create tension and stress leading to lack of sexual interest among married couple. Unaddressed issues can always lead to misunderstanding and resentment. Unmet sexual needs or desire can be responsible for frustration and stress in marriage.
2. **Shame and Guilt:** There is stigma attached to impotency in society, and there is a lot of shame and guilt for the sufferers of sexual dysfunctions. People with sexual

dysfunction tend to evaluate themselves negatively on a regular basis, which is a habit that has roots in childhood experiences. Mahmud (2008) reporting the work of psychodynamic theorist attributed dysfunction to unresolved Oedipal conflict. He further explained that impotence is based on a persistence of an unconscious sexual

attachment to the mother. Hence, because the partner is never the mother, impotence results.

3. **Anxiety:** Anxiety is a complex emotional state characterized by feelings of worry, nervousness, or fear that are persistent or overwhelming; that makes individual perceives danger that is not there. Symptoms include the followings: fear, excessive worry, tension, and restlessness, sense of impending danger or doom, difficulty concentrating, sweating, rapid heart rate, insomnia.

Conclusion

This study therefore concluded that sexual dysfunction is an important public health problem in Nigeria which has not received enough attention. The study has investigated the causes of sexual dysfunction among married adults, looking at the psychological implications for dispute resolution in marriage and found that dispute emanating from sexual dysfunction has destroyed many marriages, and couples with this challenge who attempt to maintain their marriages are living in distresses. The belief that sex is sacred and private often prevented victims of sexual dysfunction from seeking help where the underlying causes of their problem could be investigated. Most sufferers of sexual dysfunctions only seek medical attention even when the underlying cause of their problem is not medically related.

Suggestions

1. Every sexual dysfunction has a particular underlying cause which may be socio-cultural, psychological, biological or physical. The solution of a particular sexual dysfunction is determined by the underlying cause. Conducting a comprehensive assessment of these factors to know the cause is important.
2. To ensure a holistic approach to treatment, a multidisciplinary treatment plan should be developed to include, medical practitioners, social workers, psychiatrics, psychologist, counsellor among others to investigate root causes of sexual dysfunctions.
3. Government should assist in making provisions and support for all stakeholders to consciously engage in fight against sexual dysfunctions in Nigeria.

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence and Conflict resolution Strategies among counsellors and public officials in Owerri Municipal Council, Imo State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, involving a population of 300 practicing counsellors, from which a sample of 150 was randomly selected using a stratified sampling technique. Data were collected using a validated structured questionnaire titled “Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution and Counselling Effectiveness Questionnaire (EICRCEQ)”. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, ANOVA, and t-tests, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed. Findings revealed that counsellors exhibited high levels of emotional intelligence, particularly in empathy, self-awareness, and relationship management. EI was found to be significantly and positively correlated with constructive conflict resolution styles (collaboration and compromise) and counselling effectiveness. However, the study also found that formal training in emotional intelligence was lacking among most professionals, despite a strong desire for such training. The study concludes that emotional intelligence is a vital skill in conflict management and counselling. It recommends that emotional intelligence (EI) training should be systematically integrated

into professional development programmes, school curricula, and public service policies as a strategic approach to improving conflict management, strengthening interpersonal relationships, enhancing productivity, and promoting emotional well-being across institutions within Owerri Municipal Council.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution, Counselling, Empathy, Public Institutions, Imo State

Introduction

Conflicts are an inevitable part of human interaction and organizational life, particularly in diverse and dynamic settings like educational institutions, government councils, and social groups. In the Nigerian context, particularly in urban areas such as Owerri Municipal Council in Imo State, scholars have identified misunderstandings, communication gaps, cultural diversity, value differences, and emotional mismanagement as contributing factors to conflict situations (Obasi & Nwachukwu, 2022). Unresolved conflicts can lead to tension, reduced productivity, strained relationships, and, in extreme cases, violence or breakdown of institutional functions (Oboegbulem & Alfa, 2018).

Counselling, as a professional intervention, plays a critical role in resolving such conflicts by fostering understanding, promoting dialogue, and facilitating personal growth. However, the effectiveness of counselling interventions is largely dependent on the emotional competence of both the counsellor and the individuals involved. This underscores the importance of Emotional Intelligence (EI), a concept that has gained global recognition since the work of Mayer and Salovey (2023), and popularized by Daniel Goleman (2022). EI involves the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions constructively to guide thinking and behavior, particularly in times of stress and conflict. Research has shown that individuals with high emotional intelligence are more capable of navigating interpersonal conflicts, demonstrating empathy, and communicating effectively (Bar-On, 2006; Brackett, Rivers & Salovey, 2019). In conflict-laden environments such as schools and municipal offices, emotionally intelligent behaviour can make the difference between escalation and resolution.

The present study seeks to examine how emotional intelligence can be harnessed for effective conflict resolution and counselling in Owerri Municipal Council. It will explore the levels of EI among counsellors and public officers, the relationship between EI and conflict resolution outcomes, and practical ways to integrate EI training into conflict

management and counselling practices. The major concepts that underpin this study are Emotional Intelligence (EI), conflict resolution, and counselling. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and utilize one's own emotions as well as those of others to guide thinking and behaviour (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995). It encompasses key components such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy,

and social skills, which are essential for effective interpersonal interaction and conflict management. Emotional intelligence is a key variable in this study, as it significantly influences how individuals understand and respond to interpersonal conflicts, as well as how they deliver emotionally responsive counselling services. Individuals with high emotional intelligence are more likely to demonstrate empathy, emotional regulation, and effective communication, which are essential in conflict situations.

Conflict resolution refers to the process through which two or more parties seek to reach a peaceful and mutually acceptable solution to a disagreement or dispute (Deutsch, 2018). The literature identifies several conflict resolution strategies, including competing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating, each varying in levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974/2021). Among these strategies, collaboration is often considered the most constructive approach, as it promotes open communication, mutual understanding, and sustainable solutions.

Emotional intelligence is a crucial variable in this study because it influences how counsellors respond to clients' emotional needs and interpersonal challenges. Emotionally intelligent counsellors are more effective in building trust, managing emotionally intense counselling sessions, and guiding clients toward healthy and constructive choices. This effectiveness stems from their ability to demonstrate empathy, regulate their emotions, and communicate appropriately within the counselling relationship. According to Daniel Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence enhances interpersonal competence, which is essential for successful counselling and conflict resolution.

Emotional regulation is a fundamental component of emotional intelligence. It refers to the processes through which individuals influence the emotions they experience, the timing of these emotions, and how such emotions are expressed (Gross, 1998). In counselling and conflict resolution settings, emotional regulation enables professionals to remain calm, objective, and supportive, even in highly emotional situations. This ability is particularly important for counsellors and conflict managers, as it helps prevent escalation and promotes constructive engagement between conflicting parties.

This study is anchored on three core psychological and behavioural theories that explain how emotional intelligence influences conflict resolution and counselling

effectiveness. The Emotional Intelligence Theory was first proposed by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer (1990), who defined emotional intelligence as the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, discriminate among them, and use this information to guide thinking and actions. The theory was later expanded by Daniel Goleman (1995), who identified five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and

social skills. These components are essential for effective interpersonal interaction, making the theory highly relevant to counselling and conflict resolution. The Person-Centered Counselling Theory developed by Carl Rogers (1951) emphasizes empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard as core conditions for effective counselling. The theory posits that individuals are more likely to achieve personal growth when they feel understood and accepted. This perspective aligns closely with emotional intelligence, particularly in the areas of empathy and emotional regulation. It explains why emotionally intelligent counsellors are more effective in creating a safe and supportive environment for clients. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Theory explains the different strategies individuals use in handling conflict, including competing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating. These strategies vary in terms of assertiveness and cooperativeness. The theory is relevant to this study because emotional intelligence influences how individuals choose and apply these conflict resolution strategies, particularly the use of collaborative approaches that promote mutual understanding and lasting solutions.

Several empirical studies, both globally and within Nigeria, have examined the relationship between emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and counselling effectiveness. Afolabi (2017) investigated the role of emotional intelligence in conflict management among Nigerian university students. The findings revealed that students with higher levels of emotional intelligence were significantly more capable of managing interpersonal conflicts constructively. The study recommended the integration of emotional intelligence training into student development and leadership programmes. Ofole and Odusanya (2017) conducted a study in Lagos State to examine the influence of emotional intelligence on counselling performance among secondary school counsellors. The results indicated that counsellors with high emotional intelligence were more effective in establishing therapeutic relationships, managing clients' emotions, and applying appropriate counselling techniques. Ugoani (2020) explored emotional intelligence and conflict management in Nigerian organizations. The study found that individuals with high emotional intelligence demonstrated better conflict management skills, maintained stronger interpersonal relationships, and contributed to improved organizational productivity.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict is an inherent and often unavoidable aspect of human interaction, particularly within social, educational, and organizational settings. In Nigeria, and especially in urban centres such as Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State, conflicts have been reported in schools, workplaces, and community settings among students, teachers, public servants, and

other stakeholders (Nwankwo, 2020; Obasi & Nwachukwu, 2022). These conflicts may be associated with factors such as poor emotional regulation, ineffective communication, lack of empathy, and the use of inappropriate conflict resolution strategies. When not effectively managed, such conflicts can result in strained relationships, reduced productivity, and psychological distress.

Although counselling services and conflict resolution mechanisms exist in many schools and public institutions, studies suggest that these interventions do not always produce optimal outcomes (Ofole & Odusanya, 2017). This limitation may be linked to insufficient emphasis on emotional intelligence competencies such as self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills, which are essential for constructive conflict management.

Emotional intelligence, as established in the literature, enhances individuals' ability to understand and regulate emotions, improve communication, and facilitate peaceful resolution of disputes (Salovey & Mayer, 1997; Goleman, 1995).

However, within the context of Owerri Municipal Council, there appears to be limited empirical evidence on the extent to which emotional intelligence is integrated into counselling practices and conflict resolution processes. It is also unclear whether counsellors and administrative personnel possess adequate training in emotional intelligence, particularly in managing emotionally charged situations. This gap underscores the need for further investigation into how emotional intelligence can be harnessed to improve counselling effectiveness and conflict resolution outcomes in the area.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution strategies of counsellors and administrative officials in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Assess the level of emotional intelligence among counsellors and administrative officials.
2. Investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and the conflict resolution strategies employed by counsellors and administrative officials.

3. Examine the contribution of emotional intelligence to counselling effectiveness, particularly in addressing emotional, behavioral, and interpersonal challenges among students and public officials.
4. Explore the extent to which emotional intelligence training and awareness are integrated into the professional development programs of educators, counsellors, and

public officials in Owerri Municipal Council.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the investigation into the role of emotional intelligence in conflict resolution and counselling within Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State:

1. What is the level of emotional intelligence among counsellors and administrative officials in Owerri Municipal Council?
2. How does emotional intelligence influence the conflict resolution strategies employed by counsellors and administrative officials?
3. To what extent does emotional intelligence affect the effectiveness of counselling practices in addressing emotional, behavioral, and interpersonal challenges?
4. What is the level of awareness and integration of emotional intelligence training in the professional development programs of educators, counsellors, and public officials in Owerri Municipal Council?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated in line with the research questions to be tested statistically in the course of the study:

- H₀₁:** There is no significant level of emotional intelligence among counsellors and administrative officials in Owerri Municipal Council.
- H₀₂:** Emotional intelligence does not significantly influence the conflict resolution strategies employed by counsellors and administrative officials.
- H₀₃:** Emotional intelligence does not significantly affect the effectiveness of counselling practices in addressing emotional, behavioral, and interpersonal challenges.
- H₀₄:** There is no significant level of awareness and integration of emotional intelligence training in the professional development programs of educators, counsellors, and administrative officials in Owerri Municipal Council.

Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design with a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques. This design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect and analyze data from participants in their natural settings without manipulating variables, while also exploring

participants' perceptions and experiences in depth. The target population for the study comprised all professional counsellors and administrative officials working in public secondary schools and governmental institutions within Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. According to official records from the Imo State Ministry of Education and Local Government Service Commission (2024), the population consisted of approximately 300 registered professionals, including full-time school counsellors and governmental welfare officers. From this population, a sample of 150 participants was drawn, representing 50% of the population, which is considered statistically adequate for survey research (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure fair representation across institutional roles, gender, and years of professional experience, thereby accounting for potential differences in emotional intelligence levels and conflict resolution practices.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled the Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution, and Counselling Effectiveness Questionnaire (EICRCEQ), developed by the researcher. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section A captured demographic information such as age, gender, institution type, years of experience, and training in emotional intelligence. Section B, the Emotional Intelligence Scale, contained 20 items adapted from Goleman's Emotional Competency Framework and the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), measuring self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness (empathy), and relationship management on a five-point Likert scale. Section C, the Conflict Resolution Style Inventory, consisted of 15 items based on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), assessing respondents' preferred conflict management styles: Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding, and Accommodating. Section D, the Counselling Effectiveness Inventory, included 15 items assessing counselling performance, focusing on quality of interactions, management of clients' emotions, problem-solving abilities, and session impact, also rated on a five-point scale. The draft instrument was subjected to content and face validation by three experts in educational psychology and measurement, and subsequently pilot-tested on 30 counsellors outside the study area. Reliability analysis yielded high Cronbach's alpha coefficients: Emotional Intelligence ($\alpha = 0.88$), Conflict Resolution ($\alpha = 0.84$), and

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Counselling Effectiveness ($\alpha = 0.86$), indicating strong internal consistency.

For the qualitative component, structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with counsellors, teachers, and administrative officials to gain deeper insights into the application of emotional intelligence in counselling and conflict resolution. The discussions explored real-life conflict cases, use of emotional intelligence in

interventions, challenges faced, and areas needing further training or support. All sessions were recorded with consent, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify recurring patterns and emerging themes.

The questionnaires were distributed to a cross-section of participants in selected schools and government offices. Out of 150 questionnaires distributed, 138 were fully completed, yielding a 92% response rate, while incomplete responses were discarded.

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 25.0. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize demographic information, emotional intelligence levels, conflict resolution styles, and counselling effectiveness. Inferential statistics included Independent Samples t-tests, One-Way ANOVA, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, applied to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level. The t-test compared participants with and without emotional intelligence training (HO4), ANOVA compared EI levels across different professional groups (HO1), and Pearson correlation examined the relationships between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution strategies (HO2) as well as counselling effectiveness (HO3). Qualitative data were analyzed thematically to complement the quantitative findings and provide richer understanding of how emotional intelligence is applied in real-life counselling and conflict resolution scenarios.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of emotional intelligence among counsellors in Owerri Municipal Council?

Emotional Intelligence Components	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation
Self-awareness	4.12	0.53	High
Self-regulation	3.89	0.61	Moderate-High
Empathy (social awareness)	4.05	0.58	High
Relationship management	3.91	0.66	Moderate-High
Overall EI Score	4.00	0.59	High__

The results indicate that respondents have a generally high level of emotional

intelligence, with strong abilities in self-awareness and empathy. However, self-regulation and relationship management are slightly lower, suggesting some room for improvement in managing emotions and interpersonal relationships.

Research Question 2: How does emotional intelligence influence conflict resolution strategies adopted by school counsellors and public officials?

Conflict Resolution Style	Mean Score	Relationship with EI (r)	Significance (p)	Interpretation
Collaborating	4.21	0.68	0.000	Strong positive
Compromising	3.90	0.61	0.000	Moderate positive
Avoiding	2.22	-0.35	0.003	Weak negative

Emotional intelligence is significantly and positively related to the use of collaborative and compromising conflict resolution strategies.

Research Question 3: To what extent does emotional intelligence affect the effectiveness of counselling practices?

Counselling Effectiveness	Variable Correlation with EI	p-value	Interpretation
		(r)	
Managing client emotions	0.73	0.000	Strong positive relationship
Building therapeutic relationships	0.69	0.000	Strong positive relationship
Problem-solving in sessions	0.64	0.000	Moderate-strong positive

High emotional intelligence significantly enhances counselling effectiveness across multiple dimensions.

Research Question 4: What is the level of integration of emotional intelligence training in professional development programs?

Item	Yes (%)	No (%)
Have you received formal training on EI?	36%	64%
Is EI included in your professional development?	29%	71%
Would you like training in emotional intelligence?	88%	12%

A majority of respondents have not received formal EI training, indicating a gap in professional development.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Result	Decision
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H ₀₁	ANOVA	F(2,147) = 4.76, p < 0.05	Rejected
H ₀₂	Pearson Correlation	r = 0.68, p = 0.000	Rejected
H ₀₃	Pearson Correlation	r = 0.73, p = 0.000	Rejected
H ₀₄	t-test	t (136) = 3.29, p = 0.001	Rejected

The table shows that all the null hypotheses were rejected, indicating statistically significant results. Specifically, the ANOVA result suggests significant differences among groups, while the Pearson correlation results ($r = 0.68$ and $r = 0.73$) indicate strong positive relationships between the variables. Additionally, the t-test result confirms a significant difference between the compared groups.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study have provided valuable insights into how emotional intelligence (EI) influences conflict resolution and counselling effectiveness in educational and public institutions within Owerri Municipal Council. The discussion is organized according to the research questions and hypotheses.

Level of Emotional Intelligence among Respondents

The results indicated that the counsellors in Owerri Municipal Council exhibited a generally high level of emotional intelligence, particularly in self-awareness, empathy, and relationship management. This aligns with previous research by Adeyemo and Ogunyemi (2020) and Oginska-Bulik (2020) who found that professionals with higher EI levels are better equipped to manage their own emotions and understand those of others, which is essential in emotionally charged situations like conflict resolution and counselling. This high EI level, however, contrasts with the finding that most participants had not received formal EI training, suggesting that much of their emotional competence may stem from personal experiences or informal learning. This points to a need for institutionalized emotional intelligence training to further strengthen these natural capacities.

Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Conflict Resolution Strategies

The findings revealed a strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence

and the use of collaborative and compromising conflict resolution strategies. Respondents with higher EI scores were more likely to resolve disputes constructively by engaging in open communication, empathy, and mutual understanding. This confirms earlier empirical studies, such as Afolabi (2021) and Ugoani (2016), which demonstrated that emotionally intelligent individuals tend to avoid aggressive or avoidant conflict styles, preferring

instead to seek win-win outcomes. The low mean score for avoidant strategies among participants further supports the conclusion that EI encourages active engagement in resolving disputes rather than withdrawing or escalating tensions.

Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Counselling Effectiveness

A significant positive relationship was found between emotional intelligence and key indicators of counselling effectiveness, including empathy, emotional regulation, and client engagement. This supports the work of Ofole and Odusanya (2019) and Nelson et al. (2020), who emphasized the importance of EI in building trust, understanding client needs, and creating a therapeutic environment conducive to problem-solving. The results suggest that counsellors with higher emotional intelligence are better able to: Build rapport with clients/students, Navigate emotionally intense conversations, Guide clients toward realistic and emotionally sound decisions. This finding underscores the role of EI not just in conflict prevention, but also in therapeutic intervention and rehabilitation.

Integration of Emotional Intelligence Training

Despite the high levels of EI observed, the majority of participants reported that they had not undergone formal emotional intelligence training, and that EI concepts were not well integrated into professional development programs. However, a large percentage expressed interest in receiving such training, indicating a gap in institutional capacity building and a willingness to improve. This is consistent with findings by Eze & Eze (2019), who reported that structured EI training significantly improves interpersonal skills and conflict resolution outcomes among school personnel. The lack of formal training may limit the potential of otherwise capable counsellors, especially in more complex conflict or crisis situations.

Counselling Implications

The results of this study have several implications for counselling practice in Owerri Municipal and beyond:

Effective counselling practice requires deliberate and sustained investment in the emotional intelligence of professionals. Counsellors should be provided with structured and continuous training that equips them to understand and manage the emotional

complexities that arise in client interactions and conflict situations. Beyond in-service training, emotional intelligence should be embedded as a core component of counsellor education programmes so that emerging professionals enter the field with a solid emotional and interpersonal foundation.

In addition, attention must be given to cultural sensitivity. Counsellors need to be

adequately prepared to recognize how cultural beliefs, values, and social norms shape emotional expression and influence approaches to conflict resolution within the Nigerian context. This understanding will enable them to respond more appropriately and effectively to clients from diverse backgrounds. Institutional support is also essential. Schools, government agencies, and counselling centres have a responsibility to create enabling environments by investing in emotional intelligence training and providing the necessary support systems for counsellors to perform optimally. When such support is in place, counsellors are better positioned to build strong therapeutic relationships characterized by trust, empathy, and openness, which ultimately leads to more positive counselling outcomes.

Conclusion

This study underscores the central importance of emotional intelligence in promoting effective conflict resolution and counselling practice among counsellors in Owerri Municipal Council, Imo State. Rather than merely describing outcomes, the study establishes emotional intelligence as a critical factor that shapes how counsellors respond to interpersonal challenges, manage emotions, and facilitate positive change in others. It highlights that the ability to understand and regulate emotions, demonstrate empathy, and maintain healthy relationships is fundamental to achieving meaningful and lasting resolutions in conflict situations.

Furthermore, the study affirms that emotional intelligence goes beyond being an individual trait; it is a professional competence that directly impacts the quality of counselling services and organizational harmony. Counsellors who demonstrate strong emotional intelligence are better equipped to create supportive environments, encourage open communication, and guide individuals toward constructive behavioural outcomes. Therefore, the study concludes that strengthening emotional intelligence among counsellors is essential for improving counselling effectiveness, fostering peaceful coexistence, and enhancing overall institutional functioning.

Recommendations

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

improve conflict resolution and counselling effectiveness through the application of emotional intelligence within Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State:

1. Although counsellors showed a high level of emotional intelligence, targeted training should be provided to improve self-regulation and relationship management skills.
2. Counsellors and public officials should be trained to adopt more collaborative and

compromising strategies, as these are positively influenced by emotional intelligence.

3. Emotional intelligence should be strengthened as a core professional skill to enhance counsellors' ability to manage client emotions, build relationships, and solve problems effectively.
4. Emotional intelligence training should be formally incorporated into professional development programmes, since many respondents have not received such training despite its importance.

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TEACHING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: COUNSELLING STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH AND ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a critical psychological competency that significantly influences how individuals perceive, understand, manage, and express emotions in themselves and others. Among youth and adolescents, the development of EI plays a pivotal role in fostering academic achievement, promoting positive peer interactions, and supporting overall mental and emotional well-being. As adolescence is a formative period characterized by rapid emotional and cognitive changes, it is a crucial time for cultivating emotional awareness and regulation skills. This paper explores the significance of emotional intelligence in the context of adolescent development, emphasizing its impact on personal growth, decision-making, and resilience in the face of stress and social pressure. Drawing upon established psychological theories, such as Goleman's framework of EI and Mayer and Salovey's ability model, the paper examines the underlying constructs of emotional competence. It also outlines a range of evidence-based counselling strategies

designed to enhance EI in young people, including cognitive-behavioral techniques, mindfulness training, social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, and group therapy interventions. The discussion includes best practices from both school-based and clinical settings, showcasing the vital role counsellors play in identifying emotional struggles, providing supportive interventions, and empowering adolescents with tools for emotional growth. Finally, the paper considers the long-term benefits of early EI development, such

as improved interpersonal relationships, reduced risk of mental health disorders, and better life outcomes. Recommendations are offered for effectively integrating EI training into counselling programs to ensure that young individuals are equipped to navigate the emotional complexities of adolescence and adulthood.

Keywords: Teaching, Emotional intelligence, Counselling strategies, youth and adolescents

Introduction

Adolescence is a transformative and often turbulent period characterized by profound psychological, physiological, and social changes. This developmental stage, typically encompassing the ages of 10 to 19, serves as a critical bridge between childhood and adulthood. During this time, individuals experience rapid brain development, hormonal shifts, evolving social relationships, and increasing autonomy. These dynamic transitions can make adolescents particularly susceptible to a range of emotional and behavioral challenges. Emotional dysregulation, identity confusion, peer influence, and academic pressure are common experiences that significantly shape their mental health and overall well-being (Goleman, 1995). As adolescents navigate these complex changes, the ability to understand and manage their emotions becomes crucial not only for personal resilience but also for fostering healthy relationships and achieving academic success.

One of the most pressing concerns during adolescence is the heightened vulnerability to emotional turbulence. The adolescent brain, especially the prefrontal cortex responsible for decision-making and impulse control, is still under development. At the same time, the amygdala, the emotional center of the brain, is highly active, which often results in emotionally charged reactions and difficulty in regulating responses (Steinberg, 2005). These neurological realities help explain why adolescents may struggle with anger, frustration, anxiety, and sadness more intensely than at other stages of life. Emotional dysregulation can manifest in maladaptive behaviors such as aggression, withdrawal, substance use, and risk-taking. Left unaddressed, these patterns may evolve into more

serious psychological issues, including depression and anxiety disorders, which often emerge during the teenage years.

Compounding these internal struggles are external pressures. Adolescents are heavily influenced by peer relationships, which become increasingly central to their identity and self-esteem. Peer pressure can push adolescents toward conformity, sometimes at the cost of personal values or mental health. The desire to fit in may lead to risky behavior, such as

experimenting with drugs, engaging in unsafe sexual activity, or participating in bullying, all of which can have long-term consequences. Additionally, the academic demands placed on adolescents—from standardized testing to college preparation can lead to chronic stress and burnout. In a competitive educational environment, adolescents often feel the weight of expectations from parents, teachers, and society. The cumulative effect of these internal and external stressors underscores the necessity of equipping adolescents with tools to navigate their emotional landscape effectively.

Emotional intelligence (EI) emerges as a pivotal skill set that can empower adolescents to cope with these challenges constructively. Salovey and Mayer (1990), who pioneered the academic definition of emotional intelligence, describe it as the capacity to recognize, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions in oneself and others. Emotional intelligence is not a singular ability but rather a composite of several interrelated competencies: emotional awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, interpersonal skills, and effective decision-making. High emotional intelligence is associated with improved mental health, better academic performance, more satisfying interpersonal relationships, and lower levels of stress and conflict (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). For adolescents, developing emotional intelligence can serve as a protective factor against the psychological vulnerabilities that commonly arise during this developmental period.

Moreover, emotional intelligence supports the formation of a coherent and stable sense of identity a central developmental task of adolescence as articulated by Erikson (1968) in his psychosocial theory of development. Adolescents with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to understand their own values, motivations, and goals, which aids in resolving identity confusion and fostering self-acceptance. Additionally, empathy, a core component of emotional intelligence, enhances social functioning by promoting perspective-taking and reducing conflict in peer interactions. Adolescents who can empathize with others are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior, resist negative peer pressure, and form deeper, more authentic relationships.

Given the significance of emotional intelligence in adolescent development, the educational system and mental health services have a shared responsibility to nurture these

competencies. While traditional academic curricula often prioritize cognitive development and standardized achievement, emotional learning is frequently marginalized or overlooked. This gap underscores the vital role that school-based counselling and mental health programs can play in teaching emotional intelligence. Counselling offers a structured, supportive environment where adolescents can explore their emotions, reflect on their behavior, and learn practical strategies for self-regulation and interpersonal

communication.

School counsellors and trained mental health professionals are uniquely positioned to foster emotional intelligence through individualized support, group interventions, and school-wide initiatives. Through techniques such as active listening, cognitive-behavioral strategies, role-playing, and mindfulness training, counsellors can guide adolescents in developing a deeper awareness of their emotional patterns. In addition, group counselling sessions can provide a space for peer interaction, where adolescents can learn from each other's experiences, practice empathy, and build social skills in a safe and moderated environment. These interventions not only address immediate emotional concerns but also lay the foundation for long-term mental and emotional resilience.

Furthermore, integrating emotional intelligence education into counselling aligns with the broader goals of social-emotional learning (SEL), a framework that has gained substantial traction in educational policy and practice. SEL emphasizes five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). These competencies closely mirror the components of emotional intelligence and reinforce its application in everyday academic and social contexts. Numerous studies have demonstrated that SEL programs in schools lead to significant improvements in students' emotional well-being, behavior, and academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011). Counselling, as a modality for delivering SEL content, provides a personalized and adaptive approach to fostering these essential life skills. Adolescence represents a critical window for emotional development, marked by both vulnerability and potential. Emotional intelligence is a key determinant of how effectively adolescents navigate this complex period. By understanding and managing their emotions, adolescents can build resilience, enhance relationships, and thrive in the face of academic and social challenges. Given its wide-ranging benefits, emotional intelligence should not be relegated to optional programming or extracurricular activities. Rather, it should be an integral part of adolescent education and mental health support. Counselling serves as a powerful vehicle for this integration, offering the tools, guidance, and emotional safety adolescents need to flourish. Investing in the emotional development

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of young people is not merely a preventative measure—it is a foundational strategy for cultivating a healthier, more empathetic, and emotionally intelligent society.

Theoretical Review of Emotional Intelligence

The study of emotional intelligence (EI) has evolved significantly since its conceptual inception, providing a rich theoretical foundation for counselling practices, especially in work with adolescents. Emotional intelligence, as a psychological construct,

encompasses the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions to guide thinking and behavior. Several prominent models have shaped our current understanding of EI, with implications for both individual development and therapeutic intervention.

Two of the most influential frameworks are the Ability Model proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and the Mixed Model advanced by Daniel Goleman (1995). These models offer complementary perspectives that underscore the complexity of emotional functioning and highlight the multiple pathways through which EI can be cultivated through counselling.

The Ability Model (Salovey & Mayer, 1990)

Salovey and Mayer's Ability Model of emotional intelligence is one of the earliest and most rigorously defined theoretical approaches in the field. According to this model, emotional intelligence is a form of cognitive ability akin to traditional intelligence that involves the processing of emotional information. The model is organized into four interrelated branches:

1. **Perceiving Emotions:** This is the foundational skill of emotional intelligence, involving the accurate recognition and interpretation of emotional cues in oneself and others. It includes sensitivity to facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language. For adolescents, this skill is critical in decoding social signals from peers, teachers, and family members.
2. **Using Emotions to Facilitate Thinking:** Emotions are not merely responses to events; they also influence how individuals prioritize attention and approach problems. This branch emphasizes how emotions can enhance cognitive processes such as memory, creativity, and decision-making. For instance, understanding how anxiety might heighten focus before an exam or how excitement can fuel motivation can be strategically beneficial for adolescent learners.
3. **Understanding Emotions:** This component involves comprehending the complexities of emotional dynamics, such as how emotions evolve over time or how different emotions can blend together. Adolescents often experience rapid mood shifts and

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conflicting feelings; understanding these emotional patterns supports better self-reflection and identity formation.

4. **Managing Emotions:** This final and most sophisticated branch refers to the capacity to regulate emotions in oneself and influence the emotions of others in socially acceptable and effective ways. Adolescents who can manage frustration, anger, or disappointment are more likely to succeed in academic and social contexts, avoid risky

behavior, and maintain healthier relationships.

Salovey and Mayer's model is particularly well-suited to educational and clinical settings because it treats EI as a set of measurable, learnable skills. The model lends itself to evidence-based assessments and interventions, such as the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), and informs many counselling strategies aimed at improving emotional regulation, interpersonal insight, and social functioning.

The Mixed Model (Goleman, 1995)

Building upon the foundation laid by Salovey and Mayer, Daniel Goleman introduced a broader and more popularized understanding of emotional intelligence in his 1995 best-selling book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Goleman's Mixed Model incorporates both cognitive abilities and personality traits, emphasizing the role of emotional intelligence in real-world success. His framework identifies five core components:

1. **Self-Awareness:** The ability to recognize one's own emotional states and understand their impact. This includes emotional self-confidence and accurate self-assessment, which are essential for adolescents navigating identity development.
2. **Self-Regulation:** Similar to Salovey and Mayer's concept of emotional management, this component involves controlling disruptive impulses, maintaining integrity, and adapting to change. Adolescents who cultivate self-regulation are better equipped to cope with stress, peer conflict, and academic pressure.
3. **Motivation:** Goleman highlights intrinsic motivation—the internal drive to achieve goals for personal satisfaction rather than external rewards. Adolescents with high emotional intelligence tend to display greater persistence, initiative, and optimism, especially when facing obstacles.
4. **Empathy:** The ability to understand and respond appropriately to the emotions of others. Empathy is crucial for social harmony, conflict resolution, and moral development, all of which become increasingly salient in adolescence.

5. **Social Skills:** This encompasses communication, leadership, teamwork, and the ability to influence or manage interpersonal relationships effectively. For adolescents, strong social skills can reduce the risk of isolation, bullying, and antisocial behavior.

Goleman's model has been widely adopted in organizational psychology, education, and counselling due to its practical orientation and applicability across diverse domains. Its broader scope makes it particularly useful in adolescent counselling, where emotional

intelligence intersects with motivation, behavior, and social identity.

Integrating Theoretical Models into Counselling Practice

Both the Ability Model and the Mixed Model offer valuable insights into how emotional intelligence can be developed and applied in counselling settings. In practice, counsellors often draw from both models to address the multifaceted nature of adolescent emotional development. While the Ability Model provides a structured, skills-based approach for teaching specific emotional competencies, the Mixed Model offers a more holistic view that incorporates personal values, behavioral tendencies, and relational dynamics.

For example, a counsellor working with an adolescent experiencing peer conflict might first help the individual perceive and label their own emotions (Ability Model), then explore how these emotions influence their actions. Simultaneously, the counsellor could foster empathy and social problem-solving skills (Mixed Model) to support more constructive interactions with peers. The two models, though theoretically distinct, are not mutually exclusive; rather, they reinforce each other by addressing both the internal mechanics of emotion processing and the external expression of emotional intelligence in social contexts.

Moreover, these models guide the development of structured interventions and curricula aimed at enhancing EI. Programs such as Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), and mindfulness-based counselling techniques all draw on EI principles derived from these theoretical frameworks. SEL programs, in particular, often incorporate Goleman's components of self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills to promote emotional literacy and resilience among adolescents (CASEL, 2020).

Relevance to Adolescent Development

Applying these models of emotional intelligence within adolescent counselling is especially critical due to the developmental challenges and opportunities present during this life stage. Adolescents are in the process of forming their identities, asserting

independence, and redefining their social roles. These tasks often involve emotionally charged situations that require nuanced understanding and regulation of feelings. Equipping adolescents with the tools to recognize, articulate, and manage their emotions not only supports immediate mental health but also contributes to long-term emotional and relational success.

Furthermore, adolescence is a sensitive period for neuroplasticity—the brain's ability

to reorganize and adapt based on experience. This means that emotional intelligence skills, when taught and practiced during this period, can become deeply ingrained. Counselling interventions grounded in EI theory take advantage of this plasticity by encouraging reflection, practicing emotional regulation strategies, and building habits of empathy and resilience.

Theoretical models of emotional intelligence serve as essential frameworks for understanding how individuals perceive and interact with the emotional aspects of their lives. The Ability Model by Salovey and Mayer and the Mixed Model by Goleman each contribute unique perspectives that enhance counselling practices with adolescents. By integrating these models, counsellors can offer comprehensive, skill-based, and relationally attuned interventions that address the emotional needs of adolescents. As emotional intelligence is a critical predictor of mental health, academic success, and social competence, grounding counselling practices in robust theoretical models ensures that interventions are both evidence-based and developmentally appropriate. The application of these models in adolescent counselling holds immense promise for cultivating emotionally intelligent. Several models of emotional intelligence inform counselling practices. The ability model proposed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) conceptualizes EI as a set of interrelated skills: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thinking, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. Goleman (1995) expanded this framework to include social competencies such as empathy, motivation, and relationship management. These models provide a foundation for designing interventions that target both intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of emotional functioning.

Importance of EI in Adolescent Development

High levels of EI in adolescents have been linked to lower levels of anxiety, depression, and aggression, as well as better academic performance and social adjustment (Mavroveli et al., 2007). Adolescents with well-developed EI are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors, resist peer pressure, and make responsible decisions (Brackett et al., 2012). Furthermore, EI contributes to self-efficacy and emotional resilience, enabling

young people to cope with the challenges of adolescence more effectively.

Counselling Strategies for Teaching EI

Counsellors can employ various strategies to foster emotional intelligence in adolescents. These include:

- 1. Emotion Identification and Labelling:** Helping youth recognize and accurately label

their emotions is a foundational step in developing EI. Activities such as emotion diaries, facial expression cards, and guided reflection can support this process.

2. **Cognitive Restructuring:** Cognitive-behavioral techniques can be used to challenge irrational beliefs and promote healthier emotional responses. By reframing negative thoughts, adolescents learn to manage their emotional reactions more effectively.
3. **Role-Playing and Social Skills Training:** Simulated social interactions allow adolescents to practice empathy, active listening, and assertive communication. These activities improve both emotional awareness and relationship management.
4. **Mindfulness-Based Interventions:** Mindfulness training enhances emotional regulation by increasing present-moment awareness and reducing impulsivity (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). Practices such as deep breathing, body scans, and meditation are effective tools in EI development.
5. **Group Counselling and Peer Support:** Group settings provide opportunities for adolescents to share experiences, receive feedback, and learn from peers. Such environments foster a sense of belonging and encourage collaborative learning of emotional skills.

Case Example

A school-based counselling programme in Ontario, Canada, implemented a 10-week emotional intelligence curriculum for middle school students. The program incorporated mindfulness exercises, cognitive restructuring techniques, and peer discussions. Evaluation results showed significant improvements in students' emotional regulation, empathy, and conflict resolution skills (Durlak et al., 2011).

Role of the Counsellor

Counsellors play a pivotal role in modelling emotionally intelligent behavior and creating a safe environment for emotional exploration. They must demonstrate empathy, authenticity, and active listening in their interactions with youth. Additionally, they can collaborate with teachers and parents to reinforce EI learning across contexts.

Challenges and Considerations

Despite the benefits, several challenges may arise in teaching EI to adolescents.

Resistance from youth, lack of parental involvement, and cultural differences in emotional expression can hinder progress. To address these issues, counsellors must adopt culturally sensitive approaches and involve families in the intervention process (Castro-Olivo, 2014).

Conclusion and Suggestions

Teaching emotional intelligence to adolescents through counselling is a proactive approach to promoting mental health and social competence. By integrating EI training into school counselling programs and tailoring strategies to developmental needs, counsellors can equip youth with essential life skills. Future research should continue to explore culturally adapted interventions and longitudinal outcomes of EI development.

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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS CORRELATE OF ADMINISTRATORS CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study determined emotional intelligence as correlate of administrators conflict management in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three research questions and three null hypotheses. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study was 471 administrators in public secondary schools in Abia State. The sample of the study was 188 secondary school administrators selected using multi-staged sampling procedure. The instruments for data collection were two structured questionnaires validated by three experts. The reliability of the two instruments was .83 and .71 respectively using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient. The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer the research questions while Linear Regression analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that administrators self-awareness significantly to a moderate positive extent correlate with conflict management. Also, administrators' empathy and self-regulation significantly to a high positive extent correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Abia State Ministry of Education should endeavour to ensure that administrators in public secondary schools are train and retrain regularly using seminars, conferences and workshops to improve their emotional intelligence for effective management of conflict.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Administrators, Conflict Management and Secondary Schools.

Introduction

Education at all levels especially that of secondary school remain imperative to build upon the foundational knowledge and skills acquired at primary level for preparing students for further academic pursuits or entry into the workforce. Secondary education is crucial for individual and societal development, serving as a bridge between primary and

higher learning or vocational training. Therefore, to ensure that conducive learning environment is provided to enhance quality education for students in secondary schools, adequate attention is required in management of conflict in the school system. Conflict in the school system is a common and multifaceted issue, stemming from diverse interactions between students, teachers, administrators and even parents.

Conflict in the submission of Emmanuel (2021) is a natural aspect of human interaction that arises from opposing interests, values, or viewpoints among individuals or groups. Conflict can be described as a clash between individuals arising out of difference in thought, attitudes, understanding, interests, and perceptions resulting in heated arguments, physical abuses and definitely loss of peace and harmony among students, educators, parents, administrators and other stakeholders, impacting relationships, decision-making and overall school climate and is unavoidable, the most important thing is the effective management of it when it happens.

Conflict management according to Iyala et al., (2021) is the practice of recognizing and dealing with grievances and disputes in a rational, balanced and proactive manner. Effective management of conflicts in secondary schools, therefore, requires school administrators to have good knowledge of their emotional intelligence. Conflict management as described by Deedam and Oparaka (2023) is the process of applying diverse measures and techniques to address, reduce, remove and minimize the negative effects of conflict and optimizing the positive effect of the conflict through the introduction of effective measures in minimizing the negative effect in terms of constructive function thereby promoting learning and the wellbeing of individuals within the school system.

Therefore, the purpose of conflict management in the school system is to create conducive, peaceful and harmonious learning environment. Thus, for effective conflict management, the leaders (secondary school administrators) must possess certain skills needed for proper resolution. Proper management of conflict in the school system requires the administrators with a high level of emotional intelligence since the issues that usually induce conflicts are related to feelings, moods, and emotions. School administrators in the view of Mohammed et al. (2021) are individuals who manage and oversee the daily

operations of the secondary school administration. They are responsible for creating a positive and effective learning environment for students and staff. Their roles encompass wide range of duties, from managing the school budget and coordinating security and communicating with parents. Secondary school administrators conflict management involve recognising and dealing with grievances and disputes in a rational, balanced and

proactive manners. Effective management of conflicts in secondary schools requires the administrators to have good knowledge of their emotional intelligence (Iyala et al., 2021).

Emotional intelligence in the submission of Nkechi and Felix (2018), is the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotionally related feelings, understand the information of those emotions and manage them effectively. Emotional Intelligence is an individual's ability to control impulses, to motivate self, to have empathy for others, and to create positive, social and interpersonal relationships (Dill, 2019). According to Uwaleke et al. (2024), emotional intelligence can be defined as the skills to recognize own feelings and feelings of others; the ability to motivate and manage one's emotions and that of others better. Emotional intelligence is crucial for administrators, enabling them to understand and manage their own emotions and the emotions of others, leading to better decision-making, stronger relationships, and improved team performance. This implies that the emotional intelligence of individuals including that of the secondary schools administrators are imperative in management of conflicts. As such Adebowale et al. in Nwosu and Nwankwo (2024) maintained that emotional intelligence may include high level of self-awareness; self-regulation/self-management and empathy/social awareness.

Self-awareness in the opinion of Nwosu and Nwankwo (2024) is the ability to know oneself and understand one's feeling, accurate self-assessment, understanding one's strength and weaknesses and their effects; self-confidence, having faith in self and being willing to put oneself forward. According to Cherry (2019), self-awareness refers to the capacity to recognize and understand emotions and have a sense of how one's actions, moods and the emotions of others take effect which can enable individuals (secondary administrators) to recognize their emotional triggers and biases, which can helps them to remain objective and calm during conflicts just like self-regulation or self- management (Beqiri, 2018).

Self-regulation or self-management is another form of emotional intelligence that is concerned with self-control. This is an important part of emotional maturity, controlling one's feelings and/or expressing them in the appropriate circumstances. It simply means waiting for the right time, place and avenue to express one's emotions. It is the ability to be aware of one's emotions and have the flexibility to positively direct one's behaviour in

response to those emotions, to manage emotional reactions in all situations and with all people (Nwosu & Nwankwo, 2024). This is why Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2018) stated that the ability to manage one's emotions enables principals including the vice principals (secondary school administrators) to handle stressful situations with composure and avoid reactive behaviour that could escalate conflicts.

Aside, self-regulation or self- management, Sani et al. (2022) added that empathy or social awareness is another emotional intelligence technique for managing conflict. Nwosu and Nwankwo (2024) defined empathy or social awareness as the ability to understand how others feel. It also goes beyond the ability to recognize the emotional states of others. It further involves one's responses to others based on information. Empathy is also seen as social awareness- the ability to explain self well and be aware of how one is understood, as well as knowing the extent of comprehension of one's audience (Sani et al., 2022). Empathy allows individuals to understand the perspectives and emotions of others, facilitating effective communication and fostering a supportive environment for conflict resolution (Mayer, et al., 2018). However, the study by Agbudu and Felix (2023) indicated that self-awareness helps principals in secondary schools in Niger State to understand their feelings and emotions as well as the feelings of the teachers and students, and their reactions towards issues, thereby improving their conflict management skills in the school system. While, the study by Nwosu and Nwankwo (2024) showed a strong positive relationship between principals' self-awareness, self-management, and conflict resolution approach in Anambra State. However, there was a weak positive relationship between principals' social-awareness and conflict resolution approach. Consequently, to ascertain the views and opinion of the authors, this study sought to determine the correlation between emotional intelligence and administrators' conflict management in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Effective management of conflicts in public secondary schools is important to provide conducive teaching and learning environment for achieving educational goals.

However, the researchers' observation indicated that in some public secondary schools in Abia State conflicts seem to be frequent and often time poorly managed, issues such as students indiscipline, teacher grievances, and parental complaints are common. The inability of administrators to handle these conflicts constructively has led to a hostile and fragmented school environment, affecting the morale and performance of both students and staff.

More so, there are also instances of outbursts of emotions by some principals and

other administrators (vice principals) on teachers in terms of principals saying the right things at the wrong place (as correction); allowing emotions to becloud their judgments; being less empathetic and not also having clear communication skills. These are strong indicators of low emotional intelligence leading to consistent poor management of conflicts. This has become a worrisome issue in that without effective conflicts

management in the school system instructional activities may be paralysed and by extension affects the actualization of educational goals. Consequently, it is against this background that prompted the need to determine the correlation between emotional intelligence as correlate of administrators' conflict management in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study is to determine emotional intelligence as correlate of administrators' conflict management in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the extent of correlation between administrators self-awareness and conflict management in public secondary schools,,
2. Determine the extent of correlation between administrators empathy and conflict management in public secondary schools and
3. Find out the extent of correlation between administrators self-regulation and conflict management in public secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does administrators' self-awareness correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools?
2. To what extent does administrators empathy correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools and
3. To what extent does administrators' self-regulation correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools?

Research Hypotheses

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

H0₁: There is no significant correlation between administrators self-awareness and conflict management in public secondary schools,,

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H0₂: There is no significant correlation between administrators' empathy and conflict management in public secondary schools and

H0₃: There is no significant correlation between administrators' self-regulation and conflict management in public secondary schools.

Methodology

The study adopted correlational research design. However, correlational design in the submission of Nkwocha and Akanwa (2017) is a type of non-experimental method in which a researcher measures two variables, understand and assess statistical relationship between the variables with no influence from any extraneous variables. The population of the study was 471 administrators in public secondary schools in Abia State (Abia State Secondary Education Board, Statistical Department, 2023). The sample of the study was 188 secondary school administrators selected using multi-staged sampling procedure. The sample size represents 40% of the total population of 471. This is supported by Nwanna in Unanam (2023) who stated that when the population runs into few hundred use 40% or more, when several hundred use 20%, when thousand use 10% and when several thousand use 5% or less.

The instruments for data collection were two structured questionnaires designed by the researcher tagged: “Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ)” and Administrators Conflict Management Questionnaire (ACMQ). The EIQ has two sections (A and B). Section A contains the bio-data and a brief instruction for the respondents on how to respond to the instrument while section B has clusters that addressed the specific purposes (the independent variables). The instruments were validated by three experts; two from Guidance and Counselling in the Department of Guidance and Counselling and one from Measurement and Evaluation unit of Science Education Department, all from College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The reliability of the two instruments yielded .83 and .81 respectively for EIQ and ACMQ using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. A total of 188 copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the researcher with the help of three research assistants and 169 copies were retrieved representing 90% rate of returns. The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer the research questions while Linear Regression analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The extent or strength of relationship of the variables was decided or interpreted using Creswell (2008) correlation coefficient scale, which stated that: $\pm 0.70 - 1.00 =$ High Extent, $\pm 0.30 - 0.69 =$ Moderate Extent and $\pm 0.00 - 0.20 =$ Low Extent. To this end, Creswell (2008) asserted that correlation coefficients can range from -1.00 to +1.00 with positive numbers

used to identify a positive relationship and negative numbers being used to identify a negative relationship while no linear association is indicated with a correlation coefficient of 0.00. More-so, the null hypotheses were rejected if P-value is greater than the alpha value of 0.05 level, otherwise the null hypotheses were accepted.

Results

The results of the study were presented in tables and based on the research questions and the hypotheses that guided the study.

Research Question 1: To what extent does administrators' self-awareness correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools?

Table 1: *Correlation Matrix of the Relationship between Administrators Self-Awareness and Conflict Management in Public Secondary Schools*

		ASA	CM
ASA	Pearson	1	.601
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	169	169
	R ²	(0.431) 43%	
CM	Pearson	.601	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	169	169

ASA = Administrators Self-Awareness, CM = Conflict Management

Data in Table 1 show a correlation value of .601 which is positive and within the coefficient limit or range of 0.41-0.60 indicating moderate relationship. This result shows that administrators self-awareness to a moderate extent, relates to conflict management in public secondary schools. The coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.431 indicates that 43% of the conflict management in public secondary schools could be accounted for by the administrators self-awareness.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant correlation between administrators self-awareness and conflict management in public secondary schools.

Table 2: *Regression Analysis of the correlation between administrators' self-awareness and conflict management in public secondary schools*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
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Regression	22314.312	1	22314.312	105.834	.000 ^b
Residual	35421.482	168	210.842		
Total	57735.794	169			

Data in Table 2 reveals a probability (P) - value of 0.00 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Since the P-value is less than 0.05 alpha level, the hypothesis of no significant relationship was rejected and the alternate upheld. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between administrators' self-awareness and conflict management in public secondary schools.

Research Question 2: To what extent does administrators' empathy correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools?

Table 3: *Correlation Matrix of Relationship between administrators empathy correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools*

		AE	CM
	Pearson	1	.708
AE	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	169	169
	R ²	(0.512)	
		51%	
CM	Pearson	.708	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	169	169

AE = Administrators Empathy, CM= Conflict Management

The data in Table 3 reveals a correlation (r) of .708 which is positive and within the coefficient range of 0.61-0.80 which indicates high extent relationship. This result indicates that administrators' empathy to a high extent relates to conflict management in public secondary schools. The coefficient of determination (R²) of 0.512 indicates that

51% of the conflict management in public secondary schools could be accounted for by administrators' empathy.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant correlation between administrators empathy and

conflict management in public secondary schools

Table 4: *Regression Analysis of Relationship between Administrators Empathy and Conflict Management in Public Secondary Schools*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	25541.433	1	25541.433	124.913	.000 ^b
Residual	34351.632	168	204.474		
Total	59893.065	169			

Data in Table 4 show a P - value of 0.00 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Since the P-value is less than 0.05 alpha level, the hypothesis of no significant relationship was rejected and the alternate upheld. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between administrators empathy and conflict management in public secondary schools.

Research Question 3: To what extent does administrators' self-regulation correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools?

Table 5: *Correlation Matrix of Relationship between Administrators Self-Regulation and Conflict Management in Public Secondary Schools*

		AS	CM
AS	Pearson	1	.804
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	169	169
	R ²	(0.612) 61%	
CM	Pearson	.804	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	169	169

IR=Instructional Resource, TCE= Teacher Classroom Effectiveness

The data in Table 5 reveals a correlation (r) of .804 which is positive and within the coefficient range of 0.61-0.80 which indicates high extent relationship. This result indicates that administrators self-regulation to a high extent relates to conflict management

in public secondary schools. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.612 indicates that 61% of the conflict management in public secondary schools could be accounted for by administrators' self-regulation.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant correlation between administrators' self-regulation and conflict management in public secondary schools.

Table 6: *Regression Analysis of Relationship between administrators' self-regulation and conflict management in public secondary schools*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	23547.624	1	23547.624	105.683	.000 ^b
Residual	37432.805	168	222.814		
Total	60979.624	169			

Data in Table 6 show a P - value of 0.00 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Since the P-value is less than 0.05 alpha level, the hypothesis of no significant relationship was rejected and the alternate upheld. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between administrators' self-regulation and conflict management in public secondary schools.

Major Findings of the Study

The following were the major findings of the study:

1. Administrators' self-awareness significantly correlates with conflict management in public secondary schools
2. Administrators' empathy significantly to a high positive extent correlates with conflict management in public secondary schools and
3. Administrators' self-regulation significantly to a high positive extent correlates with conflict management in public secondary schools?

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study were discussed below based on the major findings of the study.

It was found from the research question one of the study that administrators self-

awareness significantly to a moderate positive extent correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools. The result implies that administrators' self-awareness is bound to help them to be aware of their feelings and emotions as well as that of the teachers and students. Such understanding determines how they react to a series of

conflict-related issues in school management. The integration of the emotional intelligence component of self-awareness into school management is indispensable as it enables administrators to take into consideration the feelings and moods of teachers, thereby promoting peaceful co-existence among members of a given school. The findings relate to the earlier study by Agbudu and Felix (2023) that self-awareness helps principals in secondary schools in Niger State to understand their feelings and emotions as well as the feelings of the teachers and students, and their reactions towards issues, thereby improving their conflict management skills in the school system. The findings also relate with the study of Nwosu and Nwankwo (2024) who found that there is a strong positive relationship between principals' self-awareness, self-management, and conflict resolution approach in Anambra State.

The findings further revealed that administrators empathy significantly to a high positive extent correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools. The findings relate to the earlier study of Uwaleke et al. (2024) that there is positive relationship between principals empathy and conflict management in secondary schools in Benue South Senatorial District. The findings also relate with the study of Sani, et al (2022) that there is significant relationship between principals' level of social-awareness and conflict management in secondary schools in Niger State.

Lastly, the result of the study also indicated that administrators' self-regulation significantly to a high positive extent correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools. Thus, the findings align with the finding of Waweru et al. (2020) that there is a positive correlation between self-management and organizational commitment. Also, the findings opposed the earlier study of Azuka-Obieke (2016) that there is no significant relationship between self-management as a component of emotional intelligence and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria. The difference between both findings could be as a result of geographical change of respondents.

Conclusion

This study determined the correlation between the emotional intelligence and administrators conflict management in public secondary schools. Based on the analysis carried out and the results of the study, it was concluded that administrators self-awareness

significantly to a moderate positive extent correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools, administrators empathy and self-regulation significantly to a high positive extent correlate with conflict management in public secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Abia State Ministry of Education should endeavour to ensure that administrators in public secondary schools are train regularly using seminars, conferences and workshops to improve their emotional intelligence especially on self-awareness for effective management of conflict.
2. There is need for administrators of secondary schools to show empathy in managing conflicts for effective administration of secondary schools in Abia State.
3. The Abia state Government through the Teaching Service Commission should include emotional intelligence test as part of recruitment including self-regulation to reduce the level of conflicts in public secondary schools for enhancing the achievement of educational goals.

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on family relationships from a teacher educators' perspective, highlighting its benefits, strategies for development, and implications for practice. It was conducted in Owerri, Imo State. The study was guided by three purposes alongside three research questions. It adopted a descriptive survey design. Population of the study comprised all 478 Lecturers from seven Faculties in Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State. Sample of the study was 148 lecturers selected from the Faculty of General Education, AIFUE, Owerri through a purposive sampling technique. A researchers' made questionnaire tagged: "Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Family Relationships Questionnaire (IEIFRQ)" was used as instrument for data collection. Data obtained from the study were analysed using mean statistics and t-test. Findings of the study showed that emotional intelligence significantly impact on family relationships. It further revealed that emotional intelligence improve communication among family members and enhance conflict resolutions among others. The study recommended that emotional intelligence should be integrated into teacher education

programmes and that teacher educators should promote EI development in individuals through awareness creation on empathy, emotional regulation and effective communications to their students among others.

Keywords: Impact, emotional intelligence, family relationships, teacher educators, perspective

Introduction

In an era when family dynamics are increasingly complex and emotionally charged, the significance of emotional intelligence otherwise known as EI cannot be exaggerated. As a pivotal catalyst of interpersonal relationships, emotional intelligence (EI) gained prominence as a decisive factor in defining the quality of family relationships. By recognizing, understanding and managing emotions, individuals with high level of emotional intelligence are better equipped to navigate the intricate web of family interactions, fostering a more supportive and nurturing environment.

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to recognize and understand emotions in oneself and others, and to use this awareness to guide thought and behaviour (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). It is individual's ability to develop self awareness, self regulation and emotional expression. According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence involves a cluster of skills and competencies focused on four capabilities: self awareness, relationship management, social awareness and self management. These capabilities form the basis of twelve (12) subscales of emotional intelligence (EI) including emotional self awareness, emotional self control, adaptability and empathy.

Similarly, notable researchers like Salovey and Mayer (1990) define emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. The authors modeled branches of EI to include: (1) perceiving or recognizing emotions in oneself and others (2) using or harnessing emotions to guide cognitive activities and solve problems; (3) understanding or comprehending emotional languages and recognizing the causes and consequences of emotions (4) managing or regulating one's emotions and responding to the emotions of others. The authors emphasize that these components of emotional intelligence are pivotal to a healthy family relationship.

In the same vein, Baron (2004) sees emotional intelligence as an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in

dealing with environmental demands and pressures. He modeled EI into five cardinal components including (i) intra personal skills which enhance self awareness and self expression; (ii) interpersonal skills that facilitated social awareness and interaction; (iii)

stress management responsible for emotional management and regulation; (iv) adaptability which ensures change management and problem-solving, as well as; (v) general mood which is the ability to regulate emotions in oneself and others.

The emergence of emotional intelligence has proved to be an essential element in fashioning inter and intra personal relationship including those within families. This innovative essential trait is beneficial not only to families but to teacher educators. It is vital to fathom the dynamics of emotional intelligence and its impact on family relationships. Also, exposing teacher educators to emotional intelligence will enable them to model and teach effective emotional regulation, empathy and communication skills to their students who will in turn benefit their own families and students (Webster-Stratton, 2018). As a multi-faceted construct, emotional intelligence encompasses the ability to recognize and understand emotions in oneself and others, and to utilize this awareness to guide thought and behaviour. The family system being a critical context for emotional learning and development, in influencing intelligence of its members. Parents EI in particular, has a profound impacts on the emotional learning of their children (Sanchez-Nunez, Fernandez-Berrocal & Latorre, 2013).

The intricate dynamic of family relationships underscores the importance of EI in fostering a supportive and nurturing environment. Even family members possess high levels of EI, they are better equipped to manage conflicts, communicate effectively and provide emotional support to one another. Conversely, low levels of EI can lead to misunderstandings, conflict and emotional distress, ultimately compromising the well being of family members (MacCann, Jians, Brown, Doubie, Bucich & Mimbiashian, 2020).

Previous empirical studies have consistently shown that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in building and maintaining healthy relationships (Goleman, 2015; Brackett & Salovey, 2020). Research has also highlighted the impact of emotional intelligence on family functioning, with studies indicating that families with high emotional intelligence tend to have better communication, empathy, and conflict management (Cortés & Velásquez, 2018; Duggan & Jervis, 2017). EI is also found to be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction with couples who possess high level EI reporting relationship satisfaction and fewer conflicts (Elenberg, Cumberland & Spunraf, 2018). Studies on teacher education have emphasized the importance of integrating

emotional intelligence into teacher training programmes to enhance teachers' social and emotional competencies, ultimately benefiting student outcomes (Duggan & Jervis, 2017; Jennings & Greenberg, 2019).

In the central of parent-child relationships, EI plays a critical role in moulding the

emotional development of children. Parents with high levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped respond to their children's emotional needs, provide emotional support and model healthy emotional regulation (Gottan, Katz & Hooven, 2016). There is a proven link between parents, level of emotional intelligence and their children emotional development including increased emotional intelligence and better emotional regulation (Taylor & Stanton, 2017).

It is of imperative to state here that teacher educators' roles in promoting emotional intelligence is not only crucial but a necessity. This is largely because they play critical roles in structuring the emotional learning of their students, who will go on to become parents, and teachers and influence the emotional development of their children and students. Given the importance of emotional intelligence in strengthening the family's bond and beyond, it becomes necessary to explore the perception of teacher educators on the ways in which emotional intelligence can be leveraged to promote harmonious and resilient family dynamics.

However, the perspective of teacher educators on emotional intelligence in family contexts remains under explored. This present study bridges that gap by tapping into teacher educators' insights, potentially informing how teacher education can bolster healthy family dynamics through emotional intelligence. By building on previous findings, this study aims to inform strategies for promoting emotional intelligence in educational settings and beyond.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the essential role that emotional intelligence plays in fostering interpersonal relationships, many families struggle to develop and maintain healthy emotional dynamics. Family conflicts, unresolved misunderstandings, emotional distress, strained relationships and poor communications can have enduring consequences for family members' mental health, relationships and overall quality of life. The lack of emotional awareness, empathy and effective communication skills can lead to misunderstandings, conflict and emotional distress, ultimately compromising the wellbeing of family members. Also, the impact of emotional intelligence on family relationships has remained an elusive subject with many factors influencing its impact and there is need for research that explores the complex

dynamic of emotional intelligence in family context. This study therefore is undertaken to investigate the impact of emotional intelligence on family relationships as perceived by teacher educators.

Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the impact of emotional intelligence on family relationships; a teacher educators perspective. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the perceived relationship between emotional intelligence and family relationships among teacher educators.
2. Examine teacher educators perception on leveraging emotional intelligence to promote family relationships.
3. Explore the roles of teacher education programme in promoting emotional intelligence and healthy family relationships.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What is the perceived relationship between emotional intelligence and family relationships among teacher educators?
2. How do teacher educators believe emotional intelligence can be leveraged to promote healthy family relationships?
3. What role can teacher education programme play in promoting emotional intelligence and healthy family relationships?

Method

The study employed a descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design according to Singh (2023) is an exploratory research method that helps a researcher describe a population, circumstance or phenomenon. The design is appropriate for this study because the study aimed to exploring the impact of emotional intelligence on family relationships as perceived by teacher educators.

The population for this study was made up of all four hundred and seventy eight (478) lecturers (here in referred to as teacher educators) from the seven faculties in AlvanIkoku Federal University of Education, Owerri. A purpose sampling technique was used to select 148 lecturers from the faculty of General education, AIFCE, Owerri as sample for the study.

A researcher's made questionnaire was used in the study as instrument for data

collection. The instrument was tagged "Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Family Relationships Questionnaire (IEIFRQ). It was made up of a cover letter and two sections (A & B). The cover letter was used to solicit for respondents' cooperation. Section "A" on the other hand contained bio-data of the respondents, while section "B" contained fifteen

structured question item developed from the three research questions. It was structured in a modified four point Likert scale format of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Agree. The instrument was validated by two experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation and Educational Psychology, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri. They ascertained the suitability of items in the questionnaire made their observations and corrections which were integrated in the final copy before administration. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a test-retest on subjects outside the sampled faculty within an interval of two weeks. The results of the two tests, were collated and compared using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation formula and a coefficient of 0.87 was obtained indicating a high degree of reliability of the instrument.

Consequently, copies of instrument were administered by the researchers in their various offices. Data collected from the instrument were carefully collated, organized in tables and analyzed using mean statistics and t-test at $p < 0.001$.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the perceived relationship between emotional intelligence and family relationships among teacher educators?

Table 1: *Perceived Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Family Relationships*

S/N	Item	Mean	t-value	P-value
1.	Emotional Intelligence is essential for building strong family relationships	4.2	12.1	0.000
2.	Family members with high emotional intelligence tend to have better relationships	4.1	11.5	0.000
3.	Emotional Intelligence helps family members communicate more effectively	4.3	13.2	0.000
4.	Emotional Intelligence is linked to increased empathy and understanding in family relationships	4.2	12.5	0.000
5.	Families with high emotional intelligence tend to have fewer conflicts	4.0	10.8	0.000

The results from Table 1 indicate a strong perceived relationship between

emotional intelligence and family relationships among teacher educators (t-values > 10 , $p < 0.001$). All items show significant agreement, suggesting emotional intelligence is

crucial for building strong family relationships.

Research Question 2: How do teacher educators believe emotional intelligence can be leveraged to promote healthy family relationships?

Table 2: *Leveraging Emotional Intelligence for Healthy Family Relationships*

S/N	Item	Mean	t-value	p-value
6.	Teaching emotional intelligence skills can improve family relationships	4.3	13.5	0.000
7.	Emotional Intelligence training can help family members manage conflicts more effectively	4.2	12.8	0.000
8.	Practicing emotional awareness and empathy strengthens family bonds	4.4	14.1	0.000
9.	Emotional Intelligence can help family members better understand each other	4.1	11.9	0.000
10.	Developing emotional intelligence can lead to more positive family interactions	4.2	12.2	0.000

Analysis from Table 2 above revealed that teacher educators strongly believe emotional intelligence can be leveraged to promote healthy family relationships (t-values > 11, $p < 0.001$). All items show significant agreement, highlighting the importance of teaching emotional intelligence skills and practicing emotional awareness.

Research Question 3: What role can teacher education programs play in promoting emotional intelligence and healthy family relationships?

Table 3: *Role of Teacher Education Programmes*

S/N	Item	Mean	t-value	p-value
11.	Teacher education programs should prioritize teaching emotional intelligence skills	4.4	14.3	0.000
12.	Emotional Intelligence training for teachers can positively impact family relationships	4.3	13.8	0.000
13.	Teacher education programs can play a crucial role in promoting healthy family relationships	4.2	12.9	0.000
14.	Teachers with high emotional intelligence can better support students' emotional development	4.3	13.2	0.000
15.	Incorporating emotional intelligence into teacher education can lead to more supportive learning environments	4.4	14.5	0.000

From the analysis in Table 3, it showed that teacher educators strongly agree that teacher education programs can play a significant role in promoting emotional intelligence and healthy family relationships (t-values > 12, $p < 0.001$). All items indicate significant agreement, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing emotional intelligence skills.

Discussion of Findings

Research question one sought to ascertain perceived relationship between emotional intelligence and family relationships. The study's findings reveal a strong perceived relationship between emotional intelligence and family relationships among teacher educators, echoing Goleman (2015) who emphasized the role of emotional intelligence in building strong interpersonal relationships. The respondents strongly agreed that emotional intelligence is essential for building strong family relationships, facilitating effective communication, and fostering empathy and understanding. This alignment with existing literature underscores the significance of emotional intelligence in promoting healthy family dynamics.

Research question two examined perceptions of teacher educators on whether emotional intelligence (EI) can be leveraged to promote family relationships. Findings

from data analysis on the research question indicate that teacher educators believe emotional intelligence can be leveraged to promote healthy family relationships, resonating with Cortés and Velásquez (2018) who found emotional intelligence to be a key factor in

adolescent family functioning. The respondents highlighted the importance of teaching emotional intelligence skills, practicing emotional awareness, and empathy to strengthen family bonds. This further corroborates with Brackett and Salovey (2020) whose study findings showed the efficacy of emotional intelligence in building stronger family relationships, provide conflict management, communication skills and emotional support to each other. The findings suggest that targeted interventions focusing on emotional intelligence could yield positive outcomes for families.

The study also underscores the pivotal role teacher education programmes can play in promoting emotional intelligence and healthy family relationships. The finding corroborates the position of Jennings and Greenberg (2019) who advocated for integrating social and emotional learning in teacher training. The findings indicate that prioritizing emotional intelligence in teacher education, we can equip teachers to support students' emotional development and foster healthier relationships within families can ultimately contribute to more supportive learning environments.

Conclusions

This study examined the impact of emotional intelligence on family relationships from a teacher educators' perspective. The findings reveal a strong perceived relationship between emotional intelligence and healthy family relationships, highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering effective communication, empathy, and conflict management within families.

The results also underscore the critical role teacher education programs can play in promoting emotional intelligence among future teachers, who can in turn support students' emotional development and contribute to healthier family dynamics. It showed that integrating emotional intelligence training into teacher education can create a positive ripple effect on families and communities.

Ultimately, prioritizing emotional intelligence in both educational settings and family contexts has the potential to enhance relationships, improve communication, and build more supportive environments for personal growth. As such, stakeholders should consider investing in emotional intelligence initiatives to reap these benefits.

Recommendations

Sequel to the findings of this study and conclusions reached, the study recommended

as follows:

1. Teacher education programmes should prioritize teaching emotional intelligence skills to equip future teachers with the competencies needed to support students' emotional development and foster healthy family relationships.
2. Emotional intelligence should be promoted in family settings through workshops or programmes that teach emotional intelligence skills to family members, enhancing communication, empathy, and conflict management within families.
3. Schools should provide ongoing training and resources to help teachers develop and apply emotional intelligence in their work to be able to support students' emotional growth.
4. Teacher educators should be encouraged to model emotional intelligence in their teaching practices, creating a positive impact on students' emotional development and family relationships.
5. Further research should be conducted to explore the impact of emotional intelligence training on teacher educators' ability to support students' emotional development and promote healthy family relationships.

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Abstract

Conflict is an inherent aspect of human relationships that often disruptive and can become a catalyst for growth when approached with emotional awareness. This paper explores how recognising and responding to emotions, particularly through emotional attunement, transforms conflict resolution from adversarial engagement to constructive dialogue. Drawing on psychological theories, especially emotional intelligence, the work highlights how emotions shape perception and behaviour during conflict. It examines strategies such as active listening, empathic validation, open-ended questioning, and nonverbal communication as essential tools for emotional recognition. Additionally, the paper illustrates the broader implications of emotional attunement across various settings, from interpersonal relationships and workplaces to community mediation. Emotional responsiveness not only facilitates trust, understanding, and collaboration but also reveals underlying interests that can lead to sustainable resolution. By emphasizing both the psychological foundations and practical applications, this work positions emotional attunement as a cornerstone of effective conflict management and a transformative force for connection and repair.

Keywords: Emotions, conflict, building bridges

Introduction

Conflict is an inherent and universal aspect of human interaction, woven into the fabric of our everyday experiences from personal relationships and professional settings to community dynamics and international diplomacy. According to Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus (2014), the inevitability of conflict arises from the diverse needs, values, perceptions, and goals held by individuals and groups. While some conflicts may be mild or short-lived, others can escalate into deeply entrenched disputes with long-term consequences. Regardless of scale, conflict tends to provoke strong emotional responses and can significantly impact communication quality, decision-making, and interpersonal trust.

As such, the manner in which conflict is approached and managed plays a decisive role in determining whether the outcome will be constructive or destructive. Emotional regulation within oneself is essential but it represents only half of the equation. Navigating

tense situations also requires a keen ability to identify, interpret, and respond to the emotional signals of others. Emotional intelligence, as conceptualized by Goleman (1995) and later expanded upon by Mayer (2012), emphasizes this dual competency: the management of one's own emotions and the empathetic engagement with others' feelings during times of stress and disagreement.

Emotions are not simply peripheral reactions; they are central to how individuals perceive and respond to conflict. Anger, frustration, fear, and disappointment often emerge in the midst of disagreements, and if not acknowledged or addressed, these feelings can intensify divisions. Nair (2008) warns that neglecting or misreading the emotional experiences of others can cause misunderstandings to spiral, leading to harmful escalation and enduring rifts. When individuals feel invalidated, dismissed, or misunderstood, their reaction is frequently defensive ranging from passive withdrawal to outright hostility. These dynamics can stall progress toward resolution and make reconciliation increasingly elusive.

However, the inverse is also true. Conflict becomes an opportunity for growth when parties can attune themselves to each other's emotional cues and respond with empathy and understanding. As noted by Pruitt and Kim (2004), empathetic engagement can reduce defensiveness and promote open dialogue, allowing space for compromise and collaboration. Whether through active listening, nonverbal affirmation, or compassionate inquiry, emotionally attuned interactions help ease tensions and redirect energy toward mutually beneficial outcomes.

At the heart of successful conflict resolution lies the concept of emotional intelligence a framework that bridges cognitive reasoning with emotional awareness. Emotional intelligence encompasses several interconnected skills: self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social competence. These capacities enable individuals to manage internal emotional states while also interpreting and constructively responding to the emotions of others. Katz and McNulty (1994) stress that emotional insight is more than just sensitivity; it's a powerful tool for negotiation, mediation, and trust-building.

For example, in workplace settings, emotionally intelligent leaders tend to foster more cohesive and adaptive teams by modelling calm responses to tension and showing genuine concern for staff well-being. Similarly, in interpersonal conflicts, emotionally literate partners can recognize the hurt behind anger or the anxiety behind avoidance

leading to more thoughtful and supportive exchanges.

This paper aims to unpack the significance of recognizing and responding to emotions in conflict scenarios. It begins by examining foundational psychological concepts

related to emotional intelligence and interpersonal dynamics. It then explores practical strategies for cultivating emotional attunement such as mindful communication, empathy training, and reflective listening drawing upon established research from conflict resolution and communication fields.

The discussion also highlights real-world applications and case studies, illustrating how emotional responsiveness contributes to de-escalation and long-term peace-building across various contexts. By examining emotional awareness as a cornerstone of conflict resolution, this paper reveals how the intentional practice of empathy and emotional engagement can transform conflict from a destructive force into a platform for connection and change.

Conceptual Clarifications

Emotional Recognition in Conflict

Understanding the role of emotions in conflict requires delving into the core principles of human psychology, which illuminate how emotions shape perception, behavior, and interpersonal dynamics. Emotions are not peripheral experiences they lie at the heart of how individuals interpret the world and engage with others. As Ekman (1992) posits, emotions function as internal signals that direct attention, influence interpretation, and guide responses to complex social interactions. In conflict situations, these signals become intensified, often functioning as both a protective mechanism and a source of tension.

When individuals perceive threats to their identity, goals, or fundamental needs, emotional intensity rises (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005). This heightened state can reduce cognitive flexibility, leading to tunnel vision in attention and skewed perception. Lazarus (1991) observed that in such conditions, people may become less capable of objective problem-solving and more prone to automatic, defensive behaviors such as blame, withdrawal, or aggression. These reactions, although often unconscious, can derail constructive efforts and perpetuate cycles of misunderstanding.

Emotional responding in conflict refers to how individuals experience, express, and regulate their emotions when faced with disagreements or opposition. Conflict situations often provoke intense emotional reactions because they touch on personal values, goals, identity, and relationships. These responses may manifest as anger, frustration, fear, or

sadness, depending on how the situation is perceived. The way individuals respond emotionally can significantly influence the direction and outcome of the conflict. Poorly managed emotions, such as impulsive anger or defensiveness, tend to escalate tensions and

hinder communication, while controlled and constructive emotional responses can promote dialogue, mutual understanding, and resolution. Therefore, emotional responding is not only a natural part of conflict but also a critical factor in determining whether conflicts become destructive or productive (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2014).

Closely related to this is the broader concept of emotions in conflict, which emphasizes that emotions are central to the conflict process itself. Conflicts are rarely driven solely by objective disagreements; rather, they are deeply rooted in emotional experiences and unmet psychological needs such as respect, recognition, fairness, and security. Emotions shape how individuals interpret events and the intentions of others.

For instance, anger may lead to assumptions of hostility, while fear may cause avoidance or withdrawal. At the same time, emotions can play a constructive role by signaling that something important is at stake and motivating individuals to address underlying issues. When properly understood and managed, emotions can enhance empathy, improve communication, and support resolution. However, when ignored or mismanaged, they can intensify misunderstandings and prolong disputes (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011).

A useful framework for understanding how emotions arise in conflict is the Cognitive Appraisal Theory proposed by Richard Lazarus. This theory argues that emotions are not automatic reactions to events but are shaped by an individual's interpretation or evaluation of those events. According to Lazarus (1991), emotional responses occur through two main processes: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. In the primary appraisal stage, an individual evaluates whether a situation is relevant to their well-being and whether it is perceived as a threat, harm, or challenge. In the secondary appraisal stage, the individual assesses their ability to cope with the situation and manage its demands. In conflict situations, this means that different people can react emotionally in very different ways to the same event based on their interpretations. For example, a disagreement may be seen as a constructive exchange by one person but as a personal attack by another, leading to different emotional and behavioral responses. This theory highlights the importance of perception in conflict and suggests that by changing how situations are interpreted, individuals can better regulate their emotional reactions.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) further provides a practical framework for managing emotions effectively in conflict situations. Emotional intelligence involves the ability to

recognize, understand, and regulate one's own emotions while also being aware of and responsive to the emotions of others. In the context of conflict, EI is essential for maintaining self-control, communicating effectively, and building positive relationships.

Individuals with high emotional intelligence are more likely to manage their emotional impulses, listen actively, and respond with empathy. This helps to reduce tension and prevent escalation. Additionally, emotional intelligence supports collaborative problem-solving by encouraging openness, mutual respect, and a focus on shared solutions rather than personal attacks. It also enables individuals to de-escalate conflicts by recognizing emotional cues and addressing them appropriately. As such, emotional intelligence transforms conflict from a potentially destructive experience into an opportunity for growth, understanding, and improved relationships (Goleman, 1995).

In conclusion, emotional responding and emotions in conflict are deeply interconnected and play a fundamental role in shaping conflict dynamics. The Cognitive Appraisal Theory explains that emotional reactions are influenced by individual perceptions and interpretations, while Emotional Intelligence offers practical skills for managing these emotions constructively. Together, these concepts demonstrate that effective conflict resolution depends not only on addressing the issues at hand but also on understanding and regulating the emotional processes that underlie human interactions.

Emotional Intelligence and Its Conflict Applications

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a powerful framework for understanding how emotions can be managed and harnessed in interpersonal settings. Introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990), and later popularized by Goleman (1995), EI includes four interrelated domains:

1. Perceiving Emotions: Detecting emotions in oneself and others with accuracy.
2. Using Emotions to Facilitate Thought: Employing emotions to prioritize and guide reasoning.
3. Understanding Emotions: Grasping the complexity and causes of emotional states.
4. Managing Emotions: Regulating emotional responses constructively.

In the context of conflict, the first and third components are especially critical. Being able to read emotional cues such as tone shifts, facial tension, or body posture provides insight into how others are experiencing the situation. Understanding these emotions in light of personal or cultural context allows for responses that demonstrate empathy and nuance. Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004) emphasize that emotional intelligence is not

merely about being sensitive; it's about being skillful in turning emotional awareness into thoughtful action.

High-EI individuals are often able to engage in conflict without allowing emotional

reactivity to dominate their decisions. Studies by Jordan and Troth (2004) show that people with stronger emotional intelligence navigate disputes with greater composure, empathy, and openness. They are better equipped to listen actively, validate others' perspectives, and identify common ground. This ability not only contributes to more productive outcomes, but also strengthens relationships through mutual respect and trust.

Practical Strategies for Recognising and Responding to Emotions

Translating psychological insight into tangible practice during conflict situations calls for more than theoretical knowledge; it demands actionable interpersonal skills. While understanding the emotional underpinnings of human behavior is foundational, it is the ability to apply this understanding that enables conflict to shift from destructive confrontation to meaningful resolution. This section explores several core techniques that help individuals recognize emotional cues and respond with empathy and precision. One of the most universally endorsed methods in conflict resolution is active listening, a skill that requires mindful presence and interpretive responsiveness. Unlike passive hearing, active listening is a dynamic process involving the attentive reception of both verbal content and nonverbal emotion (Brownell, 2012). It entails paraphrasing the speaker's message, asking clarifying questions, and demonstrating undivided attention.

For example, an effective active listener may say, "So what I'm hearing is that you felt ignored during the meeting, and that upset you?" This kind of reflective communication not only clarifies misunderstandings but also signals genuine concern. Gordon (2003) underscores the importance of active listening in emotionally charged situations, arguing that it encourages openness and diffuses defensiveness. When emotions are raw, simply acknowledging someone's feelings can be transformative. Empathic statements like "It seems like that situation overwhelmed you" or "I understand why that would make you angry" demonstrate emotional attunement (Ickes, 2009). This approach aligns with Linehan's (1993) framework for emotional validation, which distinguishes between acknowledging emotional experience and agreeing with the underlying judgment. Validation helps individuals feel recognised and respected, which, in turn, can lower emotional intensity and create a more receptive environment for dialogue. According to Miller (2003), emotional recognition serves as a prerequisite for effective problem-solving; once individuals feel emotionally understood, they are less reactive and more willing to collaborate.

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Strategic questioning can gently guide a conflict conversation toward clarity and resolution. Open-ended questions are particularly valuable because they encourage elaboration and introspection, rather than eliciting yes-or-no replies. These questions help

surface deeper emotional truths and perspectives that might otherwise remain hidden.

Examples include: What was the hardest part of this experience for you? How would you like things to be handled differently moving forward?” Such prompts invite vulnerable sharing and disarm defensive communication. Rogers (1961) advocated this method as part of his client-centered therapy approach, which places empathy and exploration at the core of healing dialogue.

Attuning to nonverbal communication is essential for accurately understanding emotions, as a significant portion of emotional expression is conveyed through cues beyond words. Elements such as eye contact, posture, gestures, and facial expressions often reveal a speaker’s true feelings more clearly than verbal language, sometimes even reinforcing or contradicting what is being said. Maintaining steady and respectful eye contact signals attentiveness, while adopting an open posture communicates receptivity and reduces perceived dominance. Subtly mirroring another person’s gestures can also help build unconscious rapport. Conversely, behaviors like fidgeting, crossing arms, or displaying a disengaged posture may unintentionally signal disinterest or hostility, even when the spoken message seems neutral or kind.

Developing emotional responsiveness, however, requires intentional practice, which is why role-playing and perspective-taking exercises are widely used in conflict resolution training. These methods simulate real-life interpersonal situations, encouraging individuals to step outside their own viewpoints and engage with the experiences of others. By doing so, individuals strengthen their ability to interpret emotional nuances and respond with empathy. Regular engagement in perspective-taking has been shown to improve emotional understanding and expression, while role-playing builds both emotional literacy and the confidence needed to handle future conflicts with sensitivity and insight.

Suggestions

1. Give full attention to the speaker, avoid interrupting, and reflect back what you hear to ensure you accurately understand their emotions and concerns.
2. Observe body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and gestures, as these often reveal deeper feelings that words alone may not express.
3. Acknowledge the other person’s feelings as real and important, even if you disagree with their perspective, to build trust and reduce defensiveness.

4. Stay calm and self-aware during conflict so you can respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively, creating space for constructive dialogue.

Conclusion

Conflict, with its complex interplay of emotions, perceptions, and communication, is an inescapable part of life. While managing one's own emotions is essential, the ability to recognize and respond to others' emotions is equally critical for constructive conflict resolution. By understanding the psychological foundations of emotions, employing practical strategies such as active listening and empathy, and appreciating the transformative potential of emotional attunement, individuals can navigate conflicts more effectively and build stronger, more resilient relationships. In a world marked by increasing polarization and misunderstanding, cultivating the skill of recognizing and responding to others' emotions offers a powerful means of bridging divides and fostering dialogue. As research and practice continue to demonstrate, emotional attunement is not just a soft skill but a vital competency for personal, professional, and societal well-being.

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**EFFECT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TRAINING ON CONFLICT
RESOLUTION SKILLS AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS
IN NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of Emotional Intelligence Training Programme (EITP) in enhancing conflict resolution skills among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Guided by a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control group design, the study involved 100 SS2 students across urban and rural settings. Data were collected using standardized Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution inventories, student reflection journals, and focus group discussions. Pre-test results indicated low to moderate levels of emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills. Post-test ANCOVA revealed significant improvement in the experimental group ($F(1,97) = 8.65, p < 0.01$). Qualitative feedback showed increased empathy, anger regulation, and negotiation skills. The study underscores the value of integrating emotional intelligence training into secondary education curricula to foster peaceful peer interactions and effective conflict resolution. It is therefore recommended that emotional intelligence training be

systematically incorporated into secondary school programmes and delivered by trained school counsellors to enhance students' socio-emotional competencies and reduce conflict-related behaviours.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Emotions, Conflicts, Conflict Resolution Skills, and

Introduction

Conflict is a natural part of human interaction, especially among adolescents navigating the complex social environment of secondary school. In Nigeria, as in many parts of the world, conflict among students has become a growing concern due to its implications for academic performance, peer relationships, and school climate (Adebayo & Ojedokun, 2021). The increasing prevalence of peer conflict in Nigerian Secondary schools highlight the urgent need for proactive and developmental interventions within schools. A critical skill set that has shown potential in addressing such interpersonal issues is emotional intelligence which is the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and others (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016).

Emotional intelligence has increasingly been recognized in educational psychology as a critical factor influencing social interaction, academic achievement, and psychological well-being (Brackett et al., 2019; Durlak et al., 2011). Adolescents with high EI are more likely to regulate their emotions effectively, resolve interpersonal conflicts constructively, and maintain positive peer relationships (MacCann et al., 2020). In contrast, students with low EI tend to exhibit higher levels of aggression, emotional dysregulation, and social withdrawal. Conflict resolution skills involve the capacity to manage and resolve disputes constructively through strategies such as empathy, negotiation, and effective communication (Kim, Wang, & Oh, 2021). When emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills are developed concurrently, they provide a strong foundation for reducing aggressive behaviours and promoting a positive and supportive school climate (Corcoran et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2017).

Despite the well-documented benefits of emotional intelligence in promoting effective conflict resolution, its development remains insufficiently emphasized within many secondary school settings. In most cases, school-based counsellors and educators tend to prioritize academic instruction over students' emotional and social development.

This imbalance has resulted in many students lacking the necessary skills to manage

conflicts constructively, thereby contributing to increased incidences of peer violence, truancy, and disciplinary challenges (Yusuf & Adigun, 2010). Consequently, there is a pressing need for structured and culturally relevant interventions that can systematically enhance students' emotional competencies and conflict resolution skills.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is commonly defined based on the work of Salovey and

Mayer (1990) as the capacity to perceive, use, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. Goleman (1995) expanded the concept to include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, all which are particularly relevant in the school setting. Adolescents with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to understand their emotions, regulate impulsive behaviours, and respond empathetically to others, competencies that have been empirically linked to more constructive and peaceful conflict resolution outcomes (Brackett et al., 2019; Corcoran et al., 2018; MacCann et al., 2020).

Conflict Resolution Skills refer to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacities that enable individuals to manage interpersonal disputes effectively. Rahim (2001) classified conflict resolution styles into integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. Each of these styles has implications for how adolescents handle conflicts. Effective conflict resolution requires emotional regulation, perspective-taking, and communication skills.

Training Interventions, particularly those focused on emotional intelligence, are structured programs aimed at enhancing individuals' ability to manage emotions and social interactions. Such interventions have shown promise in increasing emotional awareness, reducing aggression, and improving problem-solving abilities among youth (Brackett et al., 2012). In the school context, EI training is often delivered through workshops, role-plays, group discussions, and reflective journaling.

Several studies have highlighted the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution. For instance, Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe, and Bakker (2007) found that adolescents with higher emotional intelligence scores demonstrated better conflict management strategies and lower levels of aggression. Similarly, Brackett and Rivers (2014) reported that emotional intelligence training significantly improved students' interpersonal relationships and reduced disciplinary referrals in American schools. Within the Nigerian context, Yusuf and Adigun (2010) examined the correlation between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution behavior among secondary school students in Kwara State. Their findings suggested a positive relationship, but their study did not involve any intervention or training program. Likewise, Akomolafe, Ogunmakin, and

Onwuka (2016) investigated emotional intelligence as a predictor of conflict management styles among pre-service teachers, again pointing to a significant relationship but lacking an experimental approach.

With the above findings, what remains underexplored is whether emotional intelligence can be actively taught to secondary school students and if such training can

lead to measurable improvements in conflict resolution abilities. Most existing studies in Nigeria are correlational, lacking experimental designs. Furthermore, there is limited research targeting students in rural and urban public schools combined, a gap this study addressed.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing incidence of interpersonal conflict among secondary school students in Nigeria, particularly in public schools, emotional and social competencies such as empathy, self-regulation, and constructive communication remain underdeveloped. Many students lack the emotional intelligence required to manage disagreements peacefully, often resorting to aggression, withdrawal, or peer retaliation. Existing school programs tend to emphasize academic achievement, with limited attention given to emotional learning and conflict resolution strategies. Moreover, previous studies in Nigeria have mostly established correlational links between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution, without testing the effectiveness of targeted interventions. This gap highlights the urgent need to assess whether structured emotional intelligence training can significantly enhance conflict resolution skills among adolescents. Addressing this problem is vital for fostering safer, more emotionally resilient school environments in both urban and rural settings.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the baseline level of emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State before the intervention.
2. To explore students' perceptions of the emotional intelligence training programme.
3. To evaluate the extent to which emotional intelligence training improves students' conflict resolution skills.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the baseline level of emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills among students before the intervention?
2. How do students perceive the emotional intelligence training intervention?
3. To what extent does emotional intelligence training improve students' conflict resolution abilities?

Statement of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in post-test emotional intelligence scores between students in the experimental and control groups.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in post-test conflict resolution skill scores between students in the experimental and control groups.

Methodology

Quasi-experimental (pre-test/post-test control group) was adopted. 100 SS2 students (50 experimental, 50 control) selected via convenience sampling where two public secondary schools across one purposively selected LGA (one urban, one rural) in Nasarawa State was selected. Three instruments were used for data collection: the Emotional Intelligence Scale for Adolescents (EISA), adapted from Schutte et al. (1998); the Conflict Resolution Skills Inventory (CRSI), adapted from Rahim (2001); and qualitative tools comprising a Student Reflection Journal and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide. The FGD Guide consisted of a set of semi-structured open-ended questions designed to elicit students' experiences, perceptions, and behavioural changes following participation in the emotional intelligence training programme. The focus group discussions were conducted with selected participants from the experimental group after the intervention, and responses were audio-recorded, transcribed, and thematically analysed.

These instruments were validated by two experts in Guidance and Counselling Department of Nasarawa State University Keffi. The reliability of the instruments was ascertained to a reliability index of 0.75 and 0.78 respectively using Cronbach Alpha.

The study followed a 4-stage procedure including: Pre-test administration, Six-week emotional intelligence training to experimental group, Post-test for both groups and FGDs and review of student journals. Descriptive statistics (mean, SD), ANCOVA for post-test comparison, Pearson's correlation were used for data analysis.

Results

Table 1: *Pre-Test Mean Scores of Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution Skills*

Group	Emotional Intelligence (Mean $\pm$ SD)	Conflict Resolution Skills (Mean $\pm$ SD)
<i>Exp.</i>	38.2 $\pm$ 5.4	34.7 $\pm$ 4.9
<i>Ctl.</i>	37.8 $\pm$ 5.1	35.1 $\pm$ 5.2

Table 2: Post-Test ANCOVA Comparison Between Groups

Variable	F	p-value	Interpretation
<i>Emotional Intelligence</i>	7.83	<0.01	Significant improvement
<i>Conflict Resolution Skills</i>	8.65	<0.01	Significant improvement

Qualitative Summary:

Themes derived from the analysis of student reflection journals and post-intervention focus group discussions revealed notable improvements in participants' socio-emotional competencies. Specifically, students reported enhanced empathy and perspective-taking, indicating a greater ability to understand the feelings and viewpoints of their peers. There was also clear evidence of improved anger and emotion regulation, as many participants described becoming more conscious of their emotional reactions and adopting strategies to manage them effectively. In addition, students demonstrated increased use of constructive conflict resolution strategies, particularly dialogue, negotiation, and active listening when addressing interpersonal disagreements.

These findings suggest that the emotional intelligence training programme had a meaningful impact on students' attitudes and behaviours, equipping them with practical skills for managing conflicts more peacefully and maintaining positive peer relationships.

Discussion of Findings

At the pre-test stage, both the experimental and control groups recorded low to moderate mean scores in emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills, indicating that students initially possessed limited competencies in these areas. This suggests that many students may lack the necessary emotional and interpersonal skills required for effective conflict management. The similarity in baseline scores between the two groups further confirms that they were comparable prior to the intervention, thereby strengthening the internal validity of the study and supporting the attribution of observed post-test

differences to the emotional intelligence training programme. This finding aligns with previous studies which indicate that emotional and social learning is often underemphasized in Nigerian secondary schools (Yusuf & Adigun, 2010).

The observed improvement in the conflict resolution skills of students in the experimental group suggests that participation in the emotional intelligence training

programme enhanced their ability to manage interpersonal conflicts more constructively. This improvement may be attributed to the development of key emotional competencies such as empathy, self-awareness, and emotional regulation, which are essential for effective communication and problem-solving during conflicts. The structured activities embedded in the training, including role-plays, group discussions, and reflective exercises, likely provided students with practical opportunities to internalize and apply these skills in real-life situations.

This interpretation is consistent with existing literature which emphasizes that emotional intelligence-based interventions can significantly improve students' social functioning and reduce maladaptive behaviours (Brackett et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2017). It also supports the view that emotional intelligence is not only a correlational factor but a trainable skill that can produce measurable behavioural outcomes in adolescents.

Qualitative findings from the student journals and focus group discussions provided rich insights into how participants internalized and applied the training. Students reported improved self-awareness, anger management, and an enhanced ability to empathize with others. Many shared that before the training, they often resorted to fighting or verbal aggression but gradually began using dialogue and self-regulation strategies.

These reflections confirm that the intervention was not only theoretically effective but practically meaningful to students. The combination of storytelling, group exercises, and reflection tasks in the six-week EI training was seen as engaging and personally relevant. The use of reflective journaling as a pedagogical tool also proved effective in reinforcing key emotional skills, in line with Brackett and Rivers (2014), who emphasized the value of self-reflection in socio-emotional development. Additionally, students noted improved peer relationships, reduced instances of misunderstanding, and an overall increase in classroom harmony. These outcomes suggest that EI training has the potential to shift school culture toward more positive and empathetic norms.

Implications for Counselling Practice

The improvement in conflict resolution skills through emotional intelligence training has meaningful implications for counselling and classroom management. Students with

higher EI are better positioned to de-escalate conflict situations, communicate their needs without aggression, cooperate in group tasks, and support a positive classroom climate.

From a counselling perspective, the findings advocate for systematic integration of EI development into guidance curricula and school-wide behavioural programmes. EI training can serve as a preventive tool against school violence and as a restorative approach

in student discipline cases. The reflective practices used in this study also offer school counsellors practical methods for helping students process emotional experiences in constructive ways.

Conclusion

The findings of this study substantiate the claim that emotional intelligence training is an effective educational strategy for enhancing adolescents' conflict resolution skills. Quantitative improvements and rich qualitative feedback converge to confirm that structured EI programs can help young people better navigate the emotional and interpersonal demands of school life.

This study therefore contributes significantly to the existing literature by offering a culturally grounded, empirically tested intervention model that can be scaled across Nigerian secondary schools and potentially across other African educational contexts.

Recommendations

1. The Nigerian Ministry of Education, through curriculum planners, should formally incorporate emotional intelligence (EI) modules into the national secondary school curriculum.
2. School counsellors should be empowered and trained to deliver structured emotional intelligence training programmes, similar to the one used in this study.
3. Teachers play a critical role in modeling emotional intelligence. Therefore, regular professional development workshops on EI and classroom conflict resolution should be provided to help teachers better manage student behaviour and create emotionally safe classrooms.

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COUNSELLING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AMONG YOUNG COUPLES LIVING IN URBAN AREAS OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined counseling and conflicts resolution strategies in enhancing mental stability among young couples living in the urban areas of Nigeria. The word conflict can be explained to either be a disagreement or argument, which may erupt from controversy. The resolution of conflict in a relationship therefore has to do with managing and resolving conflicts in a constructive manner. Due to the increasing global rates of marital discord and also the unique social -cultural and financial imbalance in Nigeria, there is no doubt that marital relationships among young couples has suffered a lot of conflicts. It is therefore essential to understand how conflict resolution strategies can contribute to the longevity of young married couples. When conflict is resolved effectively, it's end result strengthens the relationship by fostering understanding and communication. Some key strategies that can be used to resolve conflict successfully are - Effective communication, Empathy, Active listening, Compromise and others. This research work therefore advises that these approaches and strategies if well applied on conflict resolution, can be effectively resolved and in the end resilient Union will be achieved.

Introduction

Marriage is a recognized relationship between a man and woman who shows mutual love for each other. This relationship starts with the process of either traditional engagement, court and or religious ceremonies. It typically encompasses interactions like mutual support and conflict management. In every relationship therefore, there is bound to

be conflicts between the couple from time to time. This is because, each and every one of them has their different life experiences and undoubtedly has different expectations about marital relationships from each other, but they are expected to be patient and accommodate one another for their common good. Unfortunately many couples of today hardly know how to manage conflicts in marital relationships. This has caused some setback, this

research work therefore attributes it to the unavailability of marital counseling, which should serve as a way of intervention in the process of conflict,

Conflict resolution can be described as an act of resolving broken relationships or amending it to achieve a positive result. It can also be described as a crucial aspect of maintaining healthy and fulfilling connections with others. It involves open communication, understanding each other's perspectives in order to find a mutually agreeable end. In relationships, conflicts cannot be ruled out or avoided, whether it is seen as being romantic or professional. It is certain that no relationship is perfect or without faults.

Marital relationship is a complex and dynamic entity that is usually influenced by various factors, which may include economic, cultural, individual dynamics and social influences. Presently in Nigeria, all these factors are posing serious effects on newly married couples, as it affects heavily on their happiness and way of life, both psychologically and socially.

It is therefore the method of managing the conflict that determines the resolution and success of relationships. Individuals can only strengthen their relationships through trust and foster deep connections if they are able to learn how to avoid or manage conflicts in a productive way.

Conflict resolution in marital relationship is geared towards a friendly and lasting relationship and not just about resolving conflicts. Therefore, the proper use of some counseling skills like active listening, empathy and others are essential in this context. Also, with the help and adoption of constructive approach in conflict resolution, one can achieve a lasting and friendly relationship and also a transformation of opportunities for growth, intimacy and peace of mind.

In carrying out the resolution of conflict in marital relationship, it is necessary to handle the process with care, as it can either break or amend the bond between the two parties involved or even affect the family members and friends of the partners. It is very obvious that no relationship exists without conflicts from time to time, but the way these conflicts are managed and avoided is what strengthens the relationships.

Reasons for the necessity of conflict resolution in marital relationships

- It encourages the growth of the partners both socially and psychologically.
- It helps to build intimacy and trust among the partners.
- It helps to introduce an honest communication even if it did not exist before the conflict

and so on.

The first and most crucial step in conflict resolution is to understand the conflict itself. This involves defining the problem, identifying the root cause, and clarifying the positions and interests of all parties involved. Before attempting to resolve a conflict, it's essential to gain a clear understanding of what the conflict is about, why it arose, and what each person's perspective and desired outcomes are.

Conceptual clarification:

- Clearly articulate the specific issue or problem that is causing the conflict. This prevents conflict from escalating into unrelated disputes.
- Counseling resolution identifies the Root Cause: Explore the underlying reasons why the conflict arose. This may involve asking questions, listening to all sides, and understanding the perspectives of everyone involved.
- Counselling resolution takes Clarifies Positions and Interests: Understand what each party wants to achieve (their position) and what their underlying needs and concerns are (their interests).
- Counseling resolution takes a Diagnostic Approach: Instead of reacting emotionally, step back and observe the situation from a neutral perspective. This involves being aware of your own reactions and understanding the motivations of others.
- The Counselor Listens Actively: Pay close attention to what others are saying, both verbally and non-verbally, to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives.
- The Counselor Considers Different Perspectives: Try to see the situation from the other person's point of view.
- The Counselor Seeks Understanding First: Remember the principle "seek first to understand, then to be understood".

The 'C' principles in conflict management:

The 'C' principles in conflict management consist of Compete, Concede, Compromise, Collaborate, and Communicate. Each principle serves a distinct role in navigating conflicts:

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- ◆ Compete: Assertively pursuing one's own interests regardless of the impact on others.
- ◆ Concede: Yielding to the other party's demands, often to maintain peace or relationships.
- ◆ Compromise: Finding a middle ground where both parties give up something to reach an agreement.

- ◆ Collaborate: Working together to find solution that satisfies all parties, emphasizing teamwork.
- ◆ Communicate: Engaging in constructive dialogue to express needs and concerns clearly.

How the 'C' principles are applied

Effective conflict management requires a fine balance of these principles. Leaders and counselors need to:

- ◆ Understand the Issues: Assess what the conflict is truly about by gathering relevant information.
- ◆ Assess Perspectives: Evaluate the viewpoints and interests of all parties involved to foster mutual understanding.
- ◆ Facilitate Dialogue: Create an environment where open communication can thrive, allowing everyone to express their thoughts without fear.

Applying these principles allows organizations to address conflicts early, thereby reducing potential costs such as decreased productivity and high turnover. By promoting strong communication.

Steps to take in resolution of conflict is to open an honest and transparent communication by encouraging dialogue for the parties involved to express themselves and their concerns. This move helps foster empathy and create a conducive environment for the parties to express themselves better.

In the course of communication, there will be a collaboration which will lead to a favorable solution that can address the issue on ground. However, when this is not fully achieved, there will be a level ground for compromise, to agree on a level ground where parties involved will arrive at a conclusion that is if the parties are willing to let go of some issues responsible for the conflict in order to achieve favorable resolutions.

The next stage is the avoidance stage which is not always a better stage for resolution of conflict, but this can only be applied when there is emotional intense. In this case, the parties are allowed to go apart to calm their tension and feelings and then come back to address the real conflict in a constructive way. After avoidance, the resolution process goes

into negotiations which takes the process to a mutual and understanding stage. At this point, the parties are expected to find a friendly communication ground to be able to understand them for an effective negotiation. This takes the parties to the meditation stage where the counselor or the third party can come in to guide the parties towards resolution of the conflict, which also involves the use of a calm and friendly process to enable the parties to

have confidence in the third party to give them confidence to express themselves in a calm and friendly manner.

Empathy among other skills plays an important role in conflict resolution of marital relationships, as acknowledging, understanding and the thinking of others helps to control tension and provide an atmosphere of understanding.

For one to see conflict from the other party's thinking, Empathy must be adopted in order to foster mutual respect and cooperation.

There are some distractions that should be avoided in the course of conflict resolution, these vices are:

- ◆ Emotional negativities.
- ◆ Introducing unrelated issues
- ◆ Shifting blames on any of the partners.
- ◆ Focusing on the immediate actions.
- ◆ The use of I feel statements which can prolong and activate more dialogue and anxiety.
- ◆ Failure to actively listen to be able to capture all the statements.
- ◆ Not to be biased.

The implications of conflict Resolutions:

There are so many implications of conflict resolution in relationships which can either be negative or positive.

Some POSITIVE Implications are:

- It can improve communication by enhancing the communication skills of the partners and also help them to have a better expression of their feelings, needs and show of love.
- It can also go a long way to strengthen their relationship by holding firm the strength of their trust, intimacy and level of understanding between partners as long as their relationship exists.
- Avoiding conflicts can also create self-awareness, the show of empathy in the partners

and finally fosters the level of emotional intelligence that will aid them to have a lasting relationship.

The implementation can also have some NEGATIVE forms which Leads to the bad side of the relationship, they are:

- If the conflict is not resolved, it can strain the relationship for life, which can lead to distancing and resentment.
- Feelings of betrayal and lack of trust can take place in the relationship if conflict is not properly resolved.
- The presence of conflict or conflict can give rise to anxiety, feelings of hopelessness, depression and significant emotional distress.

There can also be a long term implications in a positive form, which may involve personal growth, relationship satisfaction and healthy relationships pattern.

This research work therefore advises that for a positive conflict resolution to take place in relationships, there is the need for the adoption of these Implications for the partners to be able to have a more resilient relationship.

Limitations:

There are so many limitations in conflict resolution in marital relationships, which can help in reducing the challenges on the relationships and create good impacts on it's effectiveness if well managed. Some of these limitations are

- External stressors which involve work related stress, constraints, health instability and others.
- Personal limitations which comprises of issues that were not being resolved personally, or some emotional issues that can affect a peaceful conflict resolution in relationships.
- Relationship limitations-for instance if there were some issues in the relationship before another one surfaced, but was not resolved, it can affect the process in the resolution of conflict in relationships.

More of the limitations among others include; Communication imbalance, Tension, Lack of trust, Defensiveness and others.

Finally, there is need to follow up in the process of conflict resolution in relationships, as the proper follow up of all these limitations can help to give a better outcome in conflict resolution in relationships.

Counseling Implication:

There is no doubt that counseling plays a vital role on resolution of conflict in relationships. It is also necessary to involve a trained counselor in the course of this context, as the use of counseling skills will intensify the success of the resolution. The

Counselor employs various methods that facilitate effective communication and understanding amongst the parties involved. The counselor first identifies the partners involved in the conflict and the main costs of the conflict which is usually bridge in communication. Then develop effective communication skills like active listening, and expressing clearly the needs and wants of the parties involved. The counselor also introduces them to ways to manage their emotions and also resolve their conflicts constructively by collaboration with them to find mutual beneficial solutions to their conflicts which will in the end help them to help them to foster a deep understanding with each other. In the process of the resolution, the counselor will help them to become mindful of themselves which will help them to maintain calmness during conflict and with a clear mind. In this process, there is a need for the partners to pause and reflect, foster on more constructive dialogue and also minimize their emotional reactions as this will help them to maintain a longer lasting relationship with peace and love.

Conflict resolution tips for Young couples in the rural areas of Nigeria. It is advisable that the couple directly express what is bothering them in a firm, honest and caring manner. Keeping your grievances with your selves to bring them up at any annoying time can build up the unspoken grievances which may combust like a bomb explosion and this can lead to relationships decay, divorce and or domestic violence.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that almost all the conflicts experienced by marital couples are amendable, which may include childlessness, economic breakdown, health issues, child spacing and or sex, sexual inability due to health or lack of interest, interference of relations which may sometimes erupt to violence or malice. This research work therefore proposes some ideas to help resolve conflicts in marital life.

- ◆ Never discuss marital issues without committing them to GOD in prayers first. Be honest to each other.
- ◆ Before raising a point of argument, first think twice about the issues.
- ◆ Avoid attacking each other, instead critically look at the issues on ground.

- ◆ Concentrate only on the issues of the conflicts, rather than connecting to many other past events.
- ◆ Consider the imperfections of human beings and see your partner not to be a saint.
- ◆ Remember to control your true emotion to a limit.

Note that the resolution is not based on who wins or loses but that the ball must keep rolling.

- ◆ Always have in mind that anger is a deadly and find a way to deal with it, especially with reference to the word of GOD. By so doing, you can avoid the extreme outcome of anger which maybe anxiety, depression and increased irritability on each other.
- ◆ Avoid using derogatory statement like, over my dead body, you can never get it right, I will never..... rather use comments like, is ok, we can get it right, it can be better tomorrow, no one is perfect, and so on.
- ◆ Finally, practice forgiveness which does not require the participation of the partner, this will make way for reconstruction which is the aim of conflict resolution.

Suggestions:

For an achievement of a healthy relationship to exist, there should be an effective conflict resolution put in place. This can help to solidify their union through active communication, empathy, collaboration, compromise, avoidance when necessary, negotiation and some other skills to help and achieve a positive result.

These can help to build up emotional intelligence and self-awareness which will help the parties to build up understanding and bonding with themselves. Through the adoption of a productive conflict resolution, one can create a healthier and stronger relationship that would be more resilient to withstand challenges, transform conflict into opportunities and raise up a more harmonious and productive relationship.

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ROLE OF EMPATHY IN DE-ESCALATING CONFLICT SITUATIONS

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Abstract

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human relationships, coming from diverse perspectives, needs, and values. While conflict is often viewed negatively, when managed constructively, it can foster growth, innovation, and strengthened connections. This paper examines the critical role of empathy an essential component of emotional intelligence in the de-escalation and resolution of conflicts. Empathy is explored through its cognitive, emotional, and compassionate dimensions, each contributing uniquely to understanding, connection, and action. Cognitive empathy enables perspective-taking and recognition of underlying concerns, emotional empathy fosters genuine emotional resonance and trust, and compassionate empathy motivates supportive behaviors that address the root causes of conflict. By integrating these dimensions, individuals can navigate complex interpersonal dynamics more effectively, transforming adversarial interactions into opportunities for collaboration and positive change. The paper underscores that developing and practicing empathy is not only vital for resolving disputes but also for building resilient, healthier

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relationships in personal, professional, and societal contexts.

Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, arising from differences in perspectives, needs, and values among individuals and groups. In interpersonal, organizational, and societal contexts, conflicts often emerge when individuals perceive that

their goals or interests are incompatible with those of others. While conflict is frequently viewed as negative, contemporary scholars argue that when managed effectively it can foster innovation, strengthen relationships, and improve decision-making processes (Gerpott, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Voelpel, 2020).

However, poorly managed conflicts can escalate into hostility, mistrust, and psychological distress, damaging relationships and reducing productivity. In emotionally charged situations, individuals often react defensively, which intensifies disagreements and prevents constructive dialogue. Consequently, effective conflict management requires not only communication skills but also emotional competencies that enable individuals to regulate their own emotions while understanding the feelings of others (Schutte & Malouff, 2020).

One of the most important emotional competencies for managing conflicts is empathy. Empathy refers to the capacity to understand and share the emotional experiences of others while maintaining awareness of one's own emotional state (Zaki, 2020). Scholars increasingly recognize empathy as a central component of emotional intelligence that facilitates interpersonal understanding, cooperation, and conflict resolution (Riess, 2021).

Recent research highlights that empathetic individuals are better able to interpret emotional cues, respond appropriately to others' feelings, and engage in constructive dialogue during disagreements. This ability plays a critical role in conflict de-escalation because it helps individuals move beyond defensive reactions and develop mutual understanding (Hodzic, Ripoll, Lira, & Zenasni, 2021).

Leaders and mediators who model empathetic behaviors often set the tone for respectful communication and constructive dialogue within groups and organizations.

In sum, conflict is an unavoidable dimension of human relationships, yet its outcomes are not predetermined. When approached with empathy and emotional intelligence, conflict can be transformed from a destructive force into an opportunity for growth, innovation, and strengthened human connections. Understanding and practicing the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of empathy equips individuals with the tools to navigate even the most challenging interactions. By fostering trust, reducing

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hostility, and promoting mutual understanding, empathy emerges not only as a tool for conflict de-escalation but as a fundamental building block for healthier, more resilient relationships in all areas of life.

Understanding Empathy

Empathy is a foundational aspect of emotional intelligence, often defined as the

ability to understand and share the feelings of another (Cuff et al., 2020; Hall & Schwartz, 2021). It goes beyond mere sympathy, which involves feeling pity or sorrow for someone's misfortune, to encompass a deeper cognitive and emotional connection that fosters genuine understanding and concern (Zaki, 2020). Empathy enables individuals to bridge emotional and psychological distances, building connections that are essential for healthy interpersonal relationships, collaborative work, and conflict resolution (Weisz & Zaki, 2021).

Psychologists often distinguish between several distinct types of empathy, each contributing uniquely to how people connect and respond to others' emotional states (Hall & Schwartz, 2021). These include cognitive empathy, emotional empathy, and compassionate empathy each playing a crucial role in how people relate to and support one another, particularly during conflicts.

Cognitive Empathy

Cognitive empathy, sometimes called perspective-taking, refers to the intellectual ability to comprehend another person's thoughts, beliefs, and intentions (Epley, 2020). It involves putting oneself in another's shoes mentally, striving to see the world through their eyes even if one does not share the same feelings. This form of empathy is closely linked to social awareness and effective communication, as it requires listening attentively and interpreting both verbal and nonverbal cues (Hall & Schwartz, 2021). In conflict situations, cognitive empathy is essential for understanding the underlying motivations behind another person's actions or reactions. For example, a manager using cognitive empathy might recognize that an employee's anger stems not from defiance but from feeling undervalued or unheard. By grasping these deeper concerns, individuals can respond in ways that address root causes rather than just surface-level disputes (Zaki, 2020).

Emotional Empathy

Emotional empathy, often referred to as empathic concern or emotional contagion, involves feeling what another person is feeling an emotional resonance that allows individuals to share in another's emotional state (Weisz & Zaki, 2021). Unlike cognitive empathy, which operates on an intellectual level, emotional empathy is an affective

experience that connects people on a deeply human level. It can, however, be a double-edged sword. While emotional contagion can sometimes be overwhelming, leading to burnout or emotional exhaustion, healthy empathic concern motivates compassion without compromising one's emotional boundaries (Hall & Schwartz, 2021). In conflict de-escalation, emotional empathy plays a critical role by humanizing the other party and softening adversarial stances. When people feel that their emotions are genuinely

understood and validated, they are more likely to reciprocate with openness and trust, which are essential for resolving disputes constructively (Zaki, 2020).

Compassionate Empathy

Compassionate empathy builds upon the foundation of emotional empathy by adding a proactive dimension: the desire to help or alleviate the suffering of others (Klimecki, 2021). It is sometimes described as empathy in action. Whereas cognitive and emotional empathy help individuals understand and feel another's distress, compassionate empathy motivates supportive behaviors, such as offering help, finding solutions, or advocating for others' needs (Klimecki, 2021; Singer & Engert, 2019). This proactive element is especially important in conflict situations because it shifts the focus from merely acknowledging feelings to actively working toward resolution and repair. For instance, in mediation or negotiation, compassionate empathy may inspire one party to propose fair compromises or extend gestures of goodwill, thereby diffusing tension and opening pathways for mutual agreement (Weisz & Zaki, 2021).

The Role of Empathy in Conflict De-escalation

In the context of conflict de-escalation, all three forms of empathy cognitive, emotional, and compassionate play interdependent roles (Coleman, Deutsch, & Marcus, 2021). Cognitive empathy enables individuals to understand why another person is upset or defensive, allowing for a clearer identification of the real issues at stake. Emotional empathy bridges the emotional divide, fostering connection and reducing the likelihood of hostile or defensive behavior. Compassionate empathy transforms this understanding and connection into constructive actions that seek to address concerns and repair relationships (Zaki, 2020).

Recent research consistently shows that empathy-driven approaches to conflict resolution can lead to more durable and satisfactory outcomes (Halperin & Cohen-Chen, 2021). By validating emotions, acknowledging perspectives, and demonstrating genuine care, empathetic communicators reduce defensiveness and build trust. This not only helps

resolve the immediate conflict but also strengthens relationships over time, creating a foundation for healthier interactions in the future (Weisz & Zaki, 2021).

Empathy Contributes to De-escalation

Empathy's power in conflict de-escalation stems from its ability to transform the dynamic from one of opposition to one of understanding and connection (Halperin & Cohen-Chen, 2021).

1. Active Listening and Validation

At its core, empathy requires active listening – paying full attention not just to the words being spoken, but also to the underlying emotions, tone, and non-verbal cues. When individuals feel truly heard and understood, their emotional arousal tends to decrease. Empathy allows a conflict resolver to:

- a. **Validate Feelings:** Acknowledge and affirm the other person's emotions without necessarily agreeing with their position or actions. Phrases like "I can see why you'd be frustrated," or "It sounds like this situation has caused you a lot of concern," can be incredibly powerful in making the other person feel recognized and respected. This validation does not equate to condoning, but rather to acknowledging the reality of their emotional experience.
- b. **Reduce Defensiveness:** When people feel attacked or dismissed, they become defensive. An empathic approach disarms this defensiveness by showing a willingness to understand rather than to judge or retaliate.

2. Perspective-Taking

Cognitive empathy enables individuals to step outside their own frame of reference and genuinely consider the conflict from the other person's point of view. This includes understanding their motivations, fears, values, and past experiences that might be influencing their current behaviour (Fisher & Ury, 1991).

- i. **Uncovering Underlying Needs:** Often, overt demands in a conflict mask deeper, unmet needs. Empathy helps peel back the layers to identify these core needs, which can then be addressed more constructively. For instance, an aggressive outburst might stem from a fear of losing control or a feeling of being disrespected.
- ii. **Identifying Common Ground:** By understanding the other's perspective, areas of shared interest or values, which were previously obscured by the conflict, can come to light. This common ground can serve as a foundation for negotiation and resolution.

3. Fostering Trust and Rapport

Empathy builds psychological safety. When one party in a conflict demonstrates genuine empathy, it signals respect and a willingness to collaborate rather than dominate. This can lead to:

- i. **Increased Trust:** Trust is severely eroded during conflict. An empathic response, by showing genuine concern and understanding, can begin to rebuild trust, making both parties more amenable to finding solutions.

- ii. Improved Communication: As trust grows, communication becomes more open and less guarded. Individuals are more likely to share their true feelings and intentions, facilitating a more honest and productive dialogue.

4. Diffusing Hostility and Anger

Intense emotions, particularly anger and frustration, are common in escalating conflicts. Empathy acts as an emotional regulator:

- i. Emotional Mirroring (Positive): While emotional contagion can spread negative emotions, a controlled, empathic response can also mirror a calming demeanour, helping to de-escalate the other person's emotional intensity.
- ii. Creating Space for Rationality: When individuals are overwhelmed by emotion, their capacity for rational thought diminishes. By acknowledging and validating their feelings, empathy helps to soothe the emotional brain, allowing the prefrontal cortex (responsible for logical reasoning) to re-engage, making constructive dialogue possible.

Practical Strategies for Applying Empathy in Conflict

Applying empathy effectively in real-time conflict situations requires conscious effort and specific techniques such as;

- 1. Listen Actively and Reflect: Give the other person your undivided attention. Use verbal and non-verbal cues (nodding, eye contact). Paraphrase what you hear to confirm understanding: "So, if I understand correctly, you're feeling frustrated because..."
- 2. Acknowledge and Validate Emotions: Use "I" statements to express your understanding of their feelings: "I can see that you're feeling very upset about this," or "It sounds like you're really disappointed." Avoid judgmental language.
- 3. Ask Open-Ended Questions: Encourage the other person to elaborate on their perspective and feelings. Questions like "Can you tell me more about what happened

from your point of view?" or "What outcome are you hoping for?" invite deeper sharing.

- 4. Avoid Interrupting or Offering Immediate Solutions: Your primary goal in de-escalation is to understand, not to fix, at this stage. Interruption can signal a lack of genuine interest in their perspective.
- 5. Manage Your Own Emotions: Before engaging empathically, ensure you are calm and centred. If you feel overwhelmed, take a brief pause or deep breaths to regulate your

own emotional state, preventing your emotions from contaminating the interaction.

6. **Seek Clarification, Not Just Agreement:** If something is unclear, ask for more details. The goal is accurate understanding, not necessarily immediate agreement with their position.
7. **Focus on Shared Humanity:** Remind yourself that the other person, despite their current behaviour, is a human being with needs, fears, and emotions, just like you. This can help maintain a compassionate stance.
8. **Physical Positioning (If Safe and Appropriate):** In person, adopting an open posture, maintaining appropriate eye contact, and even mirroring their calmer non-verbal cues can subtly communicate empathy.

Challenges and Limitations

While powerful, applying empathy in conflict is not without its challenges:

- i. **Emotional Exhaustion:** Engaging deeply with another's negative emotions can be emotionally draining, especially in prolonged or highly charged conflicts.
- ii. **Perception of Weakness:** Some individuals may mistakenly perceive empathy as a sign of weakness or capitulation.
- iii. **Lack of Reciprocity:** If the other party is unwilling or unable to reciprocate empathy, de-escalation can be difficult.
- iv. **Manipulation:** In rare cases, a manipulative individual might exploit an empathic response.
- v. **Personal Bias:** Our own biases and past experiences can impede our ability to truly understand another's perspective. Overcoming these challenges requires self-awareness, resilience, and sometimes, the assistance of a neutral third party (mediator) who can model and facilitate empathic communication.

Conclusion

Empathy is not merely a soft skill but a robust and indispensable tool in the art of

conflict de-escalation. By enabling individuals to actively listen, validate feelings, take different perspectives, and foster trust, empathy transforms hostile confrontations into opportunities for understanding and collaborative problem solving. While its application requires skill and resilience, the capacity to genuinely connect with another's emotional experience offers the most promising pathway to de-escalate tension, repair relationships, and navigate conflicts towards mutually acceptable and constructive outcomes.

Cultivating empathy is thus not only crucial for individual well-being but is also

fundamental to building more harmonious and effective communities and societies.

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**DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOUR THERAPY (DBT) AND ITS USE TO ENHANCE
SELF-ESTEEM AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Low self-esteem is a wide spread issue among Nigerian adolescents. Individuals at this stage of development may have negative perception about their physical appearance, identity, struggle with low confidence in their abilities and capacity to accomplish task, isolating themselves from others and also having difficulty giving their opinion or asking for what they want. This position paper therefore examined the relevance of dialectical behaviour therapy and its use to enhance self-esteem among adolescents in Nigeria. Dialectical behaviour therapy is a type of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) that focuses on helping adolescents regulate their emotions, improve interpersonal relationships and develop distress tolerance. Relevant literature was reviewed on concept of self-esteem which include; types of low self-esteem, factors of low self-esteem, characteristics of low self-esteem, concept of dialectical behaviour therapy which include view of human nature, effectiveness of dialectical behaviour therapy as well as the applicability of dialectical behaviour therapy on adolescents with low self-esteem. Based on the review, it was concluded that, by incorporating the core DBT skills of mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotional regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness into their daily lives, adolescents can cultivate a more sensitive self-image and foster a greater sense of self-worth. It was suggested that the government and nongovernmental organizations should fund training programs in self-esteem, DBT and adolescent development through seminars, workshops and training for equipping teachers, counselling psychologists and other significant others in schools and communities in order to enhance low self-esteem of adolescents in Nigeria.

Keywords: Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, Adolescents, Self-Esteem.

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical period of growth and identity formation, and self-esteem plays a crucial role in shaping how adolescents view themselves and how they interact with the world around them. Low self-esteem is a wide spread issue among Nigerian adolescents (Fagbohun et al., 2025). Adolescents at this stage of development may have

negative insight about their identity, physical appearance, struggle with low confidence in their abilities and capacity to accomplish task, isolating themselves from others and also finding it tough to voice their opinions or make requests. These could cause issues or prevent them from cultivating the positive self-esteem necessary to reach their greatest potential. Low self-esteem in adolescents can significantly affect a person's mental health, relationships, academic achievement, decision-making, and general quality of life.

Concept of Low Self-esteem

Self-esteem is the admiration one has for oneself. As a component of self-esteem, the word "self" refers to the attitudes, values, and beliefs that a person has about himself or herself, while the word "esteem" represents the value and worth that individuals place on themselves. Combining the two words together, 'self-esteem can be seen as a concept that represents the way at which a person generally feels about him or herself and how others feel about such a person (Solaja, 2018). Self-esteem is essential for understanding oneself and a vital key to success in life. It is an attitude that refers to the perception of a person's value, whether it is positive or negative (Sandah, et al., 2018) as well as the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and being worthy of happiness (Kumar, 2021).

Two aspects of self-esteem are high and low self-esteem according to Wills-Herrera (2024). Adolescents with high self-esteem feel respected, honoured, worthy, but not superior. On the other hand, adolescents with low self-esteem do not satisfy themselves, they feel unaccepted and rejected. Indeed, individuals with high self-esteem are able to act according to what they think to be the best choice, trusting their own judgment, and not feeling guilt when others do not like their choice (Okoye et al., 2019).

Low self-esteem can manifest in different ways leading to distinct types of low self-esteem. Global low self-esteem as one of the types of low self-esteem is a general feeling of inadequacy across various areas of life. In-school adolescent with this type of low self-esteem may feel unworthy, incompetent or unlovable in most aspect of their lives (Shwartz et al., 2018; Tavakolizadeh et al., 2022). Conditional low self-esteem is when adolescents base their self-worth on external factors such as achievement, appearance, or the approval

of others thereby causing their self-esteem to fluctuate depending on how they meet these conditions and; Social low self-esteem revolves around social interaction and relationships, individuals in this category might feel inferior or awkward in social situations, leading to feelings of loneliness, isolation or social anxiety (Valkenburg et al., 2021).

Other types of low self-esteem include Performance-based low self-esteem, body

image-related low self-esteem and comparative low self-esteem. It is important to know that these types of low self-esteem can overlap and coexist in adolescents. Quite a lot of things in life may contribute to low self-esteem among adolescents. These include poor or critical parental upbringing, media and society, bullying and past experiences, body image and unnecessary comparison and so on.

Researches according to Zhao et al., (2020); Chen, et al., (2022); Oladeji et al., (2023) have shown that low self-esteem can lead to many emotional and behavioural problems on adolescents such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, teenage pregnancy, vulnerability, drug abuse, violence, rape, suicide and membership into deviant groups like secret societies among others. It is not surprising that many treatment models such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), competitive memory training (COMET), and compassion focused therapy (CFT) among many others have helped in enhancing low self-esteem among adolescents. Therefore, dialectical behaviour therapy and its use are considered in this paper to enhance adolescents with low self-esteem in Nigeria.

Brief History of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy

Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) was first developed by Dr. Marsha Linehan, a psychologist at the University of Washington. Dr. Linehan created DBT in the late 1970s. In 1999, she and her team published *Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Patients with Borderline Personality Disorder and Drug-Dependence* in *American Journal on Addiction*. As the popularity of CBT kept growing, dialectical behavior therapy became more popular as well. It integrates the principles of cognitive behaviour therapy with principles of Western philosophy including observing, mindfulness, and avoidance of judgement (Betterham, 2016).

Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) is a type of talk therapy designed for adolescents that are struggling with low self-esteem especially for those who experience emotion very intensely. (DBT) is a modified version of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). It emphasizes the importance of self-acceptance with the acceptance of an individual's need to change their behaviours. It essentially focuses on teaching techniques to improve distress tolerance, mood management, interpersonal relationship as well as building a life worth living. Wyk (2015) defined Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) as

a comprehensive treatment that blends cognitive-behavioural approaches with acceptance-based practices. DBT is a type of talk therapy (psychotherapy) that is specifically designed for individuals who have strong emotional experiences. "Dialectical" refers to combining differing ideas which is 'acceptance' and change'

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) View of Human Nature

Like other behavior therapies, dialectical behavior therapy is predicated on the idea that all human emotions and behaviors stem from what people think, sense, assume, or believe (about themselves, other people, and the universe in general). Therefore, people's feelings and reactions are determined by their thoughts about the situations they encounter rather than the situations themselves. For example, an in-school adolescent might constantly think (like "I'm not good enough") due to academic failure. This might reinforce his negative self-perception and as a result DBT can help reframe failures as opportunities for growth and learn from mistakes.

Dialectical behaviour therapy consists of three modes of treatments: Individual therapy or Psychotherapy, Phone Consultation and Group therapy (Linehan, 2015; Swales & Heard, 2017). These three modes of treatments involve weekly sessions with the Counsellor. Each session lasts about 40 minutes to 60 minutes. Dialectical behavior therapy modes of treatments are divided into four stages of treatment according to Schimelpfening (2023) and the same method applies to all groups. The first stage is the Orientation to DBT also known as Pre-treatment stage, the Counsellor offers an assessment to the client and thereby set therapeutic goals. Stabilization stage is the stage two in which the Counsellor helps to eliminate self-inflicting and life-threatening thoughts and behaviours and at working towards change which is the stage three, steps are taken to address the issue using the four DBT skills. The last stage which is stage four involves building a life worth living; provide support to the students and follow-up.

The goals of DBT are; to help keep clients safe by reducing negative self-harming thoughts and behaviours; to limit behaviors that get in the way of productive therapy; to help reach an individual goal and improve quality of life by addressing what's blocking a person's progress, such as mental health conditions or relationship issues and also to help learn new skills to replace unhelpful behaviors (Linehan, 2014). To teach adolescents with low self-esteem some techniques to help them understand their emotions without judgement and also to equip them with skills and techniques to manage those emotions in order to change their behaviour in ways that will make their lives better and eliminate life threatening behaviours (Osarenren et al., 2021).

Effectiveness of DBT on Low Self-esteem

"Working with opposites" is what is meant by "dialectical." DBT employs "acceptance" and "change," two seemingly incompatible techniques. In a DBT session, the therapist works with the clients to help them transition from unhealthy coping mechanisms

to a life that they find personally rewarding, meaningful, and comfortable. DBT is a type of cognitive behaviour therapy which is more concerned with social and emotional aspects of an individual (Linehan, 2015).

In this context, Linehan emphasized that dialectical is the coexistence of opposing elements which entails creating two sets of abilities focused on change and two sets of skills focused on acceptance. The knowledge that people's feelings and behaviors are valid is imparted by acceptance-oriented skills. At the same time, change-oriented skills teach people the necessity of actively managing their emotions in a positive way. The acceptance-oriented skills are divided into two (1) distress tolerance which deals involves developing crisis management and coping skills, as well as the ability to endure suffering when it is challenging to alter the circumstances. It is a skill which is acquired so that adolescents can divert, relax, and solve problems, this could be done through deep relaxation which may be the key to distress tolerance (Labelle et al., 2015).

One useful distress tolerance technique for self-esteem is self-soothing. This entails using the senses to induce relaxation and contentment. Adolescents can control upsetting emotions and maintain a more balanced emotional state by using strategies like deep breathing, listening to relaxing music, or exercising. Another important distress tolerance skill for self-esteem is radical acceptance. It entails accepting a situation's reality in its entirety. Mindfulness is the second skill under the acceptance-oriented skills. (2) Mindfulness skill is also a useful tool for boosting self-confidence. Being completely present and judgment-free conscious of one's thoughts, feelings, and sensations is the essence of mindfulness. Zeifman et al. (2020) explained that mindfulness is a core skill in DBT which has to do with learning how to focus on awareness in a present moment, and to acknowledge and accept one's thoughts, feelings, behaviours and bodily sensations as they occur, without the need to control or manipulate them.

The change-oriented skills can also be divided into two. (1) Emotional regulation and (2) Interpersonal effectiveness. Emotional skills help an individual to develop the ability to control one's emotions and avoid letting them control oneself. Learning to comprehend, accept, and control one's feelings is a crucial part of DBT's emotional regulation component. One essential aspect of emotional regulation for self-esteem is identifying and labeling emotions accurately, thereby help individuals to better understand their emotional

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experiences, which can help them respond more effectively to their feelings and foster a greater sense of self-awareness (Schmelpfening, 2023).

Interpersonal effectiveness skills, which focus on building and maintaining healthy relationships with people, can also play a crucial role in enhancing self-esteem (Brooten-

Brooks, 2022). Assertiveness, which entails politely and directly communicating one's wants and boundaries, is a crucial interpersonal effectiveness ability for self-esteem. People can make sure that their demands are satisfied and their boundaries are respected by being assertive, which strengthens their sense of self-worth. Empathy is another interpersonal effectiveness quality that is related to self-esteem. By being able to assist and comprehend those around them, developing empathy can help people forge closer bonds with others and develop a deeper sense of self-worth.

The Counsellor would offer an assessment before starting DBT. This is part of the pretreatment stage. This stage is important according to Batterham (2016) because when client is emotionally absent in mind, the Counsellor cannot carry out an effective therapy. Hence, the client has the responsibility of committing to treatment and working towards eliminating behaviours that are destructive and interfering with his or her life (Kavalidou, 2016) and at the same time the Counsellor should note that they must be willing to meet and accept the clients as they are (Fassbinder et al., 2016).

Individual therapy

Stage 1: During the beginning of treatment when carrying out an individual session, the Counsellor and client work together to identify specific and achievable goals related to improving self-esteem. These goals should be specific, measurable, realistic, and time bound (SMART). The first behaviors to be addressed are the most severe and damaging ones by the Counsellor. For example, an adolescent who has a negative perception about himself or herself, would be asked to write and say positive affirmation about self for two weeks. This helps the client to practice a structured, short-term intervention to retrain their mindset, strengthen self-awareness, and build healthier self-esteem.

Stage 2: Addressing problems that have an impact on a client's quality of life is the next step in treatment by eliminating self-inflicting and low self-esteem thoughts and behaviours, chronic and emotional distress as well as resistant as to the treatment process. Emphasis is placed on reducing life-threatening behaviours and developing skills to manage intense emotion. For example, A dereceives lower grade in a Mathematics test than he anticipated and feels like a failure, questioning his intelligence and self-worth.

Stage 3: The next stage is to emphasis on concerns associated to the above situation that individual engages in by identifying and addressing the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of the client. Such negative self-talk includes (“I am not good enough”, “I am a failure”, “nothing good can come out of me”). Counsellor thereby teaches the

client to learn to analyze the function of their behaviours, develop more effective way of coping, and practice new behaviours in real life situations

- ♦ Radical acceptance: the school Counsellor can help Ade accept his current situation without judgement by encouraging him to acknowledge his disappointment without letting it define his self-worth.
- ♦ Opposite Action: if Ade's initial reaction is to dwell on self-criticism, the Counsellor will teach him to engage in positive self-talk by challenging the negative self-perception with more realistic balanced thoughts (like "I have strengths and weaknesses like everyone else") and to affirm his strengths, recognizing that a single grade does not define him (Change).

Stage 4: - At this stage, the purpose of treatment is to help patients make the most of their lives, which includes figuring out how to be happier, build stronger connections, and achieve their objectives. Post-treatment services would be provided for the client in order to overcome the negative effects of low self-esteem. The Counsellor at this stage will need to give homework that will help the clients with to make use of their skills and on what skills to use regards to life crisis.

Phone Consultation

DBT can be a valuable approach for addressing low self-esteem in a variety of life situations including phone conversation. This involves telephone call by the client between or outside session to receive guidance on coping with a difficult situation he or she is currently facing.

Stage 1: First is the introduction, building rapport, and establishing a comfortable and non-judgmental space when a Counsellor is on a phone conversation with a client who is at an all-time low, comparing self to others and not sure how to deal with it.

Stage 2: Here the Counsellor is to address the issue and find out what triggers it. For example, a client who always compares himself to others especially on social media and thinks like everyone has their life together except him.

Stage 3: The Counsellor uses DBT skills to address these negative thoughts on social media comparisons.

- ♦ Mindfulness: This helps to guide the client to increase self-awareness and presence without judgment. When on social media, an individual needs to take a moment to pause and breath. The client will need to acknowledge the thoughts without engaging

in them. The Counsellor might ask the client some positive qualities he possesses that make him unique, beyond what he sees on social media. The Counsellor will let the client know that social media often portrays a highlight reel of people's lives, not the full picture. The client can work on setting boundaries with social media, by limiting his time on these platforms and unfollowing accounts that trigger negative comparisons.

- ◆ **Distress Tolerance:** When it has to do with social comparison, distress tolerance is effective in managing feelings of inadequacy, envy, or low self-worth that can arise when individuals compare themselves to others. Using this skill will help the client to practice self-compassion, set realistic goals, limit social media, practice gratitude, build a supportive network, and engage in activities that boost self-esteem.

Stage 4: summarizing progress, providing support, and scheduling follow-up if needed.

Group Therapy

This is where clients are taught behavioral skills in a group setting. Group skills training gives the clients the opportunity to learn and implement the skills in a group setting with other individuals in treatment (Zhang, 2017). The purpose of training the DBT skills is to help the clients reduce other unhealthy and harmful behaviors and include useful practical skills into their lives that they can utilize at difficult times.

Stage 1: - introduction of group members to DBT, its principles and the groups' goals, as well as building group cohesion by establishing a safe and supportive environment.

Stage 2: - Next stage is to address issues that affect the group member's quality of life, by eliminating their self-inflicting thoughts and behaviours, chronic and emotional distress as well as resistant to the treatment process. A group with a common problem of handling rejection for example, can be a significant blow to individuals' self-esteem.

Stage 3: - The next stage is to concentrate on problems pertaining to interpersonal interactions and rejection. DBT abilities including emotional control, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance are promoted.

- ◆ **Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills:** Group members can learn how to cope with rejection, maintain self-respect, and respond in ways that align with their values. The Counsellor can teach assertiveness techniques by expressing their needs, set

boundaries, develop effective communication skills, improve relationships and to seek support from trust worthy peers and adults.

- ◆ **Emotional Regulation:** the Counsellor can help the group to identify and label emotions that is, recognize and understand emotions by teaching them the techniques to manage emotions and reduce self-criticism. Counsellor encourages them to engage

in activities that boost their mood and self-confidence.

Stage 4: This stage is called the graduation and maintenance stage. Group members celebrate progress by acknowledging group members growth. They plan for continued growth by encouraging ongoing practice and provide resources for continued support. Post-treatment services would be provided for individual in order to overcome the negative effects of low self-esteem. Therefore, Counsellor needs to continue follow up and to keep abreast of the most current research and best practices for individuals with low self-esteem.

Conclusion

Low self-esteem is a problem that has affected many adolescents in Nigeria. Various types of low self-esteem among in-school adolescents were identified which include; global, conditional, social, performance-based, body image-related, comparative and victim low self-esteem. Numerous reasons that contribute to low self-esteem including poor or critical parental upbringing, struggling academically without parental or scholastic support, media and society, bullying, body image, cultural and religious factors among others. Signs of low self-esteem among in-school adolescents are poor confidence, lack of control, negative social comparison, problem asking for what they need, worry and self-doubt, negative self-talk, poor outlook, trouble accepting positive feedback, trying to please others, fear of failure and so on.

For those looking to improve their self-esteem, dialectical behavior therapy provides a useful framework. People can develop a more positive self-image and a stronger feeling of self-worth by integrating the fundamental DBT skills of emotional regulation, distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness, and mindfulness into their daily lives. These abilities can support people in recognizing and labeling their feelings, confronting negative ideas, controlling upsetting feelings, expressing their needs, developing empathy, and staying grounded and present in difficult circumstances. People can build a stronger foundation of self-esteem and make progress toward a more contented and self-assured life by adopting and putting these abilities into practice.

Suggestions

Based on the position of this paper, the following suggestions were made:

1. The government and nongovernmental organizations should fund training programs in self-esteem, DBT and adolescent development through seminars, workshops and

training for equipping teachers, counselling psychologists and other significant others in schools and communities in order to enhance adolescents with low self-esteem.

2. School counsellors can also collaborate with parents and teachers in enhancing the effectiveness of using DBT in a school setting by providing strategies and resources to parents and teachers to support students in implementing DBT skills across different environments.
3. Counsellors can as well help adolescents set goals, and create action plans to work towards positive change. It is crucial to remember that developing self-esteem is a slow process that calls for perseverance, patience, and practice. These abilities can develop into useful tools for promoting resilience, personal development, and a more steady and long-lasting feeling of self-worth with time and dedication.

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**CAUSES OF MARITAL INFIDELITY AMONG MARRIED ADULTS IN
OSOGBO, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Marital infidelity is a major problem that affects most marriages. Despite the consequences, marital infidelity has been shown to be on the rise significantly contributing to high divorce rate. In view of this, the study investigated the causes of marital infidelity among married adults in Osogbo, Osun state. The moderating variables for the study were gender, occupation, and religion. The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents as the 200 copies of questionnaire forms were valid for data analysis. The instrument used to collect data for the study was “causes of Marital Infidelity Questionnaire”, the reliability of the instrument indicated a co-efficient of 0.75. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-test were used to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 alpha level. It was concluded that the causes of marital infidelity are: poor communication between spouses, lack of appreciation/acknowledgment of either partner, and lack of trust between partners. The findings of the study revealed that there was no significant

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difference in the causes of marital infidelity among married adults in Osogbo, Osun State based on gender, occupation and religion. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that counsellors should develop programmes that focus on effective communication, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and relationship commitment to help couples navigate challenges and prevent infidelity.

Keywords: Causes, Marital Infidelity, Married Adults

Introduction

The family is widely recognized as the cornerstone of society, playing a role in shaping individual personalities, values, and behaviour. It is within the family structure that people first learn social norms, establish emotional connections, and develop the foundation for future relationships. Bashirpour, Shafi'abadi and Doukaneifard (2020) emphasize that the family is a pivotal environment for both physical and mental well-being, providing stability and support for its members. Marriage, a vital institution within the family framework, is a formally recognized bond, typically between a man and a woman, designed to provide mutual companionship, legal rights, and societal validation. This union creates obligations and expectations between spouses, fostering an environment where emotional, physical, and psychological needs can be met. Marriage also promotes social order by creating structures for procreation, economic collaboration, and cultural continuity. However, despite its intended role as a stabilizing force, marriage is not immune to challenges, and issues like marital infidelity threaten its core purpose (Cooper, Scherer, Boies & Crordon, 2019).

Marital infidelity is a breach of the commitment to exclusivity in marriage encompassing various actions that violate the trust inherent in the relationship (Wanjiru, Ileri, & Menecha, 2020). It is characterized by sexual, emotional, or romantic involvement with someone outside the marital bond. Odebode and Adegunju (2022) describe infidelity as unfaithfulness or cheating, often referred to as philandering, adultery, or having an affair. Infidelity extends beyond physical actions to include behaviours like flirting, online relationships, or emotional attachments that undermine marital trust (Odebode & Adegunju, 2022). This betrayal disrupts the stability of the marriage which could lead to long-term consequences for both partners.

Infidelity manifests in various forms, each with its own set of complexities and implications. The most commonly recognized form is sexual infidelity, which involves physical intimacy with someone outside the marriage (Pichon, Treves-Kagan, Stern, Kyegombe, Stöckl & Buller, 2020). Emotional infidelity, while less overt, can be equally damaging, as it involves forming deep emotional connections with someone other than

one's spouse, often leading to feelings of betrayal (Talaieizadeh, 2023). In recent years, digital infidelity has emerged as a growing concern, facilitated by the anonymity and accessibility of online platforms. Social media and dating apps provide avenues for covert interactions, making it easier for individuals to engage in behaviours that would traditionally be deemed unfaithful. External factors such as financial stress, cultural norms, or dissatisfaction with the marriage further exacerbate infidelity. For instance, in some

cultural contexts, infidelity may be normalized or even accepted, creating an environment where such behaviours are less likely to be addressed or condemned (Gezer, 2023).

Marital infidelity is a global phenomenon with significant prevalence, varying across cultures and demographics. Research highlights that approximately 21% of men and 11% of women admit to engaging in extramarital affairs at some point in their lives (Hajjabari, 2023). In Nigeria, infidelity is not only widespread but also deeply rooted in socio-cultural and economic factors. Studies such as those by Agboola and Ojo (2022) reveal that infidelity is often linked to domestic violence, further compounding the challenges faced by affected families. Regional analyses, such as those conducted by Uroko and Enobong (2022), show that in Yoruba land, infidelity is a significant contributor to rising divorce rates. Similarly, Olasehinde and Onodje (2023) noted a growing trend of marital dissolution in Nigeria, with divorce rates increasing from 2.4% in 1980 to 3.6% in 2010, often attributed to infidelity. These statistics reveal the widespread nature of the issue and its profound implications for family stability and societal cohesion.

The consequences of marital infidelity extend far beyond the immediate relationship between spouses, affecting emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of life. On an emotional level, infidelity often leads to feelings of betrayal, anger, and insecurity (Esan, 2023; Nezamalmolki, 2023). Partners may experience diminished self-esteem, anxiety, and depression, with some even contemplating or attempting suicide. Psychologically, the breach of trust disrupts the foundation of the marriage, making reconciliation and healing challenging. Infidelity is also a major contributor to divorce, as highlighted by Eesa (2023), who identified it as the single most cited reason for marital breakdown. Beyond the couple, the effects of infidelity ripple through the family unit, particularly impacting children. Esan (2023) highlighted the psychosocial challenges faced by teenagers with unfaithful parents, including emotional distress and difficulties in forming their own relationships.

Several variables, including gender, occupation and educational qualification, could play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward and experiences of marital infidelity. Gender differences are particularly prominent, with men statistically more likely to engage in infidelity than women (Hajjabari, 2023). Occupation also influences infidelity, as certain professions such as those involving frequent travel or irregular schedules may increase

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opportunities for extramarital relationships. Educational attainment can impact perceptions of fidelity, with higher levels of education often correlating with greater awareness of the consequences of infidelity and the importance of effective communication in marriage (Abouzar, Maede, & Elahe, 2024). Religion serves as both a deterrent and a contextual factor, as religious teachings often emphasize fidelity, while cultural interpretations of religious norms may sometimes condone or overlook infidelity in certain circumstances

(Gezer, 2023).

The prevalence and consequences of marital infidelity highlight the urgent need for research into its underlying causes. That is why this study explored the cause of marital infidelity among couples in Osogbo, Osun State.

Statement of the Problem

Marital infidelity has become a growing concern in contemporary society, threatening the stability and harmony of marriages. Despite cultural, religious, and moral values that stress fidelity in marriage, incidents of infidelity among married partners continue to grow. This phenomenon often results in emotional trauma, broken families, psychological distress, and, in some cases, violence or divorce. Several factors, such as poor communication, lack of emotional intimacy, unmet sexual needs, peer influence, and exposure to media content promoting infidelity, have been identified as possible causes. In the Nigerian context, where marriage is highly valued and often seen as a sacred institution, the prevalence of infidelity challenges the foundation of family life and societal expectations. However, there appears to be limited empirical data on the underlying causes, consequences, and coping mechanisms employed by affected individuals.

Previous researchers (Okere & Ubani, 2020) have identified domestic violence and emotional trauma, depression, marital instability and ultimately divorce as consequences associated with infidelity. Also, the economic impact cannot be underestimated because infidelity is a potential source of sexually transmitted infections such as HIV, which can pose a threat to the entire society. Despite the consequences, marital infidelity has been shown to be on the rise significantly contributing to high divorce rate (Uroko & Enobong, 2022). Hence, there is a need to focus this study on the root cause of this menace and proffer recommendations through counselling of couples through various channels in order to curb, if not eradicate, this social challenge.

It is worth noting that other similar studies have been carried out; however, significant gaps are identified in those studies. For instance, Ologele, Kperogi, Shina, Fagbamila, Garba and Ogundiran, (2024) examined the causes of marital infidelity among married residents of Ilorin Metropolis. They found out that the study does not examine differences across variables of gender, occupation and religion. Odebode and Adegunju

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(2022) examined the causes of infidelity as expressed by literate working-class women.

Research Question

1. What are the causes of marital infidelity among couples in Osogbo, Osun State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the causes of marital infidelity among married adults in Osogbo, Osun State based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the causes of marital infidelity among married adults in Osogbo, Osun State based on occupation.
3. There is no significant difference in the causes of marital infidelity among married adults in Osogbo, Osun State based on religion.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of marital infidelity among married adults in Osogbo, Osun State. Specifically, the study also examined the influence of moderating variables of gender, occupation and religion of the respondents while investigating the causes of marital infidelity among married adults in Osogbo, Osun State.

Methodology

Research design adopted for this study was a descriptive research design. The population for this study consisted of men and women who are legally married in Osogbo, Osun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select two hundred (200) married couples in Osogbo, Osun State. A total of 200 married adults were selected with the use of simple random and stratified sampling technique using the variables of gender, occupation and religion. The instrument used for the study was a questionnaire titled “Causes of Marital Infidelity among Married Adults Questionnaire” (CMIMAQ). The questionnaire was in two sections: A and B. Section A contained three items that elicited the demographic information of the respondents in the area of gender, occupation, and religion while section B will elicited responses on the Causes of Marital Infidelity. The questionnaire comprised 20 items on section B which required the respondents to choose the response which applied to them from a four–point Likert type rating scale of: “Strongly agree” (SA), “agree” (A), “Disagree” (D), and “Strongly disagree” (SD). The data obtained was analyzed using percentage, mean and standard deviation and rank order for the descriptive data and research question while t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical analysis was used to test the null hypotheses generated. The t-test statistical

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method was used to compare the mean of two independent variables. While (ANOVA) in testing and comparing those variable having more than two means. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: *Distribution of the Respondents based on Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
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Female	102	51.0
Male	98	49.0

Table 1 indicates that 102 (51.00%) of the respondents were females while 98 (49.0%) of the respondents were males. Therefore, more females participated in this study than males.

Table 2: *Distribution of Respondents based on Occupation*

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Civil servant	78	39.0
Trader	51	25.5
Artisan	44	22.0
Others	27	13.5
Total	200	100.00

Table 2 shows that 78 (39.0%) of the respondents were civil servants, 51 (25.5%) were traders, 44 (22.0%) were artisans and 27 (13.5%) had other occupation not stated in the study. This indicates that majority of the study participants were civil servants.

Table 3: *Distribution of Respondents based on Religion*

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
African traditional religion	21	10.5
Christianity	99	49.5
Islam	80	40.0
Total	200	100.00

Table 3 reveals the religion of the respondents. 21 (10.50%) of the respondents practiced African traditional religion, 99 (49.5%) were Christians and 80 (40.0%) were Muslims. Hence, majority of the respondents were Christians.

Research Question: What are the Causes of Marital Infidelity among Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State?

Table 4: *Mean and Rank Order on Causes of Marital Infidelity among Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State*

Item No	As far as I am concerned, Causes of Marital Infidelity are:	Mean	Rank
1	poor communication between spouses	3.64	1 st
18	lack of appreciation/acknowledgment of either partner	3.47	2 nd
20	lack of trust between partners	3.47	2 nd
7	social media influence creating unrealistic expectations about marriage	3.42	4 th
2	sexual dissatisfaction	3.41	5 th
3	feeling emotionally neglected by a spouse	3.37	6 th
6	frequent unresolved conflicts	3.36	7 th
8	lack of commitment and accountability	3.34	8 th
17	overlooking a partner's feelings	3.32	9 th
4	unhappiness or fulfilment	3.30	10 th
19	overcrowded schedules or excessive work commitments	3.28	11 th
12	differences in sexual drive between partners	3.28	11 th
9	emotional detachment from a partner	3.23	13 th
16	lack of communication about sexual needs	3.22	14 th
11	financial dependency on a partner	3.16	15 th
15	arguments over financial management	3.15	16 th
5	peers influence	3.13	17 th
13	cultural or societal pressure	3.09	18 th
14	societal acceptance of infidelity, especially among men	2.93	19 th
10	low self-esteem	2.91	20 th
Cumulated Mean		3.28	

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Table 4 shows the mean and rank order of causes of marital infidelity among married adults in Osogbo, Osun State. Item 1 which stated that poor communication between spouses ranked first with mean score of 3.64, lack of appreciation/acknowledgment of either partner ranked second with mean score of 3.47, lack of trust between partner also ranked second with mean score of 3.47. While cultural or societal pressure ranked eighteenth with mean score of 3.09, societal acceptance of infidelity especially among men ranked nineteenth with mean score of 2.93 and low self-esteem ranked twentieth with mean score of 2.91.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no Significant Difference in the Causes of Marital Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State Based on Gender

Table 5: *The t-test result showing difference in the causes of marital infidelity among couples in Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State based on Gender*

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value	Decision
Female	102	2.65	0.53					Not
				198	-3.66	1.96	.00	Rejected
Male	98	2.91	0.46					

Sig. $p < 0.05$

Table 5 shows a calculated t-value of -3.66, a critical t-value of 1.96 and a p-value of .00. The critical t-value of 1.97 is greater than the calculated t-value of -3.66 at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis is not rejected. This mean that there was no significant difference in the causes of marital infidelity among Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State on gender.

Hypothesis Two: There is no Significant Difference in the Causes of Marital Infidelity among Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State Based on Occupation.

Table 6: *ANOVA Result Showing Significant Difference in the Causes of Marital Infidelity among Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State Based on Occupation*

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p- value	Decision
Between Groups	54.648	3	18.216				Not
Within Groups	2587.566	196	13.202	1.38	3.00	0.64	Rejected

Total **2642.214** **199**

Sig. p<0.05

Table 6 indicates the calculated F-ratio of 1.38, critical F-ratio of 3.00 and a p-value of 0.64 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the critical F-ratio of 3.00 is greater than the calculated F-ratio of 1.38 hence, the hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in the causes of marital infidelity among Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State Based on Occupation.

Hypothesis Three: There is no Significant Difference in the Causes of Marital Infidelity among Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State Based on Religion

Table 7: ANOVA Result Showing Significant Difference in the Causes of Marital Infidelity among Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State Based on Religion

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Squares	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p- value	Decision
Between Groups	59.973	2	19.991				Not
Within Groups	2582.240	197	13.174	1.52	3.00	0.07	Rejected
Total	2642.213	199					

Sig. p<0.05

Table 7 indicates the calculated F-ratio of 1.52, critical F-ratio of 3.00 and a p-value of 0.07 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the critical F-ratio of 3.00 is greater than the calculated F-ratio of 1.52 hence, the hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no

significant difference in the causes of marital infidelity among Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State based on Religion.

Discussion

The study revealed that poor communication between spouses, lack of appreciation/acknowledgment of either partner, lack of trust between partners, social media influence creating unrealistic expectations about marriage, sexual dissatisfaction, feeling

emotionally neglected by a spouse, frequent unresolved conflicts, lack of commitment and accountability, overlooking a partner's feelings and unhappiness or unfulfilment were the causes of marital infidelity among Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State. This implied that infidelity often stems from relational deficiencies and unmet emotional, psychological, and physical needs. This is in tandem with the study findings of Ologele et al. (2024) that revealed that childlessness, lack of sexual satisfaction and distance between spouses were responsible for the marital infidelity in the study area.

The study revealed that there was no significant difference in the causes of marital infidelity among Married Adults in Osogbo, Osun State based on gender. This implies that both men and women experienced similar motivations for infidelity, suggesting that marital issues leading to infidelity are not gender-specific but rather relationship-driven.

The finding did not tally with findings of Haifa and Yudiana (2021) which concluded that gender significantly predicted attitudes toward infidelity.

The study also revealed that there was no significant difference in the causes of marital infidelity among couples in Ilorin, Osun State based on occupation. This finding suggests that the nature of one's work does not necessarily contribute to infidelity, meaning the problem is more rooted in personal and relational dynamics rather than professional commitments. This finding differs with the findings of Asadu and Egbuche (2020) which revealed that civil servants engaged more in marital infidelity than people in other occupations.

It was also revealed that there was no significant difference in the causes of marital infidelity among couples in Ilorin, Osun State based on religion. This finding suggested that religious affiliation alone does not determine the causes of infidelity, meaning, faith-based interventions must go beyond doctrinal teachings to address practical marital issues. This finding did not tally the findings of Akorede et al. (2018) which concluded that there was significant difference in factor responsible for marital infidelity as perceived by married women in Osun State based on religion.

Conclusion

The study concluded that marital infidelity among couples in Osun State, is largely driven by relational deficiencies rather than external factors. This suggests that infidelity is not confined to specific demographics but rather results from unmet emotional, psychological, and physical needs within the marriage. The significant role of educational level in shaping the causes of infidelity implies that exposure to knowledge and different

perspectives may influence how individuals perceive and respond to marital challenges. Also, the influence of social media and unresolved conflicts suggests that modern societal pressures and ineffective conflict resolution strategies are exacerbating marital instability.

Recommendations

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

1. Counsellors should develop programs that focus on effective communication, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and relationship commitment to help couples navigate challenges and prevent infidelity.
2. Married individuals should actively work on fostering open communication, expressing appreciation for their partners, and addressing emotional and physical needs to strengthen marital bonds.
3. Faith-based organizations should supplement moral teachings with practical marriage counselling sessions that emphasize realistic expectations, emotional connection, and trust-building in relationships.
4. Media organizations should promote content that reflects realistic portrayals of marriage, counteracting the influence of social media in setting unrealistic expectations about relationships.

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ATTRIBUTIONS OF INFERTILITY AMONG SELECTED MARRIED ADULTS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study investigated the attributions of infertility among selected married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Stratified sampling techniques was adopted in selecting 330 adult participants for the study. The items of the questionnaire explored understanding of infertility, causes of infertility and socio-demographic variations in attribution patterns. In ensuring the consistency and trustworthiness of the instrument, a reliability co-efficient of 0.87 was obtained. One research question and a research hypothesis were raised for the study. Using ANOVA, findings revealed that a significant difference was found on the hypothesis raised. Participants with higher academic qualifications demonstrated greater alignment with scientific explanations of infertility. The study recommends that counsellors and mental health professionals should strive to demystifying the psychological burden of infertility by replacing stigma with scientific facts. Public sensitization toward evidence-based knowledge of infertility rather than holding to mythical believes should be strengthened.

Keywords: Infertility, Attribution, Married Adults, Nigeria.

Introduction

Marriage is universally recognized as a sacred covenant and religiously sanctioned institution founded on procreation and raising of righteous offspring as one of its core expectations (Novitasari, et al., 2024). In most African communities, including Nigeria,

children are regarded as the ultimate beauty of marriage (Baloyi & Manala, 2019). In other words, marriage is not considered successful until children are involved. The absence of pregnancy often generates anxiety, blame and cultural attributions from spouses and extended family networks. Some communities frequently associate infertility with spiritual

attacks or female factors alone, reflecting persistent socio-cultural misconceptions (Akalewold, et al., 2022). Pressure from extended family may result to marital instability, polygamy or divorce (Osa, 2020). In some Africa countries, arrival of a child after long of waiting in marriages quench persistent marital conflict. This sometimes leads to naming of a child “*Omolaja*”. The name indicates that, persistent conflicts between the couple overtime is attributed to the absence of pregnancy or child in the marriage. Thus, his arrival will quench incessant conflicts.

Many homes have broken due to inability of the wife to conceive or bear a child. The wife (sometimes) voluntarily or with anguish divorce for another relationship or the husband contracted another marriage. Infertility among women is medically linked to ovulation disorders, tubal blockage or fallopian tube obstruction, endometriosis, fibroids, hormonal disorder, genital infections, prolong use of contraception, congenital uterine anomalies among others (Akalewold, et al., 2022). On the other side, male infertility may result from low sperm count (oligospermia), absence of spermatozoa (azoospermia), hormonal abnormalities, varicocele or testicular dysfunction (WHO, 2020). These are natural, basic and scientific causes of infertility. Sometimes, beyond the knowledge or capacity of either of the couple to normalize it personally. It thus implies that inability of a couple to bear a child is sometimes factors of both couples. Striving for solution should be traced to both. Contemporary reproductive-health guidelines suggest that women below age 35 may attempt conception for up to one year before seeking medical evaluation, whereas women above 35 are advised to seek help after six months of unprotected sex, due to declining fertility (Benksim, et al., 2018; American Society for Reproductive Medicine [ASRM], 2023). Infertility may be classified as primary, secondary, sub-fertility and recurrent pregnancy loss. In any of the classes, it is very rear to see couples (especially in Africa where children are considered a primary reason for marriage) to wish their marriages to be without a child or children. If infertility is thus occurring in a marriage, many does not always think along medical issues, rather, they attribute it to non-medical, social and sometimes supernatural issues and mostly directed to the female partner.

The World Health Organization (2021) estimated an approximate of 48 million couples and about 186 million people across the globe are infertile. The prevalence

continues to rise globally and across sub-Saharan Africa, affecting an estimated 15–20% of reproductive-age couples (Inhorn & Patrizio, 2015). In Nigeria, recent estimates indicate that, between 10% and 30% of couples experience infertility related challenges annually (Surjen Healthcare, 2025). Studies continue to show that infertility contributes

significantly to marital conflict (Shuaibu, 2023), stigmatization, ostracization and psychological distress (Katole & Giri, 2025), especially for women.

Across African societies, childless women may be excluded from major cultural or social events or considered incomplete in marital identity (Kosciolek, et al.,2024). In some regions, childless women have limited inheritance rights and face social marginalization (Shuaibu, 2023). Patterns of emotional distress associated with infertility include anxiety, depressive symptoms and marital dissatisfaction (Bagade, et al., 2022).

Research indicates that many Nigerians attribute infertility to supernatural forces, spiritual curses or female-centered causes due to cultural beliefs and limited reproductive-health literacy (Oluwole et al., 2020). Cultural groups such as the Yorubas often interpret infertility as a spiritual or ancestral issue rather than a biomedical condition (Okanlawon & Adeoye, 2021).

Infertility related attributions are rarely perceived as shared responsibility between spouses, further intensifying pressure on women (Eze & Igwe, 2022). African traditional society places a high premium on the size of the family. Thus, an infertile women or childless women may be viewed as a punishment for a social misdemeanor, handiwork of witchcraft and the disaffection of one's ancestors and other attributable factors. Misconceptions about infertility contribute to marital separation, emotional abuse and stigmatization (Nwosu, & Friday, 2015).

Aim of the Study (Research Question and Hypothesis)

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attributions of infertility among selected married adults in Kwara State?
2. Are there significant differences in these attributions based on educational qualification?

Method

A descriptive survey design was employed to gather information on attributions of infertility. This design is appropriate for assessing attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. Participants were drawn from the three senatorial districts of Kwara State using a

multistage sampling procedure . At stage 1, stratified sampling technique was used to select two local governments in each of the three senatorial districts in Kwara State. Thereafter, a random sampling technique was used to select 330 respondents in the selected local government areas. However, 300 questionnaires were valid for analysis. The

Attributions of Infertility Questionnaire (AIQ) consisted of two sections: Section A and B. Section A captured demographic data and Section B assessed attributions of infertility.

The Section B consisted of researcher's designed 30 items in a four-point Likert scale. The instrument was administered twice on 20 randomly selected adults in an interval of 3 weeks. The two test scores were correlated using Person's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). A reliability coefficient of 0.87 was however obtained. Which indicates that the instrument was reliable . Questionnaires for the study were administered manually and respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA.

Results:

Research Question: What are the attributions of infertility among selected married adults in Kwara State?

Table 1: Rank order of Mean scores of items on attributions of infertility by selected married adults.

Item No.	In my opinion, inability of married couple to achieve pregnancy when desire is attributed to	Mean score	Rank
30	temporary postponement/suspension of childbearing for a while by couple	2.85	1 st
9	addiction to the use of contraceptives	2.80	2 nd
7	husbands using their sperm for rituals to get rich	2.78	3 rd
13	vows by some women in their early life not to bear children	2.73	4 th
19	divine destiny (destiny not to bear children)	2.68	5 th
23	unknown forces	2.63	6 th
29	active participation in occult activities by a man	2.57	7 th
27	nature of job or activities engaged in by a man	2.55	8 th
17	enemies who do not want one to progress	2.55	8 th
4	poor methods of family planning before the desire to have pregnancy	2.55	8 th
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28	active membership of a supernatural power society	2.53	11 th
26	nature of women's job	2.53	11 th
21	wickedness on the part of second wife (in a polygamous family)	2.52	13 th
20	the evil work of jealous relations	2.52	13 th

24	anxiety and tension on a woman	2.51	15 th
12	handwork of evil spirit	2.49	16 th
14	anatomical inadequacies on the part wife only	2.48	17 th
15	anatomical inadequacies on the part of the husband only	2.46	18 th
25	anxiety and tension on the husband	2.45	19 th
22	cursing one's wife with infertility	2.44	20 th
16	handiwork of wicked women who drinks the husband's sperm spiritually	2.44	20 th
8	eating sweet foods often by either of the couple	2.39	22 nd
5	curses by evil minded persons	2.36	23 rd
6	promiscuity by either of the couple	2.35	24 th
18	punishment for a social misdemeanor by a couple	2.33	25 th
2	handwork of witches and wizards	2.32	26 th
1	infrequent sexual intercourse with the partner	2.31	27 th
10	punishment from unhappy ancestors	2.07	28 th
11	God's tactics to control human population	2.04	29 th
3	God's anger with the couple	1.95	30 th

Table 1 indicates that items 30, 9 and 7 ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd. It implied that the items were mostly attributed as the causes of infertility among married couples. On the other hand, items 10, 11 and 3 ranked 28th, 29th and 30th respectively. This also indicates that the respondents considered the items as the least causes of infertility among married couples.

Research Hypothesis: Are there any significant difference in the attributions of infertility based on educational qualifications?

Table 2: Summary Result of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of respondents on attributions of infertility on the basis of educational qualifications.

Sources of Variance	Sum of squares	Degrees of	mean	Cal. F-ratio	Critical F-ratio freedom squares
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Between Groups	2522.19	3	840.73	6.42*	2.60
Within Groups	38786.41	296	131.04		
Total	41308.59	299			

***significant, $p < 0.05$**

Table shows that the calculated f-ratio (6.42) was higher than the critical f-ratio (2.60). The hypothesis was not accepted. It thus implies that there is significant difference in the attributions of infertility among respondents of different educational qualifications.

Discussion of the Findings

The aim of this study was to investigate the attributions of infertility by selected married adults in Kwara State in order to understand peoples' perception of couples who find it difficult to have pregnancy when desired. Findings revealed that many participants are mythical on infertility. Attributing it to spiritual factors or against medical causes. This confirmed the finding of Iwelumor et al., (2019), who asserted that infertility is caused by social and supernatural causes. It also shows that there was a significant difference in the attribution of infertility based educational qualifications.

The result indicated that the secondary school/Grade II holders are high in their attributions of infertility while, high educated respondents endorsed scientific explanations. This suggests that education plays a key role in the patterns of attributions of infertility. Thus, findings show that acquisition of higher education could serve as an instrument of promoting accurate reproductive health knowledge.

Recommendations

1. The attribution of infertility as discovered stretches between social and supernatural factors. Thus, peoples' orientation needs to be changed on mere mental interpretation of phenomena that required scientific findings. It was thus recommended that: Counsellors and mental health professionals should strive to demystifying the

- psychological burden of infertility by replacing stigma with scientific facts.
2. Infertility is mostly traumatic on the affected women or couple as a whole, general public is urged to subscribe to scientific explanation of infertility (medical causes) rather than adherence to cognitive analysis of marital reproductive health.

3. Counsellors should as much as possible educate, sensitize and convince affected couples and general public on salient facts (scientific analysis) on infertility in particular and mode of attributions in general.
4. Community-based reproductive-health education and counselling is required to stem the persistence stigma related to infertility especially as being directed to female partner alone.
5. Girl-child experiencing ovulation disorder at adolescent should live a morally upright life. Immorality at adolescent and fallen victim of infertility is a prerequisite to irrational attributions on affected individuals during marital life.

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Abstract

This study examined the Influence of Sexual Deviance on Marital Conflict among Married Secondary School Teachers in Federal Capital Territory Abuja, Nigeria. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey design. The population of this study comprised all married teachers in FCT Abuja with a total population of 36,850. A sample of 350 married teacher's were selected for proper representation of the entire population using the specification of the Research Advisor (2006). A self constructed questionnaire titled; 'Sexual Deviance and Marital Conflict Scale' (SDMIS) based on strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD) was used to elicit information from respondents. The validation of instrument was based on the vetting, corrections and modifications of the instrument with a consensus index of 0.81. The Chronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.81 was realized which depicts that the instrument was reliable for study. The research questions were answered using mean scores and standard deviation. T-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is a significant influence of sexual dysfunctions and sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja. The study recommended among others that counsellors should assist married teachers to understand the influence of sexual compatibility so as to achieve a stable marriage

Keywords: Sexual deviance, sexual dysfunctions, sexual infidelity, marital conflict,

Introduction

Marriage is an institution designed to be a union of love, oneness, happiness, enjoyment and permanence. It is important in every society because it is a prerequisite to child rearing and the survivor of the human species. Omoegun (2016) and Esere (2017)

observed that marriage is the bedrock of responsible citizens, happy communal life, general prosperity, peace and progress. When couples cannot exhibit these purposes in marriages, marital conflict emanates. In Nigeria, the study of Igbo (2015) have clearly stated shown increasing rise in marital conflict, this is shown in the high incidence of domestic violence, separation and divorce.

Marriages all around the world are becoming increasingly characterized by problems, episodes, stresses and infidelity. Amao-Kehinde (2012) described marriage as universally stressful and one of the causes of human misery and unhappiness. Unfulfilled expectation and hopes in marriage often give rise to maladjustment and unless, the couples concerned face the reality of any given situation, conflicts tend to abound in such homes. It is inevitable that individuals involved in on-going relationship will from time to time experience conflict, since married people are not God, it is only natural to expect that there will be differences in opinions, values, needs desires and habits which are the stuff of every day living (Nwobi, 2017).

A man and a woman are attracted to each other because; each hopes that the relationship will satisfy a variety of their needs. Each brings a unique pattern of personality needs to the marriage. It is expected that these needs must receive at least minimal satisfaction it deserves. The person is to be capable of satisfying the partner's needs. Marital reality is so unlike the pre-marital milieu in which they have lived and are comfortable that the newly wedded discover that they have moved into an entirely different world. A married couple usually finds nothing is quite the same as it was before marriage. With time things take all new form, the warm and romantic relationship once enjoyed begins to diminish, as it was before marriage. It becomes a common scenario now to see that it underwent all the legal, traditional and religious processes of marriage ceremonies engaging themselves in some psychological and emotional fights in less than one year of their marriage, some others engage themselves in physical violence and war of words (Nwobi, 2017).

The question remains, why are some couples splited while others in equally tough situations, stay together for better for-worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, in consonance with scriptural injunction. The answer is found among couples who, despite difficult and trying times, and sometimes seemingly impossible situations have chosen to

work through difficult conflicts and problems (Osarenren, 2012).

Marital conflict emanates as a result of infidelity when not adequately resolved, could lead to a more serious emotional and psychological problems which in some cases may degenerate to break up or total disintegration of the family. In Nigerian family,

couples criticize their partners' behaviour even in public and at home. According to Igbo (2015), some that cannot manage the crises will end up in separation or divorce. Such families live in perpetual stress. Naturally, the attacked partner becomes defensive, indigent, counter-attacking or completely withdrawn emotionally. The family now becomes a battleground where even children find difficult to inhabit. The inability of couples to realize the goals of their married life often results in anxiety and frustration.

These results in psychological and physiological change to the extent, that maladaptive stress related behaviours might occur in the life of couple culminating into marital conflict.

The term marital conflict is used to refer to the process whereby marriages break down through separation, desertion or divorce and where relevant to the subsequent re-partnering of the individual are concerned. Separation and legal divorce are social phenomenon which is caused by the couples involved, and which could either result from social, economic, psychological or cultural phenomenon. Many marriages remain-n shaky for a very long time; some of them recover equilibrium and become cohesive again, this shaky period may lead to separation.

Nearly everyone begins their marriage with a high level of satisfaction with their relationship and a high level of optimism for the future. Yet, marriages end in a divorce for many couples, while marital satisfaction declines over time for even more couples. People tend to fall prey to the confirmation bias, they tend to be more optimistic about themselves than for other, and they tend to interpret facts in a way that supports their desired view of the world.

There are hundreds of factors which are responsible for marital conflict in the world today. They range from several factors; social issues, psychological issues, economical issues, cultural issue, biological issues, emotional issues, spiritual issues, amongst others. Even some are as a result of the combination of two factors. The term 'marital conflict' is a very vast and broad topic. Therefore focusing on a key factor responsible for marital conflict can give us a good guide on what the term "marital conflict" is all about.

Adesanya (2012) identified certain factors that ensure marital stability such as economic wellbeing, responsiveness, among others. However, the strongest factor of marital stability is considered to be sexual satisfaction. According to Owuamanam (2017),

inadequate provision of essential needs for wives and children within the family is capable of creating tension, conflict and poor marital adjustment. Owuamaman and Osakinle (2015) observed that marital conflict in homes could lead to separation and divorce. In their own study, Ambakederemo and Ganagana (2016) found that marital conflict is caused by sex-

related issues. Although couples must work together to create stability in their marriage, the role played by women in this regard cannot be overemphasized. Women all over the world are known for their caring nature and ability to broker peace in order to maintain a stable home. It is even so in the African culture in general and Nigeria in particular where they are brought up to revere their husbands and endure all forms of injustices in order to gain the respect of society as responsible women. To this end, many women are seen in crusade grounds and some go to the extent of using charms so as to have a stable home.

Marital conflict, though not quite ubiquitous has become common place in many societies. Over the course of the past decades, the rate of desertions, separations or even divorce in Nigeria alone, has risen up tremendously. The number of children affected with the disruption had kept on increasing (Social Welfare Record and Data, 2010). There is need to take into account that in a marital relationship, two separate personalities are interacting, two relatively heterogeneous values and need systems confront each other and that two different behavioural systems are present.

Sexual deviance refers to behaviours where individuals seek erotic gratification through means that are considered odd, different, or unacceptable to either most or influential persons in one's community. As with most forms of deviance, sexual deviance is something that is defined differently by persons of different backgrounds, beliefs, morals, and locations. However, sexual deviance is also an idea about which most persons hold very strong views, and react in stigmatizing and ostracizing ways.

Hassan (2012) and Adeleke (2014) stated that, sexual activity solidifies marital union, and a situation where sexual activity between man and his wife is done by force and without consent, tends to yield conflict, separation and divorce among couples in marriage. In marriage, many factors tend to bring about stability or conflict among couples. Factors such as in-laws interruption, religion, socio-economic status, communication, sexual compatibility, etc are some of the factors that stabilize marriage among couples. Marital rape is one of the causes of conflict in marriage. Due to the fact that many couples are not sexually compatible, not communicating at the same frequency sexually, the incidence of spousal rape, that forceful sexual intercourse can occur. According to Ibegbu (2014), sex without consent of the spouse, especially the woman, has caused marital conflict, separation and divorce among the married couple. He opined that in some homes, couples

do not have good relationships, and in a home where there is lack of effective sexual communication, abuse of sex usually occurs.

Sexual dysfunctions may also affect marriages due to the decreased genital sensation are induced in pelvic floor surgeries and are intensified by hysterectomy which disrupts the

local nerve supply and anatomical relations of the pelvic organs. On the other hand, it seems that some post-hysterectomy sexual problems result from psychological complications of such surgeries. Some studies indicate that hysterectomy has serious effects on marriages.

Sexual Infidelity as a factor of marital conflict is widely defined as “the breaking of trust and the keeping of secrets in an intimate partnership” (Schneider, 2012). Previous studies have discussed different types of infidelity such as emotional, virtual, and physical and how each type may have a different influence on a couple. Many assume that infidelity is only related to a physical act of some sort. However, infidelity is not only considered an act but a state of being as well. Studies have shown that the emotional distress an individual endures is not necessarily through a sexual act their spouse committed, but more so the emotional intent behind it. Virtual infidelity, or more commonly known as cybersex infidelity, can leave those involved feeling conflicted due to lack of physical contact and in most cases the absence of emotions

Indeed, the empirical evidence has begun to find that adolescent deviance is related to various aspects of marriage regardless of the numerous possible pathways. With respect to the probability of marriage, Fu and Goldman (2016) investigated how a variety of behaviours, including crime and drug use, influenced first marriage rates on an all-white sample from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (NLSY) data. These researchers found evidence that alcohol and drug use were associated with lower rates of marriage, yet the evidence regarding delinquency was inconsistent. In a study of the Woodlawn cohort, Green and Ensminger (2016) used propensity score analysis, which statistically controlled for the differences that may exist between drug users and non drug users that also may relate to the “selection” into marriage. They found that heavy adolescent marijuana use predicted a lower likelihood of marriage in young adulthood (age 32) even when controlling on earlier potential selection factors. This relationship was mediated by high school dropout. Similarly, Huebner studied a male subsample from the NLSY and found that incarceration was negatively associated with the likelihood of becoming married and that this finding was consistent for all races (Huebner 2015, 2017). Thus, the current, although sparse, literature indicates that deviant adolescent behaviours have an influence on the likelihood of marriage, one dimension of the marital trajectory.

Deviance has also been found to relate to marital conflict. Finally, in a review of 20 studies investigating the adult outcomes of antisocial girls, Pajer (2018) found that antisocial girls were less happy in their marriages, more likely to divorce, and more likely to be in abusive or violent marriages than their non-delinquent counterparts. Another

dimension of the marital trajectory is the timing of marriage. The idea that the timing of certain transitions can affect future success in several life domains (including crime and deviance) is not a new one (Hogan 2018; Rindfuss et al. 2017). In fact, the idea that the timing of life events affects the influence of certain events is one of the four main principles of the life-course perspective (Elder 2018). Thus, while there is some evidence that deviance predicts the probability of marriage, marital problems, and precocious transitions to marriage based on separate studies, the gaps in the literature highlight the need for an investigation of long-term marital patterns to tease out whether deviance in adolescence predicts these dimensions within the same study.

One of the factors affecting the incidence of divorce and relationship problems between couples is the behaviour associated with their sexual performance. As an important and integral part of every woman's life (Tayebi, 2011), sexuality is considered to be one of the most significant factors affecting women's health. It is also a major indicator of life satisfaction affecting couples' level of mental health (Movahedi & Azizi, 2011). Sexual satisfaction refers to a person's pleasant feeling out of that type of sexual relationship which forms a vital part of couples' impression of each other which in turn maintains their marriage. Practical background studies indicate that Masters, Johnson, and Kaplan were among the first to deal with the systematic study of human sexual behavior. They consider four sexual attributions as (desire) arousal, plateau, orgasm, and resolution (Vaziri et al., 2010). Later Rosen refers to six female sexual functions as desire, arousal, lubrication (wetness), orgasm, satisfaction, and pain (Rozen, 2010). In comparison to other aspects of couples' lives, the influence of marital interaction on the breakdown of marriages has been the topic of few researches; a fact to denote the question for the researchers that if frequent, satisfactory, and pleasant marital sexual intercourse can help save a marriage or not? According to Margolis (2013) 40% of women experience sexual dysfunction at the time of their marital life, where 1/3 of them experience absence or deficiency of sexual desire, and 1/4 suffer from lack of orgasm experience. Hilz study indicates that nearly 43% of women and 31% of men in America suffer a kind of sexual dysfunction. A random survey in the Asian urban population indicates that over 20% of men and 30% of women have complained at least about one aspect of their sexual relationships (Nichols, 2015).

For most adults, happiness in life mostly depends on successful marriage and satisfactory marital adjustment. Studies have shown the remarkable effect of marital adjustment on mental health, physical health, job satisfaction, and even longevity. Most

studies have indicated that most women who had undergone hysterectomy expressed their concerns about changes in their sexuality and fear of no longer being accepted by their husbands. Comparatively there has been little attention placed upon the investigation of marital conflict and sexual deviance as the predictors, yet research shows that early deviance plays a key role in shaping life trajectories. While the family literature provides an abundance of research predicting marital status and marital stability based on mate selection, structural background factors, family influences, personality and temperament, contextual factors, attitudes toward marriage, and the interactions among the couple, there is a relative paucity of research investigating the perceived influence of sexual deviant behaviours such as sexual dysfunction and infidelity on marital conflict among couples in FCT Abuja.

Statement of the Problem

Marital conflict arises from various factors, including sexual dissatisfaction and disorders, which can damage the emotional, psychological, and physical aspects of a marriage. These issues can be rooted in problems with sexual function, differing needs, or a lack of emotional intimacy, infidelity leading to increased conflict and even separation. Many couples, however, struggle to address these problems due to societal taboos, fear, or a lack of awareness, which exacerbates the issues and contributes to marital breakdown. A significant number of marriages face conflict and potential dissolution due to sexual issues, such as sexual dissatisfaction and disorders. These problems can be caused by physical issues like erectile dysfunction or painful sex, infidelity, as well as disconnect in emotional intimacy.

Sexually deviant couples are sex driven individuals whose sexuality has been viewed negatively as inappropriate and troublesome rather than normal and healthy. Married individuals who are not satisfied at home are becoming sexually active and are found in different areas in FCT Abuja around the streets in secluded places at night engaging in sexual activities outside their marriages. Lack of information and guidance about sex and sexuality education makes married people vulnerable to diseases, physical, emotional, social and economic exploitation and divorce. Married teachers may unknowingly engage in sexual deviance that might expose them to diseases and unplanned pregnancies and

abortions which may also lead to marital conflict and divorce. It has been observed that bad company and lack of proper guidance by moral educators, counsellors and significant others may lead to a life of sorrow, tragedy, conflict and divorce. This worrisome scenario has therefore necessitated the choice of this study.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of sexual deviance on marital conflict among married secondary school teachers in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. Specifically, this study sought to;

1. Ascertain the influence of sexual dysfunction on marital conflict among married secondary school teachers in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.
2. Examine the influence of sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What is the influence of sexual dysfunction on marital conflict among married secondary school teachers in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant influence of sexual dysfunction on marital conflict among married teachers in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant influence of sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Methodology

The research employed a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study comprised of all married teachers in FCT Abuja with a total population of 36,850. (Ministry of women and social development, FCT Abuja, 2020). The sample of 350 teachers was selected using the Research Advisor (2006) table for proper representation of the entire population. This sample size was appropriate based on the specification of the Research Advisor (2006) which states that if the population is up to 36,850, a sample of at least 350 should be drawn. Multi stage sampling procedure was used to arrive at the

sample size. First, cluster sampling was used to identify the area councils in FCT Abuja. Secondly, simple random sampling was used to select schools in FCT Abuja. Proportional random sampling technique was used to distribute the sample among the married secondary school teachers in six area councils in FCT Abuja. A researcher made questionnaire titled; ‘Sexual Deviance and Marital Conflict scale’(SDMCS) based on

strongly agree (SA), agree (A),disagree (D),strongly disagree (SD) was used to elicit information from respondents. The SDMCS consist of two sections; section A comprises of 20 items on sexual deviance of respondents. Section B consisted of twenty (10) items on marital stability. The instrument yielded a validity index of 0.81. The chronbach alpha coefficient of 0.93 was realized which depicts that the instrument was reliable for study. The researcher collected the letter of introduction from the Department of guidance and counselling, Nasarawa State University Keffi, Nigeria. The researcher visited the selected schools in FCT Abuja and administered the questionnaire. The respondents were given enough time to respond to the questionnaires before retrieval. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research questions were answered using mean scores and standard deviation. T-test statistics were used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the influence of sexual dysfunction on marital conflict among married secondary school teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria?

Table 1: *Mean and standard deviation on influence of sexual dysfunction on marital conflict among married secondary school teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria*

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std	Remarks
1.	I enjoy orgasm with my spouse	54	153	143	-	2.74	.70	High
2.	I always have problem with my spouse because afraid of sex.	131	115	38	66	2.88	1.10	High
3.	I always cleave to my spouse to enjoy my marriage	38	196	77	39	2.66	.81	High
4.	I don't attain orgasm with my spouse because in don't want children	39	168	104	39	2.59	.83	High
5.	I avoid orgasm with my spouse because it is exhausting	54	153	143	-	2.74	.70	High
Cluster mean						2.72	0.57	High

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Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation on influence of sexual dysfunction on marital conflict among married secondary school teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. The result shows items 1,2,3,4 and 5 all accepted as they are above the benchmark of 2.50 mean score. The result depicts that with the cluster mean of 2.72 and a corresponding standard deviation of 0.57 the students agreed that there is a high influence of sexual

dysfunction on marital conflict among married secondary school teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria

Research Question 2: What is the influence of sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria?

Table 2: *Mean and standard deviation on influence of sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria.*

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std	Remarks
1.	I feel like ending my marriage because of lies	38	196	77	39	2.66	.81	High
2.	I don't like my partner again because he/she betrayed me	39	168	104	39	2.59	.83	High
3.	I am depressed when my partner see their ex	54	153	143	-	2.74	.70	High
4.	I hate myself because I married a promiscuous partner	131	115	38	66	2.88	1.10	High
5.	I don't show affection for my spouse because of insincerity	38	196	77	39	2.66	.81	High
Cluster mean						2.71	0.56	High

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation on influence of sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. The result shows items 1,2,3,4 and 5 all accepted as they are above the benchmark of 2.50 mean score. The result depicts that with the cluster mean of 2.71 and a corresponding standard deviation of 0.56 the students agreed that there is a positive influence of sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria

Testing of Hypotheses

The decision rule for judging the resulting t-test is that: The null hypothesis with p-value greater than 0.05 is accepted (not significant) while the null hypothesis with p-value

lower than 0.05 is rejected (significant).

Hypothesis one: There is no significant influence of sexual dysfunction on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Table 3: *The t-test on influence of sexual dysfunction on marital conflict among*

married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria

Variable	$\bar{x}$	std	df	α	t	p.val	Remark
Sexual Dysfunction	2.72	0.57	349	.05	89.077	.000	Reject
Marital conflict	2.60	0.71					

Table 3, shows the independent sample-test statistics on influence of sexual dysfunction on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. The result shows a significant influence with $n=350$, $t= 89.077$, $df = 349$, at $p=.000$ or $p< .05$. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected at $p=.000$ or $p<.05$. This means that there is a significant influence of sexual dysfunction on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Hypotheses Two: There is no significant influence of sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Table 4: *The t-test on influence of sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria*

Variable	$\bar{x}$	std	df	α	t	p.val	Remark
Sexual infidelity	2.71	0.56	349	.05	89.31	.000	Reject
Marital Conflict	2.60	0.71					

Table 4 shows the t-test on influence of sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. The result shows a significant influence with $n=350$, $t= 89.31$, $df = 349$, at $p=.000$ or $p< .05$. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected at $p=.000$ or $p<.05$. This means that there is a significant influence of sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The results and findings of the study were discussed and reported in this section based on research question and hypotheses.

The findings from research question one revealed that there is a significant influence of sexual dysfunction on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with Majula (2021) who discovered that sexual dysfunctions affect the interpersonal functioning and overall quality of life significantly in both men and women. Similarly, Daneshfar (2023) in his findings discovered that marital quality is largely dependent on the satisfaction in the sexual relationship of the couple. Alternatively,

marital distress is associated with lower sexual satisfaction and increased chances of sexual dysfunction. Moreso, Khazaei (2011) found that intimate emotional connection and self-integrity are crucial for sexual desire within marriage or in long-term relationships. Lower levels of intimacy, satisfaction, and quality of intimacy have been observed in individuals with hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD), than in controls.

The finding of research question three and hypotheses three revealed that there is a significant influence of sexual infidelity on marital conflict among married teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with Conroy (2018), these acts of infidelity lead to other problems in the marriage. Marital conflict is a social problem that is capable of causing everlasting sorrow on the children, the couple and even the society at large. Similarly, Asadu (2020) discovered that infidelity is one of the probably causes of marital conflict. Also, Zarghan (2020), affirmed that extramarital behavior is a violation of rules and violation of relationship norms by one partner resulting into jealousy and rivalry action which can be sexual or emotional.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, some conclusions were drawn. The conclusion is that there is prevalence of sexual dysfunctions and sexual infidelity issues among married teachers in FCT Abuja. The study depicts that sexual dysfunction and sexual infidelity had a significant influence on marital conflict among married teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Hence there is a significant influence of sexual dysfunction on marital conflict, counsellors should assist married teachers to understand the effect of sex so as to achieve a stable marriage.
2. School counsellors should provide marital counselling services to married teachers against sexual infidelity. This will help to solve the problem of marital conflicts among married teachers.

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EFFECT OF COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING COUNSELLING TECHNIQUE ON AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR AMONG PUPILS IN LOW BASIC SCHOOLS IN ABIA STATE

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Abstract

The study explored the effect of cognitive restructuring counselling technique on aggressive behaviour among pupils in low basic schools in Abia State. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The study employed quasi-experimental research design of non-randomized pre-test, post-test, control group design with 2x2 factorial matrix. The participants were in two experimental groups consisting of one treatment group and one control group. The sample of the study consisted of 20 students' identified as having Aggressive behaviour, which were drawn from population of 2390 lower basic 5 pupils. Multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. The instrument used for data was a questionnaire titled: "Pupils Aggressive Behaviour Identification Questionnaire (PABIQ)" designed on a four point rating scale of VHE, HE, LE and VLE with the real limits of the numbers respectively. The instrument was validated by three research experts' in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. Cronbach Alpha was used to obtain the internal consistency of the instrument which result yielded an index value of 0.91 for the study. Data were collected in the three phases of pre-treatment, post-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 null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that:

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there was improved aggressive condition among lower basic pupils. Intervention using Cognitive Restructuring therapy on subjects with aggressive behaviour to significantly reduce their Aggressive behaviour and condition. It was recommended among others that school counsellors, educators and mental health professionals should work together to promote the implementation of Cognitive Restructuring therapy as a preventative measure in their curriculum to reduce aggressive behavior among pupils in lower basic schools. In addition, Educators and school counselors should be trained in Cognitive Restructuring

techniques to effectively intervene with pupils displaying signs of aggression in the classroom.

Keywords: Aggressive Behaviour, Cognitive Restructuring Counselling Technique

Introduction

Lower Basic Education is the foundational stage of education, during which pupils learn fundamental skills and concepts that form the basis for later learning. The level of education typically covering ages 5 to 11 or 12, depending on the country or educational system. It is the period during which children learn basic skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as social and emotional skills that will help them succeed in higher levels of education (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017). This stage typically includes primary education, which covers the first five to six years of formal schooling. According to World Bank (2020), lower basic education is designed to provide students with a strong foundation in literacy, numeracy, and social development, setting the stage for their continued educational growth.

Lower basic education is a critical period for children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. It's a time when pupils are learning foundational skills such as reading, writing, and math, and also developing important social and emotional competencies like empathy, communication, and self-regulation. In the opinion of Sampson et al. (2018), Elementary school pupils are developmentally ready to engage in activities designed to foster pro-social behavior, teach conflict resolution strategies, and encourage peer support networks. However, it's also a time when Aggressive behaviour can first emerge, due to factors such as lack of emotional regulation skills, exposure to violence, or social pressures from peers. This is why addressing Aggressive behaviour early on is important, so that students can develop positive coping strategies and pro-social behaviors that will serve them well throughout their lives. In view of this, Deater-Deckard et al. (2014) stressed that early intervention has been shown to reduce the development of

later aggression and violence.

Aggressive behaviour is a broad construct that encompasses a variety of behaviors that are intended to cause physical, emotional, or social harm to another person or group. It refers to actions or expressions that are intended to cause harm or injury to others. Reardon and Hymel (2021) defined it as any act, verbal or physical, that is intended to cause harm or discomfort to another person, such as punching, kicking, insulting, or intimidating. Aggressive behaviour is a range of overt or covert behaviors, including physical, verbal, or

relational acts that are intended to cause harm or discomfort to others (Crick & Dodge, 2010). Aggressive behaviors may include physical aggression, verbal aggression, relational aggression, and cyberbullying, among others (Greenberg & Kusche, 2023). It can manifest in physical, verbal, or psychological forms and may range from minor acts of hostility or rudeness to more severe forms of violence. Some examples of Aggressive behaviour include: hitting, shoving or pushing, yelling, shouting, or name-calling, intimidation, threats, or coercion, bullying, teasing, or exclusion and destroying property or objects.

Aggressive behaviour can arise from various factors, including mental health issues, social or environmental influences, and cultural or societal norms. It is most times associated with negative consequences for both the aggressor and the victim, including physical harm, emotional trauma, and social isolation. This issue often stems from underlying conflict or mental health issues, and it can negatively impact academic achievement and social development. Kasim (2019) averred that students who exhibit Aggressive behaviour may have difficulty regulating their emotions, leading to impulsive and destructive behaviors. It is crucial for schools to provide some council skills that could cushion the effect. In another report Monks et al. (2020) stated that the emergence of Aggressive behaviour in students may be influenced by various factors such as socioeconomic status, family dynamics, peer relationships, and exposure to violence. Straus (2019) argued that aggression among pupils is not limited to physical violence, but can also take the form of social exclusion, gossiping, and cyberbullying. These forms of aggression can be equally damaging and should be addressed with the same level of urgency as physical aggression. Newson et al. (2021) noted that Bullying and Aggressive behaviour in schools often go unreported or unaddressed. In their view, students should be encouraged to speak up and report incidents of bullying or aggression to school staff.

Aggressive behaviour in educational settings is a pervasive and concerning issue that can negatively impact the academic, social, and emotional development of children. While there is a wealth of research on Aggressive behaviour in schools, most of it focuses on secondary education, leaving a gap in knowledge about Aggressive behaviour in low basic

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education. However, some studies have shed light on the prevalence and impact of Aggressive behaviour in low basic education. For example, a study by White et al. (2022) found that Aggressive behaviour was common among pupils in primary schools, particularly among boys. They also found that aggression was associated with lower academic achievement, lower emotional regulation, and poorer social skills. Other research has highlighted the importance of early intervention in reducing Aggressive behaviour among children. Deater-Deckard et al. (2014) noted that early interventions targeting

Aggressive behaviour have been shown to reduce its development and escalation, suggesting that early intervention during lower basic education may be an effective strategy for preventing and reducing aggressive behavior. Interventions should take a holistic approach to address these multiple factors to effectively reduce aggression.

In terms of interventions for Aggressive behaviour in schools, several approaches have been proposed, school-based interventions, families and communities also play a critical role in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors. Community-based programs and initiatives that promote positive social-emotional development can help prevent the emergence of aggressive behaviors among pupils (Furlong et al., 2023). Among the school-based interventions, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has been shown to be effective in reducing Aggressive behaviour by targeting negative thought patterns and behaviors (Crick et al., 2013).

Cognitive restructuring, or cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), is a therapeutic approach that aims to identify and alter negative or distorted thought patterns and behaviors. The basic concept of cognitive restructuring is that our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are interconnected and that negative thinking can lead to negative emotions and behaviors. In CBT, therapists work with clients to identify and challenge negative thought patterns and beliefs, often through the use of techniques such as cognitive restructuring, exposure therapy, and behavioral activation. The goal is to help clients recognize and modify negative thoughts and behaviors, leading to improved mental health and overall well-being.

Cognitive restructuring therapy, as described by Beck et al. (1979), Burns (1980), and the Institute of Clinical Excellence (2004), involves identifying and challenging negative thought patterns, exposing clients to feared situations, and engaging in positive activities, leading to reduced aggression. In the context of aggressive behavior, cognitive restructuring can be used to help individuals understand and modify the thoughts and emotions that underlie aggressive behavior, such as anger, frustration, or low self-esteem.

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This approach can help individuals develop coping strategies and skills to manage and reduce aggressive behavior, ultimately promoting more positive interactions and relationships.

While these interventions have been studied in secondary schools, there is a need for research on their effectiveness in low basic schools. Drawing from the deduction, literature suggests that Aggressive behaviour is a prevalent and concerning issue in low basic schools, and that early intervention may be an effective strategy for preventing and

reducing its negative impacts. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is promising interventions, but more research is needed to determine their effectiveness in low basic schools. This study bridges the gap as it aims to contribute to the literature by investigating the effectiveness of Cognitive Restructuring counselling techniques on Aggressive behaviour in low basic schools. Specifically, the study aim to determine whether the implementation of these techniques can lead to a reduction in aggressive behavior, as well as improvements in pupils' emotional regulation and academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

Cognitive restructuring, or cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), is a therapeutic approach that Aggressive behaviour among pupils in lower basic education has been recognized as a significant issue, causing disruption in the classroom and affecting the academic, social, and emotional development of students. Despite the importance of early intervention in reducing aggressive behavior, there is limited research on effective interventions for younger students in primary school settings. Additionally, while cognitive restructuring therapy has been shown to be effective in reducing aggression among older students and adults, its effectiveness in lower basic schools is largely unknown.

This study aims to contribute to the literature by investigating the effectiveness of Cognitive Restructuring counselling techniques on Aggressive behaviour among pupils in low basic schools. By exploring this under-researched area, this study hopes to provide valuable insights into effective interventions for reducing Aggressive behaviour among younger students and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Aggressive behaviour in lower basic schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the effectiveness of Cognitive Restructuring counselling techniques on Aggressive behaviour among pupils in low basic schools in Abia State. Specifically, the study intended to:

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- ◆ find the reduction mean scores of lower basic 5 pupils with Aggressive behaviour exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique group and control group at post test period.
- ◆ find the difference in the reduction mean scores of subjects with Aggressive behaviour exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique at posttest based on gender.

Research Questions:

- ◆ What is the mean score difference in the rate of reduction of Aggressive Behaviour between lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique and control group at post test period?
- ◆ What is the mean score difference in the rate of reduction of Aggressive Behavior between lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique by gender?

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant mean score difference in the rate of reduction of Aggressive behaviour between lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique and control group at post test period
2. There is no significant mean score difference in the rate of reduction of Aggressive Behavior between lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique by gender

Methodology

The study employed a quasi-experimental design of non-randomized pretest, posttest control group using 2x2 factorial matrix. The study was carried out in two mixed public lower basic schools in Abia State. The population of the study comprised all the lower basic 5 pupils in the three educational zones of Abia State; numbering about of 2390 lower basic 5 pupils, from all the public schools in Abia State (Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB), 2025). The sample size comprised 20 students' (10 males and 10 female pupils) identified as having Aggressive behaviour selected using researchers instrument titled "Pupils Aggressive Behaviour Identification Questionnaire (PABIQ)". The sampling was drawn using multi-stage sampling techniques The PABIQ has a total of 18 items designed on a four point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low

Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VHE) with weights as 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Those who scored above 2.50 cut off mark were drawn for the study as having been identified with anxiety. It has both negative and positive items. The negative items were reversed scored. All the items were non-dichotomously scored (no right or wrong answer). The initial draft of the instrument was subjected to face validation by three research experts from Counselling, Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation: all in Michael Okpara

University of Agriculture, Umudike. Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was conducted to ascertain the correlation for the PABIQ and reliability index of 0.91 was obtained. Test of reliability for the internal consistency of the instrument was measured using Cronbach Alpha and the result indicated index value of 0.90 for the PABIQ. Data were collected in the three phases of pre-treatment, post-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 null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1 : What is the mean score difference in the rate of reduction of Aggressive Behaviour between lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique and control group at post test period?

Table 1: *Pre-test and Post-test Aggressive Behaviour mean scores of Lower Basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique and control group*

		Pretest		Posttest		Mean Reduction	Mean Reduction difference
Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
CRT	10	52.83	1.69	44.45	1.78	8.38	6.78
<u>Control</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>50.01</u>	<u>1.74</u>	<u>48.41</u>	<u>1.62</u>	<u>1.60</u>	

Data in Table 1 showed that the Lower Basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique had a pre-test aggressive behaviour mean score of 52.83 with standard deviation of 1.69 and a post-test aggressive behaviour mean score of 44.45 with standard deviation of 1.78. On the other hand, those exposed to the control group had a Pre-test aggressive behaviour mean score of 50.01 with standard deviation of

1.74 and a post-test aggressive behaviour mean score 48.41 with standard deviation of 1.62. The results also showed that the Lower Basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique and the control group had a reduction mean score of 6.78. This implies that cognitive restructuring counselling technique have increasing effect in the reduction of lower Basic 5 pupils in aggressive behaviour. In other words, the use of cognitive restructuring counselling technique resulted to a higher reduction of aggressive

behaviour among lower Basic 5 pupils

To determine whether these mean differences were statistically significant, the Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was carried out using the corresponding hypothesis in the above research question.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant mean score difference in the rate of reduction of Aggressive behaviour between lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique and control group at post test period.

Table 2: *Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique and those in the control group*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	.510 ^a	2	.255	.729	.509
Intercept	.073	1	.073	2.09	.658
Pre test	3.450	1	3.450	4.861	.286
CRCT	.072	1	.072	.411	.041
Error	3.153	18	.175		
Total	52.952	20			
<u>Corrected Total</u>	<u>3.664</u>	<u>19</u>	-	-	-

Table 2 showed the calculated F-value of .206 where degree of freedom is (2, 18) with P - value of .041. Since the Probability-value of .041 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significance effect was rejected and the alternate upheld. Therefore, there is a significant mean score difference in the rate of reduction of lower basic 5 pupils with Aggressive behaviour between those exposed to cognitive

restructuring counselling technique and those in the control group.

Research Question 2: What is the mean score difference in the rate of reduction of Aggressive Behavior between lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique by gender?

The data for answering research question 2 were analysed with mean and standard deviation and results presented in the Table 3.

Table 3: *Mean and standard deviation of Aggressive Behavior among lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique based on gender*

Treatment Group		Pre-Test	Post Test	Mean gain/Loss
Males	Mean	50.43	25.00	-25.43
	N	10	10	
	SD	5.64	6.78	
Females	Mean	51.35	22.67	- 28.68
	N	10	10	
	SD	6.92	8.14	
Diff. between Males and Females in mean score loss				-3.25

Data in Table 3 showed the mean scores in the difference in the reduction of Aggressive Behavior among male and female subjects treated with the lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique. From the data, one can see that the male subjects in the experimental group had a pretest mean score of 50.43 and standard deviation of 5.64 in their students' Aggressive Behavior self-scoring reduction scale; while their post-test mean Aggressive Behavior reduction score was 25.00 with a standard deviation of 6.78. This gave a mean pre-test/post-test loss score of -25.43. The female subjects treated with the cognitive restructuring counselling technique had a pretest mean Aggressive Behavior reduction score of 51.35 with a standard deviation of 6.92 while their post-test mean score was 22.67 with a standard deviation of 8.14. This gave a pre-test/posttest mean loss score of -28.68. These results suggest that both male and female subjects exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique reduced in their post-test Aggressive Behavior scores. However, the female subjects had slightly more reduction in their Aggressive Behavior scores than the males. The difference in mean score loss between males and females' subjects exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling

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technique is -3.25 in favour of the females. A corresponding hypothesis that addressed the above research question is:

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant mean score difference in the rate of reduction of Aggressive behaviour between lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling

technique by gender Data for testing hypothesis 6 were analysed with ANCOVA and the results presented in Table 4

Table 4: *Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) mean score of Aggressive Behaviour reduction of lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique based on gender*

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig
Corrected model	186.123 ^a	4	46.531 ^a	.079	.000
Intercept	591.834	1	591.834	26.751	.000
Pre-test	22.123	1	22.123	.381	.537
Treatment	58.063	1	58.063	.818	.000
Gender	70.972	1	70.972	2.476	.272
Treatment* Gender	28.677	1	28.677	2.451	.483
Error	2460.544	35	70.301		
Total	29912.000	40			
Corrected Total	2646.917	39			

R Square = .070 (Adjusted R Square = .016).

The data in the Table 4 above showed that cognitive restructuring counselling technique as a factor in the study has a significant effect on Aggressive behaviour reduction of the subjects. The calculated f-value of 2.451 in respect of difference in the reduction of Aggressive behaviour mean scores of subjects treated with the cognitive restructuring counselling technique and those in control group is higher than f-value/critical value of 1.96 (0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the reduction of Aggressive behaviour mean scores of subjects treated with cognitive restructuring counselling technique and those in control group is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant difference in the rate of reduction of lower basic 5

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pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique based on gender.

Summary of the Findings

Based on the data analysis carried out, the findings were summarized as follows:

1. Cognitive restructuring counselling technique have increasing effect in the reduction among lower basic 5 pupils on their Aggressive behaviour while there is a significant

mean score difference in the rate of reduction of Aggressive behaviour amongst lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique and those in control group

2. The result reveals that both male and female subjects exposed to Cognitive restructuring counselling technique reduced in their post-test Aggressive behaviour scores. However, the female subjects had slightly more reduction in their Aggressive behaviour scores than the males while there was no significant difference in the rate of reduction of Aggressive Behavior between lower basic 5 pupils exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique based on gender

Discussion of Findings

The result in Table 1 and 2 revealed that cognitive restructuring counselling technique have increasing effect in the reduction of Aggressive behavior among lower basic 5 pupils. The Table 2 further showed that there is a significant mean score difference in the rate of reduction of Aggressive Behavior between those exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique and those in the control group. This implies that the student exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique had higher mean reduction in Aggressive behavior than those in the control group. The findings collaborates with Deater-Deckard et al. (2014) that argued that early intervention is important in preventing aggressive behavior from escalating.

The finding was also supported by Crick et al. (2013) which stressed that Cognitive Restructuring therapy was effective in reducing aggressive behavior, this supports their theory that interventions targeting negative thought patterns can lead to positive outcomes. Along this line, Sampson et al. (2018) emphasized that Cognitive Restructuring therapy skills are important for reducing aggressive behaviour.

Furthermore, findings of the research question two in table 3 and 4 revealed that both male and female subjects exposed using Cognitive Restructuring technique with Aggressive behaviour significantly reduced. Aggressiveness in their post-test. This is evident from the result that showed that lower basic school pupils with Aggressive behaviour exposed to Cognitive Restructuring therapy had higher reduction in their

Aggressive than those in the control group at post-test period. However, the female subjects had slightly more reduction in their Aggressive behaviour scores than the males while there is a significant difference in the rate of reduction of lower basic 5 pupils with Aggressive behaviour exposed to Cognitive Restructuring technique based on gender. This means that male and female lower basic 5 pupils are indifferent to Aggressive behavior

when exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling's technique.

These findings is in agreement with the earlier findings of Crick et al. (2013) who proposed that interventions targeting negative thought patterns can effectively reduce aggressive behavior. These findings align with this theory as Cognitive Restructuring therapy that focuses on identifying and modifying negative thought patterns, which resulted in a significant reduction in aggressive behavior. Additionally, the findings also support the deduction of Deater-Deckard et al. (2014) which he postulated that early intervention can prevent the escalation of aggressive behavior.

Finally, by providing Cognitive Restructuring therapy at an early stage, the aggressive behavior of lower basic school pupils was significantly reduced, suggesting that earlier intervention may be more effective than later intervention.

Conclusion

There were actually existence of Aggressive behavior among pupils in lower basic schools in Abia State. The study also revealed that Cognitive Restructuring therapy (CRT) shows promise as a potential solution. However, more research is needed to fully understand the effectiveness of this therapy and has been effective in reducing the Aggression which made it a best implementation in lower basic schools.

Recommendations

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

- ◆ School counsellors, educators and mental health professionals should work together to promote the implementation of Cognitive Restructuring therapy as a preventative measure in their curriculum to reduce aggressive behavior among pupils in lower basic schools.
- ◆ Educators and school counselors should be trained in Cognitive Restructuring techniques to effectively intervene with pupils displaying signs of aggression in the classroom.
- ◆ Further research should be conducted to explore the effectiveness of Cognitive Restructuring therapy on various types of aggressive behavior and the influence of

individual and contextual factors, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and school environment.

Counselling implications

Counsellors working in lower basic schools should prioritize Cognitive Restructuring therapy as a potential intervention for pupils exhibiting aggressive behavior. Counsellors

should be trained in delivering this therapy effectively to ensure that it is administered correctly and tailored to the needs of the individual pupil.

Counsellors should also consider the specific characteristics of aggressive behavior and the individual factors that may influence the effectiveness of Cognitive Restructuring therapy.

This includes the pupil's gender, socioeconomic background, and past experiences with violence. This information can help Counsellors tailor the therapy to the specific needs of each pupil.

Finally, Counsellors should emphasize the importance of early intervention to prevent the escalation of aggressive behavior. This means that Counsellors should be proactive in identifying and addressing aggressive behavior early on to maximize the effectiveness of Cognitive

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COUPLE COUNSELLING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG MARRIED COUPLES: A PANACEA FOR FAMILY DISINTEGRATION

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Abstract

Counselling is a vital tool in the society in that it helps individuals to discover themselves and make decisions that affect their lives negatively or positively without anyone forcing them to do so. In the family, counselling is very crucial as it helps to prevent marital breakdown before it occurs (in the case of premarital counselling) and also for the married couples. The married couples mentioned here are two matured adults (man and woman) who have agreed to live together, and have fulfilled all the rites according to marital laws of the society where they are found. Among married couples, as in the case of every other society, conflicts occur from time to time. The various causes of conflicts in the home are pointed out here. The roles of a Marriage Counsellor to married couples and how these roles help to cure marital conflicts are also mentioned. The techniques used by Counsellors in treating conflicts among married couples includes collaboration, avoiding, mediation, negotiation, questioning, discussion strategy, empathy, compromise, accommodating, etc. Counsellors suggests that couples intending to marry should seek premarital counsel and married couples should intentionally seek counsel to resolve marital problems when they occur. It concludes by emphasizing that couple counselling can curb and cure marital disintegration.

Keywords: Counsellor, Counselling, Conflict, Communication, and Panacea.

Introduction:

In this study, “*Couple Counselling and Conflict Resolution Among Married Couples: A Panacea for Family Disintegration*”, we will explore the things that cause conflict among married couples, define various concepts for better understanding of this subject in view, state some counselling techniques used by Counsellors to treat disputes among

married couples, and make recommendations on how to resolve conflicts among married couples. In every society where people live and interact daily, there is need for a stable relationship. It is assumed that wherever humans are found and when they relate with one another, there may be some kind of conflicts. Because conflicts will arise, there is also need to control it so that the human interpersonal relationship will go on smoothly. In the relationship that involves husband and wife, conflict also ensues. Abrahams (2024) posits

that at the heart of conflict resolution is the art of communication. Start with a time out, a genuine apology, and switch from a language of accusation and defense to one of understanding and empathy. This shift is key to resolving problems in marriages.

Meaning of Counselling

Counselling is the scientific way of treating psychological problems or challenges of a client in order to help the client to understand himself/herself and be able to make decisions that will bring behaviour modification and enhanced lifestyle. Alutu (2017) defines counselling as a person-to-person encounter in which one person (the professional) assists another (the client) to resolve conflict. Counselling is very crucial to humans as it helps to solve numerous problems faced by human beings daily. Counselling helps clients to make decisions, correct their maladaptive behaviours, start new positive habits, overcome distress and despair (Nwaoba & Kadurumba, 2024). It is not an overstatement to comment that counselling is useful and needful for every sphere of life, especially for husbands and wives in their families.

Meaning of Couple Counselling

According to Olivine (2024), couple counselling, also known as marriage counselling, is a type of counselling for intimate partners (married couples). It addresses conflicts between the partners, is often short-term, and focuses on specific problems. Other goals of couples counselling are improving communication and interactions and strengthening relationships.

Meaning of Counsellor

A counsellor is a trained personnel that cares for the psychological, social and mental health of troubled individuals. According to Nwaoba (2024), a counsellor is the professionally trained person who specializes in guiding and counselling and provides these services to client in a non-threatening environment. Alutu (2017) opines that a counsellor is a professional in helping relationship who assists clients to resolve disturbing issues that may jeopardize their future growth and happiness. He or she helps troubled individuals to make needed adjustments to cope with different spheres of life. He/she helps

troubled individuals to navigate through life.

Statement of the Problem

Many married couples go through their daily lives not knowing how to handle conflicts in their marital lives. This leaves the couples in tension and undue stress. Some try to handle these conflicts with anger. And the result comes out negative for them. Some

use various methods like totally ignoring their partners which only leads to more damage to their relationship. The reason is that these married couples lack the expertise and the techniques to handle conflicts in their marriage. Therefore, a trained Marriage Counsellor is needed to help such couples to learn how to overcome conflicts. This study will help couples to know how to navigate through conflicts.

Definition of Conflict

Conflict can be defined as a misunderstanding arising from the interpersonal relationship of one person with another, or a person with a group or a group with another group. According to Nwaoba and Obi (2024), conflict can be defined as non-compatibility or disagreement between two persons. This may include a husband and his wife. When conflict occurs between married couple, it is referred to as marital conflict. Marital conflict leads to the breakdown of law and order in marriage. This conflict, if not treated or handled well may lead to divorce and other negative marital consequences. Therefore, the counsellor has important role to play to help the couple going through marital conflict.

Causes of Conflict among Married Couples

1. Misunderstanding or disagreement among couples.
2. Unmet sexual needs.
3. Ego problem.
4. Number of children in the family.
5. Financial disagreement.
6. Lack of mutual respect for each other.
7. Disagreement on religious beliefs.

Natural Relationship Cycle

Every marital relationship goes through three different stages as noted by Nwaoba and Obi (2024), who quoted Fertel (2012). These stages are:

— **Stage One: Falling in love or Euphoria of:** This is the very beginning of relationship when the couple is fond of themselves. They often call each other, send mail

or text messages to each on each other. Here, the romantic love is very high.

— **Stage Two: Diminishing of Euphoric Love:** The euphoric or romantic love begins to fade away. The married couple may begin to avoid each other sexually, may not call, send love messages as they used to do, and sometimes may begin to question the authenticity of their married life. Some couples may begin to seek friendship and relationships outside

their spouses. Here, a need for a counsellor should be sought to help the young couple navigate this troubled time. This stage is usually between the first year of marriage to the fifth year of marriage (1-5 years of marriage).

— **Stage Three:** Beginning of Extra-marital affairs: By the time the couple refuses to treat their case in stage two, extra marital affairs may set in immediately, making it stage three. This stage is very dangerous to the married couple. Activities like coming home late at night, staying away from home without informing the other spouse, not caring for the physical, sexual, economic and psychological needs of the other, may set in. Infidelity may also set in. At this stage, if counselling intervention is not sought or received, the couple is likely heading to separation or eventual divorce. But if they subject and submit themselves to a trained counsellor for counsel, they are likely going to win back their lost love (and continue with their happy marital life).

Suggestions on How to Sustain Love in Marriage

The following are suggestions on how to sustain friendship and love in a marital relationship (Nwaoba & Obi, 2024):

1. Practice labour of love.
2. Practice positive communication.
3. Practice healthy sex life with your spouse.
4. Practice healthy life style.
5. Avoid annoying things like nagging.
6. Couples should take their relationship with God seriously.
7. Support each other's career.
8. Celebrate one another often and give gifts.
9. Spouses should support their in-laws.
10. Treat marital conflicts immediately you notice any.
11. Solve sex-related problems immediately such as bareness, same sex birth, impotence, etc. (Nwaoba, 2023).

What Married Couples Should do During Conflict

1. They should be open to each other.
2. Be ready to communicate clearly their needs in a non-judgmental tone. Communication/discussion is a very important key to solving marital problems.

3. Be willing to make amends to solve the problem.
4. Couples should attack the problem and not their spouses.
5. They should voluntarily enlist in the services of a professional therapist or counsellor. With the expertise of this counsellor and the willingness of the couple, any conflict can be managed.

Conflict Resolution Strategies for Married Couples

As we earlier noted, conflict is found in every sphere of human life and existence. Therefore, there is need to devise strategies on how to handle them. Below are eight (8) useful strategies outlined by Nwaoba and Obi (2024) to be used in handling marital conflicts among couples. These strategies are not naturally learned. They are taught by a trained counsellor during counselling sessions (during premarital counselling or the actual marriage):

1. **Discussion Strategy:** Here, the affected couples sit down together to discuss extensively their problems or cause(s) of their problem(s). They discuss constructively, finding ways to tackle their conflict and not each other. This form of approach is also found in the Bible (Isaiah 1:1-20), where God called upon His children to come let them reason together and settle their disputes. This approach is very efficient in solving marital conflicts and curbing marital instability.
2. **Collaboration Strategy (I win, you win or we win):** In this approach, the couple try to win or overcome the conflict as a team and not individually. They work to see that their relationship is restored to normalcy and love reigns among them. Here, there is no winner or loser. The two win.
3. **Compromise Approach (I bend, you bend or win-lose):** In this approach, each partner is ready to win some and ready to lose some. Each person wins some major issues and loses others. While the other couple loses some major issues and wins some other minor ones. This leads to mutual acceptance and the conflict is solved.
4. **Accommodating Approach (I lose, you win):** Here, one spouse gives up on the argument to allow the other spouse to win. This is done selflessly to protect the marital relationship. This approach is good for practicing forgiveness daily in the marital scene.

5. **Withdrawal Strategy:** One partner consciously withdraws from the conflict or ignores it. This practice is to allow time for the conflict to die off or cease to be. This approach helps to reduce tension in the family.
6. **Negotiation Approach (Give and Take):** This approach helps the couple to

determine what the problem is, discuss it and share possible solutions, have an agreement and evaluate the decisions made. By this method, the conflict can be resolved.

7. **Mediation Approach:** In this approach, the couple involved in the conflict invites a neutral third party to mediate between them. This strategy is only good for minor issues in the relationship.
8. **Separation Strategy:** After trying with the above strategies to solve a marital conflict and it fails, the separation approach can be used. This is where a husband is mandated to live separately from his wife though they are still legally married. This method is used to help the couple to weigh their relationship whether they will continue or not. At this time, they look at the problem critically and on their own can make amends to come back to live together as husband and wife. All efforts should be made to restore them back to their marital bliss or they may degenerate to divorce which is undesirable.

In addition, Abrahams (2024) suggests these six practical steps to help married couples in resolving conflicts in their marriages. They are:

1. **Reflect and Recognize:** The first step in fixing conflicts in marriage is to reflect and recognize the existence of the conflict. Ignoring issues will not make them go away; they can grow into larger problems. Acknowledging the conflict allows you to address it constructively and positively.

Recognizing conflict as a chance for growth can transform your perspective. Instead of seeing disagreements as negative, view them as opportunities to learn and strengthen your marital bond. This mindset shift paves the way for open, honest discussions that lead to deeper understanding and a more harmonious relationship.

2. **Understand Each Other:** Make it a priority to understand your partner's viewpoint, even if you don't agree. Put pride aside and listen to understand, not to argue. This approach fosters empathy and shows your partner that you value their feelings.

Listening without judgment can defuse tension and open up a path to resolve the dispute. By prioritizing understanding, you create a foundation for productive

discussions and mutual respect, which are essential for resolving any conflict effectively.

3. **Be Courteous With Your Words:** When discussing the issue, be mindful of your words. Avoid blaming and use "I" statements to express how you feel. This approach prevents your partner from feeling attacked and keeps the conversation focused on

your feelings.

Using "I" statements like "I feel hurt when..." can help communicate your perspective without assigning blame. This can lead to a more open and constructive dialogue, making it easier to resolve the conflict and understand each other better.

4. **Apologize Sincerely:** When you're in the wrong, learn to apologize sincerely. A heartfelt apology goes beyond just saying "sorry." It's about accepting your role in the conflict and showing a genuine desire to make things right.

A sincere apology involves acknowledging the hurt you have caused and expressing regret. This can help heal wounds and rebuild trust. By apologizing artfully, this leads the way for reconciliation and growth.

5. **Solution-Oriented Approach:** Focus on finding a resolution that benefits both of you. Conflicts in a marriage are not a competition. Rather, they are about finding solutions that strengthen your relationship.

By working together to identify mutually beneficial outcomes, you can transform conflicts into opportunities for growth. This approach fosters collaboration and ensures that both partners feel valued and heard, leading to a more harmonious and fulfilling relationship.

6. **Seek Professional Help:** If conflicts keep escalating despite your efforts, consider seeking professional help from therapists or Counsellors. Professional guidance can offer clarity and help initiate the healing process effectively.

Therapists and Counsellors provide a neutral perspective and they teach you strategies to manage and resolve conflicts. Their expertise can be invaluable in improving communication, understanding, and overall relationship health. Do not hesitate to reach out for help when needed.

Remember, these steps are not a magical, quick fix. But committed and persistent practice can bring about meaningful changes in your relationship. Be patient with yourself

and your partner; resolving conflicts and reaching harmony will take time and effort from both parties. It is rewarding to seek rightful ways to result conflict than doing nothing about it, hoping that the conflict will go away.

Conclusion

Conflicts arise everyday. It also happens between a husband and his wife as we have discovered here. Therefore, there is need for couples to be aware of it and learn about it before they consider marriage. Being able to use one or more of the strategies mentioned can help the couple who has a conflict to overcome marital instability. The counsellor has a very important role to play to help couples intending to marry and those who have marital conflicts to navigate successfully through the tides and waves of conflict.

Suggestions

1. Young persons intending to marry should seek the services of a professional counsellor. This means that they should be ready to undergo premarital training under a professional counsellor (Marriage Guidance Counsellor). This training helps couples to manage crisis in marriage.
2. Married couples should be open to one another and learn to practice communication/discussion in a non-judgmental way. They should have positive mindset that they can work to overcome conflicts in their marriages. By this, they will attack the conflicts or problems and not themselves.
3. A married couple should practice labour of love. This means that they should daily show genuine love, affection, empathy, warmth and care to each other. This is an antidote to conflict.
4. Married couples should take their relationship with God seriously. They should devote time to study the Bible, devote time to pray and attend church service regularly.
5. Married couples should seek the services of a trained counsellor to help them navigate through tough times in their marriages. Seeking counsel should be a regular practice as it helps the married couples to learn a lot about themselves and how to cope with a difficult spouse. They should not wait to seek counsel only when conflicts begin. Counselling is a panacea to cure marital conflicts.

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**INFLUENCE OF GROUP COUNSELLING ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION
ARISING FROM FARMERS' AND HERDERS' CRISIS IN TARABA STATE**

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of group counselling on conflict resolution among farmers and herders in Taraba State, Nigeria. The study has three targets, three research questions and three hypotheses. The research design used was a descriptive survey study. The study population was 998,012 farmers and herders in Taraba State (National Population Commission, 2024). The study sample was 384 farmers and herders in Taraba State. Respondents were selected using simple random and stratified random sampling methods. The instrument for data collection for the study was a structured questionnaire named “Group Counselling on Farmers Herders Conflict Questionnaire (GCFHCQ). Three specialists validated the instrument, two from the Department of Guidance and Counselling and one from Measurement and Evaluation, mostly for the conflict management and group counselling measures. Reliability indices of 0.78 and 0.84 were obtained by Cronbach Alpha. The data obtained were examined using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The research themes were analysed using descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation. The hypotheses were tested by the t-test at the level of significance 0.05. The results of data analysis revealed that there is a significant influence of group counselling in facilitating mutual understanding, in promoting effective communication and in facilitating collaboration as a conflict resolution management between farmers and herders crises in Taraba State. Based on these findings it is hereby recommended that different opinions as express by both the herders and farmers should be

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collected without showing preference to any group and all the parties should be encouraged to understand and agree on all issues presented. Channels of communication should always be kept open for all to make their views heard, both verbal and non - verbal communication cues should be watched out for. In order to achieve lasting solution to the

crises between farmers/herders, stakeholders should from time to time come together in discuss issues of concerned to all collaboratively.

Keywords: Group counselling, conflict resolution, farmers, herders, crisis

Introduction

Violent conflict is a primary worldwide dilemma. Intrastate conflicts have significantly increased during the 21st century. Current conflict patterns reveal that intrastate conflict is the primary form of violent conflict worldwide, while interstate conflict has notably decreased in recent years compared to the 1900s (Cottey, 2023; Kegley & Raymond, 2020). All continents are impacted, as both developed and developing nations contend with many manifestations of internal conflict. Incidents of terrorism, insurgency, and civil conflict, resulting in widespread destruction, displacement, and fatalities, are now prevalent globally.

Homer-Dixon (2018) asserts that environmental scarcities incite violent conflict in numerous emerging countries. The discord between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers in Nigeria is a principal resource-utilization conflict. The principal cause relates to the competition for access to land and freshwater, resources that have become very rare (Audu, 2023). The massive desertifications of vegetative areas and drought in Northern Nigeria are pushing herders to the south in search of greener pastures and water for their cattle. During their migration southward, the nomadic herdsman sometimes reside in agricultural towns where lush flora and water resources are accessible. Conflicts emerge between herders and farmers due to mutual charges. Farmers allege that herders are damaging their crops due to the intrusion of herded animals onto their agricultural grounds and polluting communal water supplies. Conversely, herders allege that farmers are poisoning, murdering, or stealing their animals and obstructing their access to grazing routes.

Pastoralism is a traditional practice for some communities in Nigeria including the Kanembu, Kwoya, Manga, Fulani and Shuwa Arabs (Blench, 2010; Muhammed, Ismaila & Bibi, 2015). The Fulanis are the main herding group, holding over 90 percent of the nation's animals (Abass, 2022). The unparalleled size and distribution of the Fulani

pastoralists (Blench, 2023) may account for the widespread stereotypes regarding their occupation (Olayoku, 2014) and their predominant involvement in conflicts with agricultural communities.

The crises between farmers and herders is as a result of so many factors such as

Competition for resources, climate change, land use change, ethnic and cultural differences, weak governance, arms proliferation, political interference and others. The consequences of the crises are enormous as it brings on hardship on the people. The conflict between pastoralists and agriculturists is a longstanding problem in Nigeria. Since the 1980s, violent confrontations between them have been prevalent, but they intensified and became more recurrent following the nation's reestablishment of civilian governance in 1999 (Blench, 2023). The escalating frequency of confrontations between herdsman and farmers has been substantiated by many study findings and publications. Between 1997 and 2010, just 18 incidents were documented; nevertheless, from 2011 to 2015, there was a notable increase of 371 attacks (SBM Intelligence, 2016). The war has caused several fatalities and displacements across multiple regions of Nigeria. Casualties of the battle include not only the combatants among herders and farmers but also innocent civilians from the host villages. The Fulani herdsman-farmer conflict was a major driver of inter-communal violence, resulting in almost 3,000 deaths in Nigeria's North-Central area between 2010 and 2013, according to Human Rights Watch (2013). One such demonstration of the violence that is part of the long-running war occurred in Benue State on February 24, 2016, when Fulani herdsman reportedly attacked Agatu settlements, killing over 300 residents.

The conflict between farmers and herders has become increasingly lethal due to the prevalence of firearms among herders. While it can be argued that they possess firearms and advanced weaponry for the protection of themselves and their livestock against cattle thieves, the ownership of such arms likely renders violence an instinctive response for the herders in conflicts with farmers. Fulani herders have frequently been associated with incidents of rape and abduction in agricultural villages. For instance, the abduction of Chief Olu Falae, a former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, by Fulani herders on September 21, 2015, from his residence in Ilado, Ondo State (Lawal, Olumide & Akingboye, 2015). He was later released on 24 September 2015.

Conflict resolution management can effectively manage the conflict between farmers and Fulani herders. Conflict resolution management is the act of detecting, addressing and resolving conflicts or disagreements between individuals, groups or organisations in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner. Promoting mutual understanding is one of

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the indicators of conflict resolution management. Mutual understanding refers to a shared comprehension, agreement, or empathy between two or more parties regarding a particular situation, issue, or perspective. It involves an acknowledgement and acceptance of each other thoughts, feelings, needs, and viewpoints. Mutual understanding is one of the core principles in group counselling. Without mutual understanding in group counselling the

realisation of the goal of counselling may not be attained, in this case the goal of group counselling is to resolve the conflict between the farmers and the herders which can best be promoted through mutual understanding of the parties in the groups.

Effective communication in the context of this study refers to the process of conveying information, ideas, thoughts, or feelings in a manner that is clear, concise, and easily understood by the recipient. It involves the successful transmission of messages from one party to another. Effective communication encompasses various verbal and non-verbal methods, such as speaking, listening, writing, and body language, as well as the ability to adapt communication styles to different audiences and contexts. Communication generally is an essential tool in counselling. Effective communication with regard to group counselling in conflict resolution between farmers and herders is to give assurance, clarify issues, reinstate the issue presented and to get the cooperation of all. When this is done members of the group will express their feelings, thoughts and concerns freely and objectively for peaceful resolution.

Collaboration is defined as a cooperative process where individuals or groups work together towards a common goal or shared objective (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2023). It is the pooling of resources, knowledge and effort to achieve goals that may not be able to be achieved alone. Collaboration typically emphasizes mutual respect, open communication, shared decision-making, and the recognition of each participant's contributions. This can occur within teams, organizations, communities, or across different sectors and disciplines. In this circumstance, all these attributes will be present using group counselling in resolving conflicts between farmers and herders.

Group counselling is a type of psychotherapy often comprising four to 10 participants and one or two therapists. Most groups convene frequently at the same time for one to two hours. During that period, the group members deliberate about their concerns and provide mutual support and feedback. Interpersonal engagement is esteemed and promoted. Groups may be structured in various manners; nevertheless, a commonality across all groups is that members consent to maintain the confidentiality of discussions held within the group.

Group counselling, as articulated by Venkatexh (2020), entails a collective of individuals uniting to establish a distinct objective, sharing their challenges, offering empathy and support to one another, and endeavouring to alter their self-defeating behaviours. The group members are also advocates for enhancing their current skills in managing interpersonal issues. The group counsellor's role is to facilitate member

interaction, assist in mutual learning, aid in the establishment of personal goals, provide ongoing empathy and support, and evaluate whether members apply their learning experiences outside the group.

It is in the realization of the goal for peaceful coexistence that this study is set out to investigate the influence of group counselling on conflict resolution arising from farmers and herders crisis in Taraba State, Nigeria

Statement of Problem

Farmer herder conflict is a recurring phenomenon in Taraba State. The conflict most times results into violent clashes, the clashes are more often than not product of suspicions, lack of mutual understanding, ineffective communication as well as failure to cooperate and respect individual views that may bring about collaboration.

The effects of the crises occasioned by a conflict are unimaginable ranging from lost of life and properties, insecurity, social cohesion, political instability, environmental degradation, humanitarian crises and others. Many concerted efforts have been put in place to see to the end of this problem by both the Government, NGO, Religious organisations and other stakeholders. It is however that all these efforts have not produced desired peace between the farmers and herders. The question now is what could be responsible for this perennial and incessant crises. It is now been suggested that counselling especially in group through mutual understanding, Effective communication and Collaboration as a permanent solution to end the farmer-herder crises. Therefore, this study investigates the influence of group counselling to farmer-herder crises and stakeholders management in conflict resolution in Taraba State, Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The major objective of this study is to investigate the influence of group counselling on conflict resolution arising from farmers and herders' crisis. Specifically, the following objectives are stated to:

- examine the influence of group counselling in facilitating mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management of farmer-herder crises in Taraba State.
- investigate the influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management of farmer-herder crises as in Taraba State.
- ascertain the influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a conflict resolution management of farmer-herder crises in Taraba State

Hypotheses

To guide this study the following hypotheses were formulated.

1. There is no significant influence of group counselling in facilitating mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management of farmer herder crises in Taraba State.
2. There is no significant influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management of farmer herder crises as in Taraba State.
3. There is no significant influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a conflict resolution management of farmer herder crises in Taraba State

Methodology

The research design for this study included the descriptive survey method. This design is suitable for the study as it allowed researchers to gather data from a representative sample of farmers and herders regarding the subject matter (conflict leading to crises and resolutions), enabling inferences about the behaviour of the entire population based on this information.

The population of the study comprised 546,921 farmers and 451,091 herders in Taraba State totalling 998,012 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The sample size for this study consisted of 384 farmers and herders in Taraba State. Multistage procedure was used in the selection of sample for the study. Firstly, the State has 16 Local Government Area which was divided into three clusters based on the three Senatorial Zone. Secondly, simple random sampling technique was used to select six LGA, two each from the three senatorial zones. The proportionate sampling technique was employed to choose participants for the study according to the population in each chosen LGA. Finally, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to pick participants according to their occupations as farmers and herders. The study utilised a structured questionnaire, derived from Snell and Worldridge (1991), entitled “Group Counselling on Farmers Herders Conflict Questionnaire (GCFHCQ),” which demonstrated a reliability value of 0.78 following a pilot study done by the researchers.

Data Analysis and Results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of group counselling in facilitating mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management of farmer herder crises in Taraba State.

Table 1: *The t-test of influence of group counselling in facilitating mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management of farmer herder crises in Taraba State.*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig
Mutual Understanding	384	2.0990	1.10805	383	37.120	.000
Group Counselling	384	2.1120	1.04742			

It could be seen from Table 1 that the value of $t = 37.12$. This value is significant because $t = 37.12$; $df = 383$; $p = 0.00 < 0.05$. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld that there is a significant influence of group counselling in facilitating mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management of farmer herder crises in Taraba State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management of farmer herder crises as in Taraba State.

Table 2: *The t-test of influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management of farmer herder crises as in Taraba State*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig
Group Counselling	384	2.1120	1.04742	383	39.512	.000
Effective Communication	384	2.0677	1.08664			

Evidence from Table 2 reveals that the value of $t = 39.512$. This value is significant because $t = 39.512$; $df = 383$; $p = 0.00 < 0.05$. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld that there is a significant influence of group counselling

in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management of farmer herder crises as in Taraba State.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant influence of group counselling in facilitating

collaboration as a conflict resolution management of farmer herder crises in Taraba State.

Table 3: *The t-test of influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a conflict resolution management of farmer herder crises in Taraba State*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig
Group Counselling	384	2.1120	1.04742	383	39.512	.000
Collaboration	384	2.2422	1.18131			

Evidence from Table 3 reveals that the value of $t = 39.512$. This value is significant because $t = 39.512$; $df = 383$; $p = 0.00 < 0.05$. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld that there is a significant influence of group counselling in facilitating collaboration as a conflict resolution management of farmer herder crises as in Taraba State.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study from the result of data analysis is that there is a significant influence of group counselling in facilitating mutual understanding as a conflict resolution management of farmers and herder crisis in Taraba State. This result corroborates the findings of Johnson (2021) who found that there was a significant impact of group counselling in fostering mutual understanding among the adolescents. Furthermore, there was no notable disparity in mutual understanding between male and female participants following group counselling. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Audu, Ali, and Pur (2017), which demonstrated that group counselling significantly influenced the attitudes of senior secondary school students regarding mutual understanding. Also, the finding of this study is in tandem with the finding of Oluwa (2018) which revealed that there is a significant influence of group counselling on attitude of post-graduate students towards mutual understanding in Adamawa State, Negara.

The second finding of this study is that there is a significant influence of group counselling in promoting effective communication as a conflict resolution management of

farmers and herders' crises in Taraba State. This outcome contradicts the findings of Wang et al. (2020), which indicated that group psychological counselling significantly enhances communication among college students. Ziaei et al. (2021) concluded that health centers require instruction in communication skills alongside physical training during pregnancy, facilitated by midwives and midwifery counsellors. Martin and Nakayama (2012) found that their study reveals a significant impact of group counselling on communication among adults in Taraba State, Nigeria.

This study revealed a strong impact of group counselling in promoting collaboration as a conflict resolution strategy for the crises between farmers and herders in Taraba State. This finding aligns with the research of several researchers, including Rahim (2022), who performed a study in South-Western Nigeria focusing on the physical environment and collaborative behaviour of secondary school students. The study results indicated a considerable correlation between the school's physical environment and collaborative behaviour, which in turn impeded effective learning but might also facilitate strong academic performance. In Ondo State, Nigeria, Gengu (2014) conducted a study aimed at investigating the impact of group counselling on student collaboration in selected junior secondary schools. The study demonstrated a substantial correlation between collaboration and the academic achievement of chosen Junior Secondary School pupils in Ondo State, Nigeria. Suhaila, Heyam, Naifa, and Wafa' (2020) conducted a study to assess the impact of a group counselling program on increasing collaboration skills among a sample of academically gifted students at Halima Al-Saadia Secondary School in Jordan. The study's findings indicated that enhancing collaboration among participants in the experimental group, as compared to the control group, yielded a Mann-Whitney value of 39.00, demonstrating the training program's success. Furthermore, there were no statistically significant differences in the means of the experimental group based on birth order regarding the program's effectiveness, and a sustained effect of the program was observed after a three-week follow-up.

Conclusion

In view of the finding of this study, it is hereby concluded that group counselling plays significant influence in conflict Resolution Management through mutual understanding, effective communicating and collaboration between farmers/herders in Taraba State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of this study, the following are recommended:

- ◆ Different opinions as express by both the herder and farmers should be collected without

showing preference to any group and all the parties should be maintained to understand and agree on all issues presented.

- ◆ Channels of communication should always be kept open for all to make the views heard, both verbal and non-verbal communication cues should be watched out for.
- ◆ In order to achieve lasting solution to the crises between farmers/herders stakeholders should from time to time come together in discussion issues of concern to all collaboratively.

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ROLE OF ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR) IN RESOLVING FAMILY CONFLICTS IN ABUJA: A COUNSELLING PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Family conflicts pose significant challenges to social stability and individual well-being in Abuja, Nigeria, often resulting in emotional distress, disrupted relationships, and prolonged legal battles. Traditional litigation processes for resolving family disputes are frequently criticized for being time-consuming, costly, and adversarial, which may exacerbate family tensions. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods including mediation, arbitration, and negotiation offer culturally sensitive, flexible, and confidential mechanisms that prioritize amicable settlement and relationship preservation. This position paper examines Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in resolving family conflicts in Abuja through a counselling lens, emphasizing the emotional, psychological, and relational factors that shape its effectiveness. Drawing on relevant literature, policy frameworks, and practical insights, the paper argues that counsellors are uniquely positioned to provide emotional support, facilitate communication, and empower disputing family members, thereby improving ADR outcomes. Despite its potential, the integration of counselling into ADR practices remains limited due to gaps in training, awareness, and institutional support. The paper advocates for policy reforms, targeted training programs, and multi-sectoral collaboration to formalize the role of counsellors within ADR processes thereby advancing family conflict resolution strategies that promote healing, human rights, and social cohesion in Abuja and beyond.

Key words: Alternative Dispute Resolution, Family Conflicts, Counselling practice, Social Cohesion, Mediation.

Introduction

Family conflict is an enduring and multifaceted issue that affects individuals, households, and communities. In Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory, the dynamics of family life are shaped by rapid urbanization, cultural diversity, socio-economic disparity, and evolving gender roles. These factors contribute to a rise in family disputes, including

marital breakdowns, inheritance disagreements, intergenerational conflicts, domestic violence, and parenting challenges. Traditionally, family conflicts in Nigeria have been addressed through informal family mediation, religious institutions, or litigation in courts. However, these avenues often lack the capacity to address the emotional, psychological, and relational dimensions that underlie such conflicts (Adebayo & Ajetunmobi, 2023). Furthermore, conventional legal mechanisms are often adversarial, expensive, time-consuming, and ill-equipped to preserve familial relationships, making them less effective in resolving deeply personal disputes.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has emerged globally as a viable means of addressing family conflicts in a more humane, participatory, and sustainable manner. ADR mechanisms such as mediation, negotiation, and conciliation promote dialogue, confidentiality, mutual respect, and collaborative problem-solving (Folberg & Taylor, 2022). When applied in family contexts, ADR offers not just procedural advantages, but also emotional and relational healing, which are critical for long-term conflict transformation.

In developed jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, ADR has been integrated into family law systems, often with the involvement of psychologists and counselling professionals who bring psychosocial insight into the process (Parkinson, 2020). In Nigeria, however, the case is different in that ADR processes are still largely dominated by legal practitioners, with minimal integration of mental health professionals such as counsellors which often limits the effectiveness of ADR in addressing the psychological and relational dimensions of family conflict.

Counselling professionals possess unique competencies in emotional regulation, communication facilitation, and trauma-informed interventions, all of which are indispensable in navigating the intricate terrain of family disputes. Family conflicts are rarely limited to surface disagreements; they are often rooted in unresolved emotions, miscommunication, power imbalances, and psychological distress. As such, purely legal or procedural approaches, including conventional ADR practices, may address the immediate dispute but fail to resolve the underlying relational and emotional issues that sustain

conflict.

From a counselling perspective, effective conflict resolution requires not only reaching agreements but also fostering understanding, emotional healing, and behavioural change among the parties involved. Counsellors are trained to identify underlying emotional triggers, manage hostility, and create a safe environment for open dialogue.

These skills enhance ADR processes such as mediation and negotiation by promoting empathy, reducing defensiveness, and encouraging constructive communication. By integrating counselling principles into ADR processes, outcomes are not only more sustainable but also more responsive to the psychological well-being of the parties involved. This integration ensures that agreements reached are not merely procedural settlements but are grounded in mutual understanding and emotional readiness, thereby reducing the likelihood of recurring disputes. This synergy has gained increasing recognition in the field of conflict resolution, where human-centered approaches are increasingly prioritized over rigid legalistic procedures (Okonkwo, 2021).

Despite Abuja's strategic political and cultural significance, there is a noticeable gap in structured, counselling-informed ADR mechanisms for family conflict resolution. This gap is exacerbated by limited public awareness, fragmented policy frameworks, and a lack of inter-professional collaboration between legal practitioners and mental health professionals. Consequently, families continue to face barriers to accessing justice, emotional healing, and relational restoration.

This paper therefore seeks to investigate the role of ADR in resolving family conflicts in Abuja from a counselling perspective. It examines theoretical foundations, reviews global and local literature, identifies practical gaps and challenges, and proposes a model for integrating counselling services into ADR frameworks. By doing so, it aims to enrich the discourse on conflict resolution in Nigeria and advocate for holistic, empathetic, and context-sensitive interventions that support families in distress.

Conceptual Clarifications

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) refers to a range of dispute resolution mechanisms that operate outside the formal court system. These include mediation, arbitration, conciliation, and negotiation, and they are designed to be less formal, more cost-effective, and more collaborative than litigation (Moore, 2014). In family conflicts, ADR seeks to preserve relationships, ensure privacy, and promote voluntary compliance with outcomes.

Family Conflict encompasses interpersonal disagreements or disputes that occur

within the family unit. These may involve spouses, parents and children, siblings, or extended family members. Such conflicts can stem from communication breakdown, unmet emotional needs, infidelity, abuse, financial stress, or cultural and generational value differences (Parkinson, 2020).

Counselling Perspective refers to a professional approach grounded in

psychological theory and practice, aimed at helping individuals and groups cope with personal, emotional, or relational challenges. In the context of family conflict resolution through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), a counselling perspective emphasizes the application of psychological principles to enhance communication, emotional regulation, and decision-making among disputing parties. Through empathy, active listening, and structured therapeutic techniques, counselling contributes to making ADR processes more responsive to the emotional and relational needs of individuals involved (Corey, 2017).

Theoretical Frameworks

This study draws upon three major theoretical frameworks to underpin its analysis: First, the Humanistic Theory of Carl Rogers which posits that individuals possess inherent potential for growth and self-actualization, and that effective counselling creates conditions of empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1961). In ADR, this theory supports a facilitative mediation model where the mediator (or counsellor) creates a safe environment for parties to express themselves, understand each other's perspectives, and reach mutually beneficial agreements.

Second, the Transformative Mediation Theory developed by Bush and Folger (2005) which emphasizes two core principles: empowerment of the individuals involved and recognition of the other party's perspective. This approach aligns closely with counselling practices, as it aims to improve communication, rebuild damaged relationships, and foster empathy and cooperation which critical components in resolving family conflicts.

Third, the Ecological Systems Theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner that views human development and relationships as being influenced by multiple interacting systems: micro-system (family), mesosystem (community), exosystem (institutions), and macrosystem (culture, policies) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This framework helps in understanding how external factors such as social norms, legal systems, and economic pressures influence family conflict and its resolution, and underscores the need for multi-level interventions including counselling and ADR. These conceptual and theoretical foundations provide the basis for a deeper exploration of how ADR mechanisms, informed by counselling insights,

can offer more compassionate, inclusive, and effective responses to family conflicts in Abuja.

Review of Literature

In several developed jurisdictions such as Australia, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has gained increasing

prominence as an effective mechanism for resolving family conflicts (Parkinson, 2020). Mediation, in particular, has shown strong outcomes in promoting cooperative parenting post-separation, reducing litigation costs, and facilitating emotionally responsive solutions (Sourdin, 2018). For instance, in Australia's Family Relationship Centres, family mediation has been institutionalized with counselling professionals often involved in pre- and post-mediation sessions, yielding high client satisfaction and sustained outcomes (Moloney et al., 2021). In the United Kingdom, the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) works closely with trained mediators and psychologists to ensure that the child's best interests are protected through non-adversarial means (Walker, 2019). These global models demonstrate that ADR not only reduces court burdens but also offers therapeutic benefits, especially when counselling support is embedded within the process.

In Nigeria, the practice of ADR has legal backing through statutes such as the Arbitration and Conciliation Act (2004) and has been promoted by institutions like the Multi-Door Courthouse system and the Nigerian Institute of Chartered Arbitrators. However, the application of ADR in family conflicts remains limited in scope and often informal in execution (Adebayo & Ajetunmobi, 2023). Family disputes are still predominantly handled through customary methods, religious bodies, or litigation, with ADR mechanisms underutilized due to low awareness, lack of professional mediators, and cultural resistance to formalized non-court interventions.

Beyond these structural challenges, a critical gap lies in the limited integration of counselling practice within existing ADR frameworks. Family conflicts are inherently emotional and relational, often involving deep-seated grievances, trauma, and communication breakdowns that legalistic or traditional mediation approaches alone may not adequately address. The absence of counselling input in many ADR processes reduces their capacity to manage these psychological dimensions effectively.

Integrating counselling practice into ADR can significantly enhance service delivery by introducing skills in emotional regulation, empathy, and conflict de-escalation. Counsellors can help disputing parties better understand their emotions, communicate

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more constructively, and engage in the resolution process with greater openness and psychological readiness. This not only improves the quality of agreements reached but also promotes long-term compliance and reduces the likelihood of recurring disputes. Therefore, incorporating a counselling perspective into ADR is essential for strengthening its effectiveness in resolving family conflicts within the Nigerian context.

Legal and cultural factors significantly shape the adoption of ADR in Nigeria. For

example, the legal system is still largely adversarial, and family law frameworks do not explicitly mandate ADR processes for divorce, custody, or maintenance issues. Culturally, many communities rely on elders and traditional institutions, which, while valuable, may not always be trained in mediation or sensitive to psychological dimensions such as trauma, abuse, or emotional needs (Uzoeshi & Bello, 2022).

Despite these challenges, counselling professionals have slowly begun to play facilitative roles in family dispute resolution, particularly within religious and NGO frameworks, including providing emotional support, improving communication between parties, and offering pre- and post-mediation counselling. Some family courts in urban areas like Lagos and Abuja now refer clients to social workers and psychologists, but such referrals are ad hoc and lack institutional structure or legal mandate (Okonkwo, 2021).

The integration of counselling with ADR holds considerable potential for improving the quality and sustainability of conflict resolution outcomes. Counsellors bring a range of interpersonal and psychological skills such as empathy, active listening, conflict de-escalation, trauma-informed care, and facilitation of emotional expression which are invaluable in mediation and negotiation settings (Corey, 2017). Their ability to assess psychological readiness, identify underlying emotional needs, and guide parties toward constructive communication enhances the depth and effectiveness of ADR sessions.

Research has shown that emotionally attuned mediators, particularly those with counselling training, are more successful in helping parties reach agreements that are not only legally binding but also emotionally satisfying (Folberg & Taylor, 2022). For instance, a study by Parkinson (2020) on family mediation in the United Kingdom found that mediators who employed counselling-related skills such as active listening and empathy were more effective in reducing hostility and facilitating mutually acceptable agreements among disputing parties. Similarly, Moloney, et al., (2021), in their evaluation of Australia's Family Relationship Centres, reported higher levels of client satisfaction and more durable agreements in cases where counselling support was integrated into mediation processes. In another study, Corey (2017) highlights that the application of therapeutic

communication techniques in conflict resolution settings enhances participants' emotional readiness and willingness to cooperate, thereby improving the overall effectiveness of mediation outcomes. These findings underscore the value of integrating counselling competencies into ADR processes, particularly in emotionally charged family disputes.

In family disputes, where issues often involve grief, betrayal, or long-standing resentment, the presence of a counsellor can prevent escalation and support parties in

processing emotions constructively. Moreover, post-mediation counselling can reinforce the outcomes of the ADR process and provide tools for future conflict management.

Despite the promise of integrating counselling and ADR in family conflict resolution, several gaps persist in policy, practice, and training within the Nigerian setting. First, there is no national policy framework mandating or even formally recommending the involvement of trained counsellors in family ADR processes. Most ADR practitioners are lawyers or retired judges, with minimal training in psychological or interpersonal dynamics (Adebayo & Ajetunmobi, 2023).

Secondly, training in ADR techniques is largely absent from most counselling and psychology curricula in Nigerian universities, leading to a skills gap that limits the participation of counsellors in structured ADR processes (Okonkwo, 2021). While a few NGOs provide mediation training, these programs are not standardized or widely recognized by legal or counselling regulatory bodies.

Thirdly, there is a general lack of interdisciplinary collaboration between counsellors, lawyers, and mediators. This uncooperative approach hampers the development of integrated service delivery models. Furthermore, many families in Nigeria are unaware of ADR or view it as secondary to court litigation, reflecting a gap in public awareness and cultural acceptance (Uzoeshi & Bello, 2022).

The absence of clear institutional pathways, coupled with insufficient training and poor recognition of the counselling profession in legal contexts, continues to impede the full integration of counselling into family ADR mechanisms in Nigeria.

Argument and Position

The socio-cultural and legal landscape of Abuja makes Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) not only relevant but essential in addressing the rising tide of family conflicts in the city. Abuja, being the Federal Capital Territory, is a melting pot of Nigeria's diverse ethnic, religious, and social groups. These intersecting identities often generate value-based and interpersonal conflicts within families, ranging from domestic

violence, separation, and custody battles to inheritance disputes and intergenerational tensions (Adebayo & Ajetunmobi, 2023).

Traditional litigation processes, while legally authoritative, are not well-suited for resolving such deeply personal disputes. Courtrooms are adversarial, public, and bureaucratic, frequently escalating tensions rather than diffusing them. By contrast, ADR offers a confidential, flexible, and relationship-sensitive approach, which prioritizes

reconciliation, understanding, and voluntary compliance (Folberg & Taylor, 2022). These features are particularly vital in family contexts where preserving relationships, emotional stability, and child welfare are paramount.

Moreover, ADR mechanisms are less costly and time-consuming, a critical advantage in Abuja, where many families lack the financial means or emotional stamina to endure prolonged court battles. The voluntary nature of ADR also encourages greater ownership of outcomes, resulting in higher levels of satisfaction and long-term compliance among disputing parties (Parkinson, 2020).

The Critical Role of Counselling Professionals

Counselling professionals are uniquely positioned to enhance the efficacy of ADR in family conflict resolution. Family disputes are often laden with emotional pain, unresolved trauma, communication breakdowns, and psychological distress which in most cases legal and procedural frameworks are not designed to handle. Counsellors bring essential skills such as active listening, empathy, emotional regulation, and conflict de-escalation, all of which contribute to the psychological safety of parties during mediation or negotiation processes (Corey, 2017).

In Abuja's multicultural context, counsellors are also trained to navigate cultural sensitivities and contextual nuances, helping parties find culturally meaningful solutions. Their involvement ensures that underlying emotional or mental health issues such as grief, depression, or abuse are identified and addressed, thus preventing recurring conflicts (Okonkwo, 2021).

Furthermore, counsellors can serve as co-mediators or provide pre-ADR preparatory counselling and post-resolution support, thereby reinforcing the durability of ADR outcomes. This integrated model has been successfully adopted in jurisdictions like Australia and the UK, where interdisciplinary ADR teams include legal, social, and mental health professionals (Moloney et al., 2021; Walker, 2019).

Challenges to Effective Integration

Despite the clear benefits, several obstacles hinder the integration of counselling into

ADR for family conflict resolution in Abuja:

Professional Silos and Role Ambiguity: ADR in Nigeria is largely dominated by legal professionals, with little cross-disciplinary collaboration. Counsellors are often excluded due to unclear role definitions and lack of regulatory mandates (Uzoeshi & Bello, 2022).

Lack of Training and Certification: Many practising counsellors in Nigeria have limited

exposure to formal training in ADR methods such as mediation and conciliation, as these competencies are not consistently integrated into counselling education and professional development programmes. Okonkwo (2021) notes that the interface between counselling psychology and mediation in Nigeria remains underdeveloped, with few structured opportunities for cross-training. Similarly, ADR practitioners, who are predominantly trained in legal procedures, often lack the psychological and interpersonal skills required to effectively manage the emotional dynamics of family disputes. This dual gap in professional training creates a significant barrier to the effective integration of counselling and ADR in family conflict resolution.

Policy and Institutional Gaps: There is no national policy or legal framework that mandates or even encourages the inclusion of counselling professionals in ADR processes, particularly in family law cases. The absence of such institutional backing weakens implementation efforts.

Cultural and Public Misconceptions: Counselling is still stigmatized in some communities, seen as either unnecessary or indicative of personal weakness. Similarly, ADR is often misunderstood or perceived as inferior to litigation, reducing its uptake among families in conflict (Adebayo & Ajetunmobi, 2023).

Potential Solutions

To address these challenges and realize the full potential of ADR in family conflict resolution, the following solutions are proposed:

Policy Reform and Advocacy: Government agencies, professional bodies, and civil society organizations should advocate for policy frameworks that institutionalize the role of counsellors in family ADR. Family courts should adopt a mandatory referral system that includes counselling.

Capacity Building and Cross-Training: Counselling professionals should be provided with formal training and certification in ADR techniques, while ADR practitioners should receive basic training in psychological first aid, trauma sensitivity, and communication skills.

Interdisciplinary Practice Models: ADR centres in Abuja should adopt interdisciplinary practice models that include counsellors, legal professionals, and social workers as part of mediation teams, particularly in high-conflict family cases.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Targeted awareness initiatives should be launched to educate the public about the benefits of both ADR and counselling in family dispute

resolution. Community-based sensitization efforts, especially through religious and traditional platforms, can help shift public perception.

Curriculum Integration: Universities and professional training institutes should integrate ADR modules into counselling and psychology programs, while also promoting collaborative research on ADR-counselling outcomes.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The integration of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) into family conflict resolution frameworks in Abuja has significant implications for counselling practice, particularly in the area of professional training. To effectively contribute to ADR processes, counsellors require competencies beyond traditional therapeutic skills, including mediation techniques, negotiation strategies, and conflict facilitation. This highlights the need for a deliberate shift in training dynamics within counselling education and professional development programmes.

Counselling curricula in Nigerian universities and training institutions should be expanded to incorporate ADR-related modules such as mediation, conciliation, and collaborative problem-solving. In addition, continuous professional development programmes should provide practising counsellors with opportunities to acquire certification and practical skills in ADR. Such training will equip counsellors to function effectively within interdisciplinary dispute resolution settings and enhance their capacity to address the emotional and relational dimensions of family conflicts within ADR frameworks.

Conclusion

Family conflicts in Abuja, as in many rapidly urbanizing cities, are complex, multifactorial, and emotionally charged. Traditional court systems and informal dispute resolution avenues often fall short in addressing the nuanced relational and psychological dynamics inherent in these conflicts. ADR offers a promising alternative - one that emphasizes dialogue, confidentiality, mutual respect, and relational restoration.

For ADR to fulfill its potential in the family conflict space, particularly in a diverse and dynamic context like Abuja, deliberate steps must be taken to strengthen the training

of counselling professionals in ADR-related competencies. Equipping counsellors with skills in mediation, negotiation, and conflict facilitation will enable them to engage more effectively in family dispute resolution processes. This training-focused approach will not only enhance the contribution of counselling practice to ADR but also improve the overall effectiveness of conflict resolution outcomes while promoting the emotional well-being of

families and communities.

Suggestions

The Federal Ministry of Justice and Family Courts in Abuja should mandate the inclusion of qualified counselling professionals in family ADR proceedings. A legislative framework that formally recognizes the role of counsellors in mediation processes is urgently needed.

Counsellors should be provided with structured training in ADR techniques, including certification in family mediation.

Abuja should pilot integrated ADR centers that employ mediators, legal advisors, and counsellors as co-facilitators in family dispute resolution. These centers can serve as models for nationwide replication.

Nigerian universities and professional counselling programs should include modules on ADR, mediation, and conflict transformation in their academic curriculum to prepare students for practical engagement in multi-disciplinary environments.

Government agencies and professional bodies should support research that evaluates the effectiveness of counselling-informed ADR models in family conflict resolution, thereby informing evidence-based practice and policy formulation.

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