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The Journal of Professional Counselling (JPC) serves as the official publication of the Association of Professional Counsellors in Nigeria (APROCON). It is dedicated to advancing the theory and practice of Guidance and Counselling in Nigeria and worldwide through publishing well-researched and original articles. The journal welcomes submissions from authors in the field of counselling psychology and related disciplines, aiming to enhance knowledge and skills in counselling practice. Each article undergoes a blind peer-review process and plagiarism tests to ensure a high level of originality prior to publication.

The Editorial Board expresses her gratitude to all contributing authors and peer reviewers for their invaluable efforts and time. The Board remains committed to continuously improving the quality of the Journal of Professional Counselling (JPC) to meet globally expected standards. The association maintains a functional journal website, www.aprocon.org.ng where published articles are available online, ensuring increased visibility and readership. We are happy to announce that the Journal is indexed in googlescholar as well as Boldscholar and can also be accessed online at boldscholar.com/Home/JournalDetails/JOPC.

Highlights of this Issue include:

- Artificial Intelligence in Dispute Resolution and Counselling: The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming professional practice across numerous disciplines, including counselling. AI-powered technologies now support mental health screening, virtual counselling platforms, predictive analytics, case management, decision support systems, and conflict monitoring. While these innovations offer significant opportunities for improving accessibility and efficiency, they also raise important ethical, legal, cultural, and professional concerns.

  This volume presents rigorous scholarly discussions on the opportunities and challenges associated with integrating AI into counselling and dispute resolution. Areas of interest include digital counselling, machine-assisted mediation, ethical AI, data privacy, algorithmic bias, professional competence, human-AI collaboration, and policy implications. Contributions critically examined how technological innovations can complement—not replace—the essential human dimensions of empathy, ethical judgment, and therapeutic relationships.

- Counselling and Community Dispute Resolution: Communities flourish when disagreements are addressed through dialogue, inclusion, mutual respect, and collective responsibility. Community disputes arising from cultural differences, resource allocation, political interests, religious diversity, land ownership, or intergroup tensions require interventions that are contextually relevant and socially inclusive. Counselling contributes significantly to community peace building by fostering communication, reconciliation, healing, and social cohesion.

This volume highlighted interdisciplinary research on community-based counselling interventions, peace education, restorative justice, indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, trauma-informed community practice, and collaborative models for sustainable conflict management. Contributions that demonstrate how counselling can strengthen resilience, promote social justice, and support long-term community development are particularly valuable.

- Collectively, these themes reflect the journal's commitment to advancing interdisciplinary scholarship on counselling and dispute resolution within rapidly evolving social, technological, and cultural contexts. They underscore the indispensable role of counselling in promoting peaceful coexistence, emotional wellbeing, effective communication, and sustainable conflict transformation across individual, relational, organisational, and community levels.

With data-driven insights and culturally responsive recommendations, Volume 9, No. 2 offers timely contributions to the advancement of counselling practice and national development in Nigeria.

Professor Mary O. Esere

Editor-in-Chief,

JPC.

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INCLUSIVE COUNSELLING APPROACHES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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Abstract

Inclusive counselling is an emerging paradigm that recognizes and responds to the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities and special needs. This approach moves beyond traditional models by emphasizing equitable access, cultural competence, and the removal of physical, social, and attitudinal barriers that often prevent full participation in mental health services. This paper explores best practices, theoretical foundations, and practical considerations for delivering counselling that is accessible, effective, and genuinely responsive to this population. Drawing from person-centered therapy, social justice counselling frameworks, and the disability rights movement, the discussion situates inclusive counselling within a broader commitment to human rights and social equity. It highlights the essential role of counsellor competencies, including awareness of ableism, unconscious bias, and the importance of ongoing training to develop practical skills for adapting sessions to diverse cognitive, sensory, and communication needs. The paper also examines adaptable methodologies, such as the use of visual aids, alternative communication devices, and creative therapeutic techniques like play or art therapy, which can enhance engagement for clients who may struggle with traditional talk therapy alone. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes the need for counselling environments that are physically accessible and sensory-friendly, ensuring that clients feel safe, respected, and understood. By addressing both structural and relational barriers, inclusive counselling has the potential to close significant gaps in mental health care for people with disabilities. Ultimately, this paper argues that inclusive counselling is not simply an ideal, but a necessary evolution in practice to uphold the dignity, rights, and well-being of all individuals seeking mental health support.

Introduction

People with special needs whether physical, intellectual, sensory, or developmental often face significant barriers when trying to access mental health services (Werner, 2022). These barriers can include physical inaccessibility of buildings and facilities, lack of appropriate communication tools, limited availability of trained professionals, societal stigma, and rigid service models that fail to accommodate diverse needs. Despite growing awareness of disability rights and the principles of inclusion, counselling as a field has historically overlooked the unique requirements of these individuals, resulting in unmet psychological needs and further marginalization (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2021).

The marginalization of people with special needs in mental health care is rooted in broader social attitudes toward disability. Societal perceptions often frame disability through a medical lens, focusing on deficits and limitations rather than recognizing the person as a whole. This deficit-based perspective can shape how mental health professionals are trained and how services are structured, frequently excluding those whose needs fall outside conventional practice models. Moreover, the intersecting effects of ableism, prejudice, and lack of awareness can create additional barriers for clients and their families, who may feel misunderstood or dismissed by professionals lacking disability-specific competencies.

An inclusive approach to counselling aims to remove these barriers by fostering equitable access, culturally competent practice, and adaptive interventions that respond to the diverse lived experiences of people with special needs. Inclusivity in counselling requires moving beyond superficial gestures of accessibility such as ramps or sign language interpreters alone and instead calls for a deep, systemic commitment to changing attitudes, practices, and policies. This involves rethinking how mental health services are designed and delivered, ensuring they are flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of needs and preferences.

Equitable access is a foundational element of inclusive counselling. Accessibility must be considered holistically, encompassing physical spaces, communication methods, and the affordability and availability of services. For example, individuals with mobility impairments may require accessible transportation to reach counselling facilities, while people who are deaf or hard of hearing may need counsellors proficient in sign language or trained interpreters. Similarly, people with intellectual disabilities may benefit from sessions that use plain language, visual supports, or extended timeframes to facilitate understanding and engagement.

Culturally competent practice is equally vital in ensuring that counselling services are genuinely inclusive. Counsellors must develop an awareness of the diverse ways disability intersects with culture, race, gender, and socio-economic status. People with special needs are not a homogenous group; their identities and experiences are shaped by multiple factors that influence how they perceive mental health, seek help, and respond to therapeutic approaches. For example, in some cultures, disability may carry a stigma that discourages open discussion

about mental health challenges. Counsellors must be sensitive to these dynamics and adapt their practice accordingly, building trust and rapport through empathy and cultural humility.

Adaptive interventions are another crucial aspect of inclusive counselling. Conventional counselling methods may not always align with the communication styles, cognitive abilities, or sensory needs of some clients. Therefore, practitioners must be prepared to modify their approaches to fit the client's unique situation. This might involve using augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices for nonverbal clients, integrating sensory-friendly practices for individuals with sensory processing challenges, or collaborating closely with family members and caregivers when appropriate. Flexibility and creativity are key in developing interventions that honor the autonomy and dignity of clients with special needs.

Training and professional development play a central role in equipping counsellors to work effectively with this population. Many counselling programs provide limited education on disability-specific issues, leaving practitioners underprepared to meet the complex needs of clients with special needs. Expanding training curricula to include disability awareness, legal frameworks such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or similar legislation globally, and practical strategies for inclusive practice can help bridge this gap. Additionally, ongoing supervision and consultation with specialists in disability services can further enhance counsellors' competence and confidence.

Beyond individual practitioners, counselling organizations and policymakers have a responsibility to foster inclusive environments. This can involve implementing policies that prioritize accessibility, actively recruiting and retaining staff with lived experience of disability, and collaborating with disability advocacy groups to identify and address systemic barriers. Inclusive counselling is not a static goal but an evolving process that requires ongoing reflection, feedback, and commitment to social justice principles.

The benefits of inclusive counselling extend beyond individual clients. When mental health services are accessible and responsive to people with special needs, communities as a whole become more equitable and resilient. Inclusive counselling can help reduce the isolation and marginalization that many individuals with disabilities experience, promoting a greater sense of belonging and empowerment. Moreover, by recognizing and valuing the diverse contributions of people with special needs, society moves closer to realizing the vision of full inclusion and equal opportunity for all.

In conclusion, people with special needs continue to face significant barriers in accessing mental health services due to historical neglect, social stigma, and systemic inflexibility. An inclusive approach to counselling requires intentional efforts to dismantle these barriers through equitable access, culturally competent practice, and adaptive interventions tailored to individual strengths and needs. It demands that counsellors expand their understanding of disability beyond a medical framework, embracing a person-centered perspective that recognizes the inherent worth and agency of every individual. As the field of counselling evolves, prioritizing inclusivity is essential for ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of mental well-being.

Theoretical Foundations

Inclusive counselling draws its guiding principles from a blend of established therapeutic theories and social movements that have challenged traditional ways of understanding disability and mental health. At its core, inclusive counselling is grounded in person-centered therapy (Rogers, 1951), social justice counselling (Toporek et al., 2019), and the disability rights movement, which reframes disability through the lens of the social model rather than viewing it solely as a medical or individual deficit (Oliver, 2019). Each of these foundations contributes critical insights and ethical imperatives that shape how counsellors can work effectively and equitably with people who have special needs.

Person-centered therapy, pioneered by Carl Rogers in the mid-20th century, emphasizes the inherent worth, autonomy, and self-actualizing potential of every individual (Rogers, 1951). According to Rogers, effective therapy rests on three core conditions: unconditional positive regard, empathetic understanding, and congruence (genuineness) from the counsellor. In the context of inclusive counselling, the person-centered approach aligns powerfully with the goal of respecting each client's lived experience and individuality. People with special needs have historically been subjected to paternalistic attitudes that strip them of agency and voice. By centering the client as the expert in their own life, the person-centered framework challenges these attitudes and creates a therapeutic space grounded in respect and empowerment.

Rogers' emphasis on empathy is especially relevant for inclusive counselling. Empathy requires the counsellor to deeply understand the client's perspective, including the unique barriers and discrimination they may face due to their disability. This means moving beyond surface-level assumptions and taking the time to learn about different types of disabilities, how they interact with mental health, and how social stigma can impact a person's self-concept. By fostering an empathetic, non-judgmental relationship, counsellors create an environment where clients feel safe to express themselves without fear of misunderstanding or dismissal.

While person-centered therapy lays the groundwork for valuing and affirming clients, it is not sufficient on its own to address the systemic inequities that people with special needs often encounter. This is where social justice counselling extends the framework by explicitly acknowledging and addressing the social, cultural, and political dimensions of mental health (Toporek et al., 2019). Social justice counselling recognizes that individual distress often arises from systemic oppression, discrimination, and barriers to full participation in society. For clients with disabilities, these barriers may include physical inaccessibility, negative societal attitudes, lack of legal protections, or exclusion from education and employment opportunities.

A social justice orientation compels counsellors to adopt a broader lens that situates individual concerns within their sociopolitical context. This means that an inclusive counsellor does not view a client's distress solely as an internal problem to be "fixed" but rather considers how external factors contribute to their mental health struggles. For example,

a client's feelings of isolation may be linked to the inaccessibility of community spaces or the lack of supportive services, rather than to their impairment alone. Social justice counselling encourages practitioners to engage in advocacy, community education, and systemic change efforts alongside providing individual support.

The third foundational element, the disability rights movement, has played a transformative role in shaping inclusive counselling by popularizing the social model of disability. Historically, disability was framed almost exclusively through the medical model, which locates the "problem" within the individual's body or mind and seeks to "cure" or "rehabilitate" them to meet societal norms (Oliver, 2019). While medical interventions can certainly be valuable, the medical model alone fails to account for the ways in which social structures, environments, and attitudes create disabling conditions.

The social model of disability, by contrast, shifts the focus from the individual's impairment to the barriers society erects that limit participation and inclusion (Shakespeare, 2018). According to this model, disability is not simply a biological condition but a social phenomenon produced by inaccessible infrastructure, discriminatory attitudes, and exclusionary policies. For instance, a wheelchair user is disabled not solely by their mobility impairment but by the absence of ramps, elevators, and accessible transportation. Similarly, someone with a communication difference may be disabled by a lack of alternative communication methods or trained support staff, not by their condition alone.

The social model has profound implications for counselling practice. It calls on counsellors to adopt a strengths-based perspective that focuses on removing barriers and fostering empowerment rather than pathologizing the client. This may involve helping clients develop self-advocacy skills, connecting them with community resources, or supporting them in navigating bureaucratic systems that impact their quality of life. It also challenges counsellors to examine their own biases and assumptions about disability and to actively work against ableist practices within the profession.

Integrating these three theoretical foundations person-centered therapy, social justice counselling, and the social model of disability results in a holistic framework that addresses both the intrapersonal and systemic factors affecting people with special needs. In practice, this means the counsellor must continually balance supportive, empathetic listening with a commitment to advocacy and social change. For example, an inclusive counsellor might help a client process the emotional toll of experiencing discrimination while also supporting them in filing a complaint or organizing community action.

Furthermore, these theoretical foundations highlight the importance of collaboration and client empowerment. Inclusive counselling is not something done to clients but rather with them, respecting their expertise about their own needs and preferences. In this sense, the relationship between counsellor and client becomes a partnership aimed at fostering resilience, autonomy, and social inclusion.

In conclusion, the theoretical underpinnings of inclusive counselling draw on decades of thought and activism that have challenged narrow, deficit-focused views of disability and

mental health. By grounding practice in person-centered therapy, social justice counselling, and the social model of disability, counsellors are better equipped to create meaningful, equitable, and empowering therapeutic relationships with clients who have special needs. This foundation calls for a transformative approach that does not stop at the therapy room door but extends into communities and systems, advocating for a world where all individuals can participate fully and with dignity.

Main Principles of Inclusive Counselling

The practice of inclusive counselling is rooted not only in sound theoretical foundations but also in clearly defined principles that guide everyday interactions with clients who have special needs. These principles serve as practical commitments that counsellors, agencies, and training institutions must embrace to ensure equitable, respectful, and effective support for individuals with disabilities. Among these core principles are accessibility, competence and training, collaborative approaches, and the adaptation of techniques to meet diverse needs.

1. Accessibility

At the heart of inclusive counselling is the principle of accessibility. This goes far beyond simply complying with legal requirements for physical access; it means intentionally designing spaces, services, and interactions to remove barriers and enable meaningful participation for all clients. Physical accessibility includes ensuring that counselling facilities are wheelchair-friendly, with ramps, elevators, wide doorways, and accessible restrooms (Reeve, 2020). However, it also extends to creating sensory-friendly environments for clients with autism spectrum conditions or sensory processing disorders. This might involve minimizing bright lights, loud noises, or distracting stimuli that could overwhelm some clients.

Equally important is communication access. People with hearing impairments may need sign language interpreters or real-time captioning services. Clients who are non-verbal or have significant speech difficulties may rely on augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, such as speech-generating devices or communication boards. Inclusive counsellors must be prepared to work fluently with these supports, demonstrating patience and openness to learning new modes of communication. Written information should be available in plain language, large print, or braille, depending on the needs of the client. By proactively addressing physical and communication barriers, counsellors signal that all clients are welcome and that their unique ways of engaging will be respected.

2. Competence and Training

Accessibility alone is insufficient if counsellors lack the skills and understanding necessary to work effectively with people with diverse disabilities. Therefore, competence and ongoing training are essential principles of inclusive counselling practice. Counsellors must develop specific competencies in understanding different types of disabilities, their potential impact on mental health, and how they intersect with other aspects of identity, such

as culture, age, or gender (Beauchamp & Childress, 2023).

A central part of this competence is recognizing and addressing ableism the explicit or implicit bias that devalues people with disabilities and assumes they are less capable or worthy. Counsellors must reflect critically on their own assumptions and biases to ensure they do not inadvertently reinforce discriminatory attitudes or practices. Awareness must be coupled with practical skills for adapting therapeutic approaches. For example, sessions with clients with intellectual disabilities may require the use of plain language, frequent breaks, or additional time to process information (Parker & Ray, 2020). Likewise, for clients with sensory sensitivities, therapists may need to adjust lighting, seating arrangements, or even the tone and volume of their voice.

3. Collaborative Approaches

Inclusive counselling recognizes that supporting a client with special needs often requires collaboration beyond the counselling room. Many clients benefit when counsellors work closely with family members, caregivers, support workers, and other professionals, such as teachers, social workers, occupational therapists, or medical providers (McConkey & Collins, 2010). This holistic approach acknowledges that the client's well-being is influenced by multiple environments, relationships, and systems.

Collaboration must be guided by clear communication and respect for the client's autonomy. For some clients, involving family members can help reinforce therapeutic goals at home, provide emotional support, or assist with implementing strategies discussed in sessions. For others, the presence of family may not be appropriate, particularly if family dynamics contribute to the client's distress. In such cases, counsellors must balance the potential benefits of involving others with the client's right to confidentiality and self-determination.

Working as part of an interdisciplinary team is particularly important for clients with complex or multiple disabilities. For instance, a client with a developmental disability and co-occurring mental health condition may need coordinated support that combines counselling with behavioural therapy, speech therapy, or medical management. Effective teamwork ensures that services are consistent, responsive, and tailored to the client's overall goals.

4. Adaptation of Techniques

One of the defining features of inclusive counselling is the willingness and ability to adapt therapeutic techniques to suit the unique needs of each client. Traditional talk therapy may not always be the best fit, especially for clients with intellectual disabilities, communication differences, or limited verbal expression. Therefore, counsellors must be flexible and creative in their approach (Taylor & Knott, 2025).

For example, using visual supports such as pictures, diagrams, or storyboards can help clients with intellectual disabilities better understand complex ideas or remember key points from sessions. Simplifying language and breaking down information into manageable steps

also supports comprehension. For non-verbal clients or those who find it difficult to express themselves through words alone, alternative modalities such as play therapy, art therapy, or music therapy can be especially effective (Malchiodi, 2025). These creative methods allow clients to communicate thoughts and feelings symbolically, fostering emotional expression and insight in a way that feels safe and accessible.

Adaptation also includes adjusting session length and structure. Some clients may benefit from shorter, more frequent sessions, while others may require longer appointments with breaks to accommodate fatigue or processing time. Counsellors may also need to modify their own communication style, such as speaking more slowly, using gestures, or checking for understanding throughout the session.

Bringing It Together

These four principles, accessibility, competence and training, collaborative approaches, and adaptation of techniques are deeply interconnected. Together, they reflect a commitment to seeing and serving the whole person rather than reducing them to a diagnosis or set of limitations. They require counsellors to cultivate humility, flexibility, and an openness to learning from clients themselves.

By embedding these principles into practice, counsellors can help dismantle the physical, social, and attitudinal barriers that have long excluded people with special needs from equitable mental health support. Ultimately, inclusive counselling is not just a set of technical adjustments but a profound ethical stance that recognizes the inherent dignity and potential of every client.

Challenges in Inclusive Counselling

While the principles and theories behind inclusive counselling provide a solid framework for equitable practice, putting these ideals into action presents a range of challenges. Understanding these barriers is crucial for counsellors, educators, policymakers, and community leaders committed to making mental health services truly accessible for people with disabilities. These challenges span structural, institutional, professional, and interpersonal levels, and they can significantly limit the reach and effectiveness of inclusive counselling if left unaddressed

One major challenge is the persistent shortage of trained professionals equipped to work with clients who have a wide range of disabilities (Werner, 2022). Many counsellors receive minimal or no formal education on disability issues during their initial training. Topics such as ableism, accessibility, communication strategies for non-verbal clients, or the use of assistive technology are often treated as optional rather than integral to competent practice. As a result, counsellors may feel unprepared or lack confidence when working with clients whose needs fall outside their familiar frameworks. This can lead to unintentional exclusion, where practitioners avoid taking on clients with complex needs out of fear they will not be able to provide appropriate support.

The lack of training is compounded by broader institutional barriers. Many mental health services are not designed with accessibility in mind, both physically and operationally. Counselling offices may be located in buildings without ramps, elevators, or accessible restrooms. Reception areas might lack clear signage or quiet waiting spaces for clients with sensory sensitivities. Booking systems and intake forms may assume that all clients can communicate fluently by phone or written text, which can create additional hurdles for those who use alternative communication methods. Even when services are technically "open" to people with disabilities, these barriers can render them inaccessible in practice

Stigma remains another significant obstacle. Societal attitudes toward disability continue to be shaped by stereotypes, misconceptions, and prejudices that frame people with disabilities as less competent, dependent, or incapable of meaningful participation in decision-making about their own lives (Goodley, 2017). These attitudes can seep into counselling relationships, sometimes subtly. For example, a counsellor might unintentionally speak to a caregiver rather than addressing the client directly, undermining the client's autonomy and reinforcing feelings of invisibility.

Stigma is also a barrier from the client's perspective. People with disabilities may internalize negative societal messages, leading to self-stigma and reluctance to seek help. Many have had prior experiences of being dismissed, misunderstood, or infantilized by professionals, resulting in deep mistrust of mental health services. For example, a person with a developmental disability may have been subjected to patronizing treatment or unnecessary institutionalization in the past. This history can make the idea of engaging with counselling daunting, if not outright distressing.

Practical challenges further complicate access to inclusive counselling. Transportation is a significant issue for many clients with mobility limitations, chronic illnesses, or sensory sensitivities. Public transportation may be physically inaccessible, unreliable, or overwhelming due to crowds and noise. Private transport can be prohibitively expensive or unavailable, especially in rural or underserved areas. As a result, clients may miss appointments, have to rely on family members for rides, or be forced to forgo counselling altogether.

Communication barriers are equally common. Clients who are deaf or hard of hearing may struggle to find counsellors who know sign language or are willing to arrange for qualified interpreters. Non-verbal clients or those with speech difficulties may find that many practitioners lack experience with augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools or are hesitant to adapt their methods. This can leave clients feeling misunderstood, frustrated, or exhausted by the additional effort required just to express their thoughts and feelings.

Another challenge lies in the systemic underfunding of inclusive services. Providing fully accessible counselling often requires resources such as assistive technology, communication aids, additional time for sessions, or physical modifications to facilities.

Many mental health services operate on tight budgets, making it difficult to prioritize these investments without robust institutional and governmental support. When funding is lacking, responsibility for overcoming barriers often falls on individual counsellors, who may not have the means or influence to enact meaningful change on their own.

Moreover, the time and emotional labor involved in inclusive counselling can be greater than in standard practice. Sessions may take longer due to the need for interpretation, translation, or the use of visual or tactile aids. Counsellors may need to coordinate with families, schools, social services, or medical providers to ensure comprehensive care. Without adequate support, this additional workload can lead to burnout or create disincentives for practitioners to work with clients who have more complex needs.

Intersectionality adds another layer of challenge. Clients with disabilities may also belong to other marginalized groups, such as racial or ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ communities, or economically disadvantaged populations. These overlapping identities can compound discrimination and create unique barriers to accessing mental health care. For instance, a disabled immigrant may face language barriers, cultural stigma around mental health, and a lack of culturally competent practitioners who also understand disability issues. Addressing these multiple dimensions requires a nuanced, flexible, and well-resourced approach that many current systems are not equipped to provide.

Despite these challenges, it is important not to frame inclusive counselling as an insurmountable task. Instead, recognizing these barriers can serve as a catalyst for action at multiple levels. For individual counsellors, this means committing to ongoing education, self-reflection, and advocacy for clients' rights. For institutions, it requires investment in training, accessible infrastructure, and policies that prioritize inclusion rather than treating it as an afterthought. For policymakers, it means ensuring that funding, legislation, and public awareness campaigns address the real-world needs of people with disabilities seeking mental health care.

Furthermore, listening to the voices of people with disabilities themselves is crucial. They are the experts in their own experiences and can offer invaluable insights into how counselling services can be made more welcoming, respectful, and effective. Building strong partnerships with disability communities, advocacy groups, and peer support networks can help bridge gaps and ensure that efforts to create inclusive counselling services are grounded in the realities of those who use them.

In summary, the challenges in inclusive counselling are real and multifaceted, spanning training gaps, structural barriers, stigma, practical obstacles, and systemic underinvestment. Yet each of these barriers also points to an opportunity for meaningful improvement. By confronting these challenges directly and collaboratively, the counselling profession can take concrete steps toward a more just and inclusive future where all people, regardless of ability, can access the mental health support they deserve.

Suggestions

1. Counselling training institutions should integrate inclusive counselling into their core curriculum.
2. Government and stakeholders should provide adequate funding for accessible counselling infrastructure.
3. Counsellors should engage in continuous professional development in disability inclusion and assistive technologies.
4. Collaboration among counsellors, families, educators, and healthcare providers should be strengthened.
5. Policies should be implemented and enforced to ensure accessibility and inclusivity in all counselling settings.

Conclusion

Inclusive counselling recognizes that mental health support must be equitable and adaptable. By embracing person-centered principles, addressing systemic barriers, and equipping counsellors with the necessary skills, the counselling profession can better serve individuals with special needs and contribute to a more just society.

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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TRAINING ON SELF-EFFICACY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OWERRI METROPOLIS, IMO STATE

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Abstract

*This study explored the effectiveness of emotional intelligence training on self-efficacy among secondary school students in Owerri Metropolis, Imo State**.** The study employed quasi-experimental research of non-randomized pre-test, post-test, control group design with 2x2 factorial matrix. Two research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. The subjects were in two experimental groups of one treatment group and one control group. The sample of the study consisted of 20 students' who failed in their 1st term examination, purposively drawn from a total population of 2,285 identified as having low self-efficacy using Student Self-Efficacy Identification Questionnaire (SSEIQ) which was the instrument used for data collection; in 2024/2025 academic session. Ten subjects in the treatment group were treated with emotional intelligence training techniques of analysis of emotional intelligence, self-regulation, motivation, self-awareness among others for four weeks of 40 minutes per session/week. The instrument used for data collection had 25-items (SAEIQ), validated by three research experts. Pr and Cronback Alpha methods were used to obtain the stability and internal consistency co-efficient of the instrument. The values obtained are 0.78 and 0.83 respectively. The control group did not receive the intervention. Data were collected in the two phases of pre-test and post-test periods. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that: There was low level ofself-efficacy among secondary School students in Owerri Metropolis. Exposing subjects with low Self-efficacy to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) significantly enhanced their self-efficacy. Based on the results, conclusion, discussions and recommendations were made. It was recommended among others that school counsellors*

who have students with low self-efficacy in their schools should proactively use Emotional Intelligence Training techniques to enhance their self-efficacy.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy, Emotional Intelligence Training and Secondary School Students.

Introduction

Secondary school students in Owerri Metropolist seem to have low level of motivation for school. This is because cursory observation reviews a high rate of inattentiveness of the students to schooling and school tasks. Many of them are seen roaming-about school roads and streets in diverse school uniforms even after 9 am daily, when they are supposed to be in classes receiving lessons. This behaviour of the students appears worrisome to many education stakeholders in Imo State, such as teachers, parents, school counsellors among others; as majority wonder if the students are not meant or not ready for school activities. Many others doubt the level of self-efficacy of the students

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a ask. For instance, someone with high self-efficacy might believe they can quit smoking, even if they've tried before. Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a ask (Onwudike, 2023). This concept was introduced by psychologist Albert Bandura as part of his Social Cognitive Theory. It influences how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and behave. High self-efficacy can lead to greater motivation and resilience, while low self-efficacy can result in self-doubt and avoidance of challenges, such as school tasks.

Self-efficacy has many types, one of which is Academic self-efficacy. Academic self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to perform well in school or learning tasks. Example is confidence in completing a science project successfully. Others include, social self-efficacy, emotional self-efficacy, occupational/workplace self-efficacy among others. Social self-efficacy is confidence in one's ability to form and maintain interpersonal relationships. Example: Believing you can make friends in a new environment. Emotional Self-Efficacy which is the belief in the ability to manage negative emotions like stress or anger. Example: Staying calm during an argument and Occupational/Workplace Self-Efficacy here is the belief in one's ability to succeed in job-related tasks. Example: Confidence in delivering a successful presentation at work.

Self-efficacy have some significance as listed under (Onwudike, 2023):

High self-efficacy enhances motivation and persistence**:** It helps individuals bounce back from setbacks; Strong self-belief often leads to better performance; **It is l**inked with lower anxiety and depression; Self-efficacy provides one with skills to improve. Such skills include: setting small, achievable goals and building on successes. Learn through role models or mentors. Use positive self-talk and visualization. Develop coping strategies for stress and failure.

Positive self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to succeed, offers numerous benefits for learners, including increased motivation, persistence, and better academic performance. However, it can also lead to over confidence and a reluctance to seek help when needed.

Some of the merits of Positive Self-Efficacy includes; Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to be motivated to learn and put in the effort required for academic success. They tend to persevere in the face of challenges and setbacks, viewing them as opportunities for learning rather than reasons to give up. Studies show a positive correlation between self-efficacy and academic achievement, with students demonstrating higher self-efficacy often achieving better results. High self-efficacy can lead to lower stress levels and a reduced risk of developing anxiety or depression related to academic performance. Students with strong self-belief are more likely to engage with challenging tasks and enjoy the learning process.

Learners with high self-efficacy are more likely to set challenging goals for themselves, pushing their own boundaries and striving for improvement. While demerits of Positive Self-Efficacy (when it becomes excessive) are that students may become overly confident in their abilities, leading to a lack of preparation or a belief that they can succeed without putting sufficient effort. High self-efficacy can sometimes create a reluctance to ask for help when needed, even when struggling with a difficult concept or task. Over confident students might underestimate the difficulty of a task, leading to poor planning and execution. If students with high self-efficacy are constantly striving for perfection and pushing themselves too hard, they may be at risk of burnout. Students with inflated self-efficacy may be less receptive to constructive criticism or feedback, hindering their learning and development, especially as it relates their emotional intelligence

Goleman in Nwaoba (2024) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions, as well as to influence the emotions of others in a constructive manner. Emotional intelligence helps individuals navigate social complexities, manage behavior, make personal decisions that achieve positive results, and build strong interpersonal connections.

Emotional intelligence has been linked to various positive outcomes, including better interpersonal relationships, improved mental health, and enhanced academic motivation among learners (Obi 2024). The researchers are interested in finding out how emotional intelligence could help enhance self-efficacy of secondary school students that could in turn result in high academic achievement among them.

Statement of the Problem

Majority of secondary school students in Owerri Township (Metropolis) engage in behaviours (truancy, lateness, loitering, absent in class lessons) that do not yield positive results in their academic achievements (outcome expectancy). and if this is allowed to continue, sooner or later majority of them will become school drop outs as a result of under-achievement (failure) and poor discipline among students will be the order of the day in the

schools. And when this happens, both the standard of education and economic development of the State are bound to be negatively affected against the utmost heart desires of well-meaning Imo State indigenes; hence education seems to be the hallmark of Imo State growth and development. In a study conducted in 2024 by Onwudike on influence of teachers' emotional intelligence on their self-efficacy in Imo State, the result indicated a significant improvement in the teachers' self-efficacy level. A similar study conducted by Ahunanya (2023) which investigated the impact of emotional intelligence on academic achievement and psychological well being among undergraduate students using survey design, the result showed positive psychological characteristics such as self-efficacy, motivation and resilience. Thus, the present researchers wanted to find out the extent emotional intelligent training techniques could enhance students' self-efficacy. The problem of this study therefore, put in a question form is: To what extent could EIT enhance students' academic self-efficacy in secondary schools in Owerri Metropolis of Imo State?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to find out the effect of Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) on academic Self-Efficacy among Secondary School Students in Owerri Metropolis. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the mean level of academic Self-Efficacy among Secondary School Students in Owerri Metropolis of Imo State.
2. Find out the mean score difference in the rate of improvement of academic Self-Efficacy among Secondary School Students between those exposed to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) and the Control Group at Post test period.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the mean level of academic Self-Efficacy among Secondary School Students in Owerri Metropolis of Imo State?
2. What is the mean score difference in the rate of improvement of academic Self-Efficacy among Secondary School Students between those exposed to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) and the Control Group at Post test period?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05level of significant.

HO_1: There is no significant difference in post-test efficacy mean score between students exposed to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) and the Control Group.

Methodology

The study employed quasi experimental research of non-randomized pre-test, post-test, control group design with 2x2 factorial matrix. The participants were in two experimental groups of one treatment group and one control group. The subjects in the treatment group called self-efficacy group were exposed to EIT techniques of Analysis of target behaviour (self-efficacy), self-regulation, motivation and self-awareness. The treatment proper lasted for four weeks, amidst sessions for establishment of counselling initial issues and setting counselling goals. Subjects participated actively, asked and answered questions for clarification and brainstormed on the examples indicating desirable behaviours required in each of the techniques of EIT exposed to them. Subjects role played and rehearsed behaviours modeled by the counsellor. At the end of each session, they were given assignment/homework in which they were given feedback in the next sessions. Questioning, summarization, reflection, active listening, empathic understanding, discussion and explanation etc were employed in the cause of the training. The duration for each session was 40 minutes as shown in the format below.

Session	Counsellor's activities	Subjects activities	Duration
1.	Initial counselling issues egs roles and expectations.	Active participation and listening	40 mins
2.	Analysis of self-efficacy	Active listening, asking questions and noting down points discussed	40 nins
3.	Self-regulation techniques of EIT	Payed raped attention, gave examples and ask questions	40 nins
4.	Motivation techniques of EIT	Participated in the discussions, observed and role played modeled motivation techniques	40 mins
5	Self-awareness technique of EIT	Listened attentively, asked questions for clarification and summarized the skills in the techniques and responded to the post-test	40 mins

The control group received no intervention for it served as a-wait list group. The experiment took place in two co-educational secondary schools in Owerri Metropolis. The first school was the treatment group while the second school was the control group that received no treatment. Each group was made up of ten subjects. The sample of the study consisted of 20 students' who failed in their 1st term examination drawn from a total population of 2,285 identified as under achievers using "Students' Academic Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SASEQ)" in 2024/2025 academic session. These comprised 10 subjects each for emotional intelligence training and control groups respectively. The study equally adopted purposive sampling techniques. The instrument used for data collection was a 25-item questionnaire titled 'Students' Academic Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SASEQ)' and designed on a four point rating scale of VHE, HE, LE and VLE with the real limits of the

numbers 3.59–4.00 (VHE), 3.00–3.49 (HE), 2.00–2.49 (LE), and 1.00–1.49 (VLE) respectively. The instrument was validated by three research experts from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to ascertain the stability of SASEQ and an index of 0.78 was obtained. Test of reliability for the internal consistency of the instrument was measured using Cronbach Alpha and the result indicated index value of 0.83 for the SASEQ treatment. The intervention group received emotional intelligence training while the control group did not receive any intervention. Data were collected in the two phases of pre-test and post-test 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 data in Table 1 indicate the mean ratings and standard deviation of academic self-efficacy among Secondary School Students in Owerri Metropolis of Imo State *on the* Students' Academic Self-efficacy. *The data show that the* Secondary School Students in the treatment group had mean academic self-efficacy score of 1.49 *with standard deviation of 0.*65. *The* secondary school students in the control group had mean academic self-efficacy score of 1.47 *with standard deviation of 0.*66. *This gave a mean difference of 0.02 in favour of the participants in the* treatment *group with cluster* academic self-efficacy mean score of 1.48 *with standard deviation of 0.*66. *These results indicate that there was low* academic self-efficacy among secondary school students with academic self-efficacy of 1.48 as against the benchmark in the Students' Academic Self-efficacy Questionnaire (SASEQ) used in identifying secondary school students who have academic self-efficacy behaviour which was below 2.50. The standard deviation of the two groups ranged between 0.65 and 0.66; indicating that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one an other in their responses, adding further validity to the mean.

Research Question 2: What is the mean score difference in the rate of improvement of self-efficacy between students exposed to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) and the Control Group at Post test period?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on Difference in the Rate of Improvement of Self-Efficacy among Secondary School Students between those exposed to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) and the Control Group at Post-test Period

Source		**Pre-test**		**Post-test**		**Mean increase**	**Mean Diff.**
Groups	**N**		**SD**		**SD**		
SST	10	1.47	0.65	3.88	0.19	2.41	2.42
Control	10	1.49	0.66	1.50	0.67	0.01	

Data in Table 2 showed that the subjects having low self-efficacy and were exposed to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) had a pre-test mean score of 1.47 with a standard deviation of 0.65 and a post-test mean score of 3.88 with a standard deviation of 1.19. Similarly, the subject shaving low self-efficacy and were in the control group recorded pre-test mean score of 1.49 with a standard deviation of 0.66 and a post-test mean score of 1.50 with a standard deviation of 0.67. The table further showed that the subjects having low self-efficacy and were exposed to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) had mean increase of 2.41 while their counterparts in the control group had only 0.01 increase. The mean increase difference between the Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) group and the control group was 2.42; which implied that the subjects having low self-efficacy and were exposed to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) had more increase in mean on their level of self-efficacy than their counter parts in the control group. The standard deviation of the two groups ranged between 0.19 and 0.67. The results, therefore, suggested that the use of Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) increase academic self-efficacy of secondary school students.

HO_1: There is no significant mean score difference in the rate of improvement of academic Self-Efficacy among Secondary School Students between those exposed to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) and the Control Group at Post-test period

Table 3: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on Difference in the Rate of Improvement of Self-Efficacy among Secondary School Students between those exposed to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) and the Control Group at Post-test Period

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	284.759[a]	2	142.380	21.605	.000
Intercept	7.393	1	7.393	1.003	.010
Pretest	233.682	1	233.682	31.703	.000
Treatment	20.918	1	20.918	2.838	.002
Error	125.315	17	7.371		
Total	6805.000	20			
Corrected Total	2400.074	19			

a R 0.squared=. 608 (Adjusted R squared =.792).

The calculated f-value of 2.838 in respect of the treatment as main effect of Emotional Intelligence Training (SST) on mean rate of self-efficacy scores was higher than f-critical of

1.96 with degree of freedom of 2 and17at 0.05 level of significance.The results in the Table 3 showed that Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) as a factor in the study had a significant effect on the rate of enhancing of self-efficacy of the subjects. This implied that exposing subjects with low self-efficacy to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) significantly enhanced their self-efficacy. Therefore the null hypothesis of no significant mean score difference in the rate of enhancing of self-efficacy between those in the Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) group and control at post-test period was rejected. Thus, there was significant mean score difference in enhancing self-efficacy between those in Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) group and control group at post-test period.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that*there low level of* self-efficacy among secondary School students in Owerri Metropolis, Imo State. This result is not impossible based on the assumptions of engagement theory on which this study was based, which posits that students who are not emotionally interested in schooling and academic task tend to have low self-efficacy. And their mean self-efficacy was 1.48 as against the benchmark of Students' Academic Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SASEQ) used in identifying secondary School students who had low self-efficacy which now as below 2.50 in Owerri Metropolis, Imo State. The finding of this study is in line with the findings of You science (2024) and Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health (2024) which enumerated certain factors that determine the degree to which students successfully engage in academic activities. Thus the psychological and environmental factors such as motivation; referring to intrinsic motivation to learn and negative self-worth, Learning style, prior academic experience which refers to positive or negative experiences in previous academic tasks could said to be responsible for the students' low academic self-efficacy evident by their mean self-efficacy score of 1.48 that is below the benchmark

Another findings of this study showed that exposing the students with low self-efficacy to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) significantly enhanced their self-efficacy. This is evident from the result that showed that secondary School students with low self-efficacy exposed to Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) had higher increase in their self-efficacy than those in the control group at post-test period. The findings of this study is in line with the findings of the study by CICMH (2024) which reported that the effectiveness of Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) in good self-efficacy; which can help students to reduced is satisfaction, avoid boredom, increased motivation to participate in school related activities and improve their achievement level. In other words, when students participate deeply in study activities, dedicate time and put in more efforts, it is possible to result in to learning success, achievement and improved self-efficacy.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, there was low rate of self-efficacy among secondary School students in Owerri Metropolis, Imo State before treatment with EIT. The study also revealed that Emotional Intelligence Training was effective in improving the self-efficacy

among secondary the school students exposed to EIT.

Recommendations

School counsellors should be enabled by the school authorities to attain more workshops on the proactive acquisition of the skills of Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) for enhancing students' low self-efficacy in schools.

Teachers and parents should be encouraged through PTA to bereferring students with signs of low self-efficacy to professional school counsellors who will engage the students in Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) to enhance their academic self-efficacy.

The effectiveness of Emotional Intelligence Training (EIT) in enhancing academic self-efficacy among students should be wildly disseminated by the researcher ensuring the publication of the findings of the study.

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TRUST, PRIVACY CONCERNS, DIGITAL LITERACY AND ADOPTION OF AI-BASED COUNSELLING TOOLS FOR MANAGING SCHOOL-RELATED STRESS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN DELTA NORTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT, DELTA STATE

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Abstract

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into educational and mental health systems has led to the emergence of AI-based counselling tools, such as chatbots to assist. This study investigated how school counsellors perceive the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress in secondary schools in Delta State. The objective was to examine how perceived trust, privacy concerns and digital literacy influence counsellors' intention to adopt AI-based chatbots. Four research questions were raised and three hypothesized and tested at 0.05 level of significance. This study employed a descriptive survey research design with a target population consisted of 80 registered school counsellors in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. A purposive sample of 67 practicing counsellors from public secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District was selected, based on their active counselling roles and digital literacy exposure. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument, titled Counsellors' Chatbot Acceptance Scale (CCAS), comprising 25 items based on the Extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Responses were rated on a 4-point Likert scale. Face and content validity were ensured through expert review and factor analysis, while the reliability of the instrument was established with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency. Data analysis was conducted applying descriptive statistics, Coefficient of determination, Regression, and ANOVA. Results showed that perceived trust, privacy concern and digital literacy significantly predicted intention adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress. Thus, it is recommended that counsellors should work on their trust and privacy concerns as well as their level of literacy in use of chatbot counselling tools in counselling activities. In addition, professional training for counsellors on ethical AI integration is encouraged.

Keywords: *Adoption, Chatbots, Trust, Privacy Concerns, AI-based Counselling.*

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has increasingly become a driving force across key sectors such as education, healthcare, and psychological services. In recent years, its application in mental health support has led to the development of intelligent digital systems designed to complement traditional counselling approaches. One of the most notable innovations in this area is the use of chatbot technologies—automated conversational systems that interact with users in real time. These systems are designed to support emotional regulation, provide coping strategies, and assist individuals in managing psychological stress (Abd-Alrazaq et al., 2020; Li et al., 2023).

The growing interest in AI-based counselling tools is largely driven by the increasing demand for accessible, scalable, and cost-effective mental health interventions. Globally, mental health challenges among adolescents have risen significantly, with many young individuals experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, and social adjustment difficulties. Traditional face-to-face counselling services, although effective, are often limited by accessibility, cost, and availability of trained professionals. In response to these challenges, AI-driven chatbot systems have been developed to provide immediate and continuous psychological support, thereby bridging the gap between demand and service provision (Zhang et al., 2025).

Empirical evidence has increasingly supported the effectiveness of chatbot-based interventions in improving mental health outcomes. For instance, a meta-analysis by Zhong et al. (2024) found that AI-based chatbot interventions significantly reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression across diverse populations. Similarly, Abd-Alrazaq et al. (2020) reported that chatbot interventions are not only effective but also safe and scalable, particularly for young users. More recent systematic reviews further confirm that conversational agents can enhance emotional well-being, improve coping strategies, and promote behavioural change when appropriately designed and implemented (Li et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2025). These findings highlight the growing relevance of chatbot technologies in addressing contemporary mental health challenges.

Within the educational context, particularly in secondary schools, students are frequently exposed to various academic, social, and emotional stressors. These include examination pressure, peer influence, interpersonal conflicts, identity formation challenges, and family-related expectations. When such stressors are not effectively managed, they can negatively impact students' academic performance, emotional stability, and overall well-being. Studies have shown that school-related stress is a major factor affecting students' engagement, motivation, and psychological health (Eze & Nworgu, 2023). In addition, unresolved interpersonal conflicts among students may lead to bullying, absenteeism, and behavioural problems, further disrupting the learning environment (Okafor & Ibrahim, 2022).

Despite the increasing need for psychological support in schools, many educational systems, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria, face significant challenges in providing adequate counselling services. A major concern is the shortage of trained school

counsellors, with many public secondary schools operating with only one counsellor or, in some cases, none at all. This situation often results in delayed interventions, limited access to counselling services, and inadequate support for students experiencing emotional or psychological difficulties (Agu et al., 2022). The problem is even more pronounced in rural and underserved communities, where access to mental health services is extremely limited. In this context, AI-based chatbot counselling tools present a promising complementary solution to enhance the delivery of psychological support in schools. These tools offer several advantages, including accessibility, anonymity, cost-effectiveness, and 24-hour availability. Such features make them particularly appealing to adolescents, who may be hesitant to seek traditional counselling services due to stigma, fear of judgment, or lack of privacy. Chatbot systems can provide immediate responses, offer coping strategies, and guide users through basic therapeutic exercises, thereby supporting students in managing stress and emotional challenges (Olawade et al., 2024).

Furthermore, chatbot tools have the potential to reduce the workload of school counsellors by handling routine interactions and providing preliminary support, allowing counsellors to focus on more complex cases requiring professional intervention. In this way, AI-based counselling systems can serve as supportive tools rather than replacements for human counsellors. However, the effectiveness of such systems depends largely on how they are perceived and accepted by professional counsellors, who play a central role in implementing and supervising counselling interventions within school settings. Counsellors are key stakeholders in school-based mental health services. Their responsibilities extend beyond academic guidance to include emotional support, behavioural intervention, crisis management, and referral services. As such, they are responsible for ensuring ethical practice, maintaining confidentiality, and safeguarding students' well-being. The integration of AI-based tools into counselling practice therefore requires careful consideration of counsellors' perceptions, attitudes, and readiness to adopt such technologies (AlMaskari et al., 2025).

Existing research suggests that several factors influence the adoption of AI-based technologies in educational and mental health contexts. Among these, trust, privacy concerns, and digital literacy have been identified as critical determinants. Trust refers to the degree to which users believe that a system is reliable, safe, and capable of performing its intended function. In counselling contexts, trust is particularly important because it directly relates to the ethical use of technology and the protection of vulnerable users. If counsellors do not trust chatbot systems, they are unlikely to adopt or recommend them, regardless of their potential benefits (Gefen et al., 2020).

Privacy concerns are also a major factor influencing technology adoption. AI-based chatbot systems often collect, store, and process sensitive personal information, including emotional and psychological data. Concerns about data security, confidentiality, and potential misuse of information can therefore discourage adoption. Research has shown that users are more likely to adopt digital health technologies when they are confident that their data is

protected and used responsibly (Olawade et al., 2024). In addition to trust and privacy, digital literacy plays a crucial role in shaping adoption behaviour. Digital literacy refers to the ability to effectively use and interact with digital technologies. Counsellors with higher levels of digital competence are more likely to understand how chatbot systems function, evaluate their usefulness, and integrate them into their professional practice. On the other hand, counsellors with limited technological skills may experience anxiety or resistance towards adopting new technologies, thereby limiting the effectiveness of AI-based interventions (Li et al., 2023).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides a theoretical framework for understanding these dynamics. Originally developed by Davis (1989) and later extended by Venkatesh and Bala (2008), TAM explains how users come to accept and use new technologies based on factors such as perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust, and behavioural intention. In the context of AI-based counselling tools, TAM helps to explain how counsellors evaluate the effectiveness, usability, and ethical implications of chatbot systems before deciding whether to adopt them. In the Nigerian context, emerging studies indicate that trust, privacy concerns, digital literacy, and professional experience significantly influence the adoption of digital technologies in school counselling practice (Okoye & Ojo, 2023; Yakubu & Onwuegbuchulam, 2023). However, despite the increasing global interest in AI-assisted counselling, empirical evidence on the adoption of chatbot counselling tools among school counsellors in Delta North Senatorial District remains limited. This lack of context-specific research highlights the need for further investigation into the factors influencing counsellors' acceptance and use of chatbot technologies in Nigerian schools. Given the increasing relevance of AI in counselling practice and the urgent need to strengthen school-based mental health support systems, this study examined the influence of trust, privacy concerns, digital literacy, and years of experience on counsellors' adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescents in Nigerian secondary schools' face increasing academic, emotional, and social pressures that require timely psychological support. However, many public schools lack sufficient trained guidance counsellors, leading to a high counsellor-to-student ratio and limited access to mental health services. AI-powered chatbot counselling tools have emerged globally as accessible and cost-effective alternatives capable of providing immediate emotional support and guided interventions. Despite this potential, research in Nigeria has largely focused on student users, with little attention given to school counsellors, who are key stakeholders in ensuring ethical and effective implementation.

The acceptance of chatbot counselling tools among counsellors is therefore critical, particularly in relation to concerns about data privacy, emotional suitability, and professional relevance. In addition, factors such as digital literacy and years of experience may influence their willingness to adopt such technologies. Given the limited empirical evidence from

contexts such as Delta North Senatorial District, this study seeks to examine how trust, privacy concerns, digital literacy, and years of experience influence counsellors' adoption of chatbot technologies for managing student mental health in public secondary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the factors influencing the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. examine the extent to which trust influences the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State.
2. determine the extent to which privacy concerns influence the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State.
3. assess the extent to which digital literacy influences the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State.
4. determine whether there is a significant difference in the adoption of chatbot counselling tools based on years of experience among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does trust influence the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State?
2. To what extent do privacy concerns influence the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State?
3. To what extent does digital literacy influence the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State?
4. Is there any significant difference in the adoption of chatbot counselling tools based on years of experience among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State?

Research Hypotheses

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

1. Trust does not significantly influence the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State?
2. Privacy concerns do not significantly influence the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State?
3. Digital literacy does not significantly influence the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State?
4. There is no significant difference in the adoption of chatbot counselling tools based on years of experience among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State?

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of 80 registered guidance counsellors in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State (CASSON, Delta State, 2025). From this population, a sample of 67 counsellors was selected from public secondary schools in the area using purposive sampling, with the sample size guided by the Taro Yamane formula. Data was collected using a structured instrument titled *Counsellors' Chatbot Acceptance Scale (CCAS)*, adapted from the Extended Technology Acceptance Model (ETAM). The instrument measured variables such as trust, privacy concerns, and digital literacy. It comprised 25 items rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4), and also included demographic information such as age, gender, and years of experience.

A pilot study was conducted with 15 counsellors outside the study area to test the instrument. Face and content validity were established through expert review, while construct validity was assessed using factor analysis, which produced eigenvalues ranging from 0.67 to 0.92, with a cumulative variance of 97%. Reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics, coefficient of determination, regression analysis, and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at the 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Research Question 1: To what extent does trust concerns influence the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for Managing School-Related Stressamong counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State?

Table 1: *Coefficient of Determination Analysis of Trust Concern and Adoption of Chatbot Counselling Tools ForManaging School-Related Stress Among Counsellors*

Variables	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**	**r**	**R^2**	**Decision**
Trust	3.48	0.50	67	.387	.152	Positive Relationship
Adoption of Chabot	3.36	0.64				

Table 1 showed the coefficient of determination value (r-value) of the perceived trust concerns' influence in the adoption of AI chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. The r-value =.387, which showed that trust concern influences the intention to adopt AI chatbot counselling tools among counsellors. The coefficient of determination was 0.152 (15.2%), which revealed that both trust concern contributed 15.2% on the adoption of AI chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors. This revealed a positive influence of trust concerns in the adoption AI chatbot counselling tools in counselling among counsellors.

Research Question 2: To what extent does privacy concerns influence the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for Managing School-Related Stressamong counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State?

Table 2: *Coefficient of Determination Analysis for Privacy Concern and Adoption of Chatbot Counselling Tools For Managing School-Related Stress Among Counsellors*

Variables	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**	**r**	**R^2**	**Decision**
Privacy Concern	2.81	0.66	67	.615	.381	Positive Relationship
Adoption of Chabot	3.36	0.64				

Data presented in Table 2 showed the coefficient of determination values of the perceived privacy concerns' influence in the adoption of AI chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors among counselors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. The r-value =.615, which showed that privacy concern positively influences the intention to adopt AI chatbot tools counsellors. The coefficient of determination was 0.381 (38.1%), which revealed that privacy concerns contributed 38.1% to the adoption of AI chatbot counselling tools in counselling. This revealed a high positive influence of privacy concerns in the adoption AI chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors.

Research Question 3: To what extent does digital literacy influence the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for Managing School-Related Stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State?

Table 3: *Coefficient of Determination Analysis of Digital Literacy and Adoption of Chatbot Counselling Tools For Managing School-Related Stress Among Counsellors*

Variables	Mean	SD	N	R	R^2	Decision
High Digital Literacy	3.10	0.402				
Low Digital Literacy	2.47	0.18	67	.312	.097	Positive Relationship
Adoption of Chatbot	3.36	0.64				

Table 3 showed the coefficient of determination values of the perceived influence of digital literacy on the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. The r-value =.312, which showed a relative influence of digital literacy on the adoption of chatbot counselling tools among counsellors in secondary schools. The coefficient of determination was 0.097 (9.7%) which revealed that digital literacy contributed 9.7% on the adoption of AI chatbot counselling tools in counselling. This revealed a positive influence of digital literacy in the adoption AI chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress among counsellors in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State.

Research Question 4: Is there any difference in the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for Managing School-Related Stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State based on years of experience?

Table 4: *Descriptive Analysis of Differences of Years of Experience on Adoption of Chatbot Counselling Tools For Managing School-Related Stress Among Counsellors*

Years of Experience	N	Mean	SD
Below 10 Years	30	3.11	0.46
11–20 Years	28	3.46	0.43
Above 21 Years	9	3.27	0.48

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation of the difference in years of experience in respect to the adoption of chatbot counselling tools among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State. It showed a mean and standard deviation (3.11, 0.46) for below 10 years, while 3.46 and 0.43 for counsellors between 11-20 years of experience and 3.27 and 0.48 for counsellors with above years of experience. From these values, it can be seen that counsellors with 11 to 20 years of counselling experience are better disposed to the adoption of chatbot counselling tools as compared to their counterparts of below 10 and above 21 years of counselling experience.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of trust concerns on the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for Managing School-Related Stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State.

Table 5: *Regression Analysis of Trust Concerns and Adoption of Chatbot Counselling Tools For Managing School-Related Stress Among Counsellors*

Predictor	**β (Beta)**	**T**	**Sig. (p)**	**Interpretation**
Trust	0.387	4.85	.001	Significant positive predictor

$R = 0.387$, $R^2 = 0.152$, $F(2,118) = 32.21$, $p < .05$

a. Dependent Variable: Adoption of chatbot

b. Predictor (s): (Constant), Trust Concern

Table 5 shows the regression ANOVA result, F (2,118) = 32.21, β=0.387,p = 0.001. At the 0.05 alpha level, the p-value was less than 0.05, indicating significance. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant influence of trust concerns on the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for Managing School-Related Stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State, is rejected. This indicated that there was a significant influence of trust on the adoption chatbot counselling tools among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of privacy concerns on the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for Managing School-Related Stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State.

Table 6: *Regression Analysis of Privacy Concerns and Adoption of Chatbot Counselling Tools For Managing School-Related Stress Among Counsellors*

Predictor	β (Beta)	T	Sig. (p)	Interpretation
Privacy Concerns	0.615	5.67	.014	Significant predictor

$R = 0.615$, $R^2 = 0.381$, $F(1,118) = 32.21$, $p < .05$

a. Dependent Variable: Adoption of chatbot

b. Predictor(s): (Constant), Privacy Concern

Table 6 shows the regression ANOVA result, F (1,118) = 32.21, β= .615, p = 0.014. At the 0.05 alpha level, the p-value was less than 0.05, indicating significance. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant influence of privacy concerns on the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for Managing School-Related Stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State, is rejected. This indicated that there was a significant influence of privacy concerns on the intention to adopt chatbot counselling tools among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant influence of digital literacy on the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for Managing School-Related Stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State.

Table 7: *Multiple Regression Analysis of Influence of Digital Literacy and Adoption of Chatbot Counselling Tools For Managing School-Related Stress Among Counsellors*

Predictor	β (Beta)	t	Sig. (p)	Interpretation
High Digital Literacy	.316	3.225	.002	Significant positive predictor
Low Digital Literacy	-.072	-.739	.462	Not Significant predictor

$R=0.312$, $r^2= 0.97$, $F (2,118)$, $t=5.121$, $p=.007$

a. Dependent Variable: chatbot use

b. Predictor(s): (Constant), Low Digital Literacy, High Digital Use

Table 7 shows the regression ANOVA result, F (2,118) = 5.121, p = 0.007. Since the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming that digital literacy significantly influences the adoption of chatbot counselling tools among counsellors in Delta North. The coefficients revealed that high digital literacy (β = 0.316, t = 3.225, p = .002) had a significant positive effect, while low digital literacy (β = –0.072, t = –.739, p = .462) showed no significant influence. Hence, high digital literacy has significant positive influence on the adoption of

chatbot counselling tools, but low digital literacy has no significant influence on the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for Managing School-Related Stress among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in the adoption of chatbot counselling tools for Managing School-Related Stress based on years of experience among counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, Delta State.

Table 8: *One-Way Analysis of Variance of Chatbot Acceptance Based on Years of Professional Experience of Counsellors*

Years of Experience	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	ρ	Eta Squared
1–10 Years	138.712[a]	1	138.712	5.944	.015	.024
11–20 Years	1.702[b]	1	1.702	.046	.831	.000
Above 21 Years	65.140[c]	1	65.140	1.707	.193	.007

F (2,120) =3.82, p=0.25

Table 8 shows a significant difference in counsellors' years of experience in their adoption of chatbots counselling tools. Thus, the null hypothesis of no difference is rejected. Post hoc results revealed that counsellors with less than 10 years of experience significantly adopted chatbot counselling tools ($F = 5.944$, $p = 0.015$, $\eta^2 = 0.024$). However, those with 11–20 years ($F = 0.46$, $p = 0.831$, $\eta^2 = 0.000$) and above 21 years ($F = 1.707$, $p = 0.193$, $\eta^2 = 0.007$) showed no significant influence. The result implies that there was a significant difference in the years of experience of counsellors in adoption of chatbot for counselling tools in favour of those with below ten (10) years of experience among Counsellors in secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial district of Delta State.

Discussion

This study examined how trust, privacy concerns, and digital literacy influence counsellors' adoption of chatbot counselling tools for managing school-related stress, and the findings are consistent with the focus of the study. In relation to **trust**, the findings show that it plays a key role in encouraging adoption. Counsellors who perceive chatbot systems as reliable, safe, and ethically sound are more willing to use them in practice. This aligns with Abd-Alrazaq et al. (2020) and AlMaskari et al. (2025), who emphasized that trust enhances users' willingness to engage with AI-based mental health tools. However, this is not fully supported by Li et al. (2023) and Rahman et al. (2022), who argued that AI systems still lack human empathy and emotional depth. This suggests that although trust supports adoption, concerns about the human

element of counselling may still limit full acceptance.

With regard to privacy concerns**,** the findings indicate that they significantly influence adoption. Counsellors are more likely to adopt chatbot systems when they are confident that users' personal information is secure. This agrees with Olawade et al. (2024) and Yakubu and Onwuegbuchulam (2023), who identified data protection as a key factor in technology acceptance. However, this is not entirely consistent with Gefen et al. (2020) and Li et al. (2023), who noted that users may still perceive risks even when strong security measures exist. This implies that perceived insecurity can continue to discourage adoption. In terms of digital literacy, the findings show that higher technological competence increases the likelihood of adoption. Counsellors who are more familiar with digital tools tend to feel more confident and less anxious when using chatbot systems. This supports Rahman et al. (2022) and Chukwu and Eke (2024). However, this is not fully supported by Li et al. (2023) and Ofem et al. (2025), who argued that digital literacy alone may not be sufficient, as ethical concerns and fear of technology replacing human roles may still limit adoption.

The findings further revealed that years of experience did not significantly influence counsellors' adoption of chatbot counselling tools. This suggests that experience alone may not determine technology use, but rather exposure to digital tools and training. This aligns with Okoye and Ojo (2023), who noted that experience without digital competence may not support adoption. However, this contrasts with Ofem et al. (2025), who found that more experienced counsellors showed higher acceptance. This indicates that the role of experience in adoption may vary depending on context and access to technological skills. Overall, while chatbot counselling tools offer benefits such as accessibility and continuous support, their adoption depends on addressing trust, privacy, and human-centered concerns alongside improving digital competence.

Recommendations

1. Counsellors should critically consider trust concerns in the adoption chatbot counselling tools in the provision of counselling services in secondary schools.
2. Counsellors should study the privacy rules of chatbot counselling tools before adoption to ensure clients' confidentiality are protected. In addition, this will also boost the trust of both counsellors and clients in the use of AI chatbots tools in counselling sessions.
3. Counsellors should seek specialized training on the use of chatbot counselling tools so as to enhance their literacy capacity for the provision of counselling services.
4. Although years of counselling experience do not influence the acceptance of chatbots, as such, experienced counsellors should seek knowledge on the use of chatbots for the provision of counselling services.
5. Professional training on the ethical issues on the use of chatbot for counselling services should be integrated.

Conclusion

The study found that school counsellors' adoption of chatbot counselling tools is shaped by their perception of the trust, data privacy and level of digital literacy. Counsellors with better digital literacy and moderate experience were more willing to adopt chatbots. While AI tools offer valuable support in addressing mental health gaps in schools, their success depends on ethical use, counsellor readiness, and proper integration into the existing support system.But for chatbot tools to work well, they must be trusted and accepted by counsellors, used in ethical ways, and adapted to fit the local school setting.

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COUNSELLING STRATEGIES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS IN SCHOOLS IN ABIA CENTRAL SENATORIAL ZONE

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Abstract

This study examined the counselling strategies adopted for conflict resolution in senior secondary schools within Abia Central Senatorial Zone. The study was guide by three research objectives and research questions. A descriptive survey design was used, involving 120 participants (60 counsellors and 60 teachers) selected from 20 schools across six local government areas. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire titled Counselling Strategies for Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (CSCRQ). Descriptive statistics were used to answer the research questions, while independent t-tests were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Findings showed that Table 1 reveals strong agreement on most strategies (2.88), with collaborative problem-solving (3.30), restorative circles (3.25), and time-outs (3.21) rated highest. However, peer mediation (2.49), solution-focused counseling (2.32), social skills training (2.48), mindfulness practices (2.31), and positive reinforcement (2.44) scored below the 2.50 benchmark, indicating disagreement on their use. Table 2 identifies significant challenges (grand 2.86), including student reluctance due to mistrust (3.18), cultural misunderstandings (3.15), confidentiality concerns (3.10), and intense adolescent emotions (3.05). Only failure to follow through on solutions (2.49) and social media-related conflicts (2.41) scored below 2.50, suggesting lesser significance. The perceived effects of these strategies were positive, as counselling was found to promote discipline, reduce fights, and improve peer relationships, with a grand mean of 3.02. Results of the hypotheses showed no significant difference in the perception of male and female respondents ($t = 0.56$, $p > 0.05$), indicating gender does not influence views on counselling strategies. However, a significant difference was found between the responses of counsellors and teachers ($t = 3.12$, $p < 0.05$), with counsellors expressing greater agreement. The study concludes that counselling is essential for fostering peaceful coexistence in schools and recommends improved support and resource provision for effective conflict resolution.

Keywords: Counselling strategies, Conflict resolution, Secondary schools, Challenges, Gender differences

Introduction

Conflict is a natural and inevitable part of human interaction, especially in environments where people of different backgrounds, ideas, interests, and personalities come together. In schools, particularly in senior secondary schools, conflicts among students have become a regular occurrence. These conflicts may arise from misunderstandings, peer pressure, competition, poor communication, differences in values or beliefs, or even emotional immaturity. If not properly addressed, conflicts can result in serious problems such as violence, bullying, poor academic performance, school dropouts, and emotional trauma.

Conflict, as defined by Udeze (2019), is a situation of disagreement, tension, or opposition between individuals or groups that may result in hostile behavior or strained relationships. It is not necessarily negative; when handled properly, conflict can lead to growth, better understanding, and stronger relationships. However, in the school environment, most conflicts are left unresolved or are managed poorly, leading to more damage than good.

To ensure that learning takes place in a peaceful and conducive atmosphere, conflict resolution becomes an important aspect of school administration and student development. Conflict resolution refers to the methods, strategies, and processes used to settle disagreements and restore peace among conflicting parties (Onuigbo & Madu, 2021). In the school setting, it involves helping students understand the source of their conflict, communicate effectively, and work together to find acceptable solutions.

One of the most effective tools for conflict resolution in schools is counselling. Counselling is a professional guidance process in which a trained person (called a counsellor) helps an individual or group to understand and resolve personal, social, or psychological problems. According to Nwachukwu and Eze (2018), counselling in schools helps students develop self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills, all of which are essential for managing conflicts peacefully. It offers a safe and non-judgmental space for students to express themselves, understand the consequences of their actions, and learn better ways of relating with others.

Counselling strategies are the specific techniques or methods employed by school counsellors to address students' problems, including conflicts. These may include individual or group counselling, peer mediation, cognitive restructuring (changing negative thought patterns), behaviour modification, empathy training, and problem-solving approaches. As explained by Okorie and Agada (2020), the success of these strategies largely depends on the skill of the counsellor, the willingness of the students to participate, and the support from school administrators and teachers.

In the Nigerian context, particularly in Abia Central Senatorial Zone, secondary schools are experiencing an increasing rate of student-related conflicts. Factors such as overcrowded classrooms, poor parenting, social media influence, and lack of proper guidance contribute to this trend. Unfortunately, many schools do not prioritize guidance and counselling services, and in

some cases, do not even have qualified counsellors on staff. Where counselling exists, it is often underutilized or not tailored to address the specific needs of the students (Chika & Ibe, 2022).

There is, therefore, a growing need to explore the counselling strategies currently in use for conflict resolution in senior secondary schools in this region. Understanding which strategies are being used, how effective they are, and the challenges faced by school counsellors can help in developing better approaches to managing student conflicts. This study aims to investigate these strategies within Abia Central Senatorial Zone, which includes six Local Government Areas: Umuahia North, Umuahia South, Ikwuano, Isiala Ngwa North, Isiala Ngwa South, and Osisioma Ngwa.

Conflict is a reality in school life, but with the right counselling strategies, it can be managed in ways that promote peace, learning, and student development. School counsellors, therefore, play a key role in equipping students with the emotional and social skills they need to live harmoniously with others.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict is becoming a serious issue in many secondary schools across Nigeria, especially in Abia Central Senatorial Zone. Students are often involved in arguments, bullying, fights, disobedience, gossip, and even gang activities. These problems not only affect the peace and order of the school but also disrupt teaching and learning. In many cases, students who are victims of conflict suffer from fear, anxiety, low self-esteem, and academic failure (Onuigbo & Madu, 2021). Despite the presence of school counsellors, the rate of unresolved conflicts among students seems to be increasing.

One of the major problems is that many schools do not give enough attention to guidance and counselling services. Some schools lack professional counsellors, while others assign counselling duties to untrained teachers who may not have the skills or strategies to manage student conflicts effectively (Okoye & Aboh, 2019). As a result, conflicts are often handled with punishment, threats, or expulsion, which may not address the root cause of the problem. Instead of resolving issues peacefully, students are left feeling unheard and angry, which increases the chances of repeated conflicts.

Another challenge is that even where counselling services exist, the strategies used may not be effective or appropriate for the specific types of conflicts faced by today's students. For example, some students come from homes where violence is normal, while others are influenced by what they watch online or experience on social media. These changing influences require that school counsellors adopt modern, flexible, and student-centered strategies that are relevant to current realities (Chika & Ibe, 2022).

Furthermore, research has shown that factors such as the gender and experience level of counsellors may affect the way they respond to student conflicts (Ogunlade & Akeredolu, 2018). Some counsellors may be too strict, while others may ignore serious issues due to inexperience

or bias. There is little evidence to show which strategies are most effective in the context of Abia Central Senatorial Zone. This makes it difficult for school administrators, counsellors, and policymakers to design proper training or policies for conflict resolution.

In addition, while many studies have examined the general role of school counselling in Nigeria, few have specifically focused on the counselling strategies used for conflict resolution in senior secondary schools within Abia Central. This creates a gap in knowledge and limits the ability of educational stakeholders to understand what works and what does not in resolving student conflicts in the region.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the specific counselling strategies employed by school counsellors for resolving conflicts among senior secondary school students in Abia Central Senatorial Zone. The study will also examine how counsellor characteristics like gender and years of experience influence the choice of strategies used. By doing so, the research will provide useful information that can help improve counselling services, reduce student conflicts, and promote a more peaceful school environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the counselling strategies used for conflict resolution in senior secondary schools in Abia Central Senatorial Zone. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Identify the counselling strategies commonly used by school counsellors.
2. Examine the effectiveness of these strategies in resolving student conflicts.
3. Determine the influence of counsellors' gender and experience on the choice of conflict resolution strategies.

Research Questions

What counselling strategies are commonly employed by school counsellors in resolving conflicts among students?

1. How effective are these counselling strategies in addressing conflicts in senior secondary schools?
2. To what extent does the gender of the school counsellor influence the choice of conflict resolution strategies?

Research Hypotheses

Ho_1: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of counsellors and teachers on the counselling strategies used for conflict resolution among senior secondary school students in Abia Central Senatorial Zone.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference in the conflict resolution strategies used based on the years of experience of the school counsellor.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it helps in collecting data from a large group of people in a natural setting without manipulating any variables. According to Nworgu (2017), a descriptive survey design is used when the aim of the research is to gather detailed and factual information about the current conditions or opinions of a group of people. Since the objective of this study was to examine the counselling strategies used by school counsellors to manage student conflicts, the descriptive survey method was found suitable. The study was carried out in Abia Central Senatorial Zone of Abia State, Nigeria. This senatorial zone comprises six Local Government Areas (LGAs), namely: Umuahia North, Umuahia South, Ikwuano, Isiala Ngwa North, Isiala Ngwa South, and Osisioma Ngwa. These LGAs were selected because they have a relatively high concentration of senior secondary schools, and conflict among students has become a common issue in many of the schools located in this region (Chika & Ibe, 2022).

The population of the study consisted of all guidance counsellors and selected senior secondary school teachers in public schools within the six Local Government Areas of Abia Central Senatorial Zone. These two groups were chosen because of their involvement in student discipline, counselling activities, and day-to-day school administration. As noted by Okoye and Aboh (2019), both counsellors and teachers play critical roles in managing student behaviour and resolving conflicts in school settings. A total of 120 respondents participated in the study. This sample was made up of 60 guidance counsellors and 60 teachers, drawn from 20 public senior secondary schools across the six LGAs.

The selection of schools and respondents followed purposive and random sampling techniques. First, schools that had functional guidance and counselling units were purposively selected. Then, within each school, one guidance counsellor and three teachers were randomly chosen to participate in the study. This method ensured that the sample was both relevant to the study and representative of the different areas within the senatorial zone (Nwana, 2017). The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Counselling Strategies for Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (CSCRQ)”. To ensure that the instrument measured what it was intended to measure, the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation. Three experts in the fields of Guidance and Counselling and Educational Measurement and Evaluation from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, reviewed the questionnaire. Based on their feedback, minor modifications were made to improve the clarity and relevance of the items.

The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha method to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire. A pilot test was carried out in two secondary schools outside the selected sample. The data obtained from the pilot test were analyzed, and a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.82 was obtained. This value indicates a high level of internal consistency, as values above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable for research (Adeniran, 2020).

Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher sought permission from school principals through formal letters. Once approval was granted, the researcher and two trained assistants visited the selected schools and distributed the questionnaires in person. Respondents were given adequate time (about 30 minutes) to complete the questionnaire on-site. The completed forms were collected immediately to ensure a high return rate and prevent loss of data. The process was conducted with respect for confidentiality and ethical considerations. Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. To answer the research questions, the researcher used mean scores and standard deviations. These helped in determining the degree to which the respondents agreed or disagreed with each counselling strategy. To test the hypotheses, the independent samples t-test was employed to determine if there were significant differences in the counselling strategies used based on gender and years of experience of the counsellors. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance, which is the standard threshold in educational research (Uzoagulu, 2019).

Results

Research Question 1: What are the counselling strategies used for conflict resolution among senior secondary school students in Abia Central Senatorial Zone?

Table 1: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Counselling Strategies Used for Conflict Resolution*

S/N	Item Description	$\bar{X}$ (Mean)	SD	Decision
1	Encourage students to listen attentively to each other without interrupting, ensuring all parties feel heard and understood.	3.20	0.61	Agreed
2	Facilitate a neutral, structured dialogue between conflicting students, guiding them toward a mutually acceptable solution.	3.05	0.70	Agreed
3	Using **Restorative Circle strategy by u**sing group discussions in a circle format to promote open communication, empathy, and collective problem-solving.	3.25	0.58	Agreed
4	Adopt **Empathy Training** strategy to teach students to understand and share the feelings of others, fostering compassion and reducing hostility.	3.12	0.67	Agreed
5	Use **Role-Playing** Strategy to have students act out conflict scenarios to practice resolution skills and explore different perspectives.	3.18	0.65	Agreed
6	Use **I-Statements strategy to g**uide students to express feelings and needs using "I feel" statements to reduce blame and defensiveness.	2.94	0.77	Agreed

7	Using conflict mapping strategy to help students identify the root causes, triggers, and stakeholders of a conflict to clarify issues and solutions.	2.65	0.82	Agreed
8	Using **Peer Mediation Programs to t**rain selected students through peer mediation prgrams to mediate disputes among peers, empowering them to resolve conflicts independently	2.49	0.91	Disagreed
9	Using **Solution-Focused Counseling** strategy to focus on finding practical solutions rather than dwelling on the problem, encouraging students to set achievable goals.	2.32	0.88	Disagreed
10	Using **Anger Management Techniques** strategy to teaching students anger management techniques for conflict resolution	3.10	0.72	Agreed
11	**Using collaborative problem-solving** strategy to help students to brainstorm and agree on solutions, promoting teamwork and ownership of outcomes.	3.30	0.57	Agreed
12	Using **Time-Outs** strategy to encourage students to take a brief break during heated conflicts to cool down and reflect before discussing solutions	3.21	0.64	Agreed
13	**Using Restorative Questions** strategy by asking questions like "What happened?" and "How can we make this right?" to guide students toward accountability and resolution.	2.83	0.79	Agreed
14	Using **Social Skills Training** strategy to teach communication, negotiation, and compromise skills to improve students' ability to resolve conflicts.	2.48	0.85	Disagreed
15	Using **Conflict Resolution Workshops** to Conduct group sessions to teach students about conflict dynamics and effective resolution strategies.	2.95	0.74	Agreed
16	**Using Mindfulness Practices** strategy to Introduce mindfulness techniques to help students manage emotions and approach conflicts calmly	2.31	0.93	Disagreed
17	**Using Behavior Contracts** to Create written agreements outlining expected behaviors and consequences to prevent future conflicts.	3.08	0.69	Agreed
18	**Using positive reinforcement** strategy by acknowledging and rewarding students for resolving conflicts constructively to encourage positive behavior.	2.44	0.86	Disagreed
19	**Using the Perspective-Taking Exercises** strategy to encourage students to consider the other party's viewpoint to build understanding and reduce tension.	3.06	0.68	Agreed
20	**Using Follow-Up Sessions by** Scheduling follow-up meetings to monitor progress and ensure conflicts remain resolved, addressing any lingering issues.	3.02	0.71	Agreed
	Grand Mean	**2.88**		**Agreed**

7	Using conflict mapping strategy to help students identify the root causes, triggers, and stakeholders of a conflict to clarify issues and solutions.	2.65	0.82	Agreed
8	Using **Peer Mediation Programs to t**rain selected students through peer mediation prgrams to mediate disputes among peers, empowering them to resolve conflicts independently	2.49	0.91	Disagreed
9	Using **Solution-Focused Counseling** strategy to focus on finding practical solutions rather than dwelling on the problem, encouraging students to set achievable goals.	2.32	0.88	Disagreed
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20	**Using Follow-Up Sessions by** Scheduling follow-up meetings to monitor progress and ensure conflicts remain resolved, addressing any lingering issues.	3.02	0.71	Agreed
	Grand Mean	**2.88**		**Agreed**

The results in Table 1 show that most counseling strategies for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Abia Central Senatorial Zone are generally agreed upon, with mean scores ranging from 2.65 to 3.30. Strategies like collaborative problem-solving (3.30), restorative circles (3.25), and time-outs (3.21) scored highest, indicating strong agreement on their use. However, five strategies—peer mediation (2.49), solution-focused counseling (2.32), social skills training (2.48), mindfulness practices (2.31), and positive reinforcement (2.44)—scored below the 2.50 benchmark, suggesting disagreement on their application. The overall grand mean of 2.88 confirms general agreement on the use of various counseling strategies for conflict resolution.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges encountered by counsellors in using counselling strategies for conflict resolution in senior secondary schools in Abia Central Senatorial Zone?

Table 2: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Challenges Encountered in Using Counselling Strategies (N = 120)*

	Item Description	$\bar{X}$ (Mean)	SD	Decision
1.	Many students may be reluctant to engage in counselling due to mistrust, fear of judgment, or a belief that conflicts should be resolved.	3.18	0.70	Agreed
2.	Senior secondary students often experience intense emotions due to adolescence, making it difficult to apply strategies like active listening or empathy training when students are too upset to engage rationally.	3.05	0.75	Agreed
3.	Counsellors often have limited time to address conflicts due to heavy caseloads or administrative duties, making it challenging to conduct in-depth interventions like follow-up sessions or conflict resolution workshops	2.96	0.72	Agreed
4.	Some counsellors may lack specialized training in advanced conflict resolution techniques, such as restorative practices or peer mediation, limiting their effectiveness in applying these strategies.	2.84	0.79	Agreed
5.	Diverse student backgrounds can lead to misunderstandings or clashes in values, complicating strategies like perspective-taking or collaborative problem-solving when cultural sensitivities are not adequately addressed	3.15	0.65	Agreed
6.	Peer pressure or group dynamics, such as cliques, can undermine conflict resolution efforts, as students may prioritize loyalty to friends over strategies like I-statements or mediation.	2.78	0.82	Agreed
7	Resistance or lack of cooperation from parents can hinder strategies like behavior contracts or restorative approaches, especially when parents do not support the counselling process.	2.90	0.76	Agreed

8.	Inconsistent or punitive school disciplinary policies may conflict with restorative or solution-focused approaches, creating confusion for students and undermining the counsellor's efforts.	2.64	0.88	Agreed
9.	Students may hesitate to share openly during counselling sessions due to fears about breaches of confidentiality, impacting strategies like restorative questions or open dialogue in circles.	3.10	0.68	Agreed
10.	Limited access to resources, such as space for mediation sessions or materials for workshops, can restrict the implementation of structured conflict resolution programs	2.91	0.74	Agreed
11.	Conflicts involving bullying, gang affiliations, or deep-seated issues (e.g., family problems) may require more intensive interventions than typical strategies like role-playing or mindfulness can address	2.86	0.77	Agreed
12.	Some students may not see the value in conflict resolution strategies, viewing them as irrelevant or ineffective, which affects engagement in techniques like social skills training or peer mediation	3.04	0.71	Agreed
13.	Teachers or administrators may not fully support counselling strategies, preferring quick disciplinary measures over time-intensive approaches like restorative circles or collaborative problem-solving.	2.97	0.73	Agreed
14.	Counsellors may experience burnout from managing frequent or intense conflicts, reducing their ability to consistently apply strategies like positive reinforcement or follow-up sessions effectively	2.76	0.81	Agreed
15.	Students or staff may fail to follow through on agreed-upon solutions (e.g., behavior contracts), leading to recurring conflicts and undermining trust in the process.	2.49	0.85	Disagreed
16.	Conflicts arising from social media or online interactions can be harder to resolve due to their public nature and rapid escalation, complicating strategies like mediation or restorative questions	2.41	0.89	Disagreed
17.	Students may doubt the effectiveness of counselling strategies if they perceive past interventions as unsuccessful, reducing participation in techniques like solution-focused counselling or peer mediation.	2.68	0.80	Agreed
18.	Large student populations can overwhelm counsellors, making it difficult to provide personalized attention for strategies like conflict mapping or individual follow-up sessions.	2.82	0.78	Agreed
19.	Underlying mental health challenges, such as anxiety or depression, can interfere with students' ability to engage in conflict resolution strategies like mindfulness or empathy training.	3.12	0.66	Agreed
20.	Limited backing from school leadership can restrict the implementation of comprehensive programs, such as peer mediation training or conflict resolution workshops, due to budget or priority constraints.	2.93	0.69	Agreed
	Grand Mean	**2.86**		**Agreed**

Table 2 shows that counsellors in senior secondary schools in Abia Central Senatorial Zone face significant challenges in using counselling strategies for conflict resolution, with most items having mean scores between 2.64 and 3.18, indicating general agreement. Key challenges include student reluctance due to mistrust (3.18), intense adolescent emotions (3.05), cultural misunderstandings (3.15), and confidentiality concerns (3.10). Limited time, resources, and support from school leadership, along with counsellors' lack of specialized training and burnout, further complicate strategy implementation. Only two items—failure to follow through on solutions (2.49) and social media-related conflicts (2.41)—scored below the 2.50 benchmark, suggesting disagreement on their significance as challenges. The grand mean of 2.86 confirms overall agreement on these challenges.

Research Question 3: What are the perceived effects of counselling strategies on conflict resolution among senior secondary school students in Abia Central Senatorial Zone?

Table 3: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Perceived Effects of Counselling Strategies on Conflict Resolution (N = 120)*

Item Description	$\bar{X}$ (Mean)	SD	Decision
Counselling helps reduce the number of conflicts in school.	3.28	0.61	Agreed
Counselling promotes better understanding among students.	3.12	0.68	Agreed
Counselling improves students' emotional control during conflicts.	3.05	0.72	Agreed
Counselling strategies improve communication between conflicting students.	3.09	0.66	Agreed
Counselling makes students more tolerant and respectful of others.	3.21	0.60	Agreed
Counselling encourages peaceful resolution of misunderstandings.	3.15	0.64	Agreed
Students who receive counselling are less likely to engage in violent behavior.	3.02	0.71	Agreed
Counselling helps students develop conflict management skills.	3.10	0.68	Agreed
Counselling enhances discipline among students.	2.97	0.75	Agreed
Counselling improves academic concentration after conflict resolution.	2.95	0.73	Agreed
Counselling reduces fear and anxiety in conflict-prone students.	2.84	0.80	Agreed
Counselling builds student confidence in managing peer relationships.	3.01	0.70	Agreed
Students become more responsible after attending counselling sessions.	2.93	0.77	Agreed
Counselling reduces bullying and intimidation in school.	3.00	0.72	Agreed
Counselling encourages students to seek help when conflicts arise.	3.06	0.66	Agreed
Counselling prevents conflicts from escalating into physical fights.	3.14	0.69	Agreed
Students apply conflict resolution strategies outside the school environment.	2.72	0.83	Agreed
Counselling strategies increase students' empathy and compassion for others.	2.86	0.76	Agreed
Counselling helps to reduce group or gang-related conflicts.	2.90	0.74	Agreed
Counselling has no significant effect on student behavior.	2.01	0.91	Disagreed
Grand Mean	**2.98**		**Agreed**

From Table 3, the majority of the items had mean scores above the benchmark of 2.50, indicating that respondents agreed on the positive effects of counselling strategies in resolving conflicts. Only item 20, which was negatively worded, scored below 2.50, meaning the respondents disagreed with the claim that counselling has no significant effect. The grand mean of 2.98 suggests that, overall, counselling strategies are perceived to have a positive impact on conflict resolution among senior secondary school students in the Abia Central Senatorial Zone.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of counsellors and teachers on the counselling strategies used for conflict resolution among senior secondary school students in Abia Central Senatorial Zone.

Table 4: *Independent Samples t-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of Counsellors and Teachers on Counselling Strategies Used*

Group	N	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Deviation(SD)	df	t-cal	t-crit (0.05)	p-value	Decision
Counsellors	60	3.15	0.45	118	2.67	1.98	0.009	**Reject H_0**
Teachers	60	2.89	0.51					

The table shows that the mean rating for counsellors ($\bar{X}$ = 3.15, SD = 0.45) is higher than that of teachers ($\bar{X}$ = 2.89, SD = 0.51). The calculated t-value = 2.67 is greater than the critical t-value = 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance, with a p-value = 0.009, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that there is a statistically significant difference between the ratings of counsellors and teachers on the counselling strategies used for conflict resolution in senior secondary schools in Abia Central Senatorial Zone.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the effects of counselling strategies on conflict resolution among senior secondary school students in Abia Central Senatorial Zone.

Table 5: *Independent Samples t-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of Male and Female Respondents on the Effects of Counselling Strategies*

Gender	N	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Std. Deviation (SD)	df	t-cal	t-crit (0.05)	p-value	Decision
Male	62	3.02	0.48	118	0.98	1.98	0.330	**Retain H_0**
Female	58	2.94	0.51					

From the table, male respondents had a mean score of 3.02 (SD = 0.48) while female respondents had a mean score of 2.94 (SD = 0.51). The calculated t-value = 0.98 is less than the critical t-value = 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance, with a p-value = 0.330, which is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is retained, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference between the ratings of male and female respondents regarding the effects of counselling strategies on conflict resolution in senior secondary schools in Abia Central Senatorial Zone.

Discussion of Results

The results on table 4.1 showed that guidance counsellors and teachers agreed that various counselling strategies were used for conflict resolution in schools. The grand mean of 2.88 further supports the widespread application of these strategies. The highest-rated strategies include collaborative problem-solving, restorative circles, and time-outs, while strategies like peer mediation programs, solution-focused counseling, social skills training, mindfulness practices, and positive reinforcement scored below the benchmark, indicating disagreement on their use.

The high agreement on strategies like collaborative problem-solving, restorative circles, and time-outs aligns with global research emphasizing proactive and restorative approaches in school conflict resolution. For instance, a 2020 systematic review by Acosta et al. highlights that restorative practices, such as restorative circles, promote open communication, empathy, and collective problem-solving, reducing conflict incidents and fostering a positive school climate. These findings corroborate the high mean score for restorative circles (3.25), suggesting that structured group discussions are effective in Nigerian secondary schools, likely due to their ability to create safe spaces for dialogue and mutual understanding.

Collaborative problem-solving, with the highest mean (3.30), is supported by research indicating that strategies encouraging teamwork and ownership of outcomes are effective in managing student conflicts. A 2023 study by Adedoyin and Soykan emphasizes that collaborative approaches enhance student engagement and emotional well-being by involving students in brainstorming solutions, aligning with the high agreement in Table 1. Similarly, time-outs (3.21) are recognized in literature as effective for de-escalating heated conflicts, allowing students to reflect before engaging in resolution processes. This is consistent with a 2018 study by Ashghali Farahani et al., which notes that brief breaks help students manage intense emotions, facilitating rational engagement in conflict resolution.

Other strategies with strong agreement, such as encouraging active listening (3.20), empathy training (3.12), and perspective-taking exercises (3.06), reflect the importance of social-emotional learning (SEL) in conflict resolution. A 2020 study by Hojbotăa et al. underscores that SEL programs, including empathy training, improve students' interpersonal skills and reduce hostility, supporting the findings in Table 1. The use of I-statements (2.94) and restorative questions (2.83) also aligns with literature advocating for non-confrontational communication techniques. For example, a 2022 article on conflict resolution in schools highlights that I-statements reduce blame and defensiveness, facilitating constructive dialogue.

The disagreement on strategies like peer mediation programs, solution-focused counseling, social skills training, mindfulness practices, and positive reinforcement suggests contextual barriers to their implementation in Abia Central Senatorial Zone. The low mean score for peer mediation (2.49) contrasts with some literature, such as a 2020 study by Shanka, which found peer mediation effective in Ethiopian primary schools due to its empowerment of students to resolve disputes independently. The disagreement in this context may stem from inadequate training or resources for peer mediators, a challenge noted in Table 2 and discussed later.

Similarly, the low score for solution-focused counseling (2.32) diverges from findings in a 2022 article by St. Bonaventure University, which praises solution-focused brief counseling for leveraging students' existing strengths to resolve conflicts. The low agreement in Abia may reflect a lack of counselor training in this approach or cultural preferences for more directive methods. Mindfulness practices (2.31) also faced disagreement, despite evidence from a 2023 literature review suggesting that mindfulness reduces emotional reactivity in primary school settings. This discrepancy could be due to cultural unfamiliarity with mindfulness or limited resources for implementation, as noted in Table 2.

Social skills training (2.48) and positive reinforcement (2.44) also scored below the benchmark, which is surprising given their support in literature. For instance, a 2021 study by Manesis et al. highlights that social skills training enhances students' communication and negotiation abilities, reducing conflict. The low agreement in Table 1 may indicate practical challenges, such as large student populations or time constraints, which limit personalized interventions.

Table 2 identifies challenges faced by counselors. Key challenges include student reluctance due to mistrust, cultural misunderstandings, confidentiality concerns, and intense adolescent emotions. Only two items—failure to follow through on solutions and social media-related conflicts scored below the benchmark, suggesting they are less significant barriers.

The high mean score for student reluctance due to mistrust (3.18) aligns with literature highlighting trust as a critical factor in counseling effectiveness. A 2021 study by Frolova et al. notes that students' fear of judgment or breaches of confidentiality often hinders engagement in conflict resolution processes, particularly in diverse school settings. This is echoed in Table 2's high score for confidentiality concerns (3.10), suggesting that students in Abia Central Senatorial Zone may be hesitant to participate in open dialogues or restorative circles due to privacy fears.

Cultural misunderstandings (3.15) as a challenge are consistent with research on diverse school environments. A 2020 study by Hojbotăa et al. emphasizes that clashes in values among students from varied backgrounds complicate strategies like perspective-taking and collaborative problem-solving, requiring counselors to address cultural sensitivities. This challenge is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where ethnic and cultural diversity is prominent, potentially exacerbating conflicts in secondary schools.

Intense adolescent emotions (3.05) and underlying mental health challenges (3.12) are significant barriers, supported by a 2018 study by Ashghali Farahani et al., which highlights that emotional volatility and mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression, impede students' ability to engage rationally in conflict resolution. These findings suggest that counselors in Abia need additional training in managing emotional and psychological barriers, possibly through SEL programs.

Limited time due to heavy caseloads (2.96), lack of specialized training (2.84), and insufficient resources (2.91) are also notable challenges. These align with a 2023 study by Molla et al., which identifies resource constraints and inadequate training as major barriers to effective conflict management in private schools. Similarly, a 2020 study by Shanka notes that counselors often lack training in advanced techniques like restorative practices, limiting their effectiveness. These findings suggest that systemic issues, such as underfunding and overburdened counselors, hinder strategy implementation in Abia.

The lack of support from school leadership (2.93) and resistance from parents (2.90) further complicate counseling efforts. A 2024 study by Abbas et al. underscores the critical role of school leadership and stakeholder involvement in maintaining a conducive environment for conflict resolution. Without administrative backing or parental cooperation, strategies like behavior contracts or restorative approaches may fail, as seen in Table 2.

Conclusion

This study examined the counselling strategies employed for conflict resolution in senior secondary schools in Abia Central Senatorial Zone. From the findings, it was concluded that counselling plays a significant role in helping students resolve interpersonal and academic-related conflicts. The study reveals broad acceptance of various strategies. Collaborative problem-solving, restorative circles, and time-outs are highly utilized, reflecting their effectiveness in fostering dialogue and de-escalating conflicts. However, strategies such as peer mediation, solution-focused counseling, social skills training, mindfulness practices, and positive reinforcement are less commonly employed, likely due to contextual barriers. The study also identifies significant challenges faced by counselors, including student mistrust, cultural misunderstandings, confidentiality concerns, and intense adolescent emotions, with lesser emphasis on issues like failure to follow through on solutions and social media-related conflicts. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to address systemic and cultural barriers to enhance the efficacy of conflict resolution in schools. Strengthening counselling units, training more school personnel, and increasing awareness of the benefits of counselling can significantly enhance conflict resolution in secondary schools. By addressing the identified gaps, school environments can become safer, more inclusive, and more conducive for learning.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made:

1. Schools should implement professional development programs focusing on advanced conflict resolution techniques, such as peer mediation and solution-focused counseling, to improve the adoption of underutilized strategies like mindfulness practices and social skills training.
2. School leadership and parents should be actively involved through workshops and communication campaigns to build trust and support counseling strategies, ensuring alignment with school policies and cultural contexts to enhance the effectiveness of restorative and collaborative approaches. The Ministry of Education should organize workshops to enhance counsellors' practical skills.
3. More experienced counsellors should mentor newly employed counsellors on conflict resolution practices.
4. Schools should include conflict resolution as part of life skills education in the curriculum.

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EFFECTIVENESS OF COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS TRAINING AS AN INTERVENTION FOR ENHANCING CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AMONG MEMBERS OF THE LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

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Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) skills training as an intervention for enhancing conflict resolution strategies among members of the Lagos State University Students' Union. A quasi experimental one group pre and post-test design was adopted, involving 35 participants selected through purposive and simple random sampling based on leadership involvement and conflict experience. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI; α = 0.81) was used to assess participants' conflict resolution strategies and CPS skills before and after an 8-week training programme. Data was analysed using paired samples t-tests with SPSS (version 25) at a significance level of p < .05. Findings revealed a significant increase in the use of collaborative strategies and a corresponding decrease in avoidant and confrontational approaches. The study concluded that CPS training is an effective intervention for improving conflict resolution strategies among student leaders. It is recommended that university counselling units institutionalise CPS training for student union officials, while future studies should include multiple campuses to enhance generalisability.

Keywords: Collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution, students' union, intervention, university students

Word Counts: 173

Introduction

Student Unions (SUs) often serve as a small-scale version of broader societal structure, encompassing persons with diverse backgrounds, opinions, and interests. It is a student campus-based body within tertiary institutions, such as the Lagos State University Students' Union that is guided by rules. These unions function as organised bodies responsible for representing, protecting, and advancing students' welfare within the academic community. Student Unions

rooted in the principles of labour unionism, provide a platform for collective engagement, advocacy, and leadership development. Through active participation, students develop and nurture resilience, leadership competence, and self-confidence to express different opinions on institutional and social issues (Asma & Rauf, 2023). However, the dynamic and pluralistic nature of student unions inherently creates conditions for interpersonal and group conflicts. Differences in values, interests, leadership styles, and decision-making approaches frequently generate tension among members. Ogunbodede et al. (2020) agreed that conflict is an inevitable and functional aspect of social interaction, particularly within institutional settings where individuals must negotiate roles, responsibilities, and expectations. In this setting, the effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies becomes imperative to maintaining organisational cohesion, dialogue, promoting constructive criticism and ensuring administrative efficiency within student unions.

Despite the importance of effective conflict management, empirical observations indicate that many student leaders often adopt maladaptive conflict resolution approaches, such as avoidance, confrontation, domination, or authoritarian decision-making (Adewale & Okafor, 2021). These approaches tend to escalate disputes, reduce trust, and hinder collaborative governance. This challenge highlights the need for structured psychological and counselling-based interventions that can equip student leaders with adaptive interpersonal and problem-solving competencies. One such intervention is Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) Skills Training, which serves as the independent variable in this study. CPS is a structured, interactive, and skill-based approach that emphasises joint problem definition, perspective-taking, emotional regulation, and the co-construction of mutually beneficial solutions (Anderson & Davidson, 2022; Aslam et al., 2025). Rather than imposing solutions, CPS promotes active listening, empathy, and shared responsibility in resolving conflicts. It is grounded in cognitive-behavioural and social learning principles, which posit that individuals can acquire more adaptive behaviours through guided practice, modelling, and feedback. In counselling situations, CPS has been shown to enhance communication skills, reduce aggression, and improve interpersonal relationships.

The dependent variable in this study is conflict resolution strategies, which refers to the behavioural and cognitive approaches individuals employ in managing interpersonal disagreements. These strategies may be categorised into constructive (for instance, collaboration, compromise, negotiation and so on) and destructive (such as avoidance, aggression, domination) styles. Effective conflict resolution strategies are characterised by mutual respect, open communication, and problem-focused engagement, while ineffective strategies often involve emotional reactivity, poor communication, and win-lose outcomes.

In this study, conflict resolution strategies are operationalised as measurable changes in students' ability to:

- ♦ Engage in collaborative dialogue
- ♦ Demonstrate empathy and perspective-taking
- ♦ Apply problem-solving techniques
- ♦ Reduce reliance on maladaptive conflict behaviours

The central assumption underpinning this research is that exposure to CPS skills training will significantly improve the quality and effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies among student union members. This assumption aligns with social-cognitive theory, which emphasises that behaviour change occurs through skill acquisition, cognitive restructuring, and environmental reinforcement.

By focusing on members of the Lagos State University Students' Union, this study situates itself within a real-world Nigerian university setting, thereby addressing the practical need for evidence-based counselling interventions in student leadership and governance.

Literature Review

Student leaders must manage diverse perspectives and competing demands. According to Eze and Aladejana (2021), unresolved conflicts in student unions can lead to campus violence and administrative paralysis. It was also agreed that conflict is a natural and recurring feature of student leadership, arising from the diversity of opinions, interests, and goals within student populations. How student leaders manage and resolve conflicts significantly influences the overall climate and functionality of student unions and campus governance structures (Adewale & Okafor, 2021). Student leadership positions often expose individuals to interpersonal, ideological, and structural conflicts (Rachel & Odey, 2017). These may stem from disagreements over decision-making processes, competition for influence, resource allocation, and conflicts of interest among union members. When improperly managed, such conflicts can escalate into protests, administrative disruptions, and strained relationships among students and between students and management (Ogunleye & Bamidele, 2020). Unfortunately, many students' leaders approach conflict using authoritarian or confrontational styles that fail to address the root causes of disputes and instead intensify divisions.

Research by Bakare and Oladeji (2022) found that student leaders with exposure to structured conflict management training displayed better negotiation, communication, and emotional regulation skills. They were also more likely to use collaborative (or integrative) and compromising strategies, which emphasise mutual understanding and shared solutions. Collaborative conflict resolution, in particular, has been identified as one of the most effective strategy in educational environments because it encourages openness, respect for differing views, and the pursuit of win-win outcomes (Ajayi & Fasanya, 2021). Effective conflict resolution involves understanding the root causes of disagreements and responding in ways that preserve relationships and group goals.

The development of conflict resolution skills in student leadership contributes to broader institutional goals, including campus peace building and the promotion of democratic

citizenship. According to Onuoha & Ibe (2023), training student leaders in problem-solving techniques could lead to more inclusive leadership styles and enhance trust among peers. These skills are particularly valuable in multi-ethnic and diverse student environments where miscommunication or misunderstanding can easily give rise to conflict.

In sum, the literature stresses the need for proactive conflict resolution training as an integral part of student leadership development. This is especially important in environments like Nigeria's tertiary institutions, where sociopolitical and economic tensions may further strain student interactions. Collaborative approaches to conflict resolution are increasingly recommended as one of the best practice models to prepare student leaders for the complexities of contemporary campus life and governance.

CPS is rooted in social constructivism, which views learning as a collaborative process (Vygotsky, 1978). The CPS approach encourages parties to articulate their concerns, understand others' perspectives, and generate mutually acceptable solutions (Roseth et al., 2021). It emphasises empathy, communication, and cooperation skills essential for student leaders. CPS is also recognised as an essential skill in education, leadership, and organisational settings, particularly in managing interpersonal challenges and group conflicts. CPS refers to the process by which individuals work together to define a problem, share understanding, and co-construct mutually beneficial solutions (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development {OECD}, 2021). The process involves active listening, open dialogue, empathy, and mutual goal-setting, making it a useful framework for conflict resolution in student leadership situations. Roseth et al. (2021) agreed that students trained in CPS demonstrate increased cooperation, reduced reliance on competitive conflict styles, and better academic and interpersonal outcomes. The authors emphasise that CPS helps individuals shift from adversarial thinking to collaborative mindsets, especially in group-based settings such as student unions, classrooms, and project teams.

The integration of CPS in educational institutions has also been supported by studies highlighting its alignment with 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, social-emotional learning, and digital literacy (Anderson & Davidson, 2022). In particular, CPS training encourages reflective communication, tolerance for differing perspectives, and a structured method for engaging in dialogue, which are crucial in pluralistic student environments. By addressing conflict as a shared problem rather than a personal attack, CPS nurtures a culture of inclusion and shared responsibility. CPS aligns well with restorative practices in education, which emphasise repairing harm through inclusive dialogue rather than punishment. A study by Ali & Banjo (2021) reported that student leaders who engaged in CPS-focused interventions developed stronger relationships, clearer communication boundaries, and a higher capacity for emotional regulation. This is especially critical in student unions, where leadership often requires balancing advocacy with diplomacy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of collaborative problem-solving skills training in improving conflict resolution strategies in Lagos State University Students' Union members.

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of collaborative problem-solving training on integrative conflict resolution strategies?
2. Does the collaborative problem-solving training reduce the use of avoidant and confrontational conflict strategies?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the use of collaborative strategies before and after CPS training.
2. There is no significant difference in the use of avoidant and confrontational strategies before and after CPS training.

Methodology

Research Design

A quasi-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design was adopted to determine the effectiveness of collaborative problem-solving training.

Participants

The participants for this study comprised 35 members of the Lagos State University Students' Union. A purposive sampling technique was initially used to identify students actively involved in campus unionism. Subsequently, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the final participants (35 members) from this group. This selection was based on participants' active involvement in leadership roles and their prior experience with intra-union conflicts, ensuring that only individuals with relevant exposure to the study variables were included.

Instrumentation

The Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI), adapted from Kurdek (1994) and was used as a research instrument. It measures collaborative, avoidant, confrontational, and compromising strategies. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81.

Procedure

The pre-test and post-test employed in this study was standardised self-report assessment instruments designed to measure participants' conflict resolution strategies and collaborative problem-solving (CPS) skills. The pre-test, administered before the intervention, served as a

baseline measure to assess participants with the existing level of:

i. Conflict resolution skills
ii. Ability to identify conflict triggers
iii. Communication skills (especially active listening and empathy)
iv. Problem-solving abilities
v. Negotiation and compromise skills

Following the 8-week CPS training programme, a post-test, which was structurally similar to the pre-test, was administered to evaluate changes or improvements in these abilities.

♦ Both the pre-test and post-test were specifically assessed:
♦ Participants' awareness and understanding of conflict situations
♦ Their use of constructive conflict resolution strategies
♦ Level of collaborative problem-solving skills
♦ Communication effectiveness, including empathy and active listening
♦ Ability to generate solutions and reach compromises

The comparison between pre-test and post-test scores enabled the researcher to determine the effectiveness of the CPS training intervention in enhancing conflict resolution strategies among members of the students' union.

Data Analysis

The study was analysed using paired sample t-tests to test for significant differences between pretest and posttest scores using SPSS (version 25). Significance level was determined at $p < .05$.

Results

$\mathbf{H_{01}}$: There is no significant difference in the use of Collaborative strategies before and after CPS training.

Table 1: *Paired Samples t-test on Collaborative Strategies*

Measure	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	t	df	P
Collaborative	3.21(0.55)	4.10(0.48)	0.89	6.89	34	<.001

Note: N = 35. Mean Difference = Post-test – Pre-test. $p < .05$

Table 1 presents paired samples t-test that was conducted to examine the effectiveness of Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) training on participants' conflict resolution strategies. The results demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in the use of collaborative conflict

resolution strategies following the intervention. As shown in Table 1, the mean score for integrative strategies increased from M = 3.21, SD = 0.55 at pre-test to M = 4.10, SD = 0.48at post-test,t(34) = 6.89, p<.001**.** This suggests that after participating in the CPS training, student union members were more likely to adopt collaborative approaches that include problem-solving, mutual respect and collaboration.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in the use of avoidant and confrontational strategies before and after CPS training.

Table 2: *Paired Samples t-test Showing Differences in Avoidant and Confrontational Conflict Resolution Strategies before and after CPS Training*

Measure	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Mean difference	t	df	p
Avoidant	3.45 (0.61)	2.71 (0.50)	-0.74	-5.62	34	<.001
Confrontational	3.34 (0.67)	2.49 (0.52)	-0.85	-6.12	34	<.001

Note: N = 35. Mean Difference = Post-test – Pre-test. p < .05.

Table 2 shows a statistically significant reduction in the use of both avoidant and confrontational conflict resolution strategies**.** For avoidant strategies, the mean score decreased from M = 3.45, SD = 0.61toM = 2.71, SD = 0.50**,** t(34) = **-**5.62, p<.001. Similarly, confrontational strategy usage declined from M = 3.34, SD = 0.67 at pre-test to M = 2.49, SD = 0.52 at post-test, t(34) = **-**6.12, p<.001**.**

These findings indicate that participants were significantly less likely to avoid conflict or use aggressive methods to resolve disputes after undergoing the training. Also, the findings demonstrate that CPS training significantly improved constructive conflict resolution behaviours among student union members, characterised by an increase in collaborative strategies and a decrease in avoidant and confrontational approaches.

Discussion of Findings

The results indicate that CPS training significantly improved participants' use of collaborative strategies and reduced reliance on avoidant and confrontational approaches. This aligns with the findings of Adewale and Okafor (2021); Roseth et al. (2021) documented enhanced interpersonal functioning among students trained in CPS methods. The shift toward collaborative strategies suggests the intervention helped participants reframe conflicts from zero-sum contests to joint problem-solving opportunities.

The results presented in Table 1 showed a statistically significant increase in the use of collaborative conflict resolution strategies following the CPS intervention. This result indicates that after participating in the CPS training, student union members became significantly more

inclined to collaborative strategies that emphasise mutual understanding, collaboration, open communication, and win-win solutions. These findings are in line with the literature suggesting that collaborative training enhances individuals' ability to manage interpersonal conflict constructively (Ali & Banjo, 2021; Ogunbodede et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the results in Table 2 demonstrate a statistically significant reduction in the use of avoidant and confrontational conflict strategies. These declines suggest that after the training, participants were significantly less likely to withdraw from conflict situations (avoidance) or respond with hostility and aggression (confrontation).

These findings suggest that CPS training was effective in reshaping how participants approach interpersonal conflict. It not only promoted constructive engagement through collaborative strategies but also discouraged unproductive patterns, such as avoidance and confrontation. This outcome supports the effectiveness of structured, skills-based interventions in enhancing emotional intelligence, perspective-taking, and collaborative communication among young adults, especially those in leadership roles in collaboration to the statements of (Bakare & Oladeji, 2022; Onuoha & Ibe, 2023).

In summary, the study provides empirical support for the implementation of CPS training as a viable approach to improving conflict resolution behaviours among student leaders in tertiary institutions. The dual effect of enhancing constructive responses while reducing negative ones achieves the all-inclusive impact of the intervention.

Implications for Counselling Practice

The findings provide strong support for integrating CPS training into university leadership development programmes. Counsellors and psychologists in higher institutions can collaborate with student affairs divisions to deliver ongoing CPS workshops. The training also holds promise for broader applications in peer mediation, staff-student conflict, and group counselling sessions.

Conclusion

Collaborative problem-solving training is an effective intervention for enhancing conflict resolution strategies among student leaders. The intervention helped participants adopt more constructive approaches to conflict, improving group dynamics and leadership effectiveness.

Recommendations

University counselling units should institutionalise CPS training for all student union officials.

Future studies should expand the sample to include participants from other campuses to enhance the generalisability and broader applicability of the research findings.

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PEER MEDIATION AND SCHOOL COUNSELLING AS STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING RELATIONSHIP SKILLS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of peer mediation and school counselling as strategies for enhancing relationship skills among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. The objectives were to examine the individual and combined effects of peer mediation and school counselling on students' conflict resolution, interpersonal communication, empathy, and cooperation, and to determine whether gender moderated these effects. A quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design was adopted, using a quantitative approach. A sample size of 480 SS1=SSIII students selected through multi-stage sampling across the three senatorial districts of Rivers State were used. Participants were assigned into four groups: Peer Mediation (n=120), School Counselling (n=120), Combined Intervention (n=120), and Control (n=120). Data were collected using the "Relationship Skills Assessment Scale (RSAS)", a validated and reliable instrument with Cronbach's alpha of 0.87. Interventions lasted six weeks, after which post-tests were conducted. Data were analyzed using paired sample t-tests, ANCOVA, multiple regression, and two-way ANOVA. Results revealed a significant improvement in conflict resolution skills for the peer mediation group ($t(119) = -10.85$, $p < 0.001$), and communication skills for the school counselling group ($t(119) = -11.72$, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis showed that peer mediation and counselling significantly predicted empathy and cooperation ($R^2 = 0.45$, $F(2, 477) = 194.56$, $p < 0.001$). ANCOVA indicated significant group differences in relationship skills ($F(3, 475) = 52.63$, $p < 0.001$), while gender had no moderating effect ($F(3, 472) = 0.87$, $p = 0.46$). The study concluded that both interventions were effective in enhancing students' relationship skills. It was recommended that schools should integrate peer mediation training and professional counselling services into student support frameworks.

Keywords: Peer Mediation, School Counselling, Relationship Skills, Secondary School Students

Introduction

In modern education, fostering positive relationship skills is crucial for students' holistic development. These skills—including empathy, communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution—support emotional well-being, academic progress, and peaceful coexistence in

schools (Bolu-Steve & Oredugba, 2017). Adolescents, who often experience heightened emotions and peer-related pressures, are particularly vulnerable to social and mental health challenges, such as anxiety, stress, and low self-esteem. Addressing these challenges requires structured strategies that promote both social competence and mental health resilience.

Various approaches have been employed worldwide to enhance students' relationship skills and psychological well-being. For instance, peer counselling, conflict resolution programs, and school-based psychosocial interventions have shown positive outcomes in improving student behaviour, interpersonal skills, and academic engagement (Bolu-Steve & Oredugba, 2017; Kiprono, 2015; Ukwueze & Jabi, 2020). Peer counselling involves trained students providing guidance, support, and conflict resolution for their peers, promoting empathy, accountability, and prosocial behaviour (Viashima et al., 2024). Meanwhile, professional school counselling offers structured individual or group sessions that address emotional regulation, communication, and cooperation among students, contributing to mental health and academic outcomes (Ukwueze & Jabi, 2020).

In Nigeria, and particularly in Rivers State, persistent issues such as bullying, peer conflict, and poor social interactions highlight the need for evidence-based interventions that target both relationship skills and mental health. Research suggests that combining peer-based and professional counselling strategies may yield synergistic effects, enhancing students' social competencies and emotional well-being more effectively than either approach alone (Shao et al., 2024; Viashima et al., 2024). However, limited studies have explored their combined application in the Nigerian context, especially considering the cultural diversity and socio-economic pressures faced by students.

This study, therefore, investigates how peer mediation and school counselling, both individually and jointly, can enhance relationship skills and support mental health among secondary school students in Rivers State. By integrating these strategies, the study aims to provide practical insights for educators, school psychologists, and policymakers seeking to promote students' social and emotional development.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary schools in Nigeria, particularly in Rivers State, face persistent challenges of conflicts, bullying, poor peer interaction, and weak communication skills among students. These issues are aggravated by the absence of structured conflict-resolution mechanisms and inadequate counselling services (Ukwueze & Jabi, 2020). In most schools, counselling remains reactive rather than preventive, while peer mediation though proven effective elsewhere is rarely institutionalized (Ogunsanwo, 2016). Existing studies often examine peer mediation or school counselling separately rather than in combination. For example, Kiprono (2015) investigated the effects of peer mediation on conflict resolution skills among secondary school students, while Bolu-Steve and Oredugba (2017) evaluated school counselling programs and their impact on student social interactions. Similarly, Ukwueze and Jabi (2020) explored counselling strategies

in inclusive secondary education but did not assess peer-based interventions. Few studies have examined whether combining these strategies produces synergistic benefits, and little is known about potential gender differences in response to these interventions (Viashima, Aliboh, & Iorbee, 2024). This gap limits educators and policymakers from fully leveraging these strategies to improve students' relationship skills. Therefore, this study investigates how peer mediation and counselling, both individually and jointly, can enhance relationship skills among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To assess the effect of peer mediation on students' conflict resolution, communication, empathy, and cooperation skills.
2. To determine the effect of school counselling on the same relationship skill domains.
3. To examine the combined impact of peer mediation and school counselling on relationship skills.
4. To evaluate whether gender moderates the effectiveness of these interventions on students' relationship skills.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following research questions were raised:

1. What is the effect of peer mediation on secondary school students' relationship skills in Rivers State?
2. What is the impact of counselling service on student relationship skills?
3. What is the combined effect of peer mediation and school counselling on students' relationship skills?
4. Does gender moderate the effects of these interventions on students' relationship skills?

Hypotheses

The study will test the following hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level:

1. Peer mediation will significantly enhance students' relationship skills compared to the control group.
2. School counselling will significantly enhance students' relationship skills compared to the control group.
3. The combined intervention will produce greater improvements in relationship skills than either peer mediation or school counselling alone.
4. There will be no significant gender differences in the effectiveness of the interventions on relationship skills.

Literature Review

Peer Mediation

Peer mediation is a conflict resolution strategy where students are trained to assist their peers in resolving disputes through dialogue and understanding. It leverages peer influence and promotes shared responsibility in handling school conflicts (Ogunsanwo, 2016). In schools, it builds trust and respect by equipping learners with empathy, negotiation, and problem-solving skills (Zuure, 2014; Kiprono, 2015). Unlike traditional discipline, peer-led mediation offers a less intimidating platform for reconciliation (Akpan, Udom & Usoroh, 2020). Its success relies on structured training, institutional support, and consistent monitoring. Rooted in restorative justice, it emphasizes reconciliation over punishment (Anne, Mbiriri & Ngagwencha, 2022). By reducing tensions and improving peer interactions, peer mediation indirectly enhances both social competence and academic outcomes (Shao et al., 2024).

School Counselling

School counselling involves the use of targeted psychological strategies to help students manage academic, social, and emotional challenges. Specific counselling skills—such as active listening, conflict-resolution coaching, problem-solving guidance, and social skills training—equip students to handle peer pressure, improve communication, and resolve interpersonal conflicts effectively (Bolu-Steve & Oredugba, 2017; Esere, 2017; Osuoha, 2024). For example, counsellors may use group guidance sessions to teach collaborative problem-solving, or individual sessions to develop self-regulation and empathy skills in students (Fareo, 2015; Ukwueze & Jabi, 2020). These targeted interventions move beyond general counselling services to provide measurable improvements in students' relationship skills and behavioural outcomes.

By offering a confidential and supportive environment, counselling encourages self-expression and cognitive restructuring (Ibili, 2022). In Nigerian schools, guidance programs complement academics by equipping learners with decision-making and problem-solving skills (Nkechi, Ewomaoghene & Egenti, 2016). When properly implemented, counselling services improve academic achievement, socio-emotional adjustment, and school integration (Ukwueze & Jabi, 2020). Above all, their presence fosters a positive, emotionally safe school culture (Onyango, Aloka & Raburu, 2018).

Relationship Skills in Adolescence

Relationship skills in adolescence encompass communication, empathy, cooperation, active listening, and conflict resolution skill, which are vital for effective interaction and social harmony. During this developmental stage, cognitive and emotional changes shape how students relate to peers, teachers, and family (Shao et al., 2024). Strong relationship skills foster academic achievement, emotional stability, and social integration (Akpan, Udom & Usoroh, 2020). Schools are central in nurturing these competencies through interventions like peer mediation and counselling (Fareo, 2015). Deficits in these skills often manifest as bullying, truancy, aggression, and disengagement (Muhammad & Abubakar, 2024). Conversely, students who acquire such skills demonstrate better classroom conduct, cooperation, and leadership potential (Ogunsanwo, 2016; Viashima, Aliboh & Iorbee, 2024).

Relationship Among Conflict Resolution, Communication, Empathy, and Cooperation

Core relationship skills such as conflict resolution, communication, empathy, and cooperation are central to building positive peer interactions and sustaining a peaceful school climate. Conflict resolution emphasizes recognizing disputes, considering perspectives, and achieving acceptable solutions, a process effectively supported through peer mediation (Zuure, 2014). Communication, including active listening, clarity in expression, and sensitivity to non-verbal cues, underpins collaboration and learning (Nkechi, Ewomaoghene & Egenti, 2016). Empathy enables students to connect meaningfully, manage emotions, and reduce bias (Ogunsanwo, 2016), while cooperation fosters teamwork and shared responsibility in academic and social contexts (Shao et al., 2024). Deficiencies in these skills often lead to bullying, truancy, or disruptive behavior (Fareo, 2015). However, structured interventions such as counselling and peer-led initiatives have proven effective in enhancing these competencies (Osuoha, 2024). As part of broader social-emotional learning frameworks, these skills predict lifelong personal and professional success (Akpan, Udom & Usoroh, 2020; Anne, Mbiriri & Ngagwencha, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura propounded the Social Learning Theory in (1977). The theory emphasizes that behaviour is largely acquired through observation, imitation, and modelling within social contexts. Unlike strict behaviourist views, the theory argues that individuals learn not only through reinforcement but also vicariously, by watching how others act and the outcomes of those actions (Schunk, 2012). Bandura (1986) further explained reciprocal determinism, where personal factors, environment, and behaviour continuously influence one another.

This framework underpins peer mediation and school counselling by emphasizing the use of specific, observable skills that can be modelled and practiced. In peer mediation programs, trained student mediators demonstrate targeted conflict-resolution techniques—such as active listening, negotiation, perspective-taking, and collaborative problem-solving—that their peers can observe and apply in real situations (Ogunsanwo, 2016; Zuure, 2014). Similarly, counsellors employ structured strategies such as role-play exercises, empathy-building activities, guided problem-solving, and communication skills training to enhance students' social competence (Fareo, 2015; Ukwueze & Jabi, 2020). By focusing on these concrete skills, classrooms and peer groups become active learning environments where students not only observe positive behaviours but also practice and internalize effective strategies for managing conflicts and improving interpersonal relationships.

Research supports the application of Social Learning Theory in education, showing that peer-led initiatives improve empathy, cooperation, and conflict management (Akpan, Udom & Usoroh, 2020; Viashima, Aliboh & Iorbee, 2024). Although critics argue it overlooks internal

motivation (Miller, 2011; Ormrod, 2016), its explanatory power makes it suitable for this study. The theory justifies combining peer mediation and counselling, as exposure to both peer and adult role models maximizes opportunities for social learning (Shao et al., 2024).

Methodology

This study adopted the quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design, which was considered suitable for evaluating educational interventions where full randomization may be impractical. Four groups were created: Peer Mediation, School Counselling, Combined Intervention, and a Control group. Each group was tested before and after the six-week intervention, enabling comparisons within and between groups. This design allowed for causal inferences about the effectiveness of the interventions while addressing baseline differences.

The study population comprised all senior secondary students (SS1–SS3) in Rivers State public schools, estimated at over 150,000 (Rivers State Ministry of Education, 2023). This population was chosen because adolescence is marked by intensive peer interaction, emotional sensitivity, and the development of interpersonal competencies. A sample of 480 students was drawn through multi-stage sampling. Six schools were purposively selected across the state's three senatorial districts, after which stratified and random sampling were used to ensure representation by gender and class level. Students were then assigned to the four groups, with 120 participants each. This sampling approach minimized bias and ensured demographic diversity.

The main instrument was the Relationship Skills Assessment Scale (RSAS), developed by the researcher to measure the presence and level of four core relationship skills: conflict resolution, communication, empathy, and cooperation. The scale contains 40 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater mastery or demonstration of each skill. Development involved expert review, pilot testing, and exploratory factor analysis, confirming a four-factor structure. Cronbach's alpha for the entire scale was 0.87, with subscales ranging from 0.81 to 0.89, demonstrating high internal consistency. Test-retest reliability over two weeks yielded 0.84, and validity was supported through correlations with a standardized social skills measure ($r = 0.76$, $p < .001$). These results confirm that the RSAS is a psychometrically sound instrument for assessing the level of relationship skills among secondary school students in Nigerian schools. The intervention lasted six weeks.

Peer Mediation group: Sessions were led by selected students trained as peer mediators specifically for this study, focusing on active listening, emotional regulation, and structured conflict-resolution steps. These mediators were participants trained to facilitate skill practice among their peers, distinct from professional counsellors.

School Counselling group: Sessions were led by professional school counsellors recruited for the study, emphasizing self-awareness, empathy development, emotional intelligence, and assertive communication.

Combined Intervention group: Students alternated between peer mediation sessions and counselling sessions, ensuring exposure to both peer-led skill practice and professional guidance.

Control group: Students continued with regular school activities and did not receive any structured intervention.

Data collection was standardized, beginning with pretests using the RSAS, followed by the six-week intervention, and concluding with posttests using the same instrument.

Peer mediators facilitated skill-practice sessions within the Peer Mediation and Combined groups.

Professional counsellors conducted guided counselling sessions in the School Counselling and Combined groups.

Research assistants coordinated scheduling, ensured adherence to protocols, and administered pre- and post-tests to maintain consistency across groups.

Ethical approval was obtained from the University Research Ethics Committee and the Rivers State Ministry of Education. Parental consent and student assent were secured, confidentiality was maintained, and participants retained the right to withdraw at any time.

Data were analyzed using SPSS (version 26). Paired t-tests evaluated within-group changes, while ANCOVA assessed posttest group differences after adjusting for pretest scores.

Regression analysis examined how interventions predicted components of relationship skills, and a two-way ANOVA tested gender effects. Effect sizes were also calculated to interpret the magnitude of change. This combination of statistical tools provided a rigorous framework for answering the research questions and testing hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores across Groups

Group	**Pre-Test Mean**	**Pre-Test SD**	**Post-Test Mean**	**Post-Test SD**
Peer Mediation	55.2	6.1	72.5	5.8
School Counselling	54.8	6.4	71.3	6.0
Combined Intervention	55.5	6.0	78.4	5.2
Control	54.9	6.3	56.0	6.5

The descriptive results in Table 1 compare pre- and post-test scores for Peer Mediation, School Counselling, Combined Intervention, and Control groups. Pre-test means were closely aligned (54.8–55.5), showing that all groups began with comparable levels of relationship skills. This similarity establishes baseline equivalence, ensuring that subsequent changes can be attributed to the interventions.

Post-test results revealed notable improvements among intervention groups. The Combined Intervention group achieved the highest mean score (78.4), reflecting a marked gain of 22.9 points. The relatively low standard deviation (5.2) indicates consistent benefits across participants, suggesting a synergistic effect when both peer mediation and counselling are applied together.

Peer Mediation participants improved from 55.2 to 72.5 (Δ = 17.3), demonstrating the effectiveness of student-led conflict resolution and cooperative learning strategies. School Counselling participants also showed significant progress, moving from 54.8 to 71.3 (Δ = 16.5), confirming the value of structured professional guidance in building empathy, communication, and problem-solving skills. By contrast, the Control group showed only a minimal change (54.9 to 56.0), underscoring the stability of non-intervention outcomes. The balanced standard deviations across all groups (5.2–6.5) further affirm the reliability of these findings.

Hypothesis Testing

Effect of Peer Mediation, School Counselling, and Combined Intervention (Paired Sample t-Test Analysis)

Table 2: *Paired Sample t-Test Results for Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores*

Group	**t-Statistic**	**p-Value**
Peer Mediation	-25.7996	0.000
School Counselling	-20.6896	0.000
Combined Intervention	-31.1532	0.000
Control	-2.7955	0.006

Table 2 presents paired sample t-test results comparing pre- and post-test scores across groups. Findings show significant improvements in all intervention groups, with the strongest effect recorded in the Combined Intervention group (t = -31.1532, p = 0.000). This demonstrates the powerful impact of blending peer mediation with counselling, where peer-led activities enhanced engagement and professional guidance deepened reflection. Peer Mediation alone also produced substantial gains (t = -25.7996, p = 0.000), confirming its effectiveness in building cooperation, empathy, and conflict-resolution skills. Likewise, School Counselling yielded meaningful progress (t = -20.6896, p = 0.000), emphasizing the role of professional support in strengthening emotional and social competencies. The Control group showed minimal change (t = -2.7955, p = 0.006), highlighting the clear benefits of structured interventions.

Group Differences in Relationship Skills After Intervention (ANCOVA Results Controlling for Pre-Test Scores)

Table 3: *ANCOVA Summary – Post-Test Scores by Group Controlling for Pre-Test Scores*

Source	**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**F**	**p-Value**
Group	29105.2858	3	270.8659	0.000
Pre-Test	5.9255	1	0.1654	0.6844
Residual	17013.3508	475	-	-

Table 3 presents ANCOVA results comparing post-test scores across Peer Mediation, School Counselling, Combined Intervention, and Control groups while controlling for pre-test scores. The Group effect was highly significant ($F = 270.87$, $p < 0.001$), showing that interventions produced meaningful differences in relationship skills. In contrast, the Pre-Test covariate was not significant ($F = 0.165$, $p = 0.684$), indicating that initial ability levels did not influence outcomes.

The Combined Intervention group accounted for the largest improvement, confirming the strong impact of integrating peer and professional support. Peer Mediation and School Counselling also showed significant effects, each outperforming the Control group. Minimal change in the Control group highlights that structured interventions, rather than natural progression, drive improvements in students' interpersonal skills in Rivers State schools.

Predicting Empathy and Cooperation Using Peer Mediation and School Counselling (Multiple Regression Analysis)

Table 4: *Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Empathy and Cooperation*

Predictor	**Coefficient (B)**	**Standard Error (SE)**	**t-Statistic**	**p-Value**
Peer Mediation	0.53	0.04	13.25	0.000
School Counselling	0.47	0.05	9.40	0.000
Constant	10.45	1.15	9.09	0.000

Model Summary	**R^2**	**F-Statistic**	**df**	**p-Value**
	0.45	194.56	2, 477	0.000

Table 4 reports regression findings on how peer mediation and school counselling predict empathy and cooperation. The model explained 45% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.45$) and was highly significant ($F(2, 477) = 194.56$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the strong predictive power of both interventions.

Peer Mediation showed a coefficient of 0.53 ($t = 13.25$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a powerful effect on students' ability to empathize and collaborate. School Counselling also had a meaningful influence, with a coefficient of 0.47 ($t = 9.40$, $p < 0.001$), reflecting the value of professional guidance in building relationship skills. Together, these findings highlight that peer

mediation and counselling independently and jointly foster essential interpersonal competencies among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Gender as a Moderator of Intervention Effectiveness (Two-way ANOVA Analysis)

Table 5: *Two-way ANOVA Summary – Effects of Group, Gender, and Interaction on Post-Test Scores*

Source	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**F**	**p**
Group	29159.42	3	9720.14	272.82	<0.001
Gender	146.92	1	146.92	4.12	0.043
Group × Gender	56.10	3	18.70	0.52	0.665
Residual	16816.26	472	35.62	-	-

Table 5 presents the results of a two-way ANOVA examining the effects of Group, Gender, and their interaction on post-test relationship skills.

There was a significant main effect of Group on relationship skills, $F(3, 472) = 272.82$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that different interventions had significantly different effects.

The main effect of Gender was also significant, $F(1, 472) = 4.12$, $p = 0.043$, suggesting that male and female students differed slightly in performance.

The Group × Gender interaction was not significant, $F(3, 472) = 0.52$, $p = 0.665$, indicating that intervention effectiveness did not differ between genders.

These results show that all interventions improved relationship skills and that these improvements were consistent for both male and female students.

Discussion of Findings

The results of this study revealed that peer mediation, school counselling, and their combination significantly enhanced relationship skills specifically conflict resolution, communication, empathy, and cooperation among secondary school students in Rivers State. These findings align closely with prior research and contribute new insights into the Nigerian educational context.

The significant improvement observed in the **peer mediation group** supports Ogunsanwo (2016), who reported that peer-led conflict resolution programs improved student interpersonal relations and reduced the occurrence of school violence. Similarly, Kiprono (2015) found that peer counselling had a profound effect on students' ability to resolve conflicts amicably in Kenyan secondary schools. These studies corroborate the present research, highlighting the efficacy of peer-based interventions in promoting constructive peer interactions and social cohesion.

The **school counselling group** also demonstrated notable improvement in relationship skills. This echoes findings by Fareo (2015), who argued that school counsellors play a critical role in

addressing behavioral and relational challenges, including bullying. Osuoha (2024) and Nkechi et al. (2016) also emphasized that school counselling significantly improves students' behaviour and academic discipline. The emotional support and skill-building processes embedded in counselling enable students to manage interpersonal differences more constructively.

The **combined intervention** produced the most substantial gains. This result supports Shao et al. (2024), who found that peer relationships and emotional support systems worked synergistically to enhance students' engagement and outcomes. The present study extends this understanding to interpersonal competencies, suggesting that integrating peer mediation with professional counselling leads to richer, multi-dimensional development. The consistency of this finding with those of Akpan et al. (2020) and Anne et al. (2022) further confirms that when students engage in both peer and counsellor-led activities, they acquire more robust social-emotional skills.

Notably, the study found no significant moderating effect of gender on the outcomes. This aligns with findings from Ibili (2022), who reported no gender differences in students' responsiveness to counselling in reducing truancy. It also confirms the assertion by VIASHIMA et al. (2024) that peer counselling is effective across gender lines for behavioural improvement. Thus, the interventions evaluated in this study can be confidently implemented in mixed-gender settings.

In conclusion, this study validates and extends the existing literature by showing that peer mediation and counselling both separately and in combination significantly and reliably improve relationship skills. The evidence confirms the theoretical assumptions underlying social-emotional learning and conflict resolution education, and reinforces calls by Bolu-Steve and Oredugba (2017) and Owan (2018) for schools to institutionalize these practices as part of their core psycho-educational strategies.

Implications for Educational Practice and Policy

The study's results carry vital implications for Nigerian secondary schools. First, the success of peer mediation highlights the need to institutionalize structured student-led conflict resolution programs. Training mediators fosters empathy, communication, and problem-solving, reducing school conflicts and improving climate, especially in Rivers State (Zuure, 2014; Ogunsanwo, 2016).

Second, the effectiveness of school counselling emphasizes employing trained counsellors in all schools. Counsellors should deliver proactive interventions, supported with continuous professional development and integration into school systems (Bolu-Steve & Esere, 2017; Ukwueze & Jabi, 2020).

Third, the superior outcomes of combined interventions suggest policy should promote integrated approaches, aligning peer education and counselling within holistic frameworks. The absence of gender moderation further confirms the universal applicability of these strategies,

supporting inclusive policy directions in Nigeria's education system.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study advances knowledge on adolescent development and school-based interventions in Nigeria. It provides empirical evidence that both peer mediation and school counselling significantly enhance relationship skills, and importantly, shows their combined effect within one experimental design. By validating the Relationship Skills Assessment Scale (RSAS) with strong reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$), the study also equips future researchers with a robust tool for measuring empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution among students. Unlike prior cross-sectional studies (Owan, 2018; Muhammad & Abubakar, 2024), the quasi-experimental approach with four groups strengthens causal claims. Multi-analytical methods, including ANCOVA and regression, revealed that gender did not moderate outcomes, highlighting inclusivity. Supporting earlier findings (Akpan et al., 2020; Fareo, 2015), the research further informs policy by recommending integrated, culturally relevant interventions for Rivers State schools.

Conclusion

This study examined peer mediation and school counselling as strategies for enhancing relationship skills among secondary school students in Rivers State. Using a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design with 480 participants, the research provided clear evidence that both approaches effectively improved empathy, cooperation, communication, and conflict resolution.

The results showed significant post-test gains across all intervention groups compared to the control, with the combined intervention producing the greatest improvement. This suggests that integrating peer-led activities with professional counselling creates a more powerful impact on students' social-emotional growth. Statistical tests, including paired t-tests, ANCOVA, regression, and ANOVA, confirmed the robustness of these outcomes.

Importantly, gender did not significantly moderate the effects, meaning both male and female students benefitted equally. The use of the Relationship Skills Assessment Scale (RSAS) further validated the findings by offering a reliable, context-sensitive measure of relationship competencies.

Practically, the study emphasizes the need for schools in Rivers State to adopt proactive, student- centred interventions rather than relying solely on discipline. By embedding mediation and counselling into school systems, educators can foster healthier peer interactions, reduce conflict, and promote inclusive, supportive learning environments. These interventions should be viewed as core components of holistic education, not optional add-ons.

Recommendations

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

1. Schools should integrate peer mediation into student support services by training mediators, establishing clubs, and formalizing protocols to reduce conflicts and build respect.
2. Education boards should deploy qualified counsellors in every school to provide preventive and responsive services such as group sessions, individual counselling, and conflict management.
3. Since the joint use of counselling and peer mediation produced the strongest outcomes, schools should coordinate both strategies. Peer mediators can refer peers for professional counselling when necessary, ensuring holistic support.

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ASSESSING THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF COUNSELLING ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AMONG MARRIED COUPLES IN ABEOKUTA, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study assessed the perceived impact of counselling on conflict resolution strategies among married couples in Abeokuta, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey was carried out to collect data on 200 participants (100 married couples) using a valid questionnaire (r = 0.92). Results revealed that the first reason for marital conflict was financial disagreements (M = 3.53, SD = 0.74), then poor communication (M = 3.08, SD = 0.93) and interference of extended family (M = 3.00, SD = 0.95). Counselling was perceived to help with communication (M = 3.20, SD = 0.87), promote understanding (M = 3.13, SD = 0.90), and present practical conflict resolution (M = 3.23, SD = 0.94). Counselling also occurred with a lower level of conflict and more positive partner interaction (both M = 3.25; SDs = 0.89 and 0.83). Nevertheless, rebuilding trust (M = 2.70, SD = 1.01) and regulating emotions (M = 2.85, SD = 1.06) were less effective, and the agreement was moderate when it comes to timely dispute resolution (M = 2.85, SD = 1.06) and relationship satisfaction (M = 2.90, SD = 0.94). Counselling awareness and acceptance were moderate, but preference toward it as compared to other methods was rather low (M = 2.70, SD = 0.95). It concluded that counselling is a valuable asset, especially for communication and practical strategies, but advised that the elements of trust-building and emotional regulation be strengthened, and that more couples in Nigeria should adopt and embrace it. These should be enhanced by policy and community outreach.

Keywords: Marital Conflict, Counselling Intervention, Conflict Resolution, Nigerian Couples.
Word Counts: 249

Introduction

Like in any other society, one of the challenges that couples in Nigeria are facing is the presence of conflicts that threaten the stability of their marriages and the overall well-being of their families. According to Babalola (2024), previous research indicates that problems regarding money, as well as disagreements regarding culture, communication, and other topics, manifest themselves in the majority of marriages. As a result, tactics for conflict resolution become increasingly crucial, and it is possible that counselling could be an intervention that completely

changes the narrative. While they have proven to be helpful, it is still of the utmost need to conduct additional research into the effectiveness of counselling in relation to the conflict in Nigeria. It is possible to find a vast body of literature on the subject of conflict resolution, which demonstrates the many different ideas and practical uses of counselling.

A variety of counselling models, including cognitive-behaviour models and narrative therapy, have been studied by a number of researchers as potential strategies that might effectively reduce disputes and increase communication between couples (Ogbode, Nwankwo, & Njoku, 2022; Afolabi, 2024). Therefore, the relevance of this literature is best understood in relation to Western contexts, as opposed to non-Western contexts such as Nigeria, for example. An examination of the research conducted in Nigeria suggests that counselling interventions are both promising and inconclusive, according to the findings. Olusola and Falaye (2024) found that couples who attend counselling tend to have healthy relationships and appropriate coping skills. Nevertheless, the majority of this research is qualitative or has small sample sizes, which restricts its potential to be generalised outside a specific context. This gives rise to questions regarding whether or not counselling techniques are effective in the same way across the board, which shows that there is a requirement for conducting more in-depth research into our situation.

The body of literature that is now available do not show multidimensional approaches to the role of sociocultural elements in addition to individual psychological factors. In spite of the fact that counselling theories are well-founded, research conducted in Nigeria frequently fails to take into account the combined impact of traditional beliefs, economic status, and contemporary therapy. The study discussed how counselling can be used in conflict resolution within Nigerian couples, and it fills the gaps in the literature, which tends to conclude the suitability of counselling services (Babalola, 2024; Olusola & Falaye, 2024). It discussed typical causes of marital conflict, counselling strategies of comparison and explored couple participation and experiences. Although counselling has been viewed as a solution to relational problems (Afolabi, 2024; Babalola, 2024), there is a paucity of evidence on the effectiveness of the practice in Nigeria (Kofoworola & Rofiu, 2024), with most of the studies being based on Western approaches (Elegbede et al., 2024; Kofoworola & Rofiu, 2024). The consequences of marital disagreements in Nigeria have both psychological and socio-economic impacts (Jalalvand et al., 2023; Okumdi & Akpororo, 2022) and affect both households and communities (Ogbode et al., 2022). The study was conducted to offer culturally sensitive information and empirical data to guide the counselling practice and policy, which will eventually lead to marital stability and happiness among couples in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Marital conflict remains a significant challenge among couples in Nigeria, often resulting in emotional distress, strained relationships, and, in severe cases, separation or divorce. Despite the availability of counselling services, many couples continue to struggle with unresolved issues, particularly those rooted in financial difficulties, cultural expectations, and poor communication.

Existing research on conflict resolution among couples has largely focused on Western models and qualitative approaches, creating a gap in contextually relevant, data-driven studies that reflect the Nigerian sociocultural landscape. Furthermore, while counselling interventions have shown promise in improving communication and conflict management, their effectiveness in deeper aspects such as emotional regulation and trust-building remains limited. There is a pressing need for a more systematic understanding of how culturally appropriate counselling strategies can be utilised and optimised to address the specific challenges Nigerian couples face. This study investigated the gap by evaluating the perceived role of counselling in marital conflict resolution in Abeokuta, Nigeria.

Objectives:

Four objectives were examined in this study:

i. Examine the perceived role of counselling in conflict resolution
ii. Identify the common sources of conflict among couples
iii. Assess the perceived effectiveness of counselling approaches on couples' conflicts.
iv. Determine the extent to which couples in Nigeria seek counselling as a means of resolving marital conflicts.

Research Questions:

Four research questions were answered:

1. What are the common causes of conflict among couples in Nigeria?
2. How do counselling services contribute to conflict resolution between couples in Nigeria?
3. How effective are counselling strategies in helping couples resolve conflicts in Nigeria?
4. To what extent do couples in Nigeria seek counselling as a means of resolving marital conflicts?

Methodology

A quantitative research design was adopted using a cross-sectional survey approach. This design was chosen to gather empirical data on how couples perceive counselling and its efficacy in resolving their conflicts. The study is descriptive and estimates the commonly occurring sources of conflict, the perceived role of counselling, and the extent to which couples seek counselling.

The population of the study is approximately 145,000 - 160,000 couples estimated to be living together as married couples in Abeokuta (Abeokuta North + South LGAs). The estimate started with the 2022 estimated populations for Abeokuta North (338,100) and Abeokuta South (425,700) and considered the age shares and marital prevalence rates at a statewide level. (city population, 2025).

The sample of the study consisted of 100 married couples (200 people) resident in the Abeokuta metro area of Ogun State, Nigeria. Purposive sampling was used to get participants who were currently married and living in Abeokuta. To be more specific, the sampled population consists of those from diverse backgrounds, ages, education, and duration of marriage, which truly captures the heterogeneity of couples in this metropolitan area.

The data were gathered only through a structured, developed and self-administered questionnaire titled **''Couples' Conflict Resolution and Counselling Experience Questionnaire (CCRCEQ)''** that contained 2 sections. Section A consisted of demographic data such as gender, age, occupation, ethnic group, and educational qualification. Section B consisted of 25 items to study the topic of investigation through a 4-point modified Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). A part of the research instrument was developed based on a review of literature relevant to the study and is designed to capture demographic information (age, gender, educational background, duration of marriage, etc.) and common causes of conflict among couples in Nigeria, which included questions addressing the common areas of marital conflict such as finances, communication, culture, and other stressors. Conflict Resolution Strategies: These are items that are meant to measure the particular conflict resolution strategies that couples use and the role of counselling in enhancing these skills. Counselling Experience and Perception: Items measuring the degree to which participants sought counselling, the effectiveness of the strategies used, and their general feelings towards using counselling for conflict resolution. To ensure that the items were clear, relevant to the culture, and reliable, a small group of married couples was taken to pilot-test the questionnaire before the main study. The necessary changes were made based on the pilot testing results. The questionnaire was administered two times in a gap of two weeks. The responses were Cronbach's alpha tested, and the reliability was found to be 0.92. Hence, the data is reliable.

Results

Research Question One: What are the common causes of conflict among couples in Nigeria?

Table 1: *Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Items Indicating the common causes of conflict among couples in Nigeria. (n = 200)*

S/N	Items	Responses (F)				Mean	S.D.	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD			
1	Financial disagreements frequently lead to marital conflict.	130	50	15	5	3.53	0.74	Strongly Agree
2	Cultural differences are a major source of conflict between partners.	60	90	35	15	2.98	0.88	Agree
3	Poor communication contributes significantly to marital disputes.	80	70	35	15	3.08	0.93	Agree
4	Divergent expectations regarding household roles often cause conflict.	30	50	70	50	2.30	1.00	Disagree
5	Interference from extended family members frequently sparks disagreements	70	80	30	20	3.00	0.95	Agree
	Grand mean					2.98	0.99	**Agree**

Source: Researcher's field survey (2025)

Note. Decision rule: 4= Strongly Agree (SA), 3= Agree (A), 2= Disagree (D), 1= Strongly Disagree (SD). A mean score < 2.60 is disagreed; a Mean score between 2.60-3.40 is agreed; a Mean score > 3.40 is strongly agreed.

Table 1 shows that, of the five potential areas of conflict, finances stand out as the most important factor for marital discord in Nigeria. Respondents nearly all had high agreement that financial issues are a significant contributor to conflict. With a mean score of 3.53 and a standard deviation of 0.74, this issue has a high measure of agreement. In contrast, cultural variations, poor communication, and meddling in-laws scored around 3.00 on average, which means there was also meaningful agreement, but it was not as prominent as financial issues. The decision rules show that while these items scored in the "Agree" range, they were not as firmly entrenched in the "Strongly Agree" range. This indicates there is moderate agreement by the sample that those three facets have a role in marital discord. About variation, as seen by the standard deviations, there is also an insight into the distribution of opinions. For example, variation in the responses related to finances (SD = 0.74) is fairly low, where there was a very strong and consistent perception of the issue and its importance. The variation related to different expectations regarding household roles (SD = 1.00) indicates there is a slightly wider variation whereby a sizeable portion of the respondents disagreed concerning that particular issue as a source of marital conflict. Overall, with a grand mean of 2.98 and a grand SD of 0.99, there is a balanced response period where, while there is some opinion diversity, there is a general tendency for the sample to agree that there are several issues that contribute to marital conflict, with finances being the most strongly rated.

Research Question Two: How do counselling services contribute to conflict resolution between couples in Nigeria?

Table 2:*Mean and Standard Deviation scores of items indicating* ***how counselling services contribute to conflict resolution between couples in Nigeria****. (n = 200)*

SN	Items	Responses (F)				Mean	S.D.	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD			
6	Counselling sessions help improve couples' communication skills.	90	70	30	10	3.20	0.87	Agree
7	Counselling facilitates a better understanding of each partner's perspective.	80	80	25	15	3.13	0.90	Agree
8	Counselling provides practical strategies for managing conflicts.	100	60	25	15	3.23	0.94	Agree
9	Counselling helps couples regulate emotions during disagreements.	70	60	40	30	2.85	1.06	Agree
10	Counselling contributes to rebuilding trust between partners	50	70	50	30	2.70	1.01	Agree
	Grand mean					3.02	0.98	**Agree**

Source: Researcher's field survey (2025)

Note. Decision rule: 4= Strongly Agree (SA), 3= Agree (A), 2= Disagree (D), 1= Strongly Disagree (SD). A mean score < 2.60 is disagreed; a Mean score between 2.60-3.40 is agreed; a Mean score > 3.40 is strongly agreed.

Table 2 shows that the respondents agree that counselling helps to improve different aspects of the couples' conflict resolution. The data shows that counselling is useful to improve communication skills (mean = 3.20) and provide strategies (mean = 3.23). Both items have low standard deviations (0.87 and 0.94), implying there is a consensus among respondents. Likewise, counselling is said to increase understanding of one partner's perspective better than the other partner's, as evidenced by the mean score of 3.13 with a standard deviation of 0.90.

Overall, all items fall within the "Agree" range as per the decision rule, confirming that the intervention is perceived positively overall. Contrarily, items on whether disagreements have become less emotional (mean = 2.85, SD = 1.06) and whether partners have become better at trusting one another again (mean = 2.70, SD = 1.01) received slightly lower mean scores. As such, it can be argued that counselling is thought to be somewhat less effective in these areas or somewhat more variable. The opinions were mixed about the impact of counselling on trust and emotion regulation, as is evidenced by the fairly larger standard deviations of these items. Based

upon an overall score of 3.02 (with a grand SD of 0.98), I feel that counselling is fairly effective in multiple areas of conflict resolution. The information can be useful for both practitioners and researchers, as it highlights the strength of the present counselling and also shows the areas that might need more attention to improve therapeutic outcomes for couples.

Research Question Three: How effective are counselling strategies in helping couples resolve conflicts in Nigeria?

Table 3: *Mean and Standard Deviation scores of items indicating how effective counselling strategies are in helping couples resolve conflicts in Nigeria. (n = 200)*

SN	Items	Responses (F)				Mean	S.D.	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD			
11	Counselling strategies significantly reduce the frequency of conflicts.	100	60	30	10	3.25	0.89	Agree
12	The techniques used in counselling lead to lasting improvements in conflict resolution.	80	70	30	20	3.05	0.97	Agree
13	Counselling interventions result in more positive interactions between partners.	90	80	20	10	3.25	0.83	Agree
14	Couples experience a timely resolution of disputes through counselling.	70	60	40	30	2.85	1.06	Agree
15	Counselling enhances overall satisfaction with conflict management in the relationship	60	80	40	20	2.90	0.94	Agree
	Grand mean					3.06	0.94	**Agree**

Source: Researcher's field survey (2025)

Note. Decision rule: 4= Strongly Agree (SA), 3= Agree (A), 2= Disagree (D), 1= Strongly Disagree (SD). A mean score < 2.60 is disagreed; a Mean score between 2.60-3.40 is agreed; a Mean score > 3.40 is strongly agreed.

According to Table 3, respondents mostly agree that counselling positively impacts conflict resolution since all items fall under "Agree." Regular counsel helps in reducing conflict and increasing positive interaction with another party. These two items received the same mean score of 3.25, meaning that the respondents perceived counselling strategies and interventions to be useful in these aspects. The overall grand mean of 3.06 strengthens the idea that, on average, counselling is good for the respondents for managing conflicts. The spread of the responses is moderate, as shown in the standard deviations ranging from 0.83 to 1.06. This shows that

responses are spread out but not completely different; hence, responses are broad as per the average. Looking closely at individual items, see minor differences in effectiveness. To illustrate, the item "Through counselling couples, disputes are resolved in good time" has a mean of 2.85 with an SD of 1.06, suggesting the respondents are somewhat mixed on whether counselling leads to the timely resolution of disputes. Also, the response "Couples are satisfied with how their relationship manages conflict" scores 2.90. With a standard deviation of 0.94, this implies that this item is slightly less consistent in agreement compared to the items that refer directly to a reduction in conflicts and enhancement of positive interactions. While counselling is generally accepted as helpful in managing conflicts, this reflects that specific outcome measures like timeliness/overall satisfaction could be better or more targeted.

Research Question Four: To what extent do couples in Nigeria seek counselling as a means of resolving marital conflicts?

Table 4: *Mean and Standard Deviation scores of items indicating the extent to which couples in Nigeria seek counselling as a means of resolving marital conflicts. (n = 200)*

SN	Items	Responses (F)				Mean	S.D.	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD			
16	Couples in my community actively seek counselling to resolve marital conflicts.	60	80	40	20	2.90	0.94	Agree
17	Counselling is widely accepted as a beneficial tool for resolving marital issues.	90	70	20	20	3.15	0.96	Agree
18	A significant number of couples utilise counselling services when conflicts arise.	80	60	40	20	3.00	1.00	Agree
19	There is a high level of awareness about available counselling services among couples.	50	80	50	20	2.80	0.93	Agree
20	Many couples prefer counselling over other methods for addressing marital conflicts	40	90	40	30	2.70	0.95	Agree
	Grand mean					2.91	0.96	

Source: Researcher's field survey (2025)

Note. Decision rule: 4= Strongly Agree (SA), 3= Agree (A), 2= Disagree (D), 1= Strongly Disagree (SD). A mean score < 2.60 is disagreed; a Mean score between 2.60-3.40 is agreed; a Mean score > 3.40 is strongly agreed

According to Table 4, the community agrees that counselling services are useful for resolving marital disputes. All the items fall under the "Agree" category, where the mean ranged from 2.70 to 3.15. More specifically, the item states, "Counselling is a widely acknowledged helpful method for resolving marital problems. It has the highest mean of 3.15." This indicates that the respondents have quite an assurance of the efficacy of counselling in general. Couples in conflict use counselling services rather significantly (mean=3.00), which also shows a positive but lesser agreement. The items for couples seeking counselling (mean = 2.90) also show a positive response toward counselling. While there is an agreement on the benefits of counselling, individual opinion seems to vary as the standard deviations are moderate (approx. 0.93 to 1.00). The overall grand mean of 2.91 (with a grand SD of 0.96) consolidates the view that counselling is recognised as a beneficial approach for managing marital conflicts in the community. Many couples prefer counselling over other methods, reflected by a lower mean (2.70), which indicates that while counselling is accepted and used, preference for counselling over other methods may not be very strong. Though counselling is accepted and used, the stronger preference for counselling over methods appears weaker, as shown by the lower mean for "Many couples prefer counselling over other methods" (2.70). Overall, the data reflect reasonable agreement with the use of counselling services as an effective tool in managing marital disputes.

Discussion

Based on the results presented in Table 1, the majority of respondents, with a mean score of 3.53, are in agreement that marital conflict is caused by financial concerns. This group of responders has reached a consensus that economic concerns are the root cause of marital disagreements. Cultural differences, poor communication, and involvement from in-laws are also factors that contribute to conflict, but to a lower level (grand mean = 2.98). Other factors have also been shown to contribute to conflict. Previous research has demonstrated that the most significant factors contributing to marital conflicts in Nigeria are high levels of financial hardship and cultural stress. Because there was no attempt at negotiation, this transpired. In accordance with the findings of the study carried out by Babalola (2024) and Olusola and Falaye (2024), this is the case. Since its standard deviation is quite low, it is possible to draw the conclusion that disagreements regarding finances are broadly perceived and are not restricted to a particular subgroup. As a result, this is a domain that calls for a variety of actions.

The findings shown in Table 2 demonstrate that counselling services assist individuals in being better able to cope with conflict. These services assist with communication, assist in understanding the perspectives of partners, and provide better strategies to deal with problems. Based on the low standard deviations across these categories, most respondents are in agreement that it is true that counselling can be helpful in certain aspects of relationships. Counselling interventions have been shown to bring about favourable improvements in the communication and conflict management methods of married couples, according to a previous study. This is what Ogbode et al. 2022 and Afolabi 2024 have to say about the matter. The poor ratings for

emotion control and restoring trust indicate that these components may require more improvement or focus in the counselling technique that is being utilised. Table 3 demonstrates that certain counselling processes have resulted in fewer instances of fighting and more good interactions between spouses. This is supported by the fact that the mean scores of the main items were approximately 3.25.

On the other hand, the fact that the item meant for the satisfaction with conflict management and the timeliness of conflict resolution were 2.85 and 2.90, respectively, indicated that the counselling intervention had some variable consequences. In general, the respondents in this research attest to the fact that counselling therapy has been helpful in this regard, but it has failed to resolve concerns pertaining to punctuality and satisfaction, despite the fact that it has advised against fighting. Since this is the case, there is a requirement for approaches that are more culturally sensitive. As stated by Elegbede et al. (2024) and Afolabi (2024). It is possible that further improvements could be made to the effectiveness of counselling in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the frequency with which couples seek the advice of counsellors to address their disagreements is analysed in Table 4. According to the findings of the study, couples had generally favourable attitudes towards counselling services (grand mean = 2.91), as indicated by the statistical analysis.

In comparison to other methods of conflict resolution, there is a very moderate preference for counselling, even though there is a high degree of awareness and acceptance of counselling services. According to Kofoworola and Rofiu (2024) and Okumdi and Akpororo (2022), this demonstrates that counselling is beneficial; yet, there may be some stigma associated with it or other ways to resolve it that may prevent couples from being willing to use it. These findings imply that when it comes to developing policies and other things, they should continue to inform people about the effectiveness of therapy, which is not a problem, but could prevent it from happening.

The results of this study have numerous significant implications for the field of marital conflict resolution in Nigeria, including policy, practice, and future research. As financial concerns were the most significant and widely agreed-upon source of marital conflict, counselling programmes must incorporate financial literacy and budgeting strategies as central components. Marriage counsellors and social workers should be provided with the necessary training to assist couples in overcoming economic tension and developing joint financial planning abilities. This also implies the necessity of economic empowerment programs or collaborative interventions with financial advisors. The necessity for interventions that are more culturally tailored is emphasised by the relatively lower impact of counselling in areas such as emotional regulation and trust-building. The societal values, expectations, and family structures of Nigerian couples may not be completely aligned with many Western-based models.

Given this, it is imperative to investigate and integrate indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms and culturally sensitive therapy frameworks. Counselling interventions were demonstrated to be effective in improving communication and comprehension among partners.

These areas should remain the primary focus of counselling sessions. Counsellors should be instructed in the art of fostering open dialogue, active listening, and empathy-based exercises that encourage spouses to comprehend each other's viewpoints. Despite the moderate awareness and acceptability of counselling, its utilisation is still impeded by potential stigma or competing cultural beliefs regarding the resolution of conflict. Public education campaigns, community outreach initiatives, and partnerships with religious institutions could help to normalise the process of seeking counselling, particularly before the escalation of conflicts. The research emphasised that counselling was effective in reducing the frequency of conflicts; however, satisfaction with the pace and results of conflict resolution was moderate. This implies a requirement for enhanced responsiveness, accessibility, and potentially post-counselling follow-up mechanisms to provide couples with more efficient support. In order to evaluate the long-term effects of particular counselling strategies or investigate the experiences of under-represented groups, such as inter-ethnic couples or those residing in rural communities, future research could implement longitudinal or mixed-method designs.

Conclusion

The study showed that counselling intervention is an important means of resolving marital conflict among couples in Nigeria. It profoundly affected communication, proffering practical skills and reducing the rate of conflict. While most conflicts emerge from finances, most counselling interventions are viewed as helpful in other areas of conflict. This study's findings are consistent with similar previous studies that have recognised the pertinent value of counselling as useful in improving couples' interactions. However, more culturally and contextually specific results about Nigeria that affect the uptake of counselling services and their impact are also revealed. This study stands out from previous studies that concentrated on the West and shows that while counselling is beneficial everywhere, culture is important in determining what areas counselling helps in. In Nigeria, this is especially true in the area of finance.

Recommendations

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

1. The government should enhance and invest in counselling programs that are accessible, culturally appropriate, and focused on money issues and other major sources of conflict.
2. The public should be made more aware of the benefits of counselling services and support efforts aimed at settling marital conflict.
3. Counsellors should enhance their skills in regulating emotions and trust-building mechanisms. The latter is believed to be able to make their interventions more effective.
4. Couples should go for professional counselling to improve their communication and resolve conflicts before they blow up.

5. Marital conflict can be well counselled only by the joint efforts of community leaders, policymakers and stakeholders to develop culturally applicable solutions.

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EFFECTIVENESS OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY ON MARITAL CONFLICT AMONG MARRIED COUPLES IN IGBERE OF ABIA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) on marital conflict among married couples in Igbere, Abia State. The study adopted a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest non-randomized control group design using a 2×2 factorial matrix. The population consisted of 300 married couples experiencing marital conflict in Igbere community, from which a sample of 48 married couples was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a 25-item Marital Conflict Indicator Scale (MCIS) developed by the researcher and validated by experts in Guidance and Counselling and Educational Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha with a coefficient of 0.84. Data were collected in three phases: pretest, posttest, and follow-up. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions, while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy significantly reduced marital conflict among married couples compared to the control group. The study also found that gender had no significant influence on the effectiveness of CBT in reducing marital conflict. The study concluded that CBT is an effective and gender-neutral counselling intervention for reducing marital conflict among married couples. It was recommended that marriage counsellors, religious organizations, and government agencies should adopt CBT in marital counselling programmes to promote marital harmony and family stability in Abia State.

Keywords*:* Marital conflict, Married couples, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Gender

Introduction

Marriage is the socially acceptable union of a man and a woman. It represents the union of two completely different people as husband and wife who agree to plan and establish their own family. It is a union between two unrelated men and women who want to live together and benefit from their relationship. Osarenren (2022) defined marriage as the union of an adult male and an adult female. Marriage is described as "formal union of two individuals of opposite sexes, to create an enduring relationship with each other as husband and wife" by Webster's Advanced

Learners English Dictionary (2020).According to this concept, certain assumptions are inferable. These include the premise of mutual commitment to permanent cohabitation and cooperation, as well as the assumption of specific responsibilities and obligations to one another (Okobia & Okorodudu, 2017). The responsibility of chastity and fidelity to one another falls under this later element of uncompromising value. This possibly explains why any marriage's success or failure is constantly related to these two values. In support of marriage as a harmonious union of a man and woman as husband and wife, Nwaoba and Sike (2022) asserted that marriage is a socially, recognized and approved union between two adults who commit to one another with the expectation of a lasting intimacy

Marriage, as defined by Adeboye (2020), is a union that brings people of different sexes, family, ethnic groups, belief systems, values, socioeconomic background and in some cases different race and interest together to form and start a new family; this makes marital conflicts inevitable. Unfortunately, dispute arise between a husband and wife who had vowed to cohabit economically. Socially, emotionally and psychological. These disputes take several forms, including spouse battering, spousal abuse, sexual abuse, marital irresponsibility, rape, a covert fight for power between the pair, and other violent behaviours, such as arguments, dissatisfactions, and exhibition of spirit of struggles between married spouses over values, beliefs, goals, standards, and behaviours. These disputes could be termed marital conflict.

Marital conflict denotes incompatible views or clash of interest, disagreement, arguments, tension and crisis between married couples. According to Onah (2016), disagreements are not only unavoidable in the normal course of family life, but also required for progress. Furthermore, marital conflict can be characterized as a condition of tension or stress between married spouses while they attempt to fulfill their marital responsibilities. The fact that two people decided or intended to live together as husband and wife creates distinct expectations and hopes, some of which may be met and others not, leading to disputes. A variety of variables seem to contribute to marital conflict. Therefore, conflicts in marriage could be caused by sexually related problems, financially related problems, emotionally related problems and spiritually related problems in the society. Childlessness, forced marriage, incompatibility, communication gaps, in-law involvement, finances, infidelity, child sex, lack of appreciation, divergent values, interest, vision, ambitions, and other psychosocial concerns are common causes of marital conflict according to Ayodele (2024). In Nigeria, there are specific and peculiar factors which are regarded as background to crisis in marriages. According to Okobia and Okorodudu (2017), these issues include communication gaps, polygamy, extended family influence, cultural conflict, infidelity, role performance, barrenness, children's gender, and so on. These issues are regarded as cankerworms in the foundation of most marriages in Nigeria especially in Igbere community, Tolorunleke (2023) believes that marriage should be a joyful and beautiful experience, with the goal of improving the bond between husband and wife with each passing day or year.

Marital conflicts have negative effects when it occurs regularly, it may have adverse effects on the members of the larger society. Perhaps, it is in the light of the foregoing that Makinde (2024) noted that marriage is an adventure because the two individuals that have agreed to cohabit willingly to take risks, test new ideas and experience new situations, and that no matter how long the courtship will be neither can boast of having studied and known all about the partner's idiosyncrasies. Onah (2016) related that disagreements and conflicts are unavoidable between married couples. The author believes that while most spouses work hard to reconcile these differences and issues, others do not, leading to the collapse. When marriages fail, separation or divorce is the end outcome. This obviously has a significant impact on the children of the marriage, the partners themselves, and society as a whole,

Marital conflict between married couples has a negative impact on the operation of the church and by extension, society as a whole. In Adeboye (2020), a study related to religious harmony, found out that family quality, harmony, or climates have a stronger relationship with understanding in the church than any other variables. The reason being that no matter how spiritually sound a church leader may be, if the home front (that is, his/her marriage) is not settled, the concentration to run the affairs of the church may not be there. This also is applicable to other institutions in the larger society.

Marital conflicts abound in Abia State especially in Igbere Bende Local Government Area where this study was conducted, there is ample evidence of marital conflicts among marital couples that have resulted in single parenting, separation, and divorce, which have resulted in a variety of maladaptive behaviours social vices, cultism, drug/substance abuse, and psychotic and neurotic conditions, all of which have a negative impact on our society's peaceful coexistence.

This rapid increase in marital breakdown raises a number of important sociological and psychological issues. Social unrest, delinquency, crime and sickness are frequently associated with marital discord and family fragmentation. This then makes it imperative to search for solution to this phenomenon in order to enrich the marriage institution. Investigation into marriage enrichment approaches is in keeping with the goals of counselling psychology in promoting normal development and preventing psychological difficulties. Marriage enrichment programme also known as marital therapy can help couples enhance their relationship and reduce conflicts by developing their ability to initiate changes in their relationship (Egnule, 2019).

Marital therapy, which is commonly used by marriage and family counsellors is defined as any therapeutic intervention technique aimed at assisting troubled marriages and couples to better understand their reciprocal marital interaction and attempt to find ways in which their needs can be mutually satisfied so that the growth and development of each partner can be maximized in the relationship (Okorodudu, 2016). Marital therapy is perhaps the most effective single thing that people in problematic marriages can do to help mend their relationships.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) in resolving marital problems among married individuals. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a type of talk therapy that can help people manage their difficulties by altering their thinking and behaviours. It is based on the work of psychologists such as Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck (1958), who stressed the importance of attitudinal transformation in order to foster and sustain behavioural change. CBT is essentially a combination of Cognitive Therapy and Behaviour Therapy.

CBT is widely used to treat anxiety and depression, but it can also be used to address personal social problems, inter-personal and intrapersonal issues and marital conflicts. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a sort psychotherapy that can help with a wide range of emotional and mental health difficulties. In fact, CBT is more than just one type of therapy; it is a group of different techniques that psychologists, therapists, and counsellors use to modify thoughts, behaviours, feelings, and emotions (Nicholars & Schwarts, 2017). CBT is a short-term psychotherapy treatment that uses a practical and intensive approach to solving issues such as depression, anxiety, addiction, phobia and other behavioural and emotional concerns. It is based on the cognitive model of emotional responses and is more of a brief type of treatment in which the patient learns to challenge and change their unhealthy or unhelpful attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and emotions to improve the patient's behaviours and emotional regulation.

There have been numerous studies and research that showed CBT could lead to significant improvement in daily life and the patient's quality of life. Most CBT therapists use CBT as a way to change the clients' cognitive disorder giving them a better way of thinking to replace the negative thoughts they are having (Huntley, 2024). For example, some patients may stress themselves unnecessarily over things that the rest of us naturally do not even think about. They will magnify a small incident and make it into a full-blown disaster that they cannot stop thinking about. One example is the patient who goes over conversations in their head that they had with someone (or everyone) and keep going over it for days or weeks, trying to think of some way that they could have done things differently.

According to Schwart (2019), CBT is based on the idea that people's ideas, feelings, bodily sensations, and behaviours are all interconnected, and that negative thoughts and feelings can imprison them in a vicious cycle. As a result, CBT seeks to help clients cope with overwhelming difficulties in a more positive way by breaking them down into smaller sections. Clients are told how to break free from these negative tendencies and boost their mood. Unlike other talk treatments, CBT focuses on the client's current concerns rather than issues from the past. It seeks practical strategies to improve the clients' state of mind on a regular basis, promoting improved interpersonal relationships, which is one of the objectives of this study.

The aim of CBT is to teach the clients to apply the skills they have learnt during treatment to their daily life. This study investigated the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) in reducing marital conflict among married couples in Igbere. The therapy is based on the doctrine of behaviourism; which major assumption is that since behaviours are learned, they can

be unlearned using appropriate behaviour modification techniques (Egbule, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, marriage is designed to be a harmonious union where husband and wife live together peacefully, bearing one another's burdens, and jointly creating a happy and stable family life. Within such a relationship, couples are expected to maintain unity, mutual respect, and nurture their children in a supportive environment. However, in reality, many marriages experience challenges that lead to disharmony. Issues such as persistent nagging, inertia, aggressive confrontation, anger outbursts, jealousy, and mistrust often escalate into frequent quarrels. If left unresolved, these conflicts may result in marital dissatisfaction, separation, and even divorce.

There is, therefore, a significant knowledge gap regarding how couples can effectively manage these challenges and sustain harmonious marital relationships. Many couples lack adequate strategies for conflict resolution and boundary setting, which often gives rise to observable crises and outward manifestations of dissatisfaction. These unresolved conflicts negatively affect family stability, child upbringing, and overall well-being. As a result, the study intends to use a psychological behavioural approach (CBT) to determine how helpful it will be in treating marital disputes among married couples. The problem of this study, therefore, put in a question form is: what is the effect of cognitive behavioural therapy in reducing marital conflict among married couple in Igbere community of Abia State?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose was to examine the effect of cognitive behavioural therapy on marital conflict resolution among married couples in Igbere community of Abia State Specifically, the study was designed to achieve the following:

1. To find out the mean of marital conflict among married couples in Igbere community of Abia State at pretest
2. To find out the difference in the reduction mean score of marital conflict among married couples exposed to cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and control at post-test
3. To find out the difference between the reduction mean score of male and female married couple with marital conflict exposed to CBT at posttest.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What is the difference in the reduction mean of marital conflict between married couples in Igbere at pretest?
2. What is the difference in the reduction mean score of marital conflict between married couples exposed to cognitive behaviourial therapy (CBT) and control at posttest?
3. What is the difference between the reduction mean score of male and female married couple with marital conflict exposed to CBT at posttest?

Hypotheses

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

HO_1: There is no significant difference in the mean score reduction of marital conflicts between married couples treated with cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and the control at posttest.

HO_2: There is no significant difference in the reduction mean score of married couples with marital conflicts exposed to CBT based on gender.

Methodology

The population of the study comprised 300 married couples experiencing marital conflict in Igbere community, Abia State. The population was drawn from five major villages in Igbere community, which served as the clusters for the study. These villages included Ibinaukwu village, Amankalu village, Amaiyi village, Umuisi village and Amaukwu village all in Igbere. The mode of counting the population was based on community household enumeration and counselling unit records. The researcher identified married couples experiencing marital conflict through consultations with community leaders, religious leaders, church counselling units and family heads within the community. Household visits and community records were also used to identify eligible married couples. The names of identified couples were compiled into a population frame, which produced a total of 300 married couples who had experienced marital conflict in the community.

The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique in selecting the sample for the study. In the first stage, Igbere community was divided into five villages which served as clusters. In the second stage, four villages were purposively selected based on the availability of married couples experiencing marital conflict and the presence of counselling groups. In the third stage, eligible married couples were identified within the selected villages through church counselling groups, community marriage support groups and family welfare records. In the fourth stage, 48 married couples were selected from the identified population using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. In the final stage, the selected married couples were assigned into four groups consisting of two experimental groups and two control groups, with each group containing 12 married couples, thereby forming a 2×2 factorial matrix. The married couples were placed in intact counselling groups since randomization was not possible, which justified the use of a quasi-experimental non-equivalent pretest-posttest control group design.

The Marital Conflict Indicator Scale (MCIS) adopted a four-point Likert response style for data collection. The response options included Strongly Agree (SA) with a score of 4, Agree (A) with a score of 3, Disagree (D) with a score of 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) with a score of 1. The highest attributes of the scale, which are 4 and 3, indicated positive responses to the statements, while the lowest attributes, 2 and 1, indicated negative responses. Respondents were required to read each item carefully and tick the option that best represented their marital experience. They were also instructed to respond independently and ensure that all items were

properly answered. The response style enabled the researcher to measure the level of marital conflict among married couples during the pre-treatment, post-test, and follow-up phases of the study, and data collected were subsequently analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Pre-treatment Phase: This phase involves two pre-treatment sessions conducted, two weeks prior to treatment. It involved preliminary introductions to the sampled couples and the subject for the study. The phase carried our pre-treatment assessments in order to identify couples with marital conflict using MCIS to obtain the baseline data while served as pretest data. The subjects were purposely assigned to two treatment groups and control group respectively (CBT and control group).

Treatment Phase: This phase dealt with the actual manipulation of experiment conditions after which the control group was regarded as waitlist group. The treatment group has eight sessions which lasted for 45 minutes each. The researcher and the subjects choose days, time and venue for their meeting that lasted for four weeks.

CBT

Session one: initial counselling establishment issues and setting of goals

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

Session Two – cognitive restructuring Technique of CBT

The session started with the motivation of subject and the review of the previous session. Subjects were asked to submit their assignment of the last sessions which was followed by discussion that emanated from the assignment. Having recognized/realized their thought and an orientation of CBT, the researcher introduced the first CBT technique, cognitive restructuring where they learn to replace negative thoughts with balanced, realistic ones.

Session Three – Behavioural disputation Technique of CBT

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

Session four – Emotional control technique of CBT

The session started with the motivation of subject. There was a recap of the last session's activities. Progress verification continued in this session. Task and assignment given to the subjects in the last session were reviewed and discussed by the researcher and subjects. Emotional control technique introduced and explained to the clients as methods used to regulate,

manage and respond to emotions in a healthy way. And in return have a healthier marital life.

Session five – Confrontation and encouragement technique of CBT

The session started with the motivation of subjects. Progress verification continued in this session. Task and assignment were given to the subjects. Confrontation technique was exposed to the subjects by the first discussion. For instance, confrontation is not arguing or attacking a person, it is a gently way of helping someone see that their way of thinking may not be accurate or rational. Encouragement is all about supporting and motivating the clients to behave and act better. The counsellor explains to the clients that confrontation helps them see what is wrong in their thinking while encouragement helps them believe they can improve.

Session six – Review of activities in all sessions and termination

This was the final stage of the cognitive Behavioural therapy treatment plan. The session started with the motivation of subjects. Review of all the techniques learnt and roleplaying. The subjects were commended for their efforts. Followed by the closing formalities.

Post-Treatment Phase

The post-treatment was carried out immediately after the last treatment session. The MCIS was re-administrated to the subjects after reshuffling at the end of the experiment. The responses of the subjects were scored and result compared with the pre-test score of the subjects on MCIS. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used as a statistical control measure. It also has the ability to increase the power of a statistical test. The data collected for the study were statistically analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the difference in the reduction mean of marital conflict among married couples in Igbere of Abia State at pretest?

Table 1: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Marital Conflict among Married Couples in Igbere*

Groups	N	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	SD	Mean Difference
Experimental Group (CBT)	24	1.57	0.65	
Control Group	24	1.56	0.66	0.01
Total	48	1.57	0.66	

Table 1 presents the mean ratings and standard deviation of marital conflict among married couples in Igbere using the Marital Conflict Indicator Scale (MCIS). The results show that married couples in the experimental group had a mean score of 1.57 with a standard deviation of 0.65, while those in the control group had a mean score of 1.56 with a standard deviation of 0.66. The mean difference of 0.01 indicates that both groups had almost the same level of marital conflict at the pretest stage. This suggests that the experimental and control groups were homogeneous before treatment, making them suitable for comparison.

Research Question 2: What is the difference in the reduction mean score of marital conflict between married couples treated with CBT and the control at posttest?

Table 2: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Marital Conflict Reduction between CBT and Control Groups*

Group	N	Pretest Mean	SD	Posttest Mean	SD	Mean Reduction	Mean Difference
CBT	24	42.54	2.89	29.17	2.71	13.37	
Control	24	41.09	2.73	36.69	2.80	4.40	8.97

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of marital conflict reduction among married couples exposed to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and those in the control group. Married couples exposed to CBT recorded a pretest mean score of 42.54 with a standard deviation of 2.89 and a posttest mean score of 29.17 with a standard deviation of 2.71, resulting in a mean reduction of 13.37. The control group recorded a pretest mean score of 41.09 with a standard deviation of 2.73 and a posttest mean score of 36.69 with a standard deviation of 2.80, resulting in a mean reduction of 4.40. The mean reduction difference of 8.97 indicates that CBT was more effective in reducing marital conflict than the control treatment.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean score reduction of marital conflict between married couples treated with CBT and the control at posttest.

Table 3: *Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of the reduction of marital conflict of married couples exposed to CBT and Control at Posttest*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	8062.394	2	4031.197	33.664	.000
Intercept	322.611	1	322.611	2.694	.000
Pretest	4119.351	1	4119.351	34.400	.000
Group	195.333	1	195.333	1.631	.027
Error	5396.200	45	119.915		
Total	143226.336	48			
Corrected Total	13458.594	47			

Since P-value (.027) < 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The result shows that CBT had a significant effect on marital conflict reduction among married couples. Therefore, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy significantly reduced marital conflict among married couples in Igbere, Abia State.

Research Question 3: What is the difference in the reduction mean score of marital conflict among married couples exposed to CBT based on gender?

Table 4: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Marital Conflict Reduction of Male and Female Married Couples (CBT and Control Groups Combined)*

Gender	Group	N	Pretest Mean	SD	Posttest Mean	SD	Mean Reduction	Mean Difference
Male	CBT	12	42.10	2.70	29.00	2.50	13.10	
Male	Control	12	41.20	2.65	36.50	2.60	4.70	
Female	CBT	12	42.98	2.80	29.34	2.60	13.64	
Female	Control	12	40.98	2.70	36.88	2.72	4.10	
Total Male		24					8.90	
Total Female		24					8.87	0.03

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation of marital conflict reduction among male and female married couples in both CBT and control groups. The results show that male married couples exposed to CBT recorded a pretest mean score of 42.10 and a posttest mean score of 29.00, resulting in a mean reduction of 13.10, while male participants in the control group recorded a mean reduction of 4.70. Similarly, female married couples exposed to CBT recorded a pretest mean score of 42.98 and a posttest mean score of 29.34, resulting in a mean reduction

of 13.64, while female participants in the control group recorded a mean reduction of 4.10. The overall mean reduction for males was 8.90, while females recorded 8.87, with a mean difference of 0.03. This indicates that both male and female married couples benefited almost equally from CBT in reducing marital conflict.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the reduction mean score of married couples with marital conflicts based on gender.

Table 5:*Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of the Differences in Marital Conflict Reduction of Male and Female Married Couples Exposed to CBT*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	8451.217	3	2817.072	24.310	.000
Intercept	3124.770	1	3124.770	26.960	.000
Pretest	4211.443	1	4211.443	36.330	.000
Group (CBT/Control)	2310.662	1	2310.662	19.940	.000
Gender	98.331	1	98.331	0.848	.362
Error	5098.220	44	115.869		
Total	143226.336	48			
Corrected Total	13549.437	47			

Gender Sig value = 0.362, Since 0.362 > 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

The result in Table 5 shows that an F-value of 0.848 with a significance value of 0.362 was obtained for gender. Since the significance value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in marital conflict reduction between male and female married couples in Igbere of Abia State. This implies that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is equally effective for both male and female married couples in reducing marital conflict.

Discussion of the Findings

Marital Conflict among Married Couples in Igbere (Research Question 1)

The result in Table 1 showed that married couples in both the experimental and control groups had almost the same mean marital conflict score at the pretest stage. The experimental group recorded a mean marital conflict score of 1.57 with a standard deviation of 0.65, while the control group recorded a mean score of 1.56 with a standard deviation of 0.66, with a mean difference of 0.01. This indicates that both groups had similar levels of marital conflict before the treatment was administered, suggesting that the groups were relatively homogeneous at the beginning of the study.

The implication of this finding is that marital conflict is a common experience among married couples in Igbere community and requires structured psychological intervention to

reduce its occurrence. The similarity in pretest scores confirms that the participants were equally exposed to marital conflict issues such as communication breakdown, emotional misunderstanding, financial pressure, and interpersonal disagreements before the introduction of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). This also strengthens the validity of the study because it shows that any improvement observed at posttest was due to the treatment and not pre-existing differences among participants.

The finding further suggests that marital conflict can be reduced when married couples are exposed to structured counselling interventions that help them develop better emotional regulation, communication skills, and conflict resolution strategies. This supports the assumption that marital conflict is not a permanent condition but a behavioural and psychological issue that can be managed through appropriate therapeutic intervention. The finding aligns with the view that counselling and psychological training can improve marital adjustment, emotional stability, and psychological well-being among couples. When couples are trained on how to manage their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, they are more likely to develop mutual understanding and respect, thereby reducing marital conflict and improving family stability.

Effect of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy on Marital Conflict (Research Question 2 and Hypothesis 1)

The findings in Tables 2 and 3 revealed that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) significantly reduced marital conflict among married couples in Igbere community. The results showed that married couples exposed to CBT recorded a higher mean reduction in marital conflict compared to those in the control group. Specifically, the CBT group showed a substantial reduction in marital conflict at posttest, while the control group recorded only a slight reduction. The ANCOVA result further confirmed that the difference between the CBT group and the control group was statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

This finding indicates that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is an effective psychological intervention for reducing marital conflict among married couples. The effectiveness of CBT can be attributed to its focus on changing negative thought patterns, improving emotional control, and modifying maladaptive behaviours that contribute to marital conflict. CBT helps couples identify irrational beliefs, challenge negative assumptions about their partners, and develop constructive ways of handling disagreements and emotional tension. Through structured counselling sessions, couples learn communication skills, problem-solving strategies, and emotional regulation techniques that promote mutual understanding and cooperation in marriage.

The finding is consistent with previous studies that emphasized the effectiveness of CBT in resolving marital conflicts. For instance, Makinde and Ayeyika (2021) found that CBT significantly improved marital stability and reduced conflicts among married couples regardless of the length of marriage. Their study revealed that couples exposed to CBT were better able to

manage disagreements, control emotional reactions, and build stronger marital relationships compared to those who did not receive therapy. This supports the present study by demonstrating that CBT is a reliable and evidence-based approach to marital conflict resolution.

Furthermore, this finding supports the theoretical foundation of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, which is based on the principle that behaviour is learned and can be modified through cognitive restructuring and behavioural training. The significant reduction in marital conflict among couples exposed to CBT suggests that when couples are guided to change their thinking patterns and behavioural responses, marital harmony can be achieved. This implies that CBT can be effectively used by counsellors, psychologists, and marriage therapists in addressing marital conflicts in Nigerian communities.

Influence of Gender on Marital Conflict Reduction (Research Question 3 and Hypothesis 2)

The findings in Tables 4 and 5 showed that gender had no significant influence on the reduction of marital conflict among married couples exposed to CBT. The results indicated that both male and female married couples recorded similar mean reduction scores in marital conflict, and the ANCOVA result showed no significant difference based on gender at the 0.05 level of significance. This led to the acceptance of the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in marital conflict reduction based on gender.

The implication of this finding is that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is equally effective for both male and female married couples. This means that the success of CBT in reducing marital conflict does not depend on whether the participant is male or female, but rather on the effectiveness of the therapeutic intervention. Both genders were able to benefit from CBT techniques such as cognitive restructuring, emotional regulation, communication training, and behavioural modification, leading to improved marital relationships and reduced conflict.

This finding is important because it shows that marital conflict is not gender-specific and that both men and women experience and respond to marital conflict in similar ways when exposed to appropriate counselling interventions. It also suggests that CBT can be applied universally in marital counselling without discrimination based on gender. This makes CBT a flexible and inclusive approach for addressing marital conflict in different cultural and social settings.

The finding corroborates the study conducted by Odenike (2019) on the efficacy of CBT in resolving marital conflicts, which revealed that participants exposed to treatment showed significant improvement in handling marital conflicts compared to those in the control group, and that there was no significant difference in marital conflict resolution based on gender and age. The study reported that structured therapeutic interventions such as CBT and social skills training were effective in improving marital adjustment and reducing conflicts among married couples.

The agreement between the present study and previous research strengthens the credibility of CBT as a reliable therapeutic approach in marital counselling. It further confirms that the effectiveness of CBT lies in its structured approach to behavioural change rather than demographic factors such as gender. This implies that counsellors and therapists can confidently apply CBT

techniques to both male and female married couples without expecting variations in treatment outcomes. Overall, the finding suggests that CBT promotes equality in marital conflict resolution by providing both partners with the same opportunity to develop cognitive and behavioural skills necessary for maintaining marital harmony. This contributes to the development of stable families and peaceful communities, especially in areas where marital conflict is prevalent.

Conclusion

The study concluded that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is an effective psychological intervention for reducing marital conflict among married couples in Igbere, Abia State. The findings revealed that marital conflict existed among married couples prior to the treatment, but the introduction of CBT significantly reduced the level of marital conflict among participants in the experimental group compared to those in the control group. The study further established that CBT helps married couples to restructure negative thoughts, improve communication, manage emotions, and develop constructive problem-solving skills, which collectively enhance marital harmony and psychological well-being. In addition, the study concluded that gender does not significantly influence the effectiveness of CBT, as both male and female married couples benefited equally from the treatment. This implies that CBT is a reliable and gender-neutral therapeutic approach that can be applied to married couples irrespective of gender differences. Overall, the study demonstrated that structured counselling interventions such as CBT can play a vital role in promoting peaceful marital relationships, strengthening family stability, and reducing the prevalence of marital conflict in communities. Therefore, CBT is recommended as a practical and evidence-based counselling strategy for addressing marital conflict among married couples in Igbere and similar communities in Abia State and beyond.

Recommendations

Marriage counsellors and guidance professionals should adopt Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) as a standard counselling technique in handling marital conflict among married couples, as the study has shown that CBT significantly reduces marital conflict and improves marital harmony.

Government, community leaders, and religious organizations in Abia State should organize regular marital counselling workshops and seminars where Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques can be taught to married couples to help them develop effective communication, emotional control, and conflict resolution skills.

Educational institutions and counselling centres should incorporate Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) into family and marital counselling programmes to ensure that both male and female married couples receive structured psychological support aimed at promoting stable marriages and reducing family conflicts.

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MARITAL CONFLICTS AS CORRELATE OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ABIA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between marital conflicts and social adjustment among senior secondary school students in Abia State, focusing on gender differences, using a correlation survey design and collecting data of 878 students from 8783, through Marital Conflict Questionnaire (MCQ) and Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ). The Marital Conflict Questionnaire (MCQ) and Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ) were validated by experts and tested for reliability, yielding stability coefficients of 0.742 and 0.841, and internal consistency coefficients of 0.676 and 0.773, respectively. Pearson's correlation and linear regression analysis were used for data analysis. The findings showed among others that there is a high positive correlation between marital conflict and social adjustment of senior secondary school students. It equally showed that there was no significant relative contribution of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and students' social adjustment. The study therefore concluded that marital conflicts to a very high extent correlate with the social adjustment of senior secondary school students in Abia State. Based on the findings and conclusion, the study recommended among others that Government and school proprietors should employ and have at least a Psychologist or a school Counsellor to help the students to resolve their social adjustment challenges.

Keywords: Conflict, Marital Conflicts, Social, Adjustment, Senior secondary school students, Gender.

Introduction

Conflict, being a struggle and a clash of interest, opinion or even principles, will always be found among individuals in the society. Its basis may vary from personal, racial, to class, political and societal (Straze, 2025). According to Nicholson (2019), conflict arises when individuals or entities pursue actions that are incompatible with one another, driven by conflicting desires, needs or obligations. This conflict often stems from a disagreement that escalates into active attempts to harm or undermine each other, characterized by hostile or damaging behaviour.

Conflict could manifest in various forms; interpersonal, intergroup and intragroup conflict. Hughes (2017) opines that interpersonal conflict involves social associations, connections, or affiliations between two or more people. Intergroup conflict is between two or more groups, often arising from competition, differing goals, or power struggles. This type of conflict can occur in various settings, including workplaces, organizations and even among secondary school students. Then, intragroup conflict is the disagreements or disputes within a group, where members may have differing opinions or perspectives. Wahlig (2019) maintains that Intragroup conflict is when two or more members of the same team fight against each other. A typical example of intragroup conflict is marital conflict.

Marital conflicts could arise from various issues, including verbal and physical abusiveness, personal characteristics and behaviours, perceived inequality in family responsibilities, differences in opinions and values, unfulfilled expectations and power struggles. For Dibia and Ovute (2013), conflicts in marriages and family are defined as disagreements between marital partners over values, beliefs, goals, norms, and behaviors. Tolorunleke (2014), sees marital conflicts as the state of tension or stress between marital partners as they try to carry out their marital roles. When two people decide to live together as husband and wife, they bring different expectations, hopes, and experiences. Given the complexities of human relationships, it's natural for differences to arise. Marital conflict could have significant effects on family members, particularly children. According to research, witnessing parental conflicts can increase stress levels in children, potentially affecting their academic performance (Hurlock, 2021). Marital conflict arises from a lack of understanding between couples, leading to heated quarrels, violence, separation, or divorce (Margolin, 2017). Ross (2017), defines marital conflict as a source of stress for both partners, potentially leading to severe consequences.

Marital conflict is a complex issue that arises from series of poorly handled events, leading to deep-seated damage in the relationship between husband and wife. In the context of this study, it could be viewed as the ongoing tension or stress that exists between spouses as they navigate the challenges of married life. The study carried out by (Davies, 2014; Zhou & Buehler, 2017) reveals that exposure to marital conflicts can significantly impact children's adjustment, particularly in terms of social adjustments.

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The word "social" comes from the Latin word "socius," which means "friend" or "ally." This Latin root is also related to the word "sociare," which means "to associate" or "to unite." The word "social" has evolved over time to encompass a broad range of meanings related to human interaction, relationships and society. Adjustment is from the word "adjuxtare" meaning "to bring together" or "to fix." In the opinion of Straze (2025), adjustment is the condition of a person who is able to adapt to changes in the physical, occupational and social environment. In other words, adjustment refers to the behavioural process of balancing conflicting needs, or needs challenged by obstacles in the environment. It is the process of adapting or modifying something to fit a new situation or requirement (Egyankosh, 2023),

Social adjustment involves adapting to societal norms, expectations, and demands, enabling individuals to live and work harmoniously with others and form satisfying relationships. (Vandenbos, 2015). For those who focus their research on children, Cunningham (2022) sees social adjustment as a broad construct that measures the variety of degrees for which children get along with their peers; degree to which they engage in adaptive, competent social behaviour and the extent to which they inhibit aversive incompetent behaviour. Additionally, social adjustment could be seen as the degree to which one realizes his goals that are approved by the society and it can be estimated in terms of emotional, social, familiar and relational outcomes.

In the opinion of Campbell Psychiatric Dictionary (2019), social adjustment is the adaptation of an individual to his immediate environment. As members of society, we form opinions about others while also being subject to their judgments and perceptions about us, influencing our relationships and self-perception. Secondary school students, like all individuals, desire acceptance and recognition within their social circles, particularly in school, to feel valued, included, and appreciated. Conforming to societal norms to get along with others can be challenging due to the unique personality and characteristics of each individual. Secondary school students also struggle to balance adhering to school norms and regulations with expressing their unique individuality, making adjustment a challenging task. Teachers aim to instil social adjustment skills in students, helping them adapt to school norms, build positive relationships and manage their emotions effectively. Sequel to this, Egyankosh (2013) asserts that social adjustment is a psychological process of adapting to new standards and values, evident when a student effectively copes with school expectations and builds positive relationships with peers. Social adjustment is the continual effort made by an individual to cope with standards, values and needs of a society in order to be accepted (Kuldipkumar, 2019).

Furthermore, research has shown that conflicts between husband and wife negatively affect the social adjustment of senior secondary school students. Dibia and Ajoku (2020) posited that the inability of an adolescent to cope and make adequate adjustment to the new environment as a result of insurgency and marital conflicts often result in maladjustment and delinquent behaviours. Trudys (2016) opines that many symptoms of students' social maladjustment may be readily observable by watching them in action. Behavioural problems such as delinquent tendencies (theft, truancy, vandalism, smoking, sexual offences, bullying) and personal

unhappiness were fundamentally due to frustration as a result of marital breakdown in the home. Signs of poor social adjustment could include facial expressions of unhappiness, restlessness, hyperactivity, nervous habits like nail biting, daydreaming, truancy, and self-consciousness, indicating potential difficulties in coping with one's environment (Trudys, 2016). A child who feels rejected may become withdrawn or, if they find a friend, become intensely jealous and possessive, wanting their friend's affection all to themselves. Children who experience uncertain emotional responses from their parents often struggle to form genuine attachments and give affection, due to uncertainty about reciprocation. Edem (2021) notes that students from broken homes often exhibit behavioural issues and struggle to adjust to their environment due to the impact of marital breakdown and conflicts. Additionally, some senior secondary school students, struggling to cope with their environment, may turn to substance abuse, including alcohol (beer, wine, rum, whiskey) and hallucinogens (like Indian hemp), as a way to escape their difficulties.

Senior Secondary School Students in Nigeria are those who are typically in their final three years of secondary school, usually around ages 13-19, and are preparing for their final exams, university, college or vocational training, exploring future career options and making informed decisions (Manuel, 2022). They are those students undergoing secondary education. Secondary education according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) as stipulated in National Policy of Education is the type of education students receive after primary education and before the tertiary education.

Research outside Nigeria suggests marital conflicts may disproportionately affect girls more than boys, highlighting the importance of considering gender as a moderating factor. According to Perina (2022), gender is a social construct referring to the characteristics, norms, and roles associated with femininity and masculinity, which can influence how individuals experience and respond to situations like marital conflicts. Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics, norms, behaviours, and roles associated with being male or female, shaping identities and relationships (Straze,2025). The World Health Organization (2021) notes that gender inequality exposes women and girls to high levels of violence, harmful practices, and social adjustment issues, while also influencing boys and men to engage in risky behaviours and violence. In their social adjustment, girls often face greater barriers than boys in adjusting to their immediate school environment.

Several studies have been conducted on marital conflicts and social adjustment among secondary school students. For instance, Ahmed (2022) carried a study on Student's Social Adjustment and its Relationship to Social Adaptation, at Nazirt region, in the University of Jordan and reported a significant correlation was found between social adjustment and social adaptation. Warda, Abed, Wahab and Shattla (2022) did a study on marital conflicts among parents and its effect on their adolescents' behaviours and found out that there was a highly statistically significant positive correlation between total marital conflict score and total

behavioural score. The study concluded that there was a significant relationship between parents' marital conflict and their adolescents' behaviour. Also, Fani and Fani (2022) carried out a research on The relationship of Parents' marital conflicts with students' life satisfaction and moral judgment development in Qumasi, Iran and the result from the regression analyses indicated a negative and significant relationship of marital conflict with pupils' life satisfaction and moral judgment development.

Statement of the Problem

Senior secondary school students are expected to demonstrate good social adjustment acquired from their parents, reflected in their behaviour, interactions, and decision-making, such as dressing modestly, communicating respectfully, building positive relationships, and avoiding unsafe activities like substance abuse, violence, and bullying. Unfortunately, there has been a public outcry over the rising rate of social maladjustment among secondary school students, particularly in Abia State. The frequency of condemnation surrounding adolescents' behavior is alarming, with issues like violence, kidnapping, murder, drug abuse, rape, and other social vices becoming increasingly prevalent. The prevalence of crime and social vices among secondary school adolescents indicates a lack of social adjustment, posing a significant threat to societal safety and security, as evidenced by rising insecurity, killings, and banditry.

Marital conflicts in homes can contribute to social maladjustment in children, as they may learn and exhibit problematic behaviors. Unresolved conflicts leading to broken homes can further exacerbate this issue, resulting in deep-rooted low social values. It is in line with the afore-mentioned observations that the researcher is motivated to find the extent marital conflicts correlate with social adjustment based on gender among senior secondary school students in Abia State. Previous studies, mostly conducted outside Nigeria or in other parts of the country, to the best of the researcher's knowledge have not adequately addressed social adjustment needs of secondary school students in Abia State. This knowledge gap motivated the researcher to investigate marital conflicts as correlate of social adjustment among senior secondary school students in Abia State, considering gender differences.

Purpose of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the extent marital conflicts correlate with social adjustment of senior secondary school students in Abia State.
2. Ascertain the relative contributions of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and students' social adjustment.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. To what extent do marital conflicts correlate with social adjustment of senior secondary school students in Abia State?

2. To what extent does gender relatively contribute to the relationship between marital conflicts and students' social adjustment?

Hypotheses

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

HO_1 There is no significant correlation between marital conflicts and social adjustment of senior secondary school students of Abia State.

HO_2 There is no significant relative contribution of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and students' social adjustment.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlation survey research design. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were used for the study. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample size of 878 students from the population of 8783 senior secondary II students in Abia State. Two instruments were used for data collection, namely: Marital Conflict Questionnaire (MCQ) and Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ). The instruments were validated by three experts, two from Psychology and counselling and one from measurement and evaluation departments, all from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instruments while Cronbach Alpha statistic was used to determine their internal consistency. These yielded 0.841, and 0.742 coefficients for the stability of SAQ, and MCQ respectively as well as 0.773 and 0.676 for internal consistencies of SAQ and MCQ respectively. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions while linear regression analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

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

Research Question 1

To what extent do marital conflicts correlate with social adjustment of senior secondary school students in Abia State?

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

Table 1. *Correlation matrix of relationship between marital conflicts and social adjustment*

		Marital conflicts	**Social adjustment**
	Pearson	1	.855
Marital conflicts	Sig (2-tailed)		.012
	N	860	860
	R^2	(0.731)	
		73%	
Social adjustment	Pearson	.855	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	
	N	860	860

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

The data in Table 1 shows a correlation R of .855 which is positive and within the coefficient limit or range of 0.80 and above indicating strong positive and a very high extent correlation. This result indicates that marital conflicts correlate with social adjustment of senior secondary school students to a very high extent. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.731 indicates that 73% of the variance observed in the social adjustment of senior secondary school students was attributed to marital conflicts.

Hypothesis

There is no significant correlation between the marital conflicts and social adjustment of senior secondary school students of Abia State.

Data for testing hypothesis is presented in Table 1

Table 1. *Linear regression analysis of correlation between marital conflicts and social adjustment*

Model		**Sum of squares**	**df**	**Mean squares**	**F**	**P- value**
	Regression	2916.447	1	2916.447	938.066	.012
	Residual	2670.630	859	3.109		
	Total	4787.077	860			

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

Data in Table 1 shows a P-value of .012 which is less than the alpha value of .05. This means that the null hypothesis of no significant correlation was rejected and the alternated upheld. Therefore, there is a significant correlation between the marital conflicts and social adjustment of senior secondary school students of Abia State.

Research question 2

What is the relative contribution of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and

students' social adjustment?

Data for answering research question 2 are presented in Table 2

Table 2: *Correlation matrix of the relative contribution of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and students' social adjustment*

Source		**Male**	**Female**	**MCSSA**
Male	Pearson correlation	1		.318
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.117*
	N	860		860
	R^2	(.101)		
		10.1%		
	Pearson correlation		1	.355
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.122
Female	N	860		860
	R^2	(.126)		
		12.6%		

**.Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), N = Number of respondents, MCSSA= Marital Conflicts Students, Social Adjustment*

The data in Table 2 shows that a correlation R for male students' social adjustment as a result of marital conflicts is .318 which is positive and within the coefficient limit or range of 0.21-40 indicating strong positive and a low extent correlation. This indicates that the social adjustment of male students based on marital conflicts is to a low extent. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of .101 indicates that only 10.1 percent of the variance observed in social adjustments of male students was accounted for by marital conflicts. In other words, marital conflicts predicted only 10.1 percent of the social adjustments of the male students. Table 2 also indicated a correlation coefficient (R) for female students' social adjustment as a result of marital conflicts is .355 which is positive and fall within the coefficient limit of ± 0.21-0.40 low extent correlation. This indicates that the social adjustments of female students based on marital conflicts is to a low extent. The coefficient of determination (R^2) .126 indicates that only 12.6 percent of the variance observed in social adjustments of female students was accounted for by marital conflicts. This means that marital conflicts predicted only 12.6 percent of the social adjustments of the female students. Therefore, marital conflicts predicted only 10.1% and 12.6% of the social adjustments of the male and female senior secondary schools respectively. In other words, the relative contribution of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and social adjustment is to a low extent.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relative contribution of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and students' social adjustment.

Data for testing hypothesis 2 are presented in Table 2

Table 2: *Linear regression analysis of the relative contribution of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and students' social adjustment*

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	P-value
1	Regression	1827.222	1	1827.222	908.614	.120[b]
	Residual	1727.275	859	2.011		
	Total	3954.497	860			

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

Data in Table 2 shows a P-value of .120 which is greater than the alpha value of .05. This means that the null hypothesis of no significant correlation was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant relative contributions of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and students' social adjustment.

Summary of Findings

The following findings of the study were based on the research questions and hypotheses:

1. Marital conflicts significantly to a very high extent correlate with social adjustment of senior secondary school students.
2. There was no significant relative contribution of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and students' moral adjustment.

Discussion

Marital conflicts and social adjustment of senior secondary school students

The results in Table 1 revealed that marital conflicts significantly to a very high extent correlate with social adjustment of senior secondary school students. The results indicated that marital conflicts determine to a very large extent the social adjustment of adolescents of secondary school students. This however implies that students exposed to marital conflicts are likely to have challenges in social adjustment. The results supported Nelma (2016) who maintained that some of the major factors that affect social adjustment of adolescents include varied forms of marital conflicts such as broken homes and parental rejections. In the similar vein, Dibia and Ajoku (2020) added that social adjustment could be as a result of violence and attacks experienced by adolescents on daily basis. The result agreed with Dehkordi (2022) who conducted a study on social adjustment and marital conflicts in primary schools which showed among others that there was a significant relationship between primary school pupils' social adjustment and marital conflicts.

Gender, marital conflicts and social adjustment of senior secondary school students.

The results showed in Table 2 that there were no significant relative contributions of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and students' social adjustment. This implies that the gender of the students did not contribute much on the relationship between their social adjustment and marital conflicts. In other words, the marital conflicts which the male and female

students are exposed to, relate to a low extent on how they adjust socially in the school. The result agreed with Davis (2014) who found from his earlier study on constructive and destructive marital conflicts, parenting and children's school and social adjustment that irrespective of the gender of the children, they adjust their behaviours socially. Similarly, the result agreed with Ohiseghame (2021) who in his study on causes and effect of marital conflicts among couples, found among others that the major causes of marital conflict is socio-cultural but is less gender-related. He argued that when there are marital conflicts among couples, every of the children's needs suffers irrespective of their gender.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis carried out and the results of the study it could be concluded that:

1. Marital conflicts significantly to a very high extent correlate with social adjustment of senior secondary school students.
2. There were no significant relative contributions of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and students' moral adjustment.

Counselling Implications

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

The result of the study showed that Marital conflicts significantly to a very high extent correlate with social adjustment of senior secondary school students. This result implies that some of the noticeable challenges of social adjustment faced by some students was due to issues of marital conflicts in their respective homes which the government can tackle by ensuring that each school should have at least a psychologist or counsellor to work on those set of students.

Since the result showed that there was no significant relative contribution of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and students' social adjustment, it implies that every teacher is expected to have the skills to handle the issues of social adjustment of the students since they are expected to teach in the school or classes that have both male and female students with social adjustment challenges. Hence, students with social adjustment challenges should be treated equally despite their gender.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Government and school proprietors should recruit and have at least a Psychologist or a school Counsellor to guide students identified to have social adjustment challenges.
2. Teacher training institutions should build in their curriculum contents some topics that will help to inculcate on the Would-be-teachers some skills to handle the social adjustment challenges of students irrespective of their gender.

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EFFECT OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING ON COMMUNICATION PATTERNS AMONG NEWLY MARRIED ADULTS IN KEFFI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NASARAWA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of conflict resolution training on the communication patterns of newly married adults in Keffi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State. A quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control group design was adopted, involving 40 purposively selected married adults (20 experimental and 20 control) within the first five years of marriage. Instruments used for data collection included the Marital Communication Patterns Questionnaire (MCPQ), Conflict Resolution Style Inventory (CRSI), and Participant Reflection Journals. The intervention covered active listening, emotion-focused communication, de-escalation techniques, and joint problem-solving over a six-week period. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired t-tests, and thematic analysis. The findings revealed significant improvements in constructive communication among participants in the experimental group. The study highlights the value of early conflict resolution training in promoting healthy marital communication and provides implications for counselling practice.

Key words: Conflict, Conflict Resolution Training, Newly Married, Communication Patterns

Introduction

Marriage is a close interpersonal relationship in which partners regularly interact and negotiate differences in values, expectations, and roles. Because of this continuous interaction, disagreements and conflicts are inevitable in marital relationships. However, the manner in which couples communicate and manage such conflicts plays a crucial role in determining the quality and stability of the relationship.

Research has shown that couples who adopt positive communication patterns such as active listening, empathy, negotiation, and collaborative problem-solving tend to experience lower levels of marital distress and higher relationship satisfaction. Conversely, negative communication behaviours such as criticism, withdrawal, and hostility often escalate conflicts and weaken marital bonds (Apostolou, et al., 2025; Vijayan, 2024). Furthermore, contemporary relationship research emphasizes that conflict itself is not necessarily harmful to marriage; rather, the skills couples use to address disagreements determine whether conflict leads to relationship growth or deterioration. When conflicts are handled constructively, they can promote understanding, emotional closeness, and improved communication between partners (Msughter, et al., 2024).

Marital relationships, particularly in the early years, are often characterized by a critical period of adjustment during which couples navigate the complexities of emotional bonding, decision-making, and conflict resolution. Communication plays a central role in determining the quality and durability of these relationships. Effective communication not only fosters intimacy but also provides a foundation for constructive conflict management. However, for many newly married couples, this foundational skill is underdeveloped, making them vulnerable to escalating disputes that could lead to dissatisfaction or even separation (Gottman & Silver, 2015). In Nigeria, and particularly in the Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, anecdotal and clinical reports suggest a rising incidence of marital discord among young couples, often linked to poor communication and unresolved conflict.

The early years of marriage are formative in shaping lifelong relationship patterns. Couples must learn to manage differences, negotiate roles, and balance expectations with reality. Conflict, though inevitable, need not be destructive; rather, it presents opportunities for growth if managed effectively (Halford, 2011). Many newly married couples often draw guidance for marital interaction and conflict management from cultural values, family traditions, and community experiences. Such inherited wisdom can provide useful insights that help couples navigate early marital adjustments. However, in contemporary society where marital roles and expectations continue to evolve, some couples may not receive structured guidance on effective interpersonal conflict resolution. Consequently, while traditional approaches remain valuable, research suggests that couples who acquire deliberate communication and conflict-management skills such as active listening, emotional regulation, and collaborative problem-solving tend to demonstrate healthier communication patterns and greater marital satisfaction. Empirical studies have shown that effective communication skills training and constructive conflict resolution strategies significantly enhance marital adjustment and relationship stability among couples (Alipour et al., 2020; Akın & Kaya, 2022; Shifaw, 2024).

In this context, the development of structured, evidence-based interventions to enhance couples' communication and conflict management is of urgent importance. Conflict resolution training, with its focus on skills such as active listening, assertiveness, emotional regulation, and collaborative problem-solving, has shown promise in other settings (Cummings & Schatz, 2012).

However, such interventions remain underutilized in sub-Saharan Africa, where marital counseling often takes a reactive rather than preventive approach.

Communication in marriage is often conceptualized along a continuum ranging from constructive to destructive interaction patterns. Constructive communication involves behaviours such as empathy, active listening, affirmation, and collaborative problem-solving, which foster emotional connection and enhance marital satisfaction among couples. Empirical research indicates that constructive communication patterns strengthen intimacy, trust, and effective conflict resolution, thereby contributing significantly to the stability and quality of marital relationships (Righetti, et al., 2022; Shifaw, 2024).

Conversely, destructive communication patterns include behaviours such as criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling. These negative interaction styles undermine emotional intimacy, escalate conflicts, and are strongly associated with marital dissatisfaction and relationship instability. Studies on marital interaction patterns have shown that persistent use of these negative behaviours significantly predicts relational distress and breakdown in intimate relationships (Kostić et al., 2022; Cordonnier, 2022).

Conflict resolution training is grounded in social learning and cognitive-behavioral theories, which posit that individuals can acquire new interpersonal skills through modeling, rehearsal, and feedback (Bandura, 1977). When applied in marital contexts, such training has the potential to disrupt negative communication cycles and promote adaptive interaction patterns. The conceptual tools of communication pattern theory and emotional regulation also inform this study, underscoring the dynamic interplay between cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses in marital conflict.

Empirical research continues to demonstrate a strong association between communication patterns and marital satisfaction. Recent studies indicate that the quality of communication between partners significantly predicts relationship satisfaction, emotional adjustment, and overall marital stability. For instance, a study by Weber, Lavner, and Beach (2023) found that variations in couples' communication quality were closely associated with levels of relationship satisfaction and relational functioning. Similarly, Shifaw (2024) reported that constructive communication plays a moderating role in the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital satisfaction among married individuals. In addition, intervention-based studies have shown that structured couple-focused therapeutic approaches and relationship education programs can significantly improve constructive communication patterns and marital adjustment among couples (Salimi et al., 2024; Jiao et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the importance of communication skill development in strengthening marital relationships and reducing relational distress.

In Africa, limited studies have evaluated structured marital interventions. A study by Ajayi and Falaye (2020) in southwestern Nigeria revealed that communication-focused counseling

significantly enhanced marital satisfaction among couples, but it did not assess long-term behavioral change. Another study by Egenti and Onwuasoanya (2021) showed that assertiveness training reduced verbal aggression among young couples, yet the study lacked a control group, limiting causal inference.

Despite the growing interest in relationship education, available literature suggests that certain gaps may still exist, particularly within the Nigerian context. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, relatively limited attention has been given to rigorously designed, theory-based interventions specifically targeting newly married couples. In addition, few studies appear to have employed quasi-experimental designs that combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluate the outcomes of such interventions. Furthermore, many existing studies do not clearly compare intervention outcomes with those of a control group, which may limit the ability to attribute observed improvements specifically to the training programme. This study addresses these gaps by implementing a six-week, empirically grounded conflict resolution training for newly married couples in Keffi LGA. It adopts a quasi-experimental design with both pre-test and post-test measures and includes a control group for comparison. The use of both standardized instruments and qualitative participant reflections ensures a comprehensive assessment of communication changes.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the widely acknowledged importance of effective communication in marital stability, many newly married couples in Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State still employ poor conflict management and ineffective communication patterns. These challenges often stem from a lack of formal training in constructive dialogue, emotional regulation, and collaborative problem-solving. While marital counselling services exist, they are often reactive, limited in reach, or culturally misaligned, leaving couples ill-equipped to navigate early relational conflicts. Existing empirical studies have primarily focused on general marital satisfaction, with limited emphasis on structured conflict resolution interventions targeting newlyweds. Moreover, there is a lack of localized evidence assessing the efficacy of such interventions in improving communication outcomes. This study, therefore, seeks to address this gap by examining the effect of conflict resolution training on the communication patterns of newly married couples in Keffi LGA, with the aim of promoting healthier, more constructive marital interactions.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. Examine the existing communication patterns of newly married couples prior to participation in conflict resolution training.
2. Determine the effect of conflict resolution training on the communication patterns of newly married couples.

3. Compare the communication patterns of newly married couples in the experimental group with those in the control group after the intervention.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the communication patterns of newly married couples prior to participation in conflict resolution training?
2. What effect does conflict resolution training have on the communication patterns of newly married couples?
3. What is the difference between the communication patterns of newly married couples in the experimental group and those in the control group after the intervention?

Statement of Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the communication patterns of newly married couples before and after participation in conflict resolution training.
2. There is no significant difference in the communication patterns of newly married couples in the experimental group and those in the control group after the intervention.

Methodology

The study adopted a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control group design to examine the influence of conflict resolution training on the communication patterns of newly married couples in Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised newly married couples who had been married for not more than five years and were residing within the study area. A sample of 40 married adults was purposively selected based on their marital duration and willingness to participate in the study. The participants were randomly assigned into two groups: an experimental group consisting of 20 participants who received conflict resolution training and a control group consisting of 20 participants who did not receive the training during the study period.

Data for the study were collected using the Marital Communication Patterns Questionnaire (MCPQ), which was designed to assess various aspects of marital communication such as active listening, empathy, collaborative problem-solving, criticism, defensiveness, and withdrawal. The instrument employed a Likert-type response format to enable participants to indicate the extent to which the statements described their communication behaviours. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in the department of Guidance and Counselling to ensure its relevance and clarity. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded a coefficient of 0.78,indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Prior to the intervention, participants in both the experimental and control groups completed the pre-test to determine their baseline communication patterns. The experimental group

subsequently participated in a structured conflict resolution training programme lasting six weeks, during which they were exposed to skills such as effective communication, emotional regulation, active listening, and collaborative conflict management, while the control group did not receive the training during this period. At the end of the training programme, both groups completed the post-test using the same instrument.

Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test were used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: *Mean and Standard Deviation of Communication Patterns of Newly Married Couples Before Participation in Conflict Resolution Training*

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Experimental Group	20	42.15	5.21
Control Group	20	41.80	5.34

Table 1 shows the baseline communication patterns of participants prior to the intervention. The mean scores of the experimental group (M = 42.15) and the control group (M = 41.80) indicate that both groups had relatively similar communication patterns before the training.

Table 2: *Paired Sample t-test Showing Difference in Communication Patterns of Newly Married Couples Before and After Conflict Resolution Training (Experimental Group)*

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	df	Sig. (p)
Pre-test	20	42.15	5.21	6.84	19	0.000
Post-test	20	55.40	4.62			

Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference in the communication patterns of newly married couples before and after participation in conflict resolution training. This suggests that the training programme improved the communication patterns of participants in the experimental group.

Table 3: *Independent Sample t-test Showing Difference Between Experimental and Control Groups After Intervention*

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	df	Sig. (p)
Experimental Group	20	55.40	4.62	7.21	38	0.000
Control Group	20	43.10	5.12			

Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between the communication patterns of newly married couples in the experimental and control groups after the intervention. This indicates that conflict resolution training had a positive effect on the communication patterns of the participants.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed important insights into the communication patterns of newly married couples and the influence of conflict resolution training on marital communication. The discussion is organized according to the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

The first finding of the study revealed that newly married couples demonstrated varying communication patterns prior to participation in the conflict resolution training programme. The baseline result indicated that the communication patterns of participants in both the experimental and control groups were relatively similar before the intervention. This suggests that newly married couples may initially rely on personal experiences, family traditions, or informal interaction patterns when handling marital disagreements. While such inherited communication patterns may provide useful guidance in some situations, they may not always adequately equip couples with the skills required to manage complex interpersonal conflicts in marriage. This observation supports the view that marital communication plays a critical role in shaping the quality and stability of intimate relationships. Recent empirical studies have emphasized that effective communication serves as a central mechanism through which couples manage disagreements and sustain marital satisfaction. For example, Shifaw (2024) found that marital communication significantly moderates the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and marital satisfaction, highlighting communication as a key factor in maintaining healthy marital relationships.

The second finding of the study showed that conflict resolution training had a significant positive effect on the communication patterns of newly married couples in the experimental group. The results indicated a significant improvement in participants' communication patterns following the training programme. This finding suggests that structured training programmes that focus on communication skills, emotional regulation, and collaborative problem-solving can enhance couples' ability to manage disagreements constructively. The improvement observed in

the post-test scores of the experimental group underscores the value of counselling interventions in strengthening marital communication. This finding is consistent with recent research indicating that communication and relationship skills training programmes can significantly improve marital functioning, reduce conflicts, and enhance relationship satisfaction among couples. A systematic review by Azarnik and colleagues (2024) reported that communication and relational skills interventions significantly improve marital functioning and reduce conflict among couples. Similarly, contemporary counselling studies have emphasized that targeted marital interventions such as communication skills training and assertiveness counselling can effectively reduce marital conflict and improve interpersonal understanding between partners.

The third finding of the study revealed a significant difference between the communication patterns of participants in the experimental group and those in the control group after the intervention. Participants who received conflict resolution training demonstrated significantly better communication patterns than those who did not receive the training. This finding further confirms the effectiveness of the intervention programme in improving marital communication among newly married couples. The result suggests that structured counselling programmes can provide couples with practical tools for managing marital disagreements more constructively. This finding aligns with contemporary research emphasizing that constructive conflict management strategies contribute to marital stability and emotional intimacy. Studies on marital relationships have consistently shown that when couples adopt constructive communication behaviours such as empathy, active listening, and collaborative negotiation, they are more likely to experience greater relationship satisfaction and long-term stability.

Generally, the findings of this study underscore the critical importance of conflict resolution training in promoting effective communication among newly married couples. The results demonstrate that while couples may initially rely on informal or inherited communication patterns, structured counselling interventions can significantly enhance their ability to manage conflicts constructively. By equipping couples with practical communication and conflict management skills, such interventions can contribute to healthier marital relationships and improved marital satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of conflict resolution training on the communication patterns of newly married couples in Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that newly married couples exhibited varying communication patterns prior to the intervention, suggesting that many couples rely largely on personal experiences, cultural values, and informal interaction patterns in managing marital disagreements. While such sources of guidance may provide useful insights, they may not always equip couples with the necessary skills to effectively manage interpersonal conflicts within marriage.

The study further established that participation in a structured conflict resolution training programme significantly improved the communication patterns of couples in the experimental

group. Participants who received the training demonstrated better communication behaviours, including more constructive approaches to managing disagreements, compared with their communication patterns prior to the intervention. In addition, the study found a significant difference between participants in the experimental group and those in the control group after the intervention, indicating that the improvement in communication patterns could be attributed to the conflict resolution training programme.

The results suggest that equipping couples with practical conflict resolution and communication skills can promote healthier interaction patterns, reduce the intensity of marital conflicts, and strengthen relationship stability. Consequently, conflict resolution training can serve as a valuable counselling strategy for supporting newly married couples in developing constructive communication practices that foster marital harmony and long-term relationship satisfaction.

Recommendations

1. Religious institutions and marriage registries should incorporate conflict resolution training into premarital counselling programs to equip couples with essential communication skills from the outset.
2. Local government and community development agencies should support and fund relationship education initiatives targeting young and newly married couples.
3. Guidance counsellors and marriage therapists should adopt structured, evidence-based conflict resolution modules as part of routine marital counseling services.
4. Education ministries and family welfare departments should recognize conflict resolution training as a vital tool for promoting family stability and consider including it in adult education and family life curricula.

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ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN MEDIATING PEER CONFLICT AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: TOWARD AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI), the ability to understand and regulate one's emotions and those of others, has been linked to healthier relationships. Yet, its role as a mediator in peer conflict within higher education has not received much theoretical attention. This paper revisits two main EI frameworks: Salovey and Mayer's (1997) Ability Model, which views EI as a set of cognitive-emotional skills, and Goleman's (1995) Mixed Model, which combines abilities with personality traits. It critically examines these models through the real experiences of peer conflict in university settings. Using theories of cognitive-emotional processing, affective neuroscience, cross-cultural psychology, and recent studies, the paper introduces the Emotionally Intelligent Peer Conflict Resolution Model (EIPCRM). This framework sees EI not as a fixed trait or a broad predictor of success, but as a dynamic system that connects interpersonal disagreements to either constructive or destructive results. By considering emotional processing within social, cultural, and biological contexts, the EIPCRM gives universities a practical, research-backed tool for counselling, peer mediation, residential life programs, and policy-making.

The review brings together findings from structural equation modelling studies Liu, and Zeng, (2025), Chang, (2025); Zayed, Omara, and Al Kitani, 2025), meta-analyses on EI and conflict (Schlaerth, A., Ensari, & Christian, 2013)), intervention research, and studies on cultural moderation (Gunkel et al., 2016). It argues that enhancing EI can change peer conflict from a source of stress into a chance for relationship repair and personal growth. The paper discusses implications for practice and suggests directions for future long-term and multi-method research.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Peer conflict, Emotionally Intelligent Peer Conflict Resolution Model (EIPCRM).

Introduction

University life immerses students in a mix of intense peer relationships, including shared dorm rooms, group projects, late-night study sessions, and social circles filled with excitement and occasional friction. Conflict among peers is normal. It often arises as students navigate their identities, autonomy, academic pressures, and cultural differences. When managed well, these situations can lead to growth, deeper understanding, and stronger bonds. However, emotions can overwhelm the process: a misunderstood comment can turn into resentment, a small disagreement over tasks may cause weeks of silence, or cultural misunderstandings can lead to isolation. The emotional fallout can hurt mental health, academic performance, and feelings of belonging.

Imagine this: its 2 a.m. in a busy university residence hall. Two roommates, one from a culture that values harmony and the other from one that encourages direct expression, argue about whose turn it is to clean the shared kitchen. What starts as an annoyance quickly escalates. Voices increase. Accusations are exchanged. By morning, one student skips class to avoid the other, while the second complains to friends on social media. Their academic focus suffers. Sleep is lost. The feeling of safety in their own living space disappears.

Situations like this occur every day on campuses across the globe. Conflicts among peers are part of university life because students are trying to gain independence, develop new identities, handle heavy workloads, and navigate diverse social environments. A 2019 survey of U.S. undergraduates found that 90% experienced at least one conflict with another student in the past year, averaging 8.5 disputes per person (Morgan, as referenced in relevant institutional reports). Bullying and relational aggression add more complexity: 15% to 43% of students report being targeted by peers, and witnessing such behaviour is even more common (Marraccini et al., 2018). In many low- and middle-income areas, including parts of sub-Saharan Africa, where rapid urban growth and expanding higher education bring together students from different ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, these tensions are worsened by limited resources and cultural changes.

Unresolved conflicts do more than create uncomfortable encounters in hallways. They lead to higher levels of anxiety, depression, decreased academic involvement, and even thoughts about dropping out. When emotions run wild—anger seen as a personal attack, shame causing withdrawal, or fear of embarrassment stopping honest conversation—disagreements turn into deeper rifts. Traditional conflict-resolution methods in higher education often focus on behavioural strategies like negotiation scripts, mediation protocols, or disciplinary policies. While these approaches are useful, they often miss the emotional factors that drive behaviour. Students don't simply decide to cooperate or retaliate; they feel emotions first.

Emotional intelligence theory helps explain this issue. It shows how people perceive emotional signals in real time, understand them, manage their emotions, and channel feelings into constructive actions. Instead of seeing emotional intelligence as a vague skill related to well-

being, this review shows that it acts as a mediator—a psychological process that influences whether a peer disagreement turns hostile or leads to understanding and growth.

Recent research supports this view. Liu et al. (2025) used structural equation modelling with 369 Chinese university students and found that emotional intelligence positively affected both conflict resolution skills and life satisfaction, with a sense of belonging as an important mediator. In simpler terms, students who were skilled at reading and managing emotions were better at resolving conflicts, which helped them feel more connected to their school and more satisfied with their lives. Similarly, Zayed et al. (2025) conducted a multi-group SEM study across Oman, Kuwait, and Jordan, showing that emotional intelligence was directly related to psychological well-being and indirectly lessened psychological stress—trends particularly relevant in high-stress university settings where peer conflict often triggers distress.

Cross-culturally, the situation is complex. Gunkel, M., Schlaegel, C., and Taras, V. (2016) showed that cultural values like collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance influence how emotional intelligence translates into conflict-handling preferences, such as integrating, compromising, or avoiding. In many African and Asian cultures, for example, maintaining harmony may be more important than asserting individual needs. Yet without enough emotional intelligence, this preference can result in repressed resentment instead of real resolution.

This paper has three goals. First, it re-evaluates the Ability and Mixed Models of emotional intelligence through the lens of university peer conflict, highlighting their strengths and cultural limitations. Second, it incorporates insights from affective neuroscience, emotion regulation theory, and cultural psychology to introduce the EIPCRM—an original, multi-layered framework designed for higher education. Third, it offers practical suggestions for counselling centres, residence life, faculty development, and institutional policies. By the end, readers should view emotional intelligence as a practical, culturally aware way to create healthier campus communities.

The stakes are high. Today's university students face significant mental health challenges. Over 60% meet the criteria for at least one mental health issue in recent years (Abrams, 2022). Peer conflict is both a symptom and a factor in this crisis. Teaching students emotionally intelligent conflict skills is not a luxury. It is a necessary responsibility for institutions that care about overall student success.

Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Functioning in Contemporary University Contexts In the last decade, research has exploded to clarify how emotional intelligence (EI) affects university life. EI is not just a nice addition. It is a strong predictor of relationship skills, academic adjustment, and psychological resilience.

According to Liu et al. (2025), their structural model showed clear positive links from EI to life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.32$) and from conflict resolution skills to life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.27$). A sense of belonging played a role in both connections. Students who could notice a roommate's frustration or a group member's anxiety were more empathetic and less defensive. This encouraged inclusion and helped reduce the loneliness that can come with the stress of transition.

In Arab university settings, Zayed et al. (2025) found that EI was a strong predictor of well-being across samples from Oman, Kuwait, and Jordan. Well-being helped buffer distress, though the patterns varied by country, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive interventions. Odame and Pandey (2025) studied part-time executive students in Ghana and India. They reported that EI skills, like self-awareness, self-management, motivation, and empathy, significantly predicted better conflict management styles. Culture played a role in this relationship. Ghanaian participants generally scored higher on EI, likely reflecting cultural values that emphasize emotional awareness.

Meta-analytic evidence supports these findings. Schlaerth et al. (2013) reviewed studies on EI and constructive conflict management. They found a consistent positive link, especially when EI was assessed as a skill rather than through self-report. More recent reviews of EI training programs for university students show small to moderate benefits on emotional regulation and relationship outcomes (Asiedu, 2025 dissertation synthesis).

These findings are important because university peer conflict rarely involves just ideas. It is full of emotions: the sting of feeling unfairly graded in a group, the anxiety over cultural missteps, the shame of public disagreement. Students with higher EI assess these situations more accurately, manage their physiological arousal better, and choose collaborative responses. Those with lower EI often resort to avoidance, aggression, or overthinking. These patterns lead to poorer adjustment (Núñez et al., 2023).

However, significant gaps still exist. Most studies are cross-sectional, which limits causal inferences. Few studies explicitly model EI as a mediator between conflict exposure and outcomes. Additionally, cultural diversity is often underrepresented, and much research focuses on Western contexts. This framework aims to address these gaps by synthesizing current evidence into a process-oriented, context-sensitive model.

Re-examining the Ability Perspective

Salovey and Mayer's Ability Model (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer et al., 2016) defines EI as four interrelated cognitive skills:

(1) Accurately perceiving emotions in oneself and others,

(2) Using emotions to aid thinking,

(3) Understanding emotional meanings and shifts,

(4) Managing emotions to reach goals.

In peer conflict, these abilities function both sequentially and interactively. A student notices a teammate's tense jaw and curt tone during a group meeting (perception). She recognizes that anxiety, not hostility, is at play because she remembers similar patterns from past collaborations (understanding). Instead of snapping back, she suggests a quick break to allow emotions to settle

and for creative problem-solving to continue (management). This turns the disagreement into a productive discussion.

The strength of the model lies in its connection to affective neuroscience. Effective regulation engages areas in the prefrontal cortex to control threat responses driven by the amygdala (Buhle et al., 2014). Still, the Ability Model sometimes receives criticism for being too detached. It explains how processing should happen, but it offers less guidance on motivation or visible behaviours in real-world disputes. University students, who juggle sleep deprivation, financial worries, and identity exploration, need clarity and motivational support.

Emotional Intelligence as a Mediating Mechanism

Mediation occurs when a variable explains the "how" or "why" of a relationship (Baron & Kenny, 1986; modern bootstrapping approaches). Here, peer conflict (antecedent) impacts academic and psychological adjustment (outcome) through EI processes.

When conflict arises, such as a heated discussion over project leadership, students with low EI might feel increased arousal, assume hostility, and react impulsively. This can lead to broken relationships and disengagement. In contrast, high EI students can recognize the emotions involved and reframe the situation ("She's stressed about the deadline, not attacking me"). They manage their reactions and respond with empathy. The same situation produces different outcomes. Liu et al. (2025) and Zayed et al. (2025) provide empirical support for these indirect connections through belonging and well-being.

Revisiting the Competency Perspective

Goleman's (1995) Mixed Model breaks emotional intelligence (EI) into five areas: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. This framework is both behavioural and developmental; people can learn these skills through practice. In situations of peer conflict at university, empathy helps with understanding different perspectives; self-regulation avoids hasty reactions; social skills support productive conversations.

The model is popular in practice; many campus workshops use it. However, it overlaps with personality traits, like Big Five conscientiousness, making it difficult to measure precisely. Also, its focus on expressive emotional styles may not fit well with cultures that prioritize restraint (Gunkel et al., 2016).

Neurocognitive Dimensions of Emotional Mediation

Affective neuroscience adds a biological perspective. When facing interpersonal threats, the amygdala becomes active, causing fight-or-flight responses. Certain parts of the prefrontal cortex (dorsolateral, ventromedial) help individuals with high EI manage their impulses and reassess situations (Martin, 2016). The release of oxytocin during successful displays of empathy and repair builds trust. These processes help explain why EI training lowers physiological stress during conflict simulations.

Cultural Moderation of Emotional Processes

Emotional display rules, norms around saving face, and different relational philosophies (like Ubuntu,(South Africa) Omoluabi (Yoruba), and Onye aghalaNwanneya (Igbo) from Nigeria, West African. Many African cultures practice respect for the elderly; some are intense, while some are mild, which allows the emphasis on directness, just like in Western contexts. This affects how EI functions. A Nigerian student might choose indirect language or proverbs to keep peace, while a German student might see silence as agreement. Even those with high EI can make mistakes without cultural understanding. The Emotionally Intelligent Peer Conflict Resolution Model (EIPCRM) includes cultural awareness as a key stage.

The Emotionally Intelligent Peer Conflict Resolution Model (EIPCRM)

The EIPCRM combines the strengths of both EI traditions into a five-stage, ongoing process suited to university peer relationships:

1. Emotional Cue Detection and Contextual Interpretation – Accurate perception along with awareness of the situation (like recognizing cultural background).
2. Cognitive-Affective Appraisal – Understanding what emotions arise and why; reassessing intentions.
3. Regulatory Modulation of Arousal – Self-regulation methods (like controlled breathing or reframing) based on neuroscience.
4. Empathic Relational Engagement – Understanding others' perspectives and fostering open dialogue.
5. Culturally Attuned Reconciliation Behaviour – Actions to repair relationships that respect cultural norms (such as Ubuntu-inspired community-focused solutions).

This model is flexible: the stages repeat as new information comes in. It can be taught through role-plays, reflective journaling, and peer mediation training.

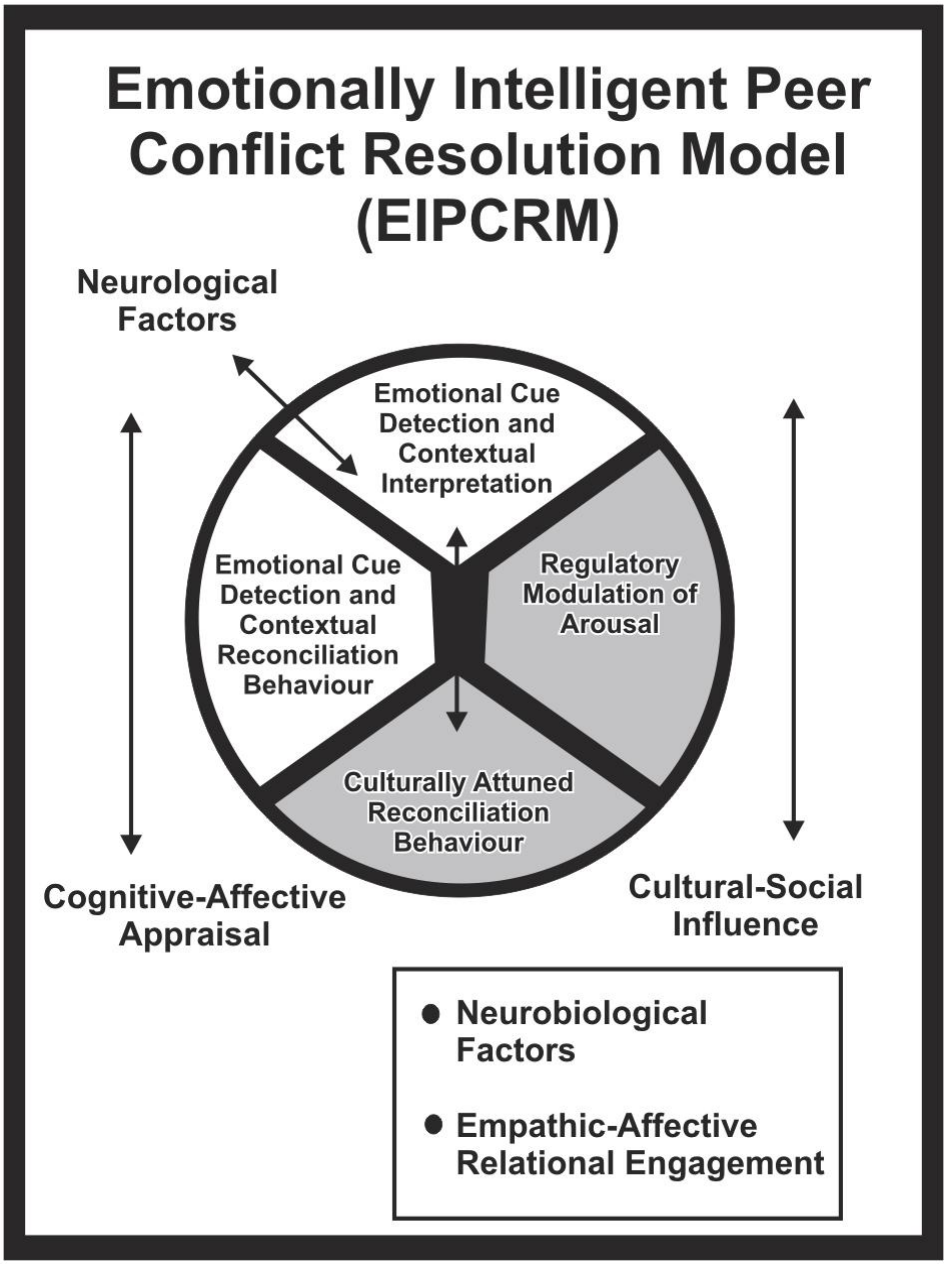
Implications for Higher Education

Counselling centres can include EIPCRM modules in their workshops. Residence halls could offer "Emotionally Intelligent Roommate" training for new students. Faculty members can demonstrate the stages in debriefs after group work. Restorative justice programs can shift their focus from punishment to healing. Institutions in diverse regions (like universities in Lagos) should adjust their examples to fit local customs.

Integration with Recent Empirical Evidence

This framework connects with the findings of Liu et al. (2025), Zayed et al. (2025), and Odame and Pandey (2025), as well as intervention studies that show the positive effects of EI training. It helps advance the field from looking at correlations to understanding underlying mechanisms.

The Emotionally Intelligent Peer Conflict Resolution Model (EIPCRM)



Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

In redefining Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a key player in navigating conflicts, the Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution Model (EIPCRM) offers a thoughtful, human-centre approach that resonates with diverse cultural backgrounds. This model tackles one of the long-standing challenges in higher education head-on.

Looking ahead, it would be great to see future research embrace a variety of methodologies, like longitudinal studies and mixed methods, while also considering a wide range of global populations. This way, we can truly assess and refine the model. By implementing interventions

grounded in EIP, we can make meaningful strides in conflict resolution and emotional understanding in educational settings.

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YEARS-IN-TRAINING AND LOGICAL REASONING APTITUDE AS DETERMINANTS OF CONFLICT ENGAGEMENT EFFICACY AMONG COUNSELLOR-TRAINEES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN OGUN STATE

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of years–in–training and logical reasoning aptitude on the conflict management efficacy of counsellor-trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State. A descriptive survey design was employed to examine the variables in a non-manipulative way. Additionally, a stratified sampling procedure was used to select 200 counsellor-trainees across all levels of study in the Faculty of Education of tertiary institutions in Ogun State. Two standardized scales were used for data collection. Section A of the questionnaire provided information on participants' years-in-training and other relevant demographic details. Sections B and C consisted of the Conflict Resolution Behaviour Questionnaire (CRBQ), with a reliability coefficient of 0.75, and the Logical Reasoning Aptitude Scale (LRAS), with α = 0.73. Two research questions were raised and answered at the 0.05 level of significance, using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tools. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between conflict engagement efficacy and logical reasoning aptitude: r(198) =0.146, p< .05, r2 = 0.021. Thus, logical reasoning aptitude accounted for a 2% increase in conflict engagement efficacy. Furthermore, a Welch ANOVA summary revealed a statistically significant difference in conflict engagement efficacy across years in training among counsellor-trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State; $F_{(3,60)} = 2.999$, $p < 0.05$. *Based on the findings, the study recommends the inclusion of logical reasoning skills and conflict engagement techniques in counselling training sessions, as well as a thoroughly supervised practicum exercise for counselling students in tertiary institutions.*

Keywords: Conflict Engagement Efficacy, Logical Reasoning Aptitude, Years-in-Training, Counsellor-Trainees

Introduction

Counsellor-trainees in tertiary institutions are being groomed to serve as mediators, facilitators of dialogue, and agents of peaceful resolution in various human contexts. As Nigeria continues to experience a variety of social, interpersonal, and institutional conflicts, the capacity of future counsellors to engage conflict constructively becomes increasingly vital. Conflict engagement efficacy, in this context, refers to the perceived and actual ability to manage and resolve conflicts effectively. While training equips counsellors with theoretical tools, practical and cognitive readiness, particularly in reasoning through tense situations, remains very essential.

In the Nigerian tertiary education system, counselling training programmes are designed to build core competencies such as empathy, communication, active listening, and problem-solving (Chinwuba & Ogunode, 2024). While these competencies are taught formally, the degree to which trainees can apply them in real-life conflict situations remains a subject of concern. Particularly in Ogun State, which houses several tertiary institutions, there is a growing awareness of the need to assess the practical readiness of counselling students to address interpersonal and institutional conflict within schools and communities.

Two major factors that may affect a trainee's conflict engagement efficacy are the number of years they have spent in training (experience/exposure) and their aptitude in logical reasoning (cognitive maturity). These factors shape not only how counsellor-trainees perceive conflict but also how they choose to address it. Yet, the empirical link between these variables and actual conflict engagement ability among Nigerian trainees is under-researched. This study therefore, addresses this gap by examining the extent to which years-in-training and logical reasoning aptitude predict the conflict engagement efficacy of counsellor-trainees in Ogun State.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, the increasing incidence of interpersonal conflicts in our society has drawn attention to the preparedness of future counsellors to manage such situations effectively. While the training curriculum for counsellor-trainees emphasizes conflict resolution strategies and communication skills, there remains uncertainty about whether extended duration in training directly improves conflict engagement efficacy. Likewise, the role of cognitive factors such as logical reasoning aptitude which is often overlooked in counselling programmes may be critical in shaping a trainee's ability to analyze, interpret, and resolve conflicts impartially and effectively.

Despite the importance of these two variables, empirical evidence is limited, especially within the Nigerian context. In Ogun State, where notable tertiary institutions offer counselling-related programmes cum services, there is a noticeable gap in research exploring how the number of years spent in training and logical reasoning aptitude influence a trainee's ability to engage with and manage conflict. Without empirical clarification on these issues, counselling training programmes may continue to produce graduates with theoretical knowledge but

insufficient practical conflict management skills. Hence, this study investigates the predictive roles of years-in-training and logical reasoning aptitude in conflict engagement efficacy among counsellor-trainees in Ogun State tertiary institutions. The goal is to uncover whether these variables significantly determine the professional readiness of trainees to handle conflict in diverse educational and interpersonal settings.

Objectives of the Study

This study was set to investigate the influence of Years-in-Training and Logical Reasoning Aptitude on Conflict Engagement Efficacy of Counsellor -trainees in Tertiary Institutions in Ogun State. Specifically, it intends to:

i. Assess the significant mean difference in the conflict engagement efficacy and years-in-training of counsellor-trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State.
ii. Examine the type of relationship that exists between conflict engagement efficacy and logical reasoning aptitude of counsellor-trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered at a 0.05 level of significance.

i. Is there any significant difference in the conflict engagement efficacy and years - in - training of counsellor-trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State?
ii. What type of relationship exists between conflict engagement efficacy and logical reasoning aptitude of counsellor-trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State?

Literature Review

Previous studies in Nigeria and beyond have explored the psychological and contextual dynamics that shape conflict management behaviour. Adesanya (2015) observed that the professional effectiveness of student counsellors correlates with the quality and duration of training. Similarly, Akinboye and Ogunyemi (2018) noted that students who had undergone more years of structured counselling training showed more mature behavioural responses to interpersonal conflict.

Concept of Conflict Management Efficacy

The Conflict management efficacy refers to an individual's self-assessed belief in their ability to engage in and manage conflict situations constructively. It is not just about knowing what to do in a conflict, but also about feeling psychologically equipped to act effectively in such situations. This belief influences whether individuals will avoid conflict, confront it directly, or approach it strategically with a resolution mindset. Bandura (1997) defined efficacy as the belief in one's capabilities to execute the necessary actions to achieve desired outcomes. Applying this to the counselling profession, conflict management efficacy becomes the counsellor's confidence in their ability to mediate interpersonal tensions, de-escalate volatile situations, and support disputing parties towards resolution.

Several scholars have emphasized the role of this construct in professional training. For instance, Ojo and Adegbesan (2012) observed that trainee counsellors in Southwestern Nigeria with higher conflict self-efficacy scores were more likely to demonstrate assertiveness and empathy during peer mediation exercises. Their ability to balance firmness with emotional understanding was linked to greater success in resolving interpersonal issues among students. Similarly, Agboola and Olanrewaju (2015) noted that in Nigerian tertiary institutions, where peer-related conflicts and academic stress are common, counsellor trainees with strong conflict engagement efficacy were more proactive in initiating peace-building strategies. They were also more likely to volunteer in student affairs units, displaying both leadership and interpersonal maturity.

Aja and Anwana (2016), in their study of counsellor education programmes across public universities in South-South Nigeria, highlighted that practical exposure to real-world conflicts such as participation in community outreach, school-based interventions, and youth counseling had a direct impact on trainees' perceived efficacy in managing conflict. Those who had hands-on experience felt more competent, suggesting that experience and efficacy are mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, the learning environment itself has been shown to influence conflict management efficacy. According to Odukoya (2020), institutions that incorporate role-plays, simulation-based learning, and guided reflection into their counselling curricula tend to produce more confident and capable counsellor trainees. This aligns with the broader view that efficacy is shaped by mastery experiences, vicarious learning, and verbal encouragement (Bandura, 1997).In summary, conflict management efficacy is not a fixed trait but a dynamic belief system that evolves through training, exposure, and reflection. For counsellor trainees in Nigeria, developing this efficacy is central to their professional competence, especially given the socio-cultural complexities of conflict across educational and community settings.

The Counsellor Trainees

Counsellor trainees, also referred to as student counsellors, are individuals currently enrolled in formal training programmes in guidance and counselling within tertiary institutions. These programmes may be offered at the diploma, undergraduate, or postgraduate levels and are designed to equip trainees with the theoretical foundations and practical competencies necessary for professional counselling practice. Student counsellors are at a developmental stage where they are expected to acquire skills in therapeutic communication, ethical decision-making, psychosocial assessment, conflict resolution, and intervention planning. While they are not yet licensed professionals, they operate within supervised learning environments, including practicum placements, where they begin to apply classroom knowledge to real-world counselling contexts.

According to Adegoke (2015), the period of training is critical to the formation of the counsellor's professional identity, as it shapes both their practical skillset and their self-efficacy in handling the interpersonal and emotional demands of the counselling profession. The

interchangeable use of "counsellor trainee" and "student counsellor" in literature reflects their dual role as learners and emerging professionals within the counselling discipline. Therefore, the performance, perception, and development of counsellor trainees are essential areas of inquiry, especially in understanding how educational exposure influences their preparedness for practice, including their ability to engage effectively in conflict management.

Years-in-Training of Counsellor Trainees

Years-in-training refers to the cumulative duration a student has spent undergoing formal academic and practical instruction in a professional field—in this case, Counselling Psychology or Guidance and Counselling. It typically corresponds with the student's level or year of study, such as 100-level through 400-level in Nigerian tertiary institutions. In counselling education, each year of training is expected to build upon the previous in terms of theory, skills, ethics, and supervised practice. As trainees advance, they are presumed to develop more nuanced understanding of human behaviour, empathy, decision-making strategies, and professional competencies. Senior-level students are often exposed to internships, case study evaluations, role-plays, and practicum sessions that simulate real-world conflict scenarios. More time in training is expected to translate into greater familiarity with Conflict resolution models (e.g., Thomas-Kilmann, Interest-Based Relational Approach), Communication skills (active listening, assertiveness, de-escalation), Self-awareness and cultural sensitivity.

The length of professional training has been consistently associated with the depth of skill acquisition, maturity in judgement, and increased confidence in professional roles. According to Adesanya (2015), students who have spent more time within a structured counselling programme tend to exhibit higher emotional awareness and self-regulation. These are two competencies essential for engaging in and resolving conflicts. These outcomes are often a result of repeated exposure to conflict resolution scenarios, role-playing exercises, internships, and supervised practicum sessions. Ogunyemi and Ifelunni (2019) studied counselling students across three tertiary institutions in South-West Nigeria and found that final-year students displayed a higher level of conflict resolution efficacy compared to those in earlier levels. The researchers attributed this difference to the cumulative effect of coursework, practicum experiences, and engagement with counselling ethics, which intensify over time.

The findings of Ajibola and Okon (2021) further underscore the importance of training duration. Their study revealed that students who had completed three or more years in counselling programmes performed better in case analysis and reflective practice tasks involving conflict scenarios. The study emphasized the value of sustained mentorship and repeated skill-building opportunities in fostering conflict competence. Furthermore, Iwuagwu and Eze (2016) noted that the capacity for empathetic listening and mediation—critical elements of conflict engagement—was significantly higher among students in their third and fourth years compared to first-year students. They concluded that the progressive training model in Nigerian universities

positively influences student readiness to manage relational and academic conflicts. However, the quality and intensity of training—not just its length—determine real gains in efficacy. Some students may plateau or regress if their years-in-training are not reinforced with real-life application and feedback. Furthermore, it should be noted that the duration of training is expected to influence skill acquisition. Ogunleye and Ademola (2022) found that final-year counsellor-trainees exhibited better conflict resolution strategies than their junior counterparts, suggesting that prolonged exposure to training enhances competence. However, other studies argue that mere years-in-training does not guarantee skill mastery unless accompanied by practical engagement (Ajayi & Ayodele, 2021).

Logical Reasoning Aptitudes

Logical reasoning aptitude refers to the mental ability to analyze arguments, identify patterns, evaluate premises, and draw sound conclusions. It is a subset of cognitive intelligence and is often assessed using standardized tests that examine inductive and deductive reasoning, analogies, sequences, and critical thinking. It is a cognitive skill that supports analysis, sequencing, and deductive thinking, has been identified as a strong predictor of conflict-handling behaviour (Ogunlade & Bakare, 2016). In their study, counsellor-trainees with higher logical reasoning scores were more likely to approach conflicts with a problem-solving mindset rather than an emotional reaction.

Additional insight is drawn from Nwankwo and Alade (2020), who reported that Nigerian undergraduate counsellors who engaged in logic-based decision training showed improvements in both assertiveness and emotional regulation. However, findings remain inconclusive on whether training duration or logical aptitude plays a more defining role, thus necessitating further investigation. For counsellor-trainees, logical reasoning is essential in structuring interventions, understanding client narratives, weighing ethical considerations, and resolving interpersonal conflicts. It aids in: assessing conflicting perspectives without bias, identifying irrational beliefs or cognitive distortions, formulating balanced and effective response strategies. Ajayi and Olatunji (2017) explored the connection between logical reasoning and problem-solving skills among education students and found a strong positive correlation. Their research concluded that logical reasoning supports clear and objective analysis in emotionally charged situations, making it a necessary cognitive foundation for conflict resolution.

Nwankwo and Alade (2020) conducted a quasi-experimental study on the effect of logic-based instruction on assertiveness and conflict handling among trainee teachers. Their findings revealed that participants who received logical reasoning training showed improved confidence in mediating disputes and de-escalating tensions in group settings. The study recommended the integration of logical reasoning modules into the general education curriculum for trainee professionals.

Similarly, Chika and Lawal (2022) examined the role of reasoning aptitude in ethical decision-making and found that students with high logical reasoning scores were more likely to

make ethically sound and balanced decisions in counselling scenarios. This supports the idea that cognitive reasoning is a key determinant of how future counsellors respond to and resolve interpersonal conflict. Conflict often involves high emotions, blurred facts, and competing narratives. Logical reasoning helps the counsellor isolate core issues, question assumptions, and offer objective resolution strategies. It enhances impartial decision-making, reduced emotional reactivity, capacity to mediate and resolve conflicts with fairness. A counsellor-trainee with high logical reasoning aptitude is likely to maintain composure, communicate more clearly, and avoid fallacious reasoning in emotionally charged situations. Ogunyemi and Adetunji (2019) documented significant skill progression across training years at the University of Ibadan, linking this to robust practicum requirements. Conversely, Adeleke's (2021) study of three colleges of education in Ogun State found negligible improvement, blaming overcrowded curricula that sacrificed hands-on training for theoretical content. This disparity suggests that training quality—not just duration—mediates conflict efficacy, a variable often overlooked in Nigerian institutional audits.

Conflict Management Efficacy and Years-in-Training of Counsellor Trainees

The relationship between conflict management efficacy and the duration of training among counsellor trainees has been widely explored in educational psychology and counsellor education literature. Years-in-training typically refers to the number of academic years or semesters a student counsellor has spent in a formal counselling programme. As trainees advance through these stages, they are presumed to accumulate knowledge, refine their interpersonal skills, and develop greater confidence in addressing complex interpersonal situations, including conflict.Conflict management efficacy, which reflects the perceived ability to handle and resolve conflict effectively, is believed to grow progressively as students are exposed to structured counselling curricula, field experiences, and supervised practicum. The theoretical assumption is that increased exposure leads to experiential learning, reflective practice, and the internalization of effective conflict resolution strategies (Bandura, 1997).

Empirical studies support this developmental trajectory. For example, Odukoya (2020) found that final-year counselling students in Nigerian universities demonstrated significantly higher confidence and competence in handling conflict compared to their first- and second-year counterparts. The study attributed this to the combination of coursework, practicum exposure, and direct interaction with clients in real-world settings. Similarly, Agbele and Adeoye (2018) argued that the progression from foundational to advanced counselling courses equips trainees with both theoretical and applied skills that contribute to improved interpersonal functioning, including conflict resolution.

However, some scholars have cautioned that the number of years spent in training does not automatically translate into increased efficacy unless the training environment is intentionally structured to promote experiential and reflective learning. Akinade (2011) noted that without practical exposure and feedback, even advanced students may struggle with real-time conflict engagement despite their theoretical knowledge. In summary, while there is a general consensus

that years-in-training positively correlate with conflict management efficacy, the strength of this relationship depends largely on the quality of training, opportunities for practice, and the extent to which student counsellors are encouraged to engage actively with real-life interpersonal challenges.

Conflict Management Efficacy and Logical Reasoning Aptitudes of Counsellor Trainees

Logical reasoning aptitude is a key cognitive skill that enables individuals to evaluate information, identify patterns, and make objective decisions based on evidence. Within the counselling profession, this form of reasoning is vital for analyzing interpersonal issues, understanding client behaviour, and devising appropriate conflict resolution strategies. Among counsellor trainees, the presence or absence of logical reasoning skills can significantly influence how confidently and effectively they manage conflict situations. Conflict management efficacy, defined as the belief in one's ability to navigate conflict constructively, is influenced not only by experience but also by cognitive capacity. Logical reasoning supports the counsellor's ability to remain objective, assess multiple sides of a conflict, and select the most appropriate intervention strategies. According to Animasahun and Olufemi (2014), individuals with high logical reasoning are more likely to use integrative conflict styles such as collaboration and problem-solving, which are generally considered more constructive than avoidance or confrontation.

In the Nigerian context, Nwankwo and Eze (2016) examined trainee counsellors' logical reasoning levels and their perceived ability to resolve conflict and found a statistically significant correlation. Their study indicated that students who scored higher on reasoning assessments tended to feel more competent and confident in addressing interpersonal disputes, both in peer interactions and during practicum engagements. Moreover, Okoye (2015) emphasized that logical reasoning plays a bridging role between emotional intelligence and behavioural responses during conflict. While emotional intelligence governs self-awareness and empathy, logical reasoning contributes to structured thinking and consistent decision-making, both of which are necessary for effective conflict engagement.

From an educational standpoint, enhancing logical reasoning through targeted training such as through courses in philosophy, problem-solving exercises, or structured debates can serve to strengthen conflict management efficacy. Aja and Anwana (2016) noted that counsellor education programmes that incorporate logic-based content into their curriculum tend to produce students who are more confident in addressing complex interpersonal challenges. In essence, logical reasoning aptitude not only enhances the counsellor's analytical capacity but also reinforces their sense of agency and competence in conflict situations. It contributes to the development of reflective practitioners who are capable of making sound, fair, and informed decisions in diverse counselling contexts.

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986)

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) posits that self-efficacy—the belief in one's ability to execute tasks successfully—plays a crucial role in skill acquisition and performance. Applied to conflict engagement, counsellor-trainees with higher self-efficacy are more likely to employ effective resolution strategies (Bandura, 1997). In the Nigerian context, studies (e.g., Adejumo & Adeoye, 2021) have shown that structured training enhances counsellor self-efficacy, which may extend to conflict management.

Cognitive-Experiential Theory (Epstein, 2003)

This theory suggests that individuals process information through rational (logical) and experiential (intuitive) systems. Conflict resolution requires both cognitive reasoning (e.g., analyzing disputes logically) and emotional regulation (e.g., empathy). (Ugwuegbu, 2021) indicates that counsellors with stronger logical reasoning skills demonstrate better problem-solving in client disputes.

Methodology

This study employs a descriptive survey design to investigate the influence of the years –in-training and logical reasoning aptitude on the conflict engagement efficacy among counsellor - trainees in tertiary institutions. The population for this study consists of all male and female counsellor–trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State. A stratified sampling technique was used to select 200 counsellor-trainees in tertiary institutions that run counselling programmes in Ogun State. A structured questionnaire consisting of three sections was used to measure the variables under investigation. Part A of the questionnaire provided information on the participants' years-in- training, as well as other relevant demographic details. Part B is a Conflict Resolution Behaviour Questionnaire (CRBQ) by Rubenstein and Feldman (1993), primarily designed to measure individuals' disposition towards conflicts and strategies for resolving marital skirmishes. The scale had 22 items across three dimensions: avoidance, attack, and agreement, with a response format ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). The internal consistency of the scale was rated at 0.79. To ensure its cultural compatibility and suitability for the domain of investigation, certain items were reworded, and the scale was revalidated using a pilot study among individuals who were not part of the study. The new reliability value obtained using Cronbach's alpha was 0. 91. The scale is now presented in a four- point Likert response format, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree; and was used to measure the dependent variable (Conflict Engagement Efficacy) in the study. Part C is a logical reasoning multiple-choice test titled "Logical Reasoning and Analytical Ability" by Lai and Gupta (2013), measuring the reasoning abilities of learners under tutelage. The original version had 90 items across twelve components, including verification of truth, syllogism, critical reasoning, decision making, problem solving, statement and argument analysis, etc. The higher the person's ability to

reason abstractly, the more effective they are in handling real-life issues. The internal consistency ranges between 0. 72 and 0. 75. Twenty- five items were extracted from the original version and subjected to validation by two (2) experts in the Department of Counselling Psychology and Test and Measurement. Also, a pilot test was conducted among non-participating individuals using test- retest methods. The new reliability coefficient yielded 0.78. The scale was used to measure the reasoning aptitude of the participants.

To obtain data for the study, the researcher sought permission from the Head of the Department of each institution, while the selected student-counsellors were briefed on the nature of the study. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to both male and female student-counsellors with the assistance of a research assistant. The completed questionnaires were retrieved and collated for statistical analysis. Furthermore, data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and simple percentages for the demographic section, while the research questions were answered using inferential statistics, such as Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The PPMC was employed to examine the relationship between conflict management efficacy and logical reasoning aptitudes of the respondents, while ANOVA assessed differences between the dependent (conflict management efficacy) and independent (Years-in Training) variables, at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

RQ1: Is there any significant difference in the conflict engagement efficacy and years -in-training of counsellor -trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State?

Table 1:*Summary of Welch Anova showing the difference between the conflict engagement efficacy and years-in-training of counsellor -trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State.*

	Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Welch	2.999	3	59.758	.038
Brown Forsythe	3.333	3	103.512	.022

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 1 shows there is a significant difference in the conflict engagement efficacy and years-in-training of Counsellor -trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State; $F_{(3,60)} = 2.999$, $p<0.05$. To further understand where the differences exist, a Post Hoc analysis was done using Games Howel in Table 2.

Table 2: *Games Howell comparison showing variance in participants' conflict engagement efficacy and years-in-training*

(J) Years-in-Training	Years-in-Training	Mean Diff. (I-J)	Std Error	Sig.
Year 1 $\bar{X}$ = 63.85	Year 2	5.081	1.843	.042
	Year 3	2.957	1.361	.143
	Year 4	1.858	1.384	.540
Year 2 $\bar{X}$=58.76	Year 1	-5.081	1.843	.042
	Year 3	-2.124	1.502	.504
	Year 4	-3.222	1.523	.177
Year 3 $\bar{X}$= 60.89	Year 1	-2.957	1.361	.143
	Year 2	2.124	1.502	.504
	Year 4	-1.098	.881	.599
Year 4 $\bar{X}$= 61.99	Year 1	-1.858	1.384	.540
	Year 2	3.222	1.523	.177
	Year 3	1.098	.881	.599

The above Games Howell post hoc test reveals a significant difference in the conflict engagement efficacy of year one and year two Counsellor -trainees (5.081, $p< 0.05$). In addition, Counsellor -trainees in Year one ($x =63.85$, $p<.05$) recorded the highest mean score on conflict engagement efficacy.

RQ2: What type of relationship exists between conflict engagement efficacy and logical reasoning aptitude of counsellor -trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State?

Table 3: *Summary of PPMC showing the relationship between conflict engagement efficacy and logical reasoning aptitude of Counsellor -trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State*

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	St. Dv	df	R	Sig.	r2
Conflict Engagement	200	61.73	6.027	198	0.146	.039	0.02
Logical Reasoning	200	20.91	8.253				

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 above shows the relationship that exists between conflict engagement efficacy and logical reasoning aptitude of counsellor -trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State; $r(198) =0.146$, $p< .05$, $r^2=0.021$. The table further reveals that logical reasoning aptitude accounts for 2% increase in conflict engagement efficacy of Counsellor -trainees in Tertiary institutions in Ogun State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed a significant difference in conflict engagement efficacy based on years-in-training among Counsellor -trainees. Specifically, Year One trainees demonstrated the highest mean score, suggesting a higher perceived ability to engage with conflict at the early stage of their training. This may reflect initial enthusiasm, idealism, or recent exposure to foundational concepts in counselling and conflict resolution. However, the significant difference between Year One and Year Two trainees may indicate a drop in self-efficacy as the realities and complexities of training become more apparent. Furthermore, a significant but weak positive relationship was found between logical reasoning aptitude and conflict engagement efficacy. Although logical reasoning aptitude accounted for only 2% of the variance, this suggests that reasoning ability plays a modest role in shaping how confident and capable trainees feel when managing conflict. The relationship aligns with existing literature that recognizes the role of cognitive processing in conflict analysis and resolution strategies.

Conclusion

This study has established that both years-in-training and logical reasoning aptitude significantly influence the conflict engagement efficacy of Counsellor -trainees in tertiary institutions in Ogun State. Notably, the finding that Year One trainees scored highest in efficacy suggests that confidence may not linearly increase with training. Additionally, the role of logical reasoning, though statistically significant, indicates that other variables may also contribute to trainees' perceived efficacy. Overall, the findings underscore the need for deliberate educational interventions to sustain and enhance conflict-related competencies throughout the training period.

Counselling Implications

The results have practical implications for counsellor education and professional development. Training institutions must recognize that perceived conflict management capacity may fluctuate across academic levels, necessitating continuous reinforcement of conflict engagement skills. Furthermore, logical reasoning should not be treated merely as a cognitive skill but integrated into counselling education as a foundational tool for ethical decision-making, problem-solving, and interpersonal effectiveness. By emphasizing both reasoning and experiential learning, counselling programmes can produce well-rounded graduates capable of handling the complexities of human interactions in schools, clinics, and communities.

Recommendations

Counsellor education programmes should integrate logical reasoning development into the curriculum, using case analysis, debates, and simulation exercises that reflect real-life conflict scenarios.

Experiential learning opportunities—such as practicum placements, supervised peer mediation, and conflict management workshops—should be evenly distributed across all years of training to maintain and strengthen efficacy levels.

Faculty and supervisors should monitor and support trainees, especially in their transition from theoretical to practical phases, to sustain their confidence in managing conflict.

Further research should explore other psychological or environmental factors that may influence conflict engagement efficacy beyond logical reasoning and years-in-training, such as emotional intelligence, stress tolerance, or supervisory style.

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INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG COUPLES IN KARU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NASARAWA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of emotional intelligence on marital conflict resolution of couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, adopting the survey design. The simple random and stratified sampling techniques were used to draw a sample of 100 young spouses (50 males and 50 females). The instruments for the conduct of the research were adapted E-OSC Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ) and a researcher-made instrument, Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (CRQ); validated by experts in the field of Guidance and Counselling. The instruments were close ended type of questionnaires with reliability coefficients of 0.79 for EIQ and 0.83 for CRQ, using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. The study was guided by five research questions and five corresponding hypotheses. The t-test statistical tool was used to analyze the data at 0.05 level of significance. The results reveal that all the components of emotional intelligence significantly influenced marital conflict resolutions as follows: self-awareness on conflict resolution (t=57.247; P = 0.00 < 0.05); self-regulation on conflict resolution(57.346; P = 0.00 < 0.05), self-motivation on conflict resolution (55.238; P = 0.00 < 0.05), empathy on conflict resolution(53.178; P = 0.00 < 0.05), and social skills on conflict resolution(53.178; P = 0.00 < 0.05). These results confirm that emotional intelligence significantly influenced conflict resolution and marital adjustment among the participants. It is therefore recommended that counsellors should help couples to be emotionally intelligent in order to resolve marital conflicts amicably to foster marital stability and satisfaction.

Key Words: Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution, Couples, Marital Stability, Marital Satisfaction

Introduction

Marital conflicts prevail in Nigeria in an unprecedented manner as cases of divorce continue to escalate. However, Yahaya (2008) postulated that it is difficult to provide accurate statistics on the rate of divorce due to the fact that not all cases of divorce are reported and recorded but there are indications of high rate of divorce according to literature and media reports. Marital conflict resolution fosters marital stability and satisfaction among couples. There are many ways of resolving marital conflicts but emotional intelligence seems to be one of the most seamless accesses to marital stability as couples through the process of understanding own and partners' pattern of emotional feelings can resolve their challenges with little or no third-party involvement. Emotional Intelligence refers to the capacity to recognize and manage our own feelings and to recognize and respond effectively to those of others (Adeniyi, & Ekeanya, 2021). It can help couples to control their own emotions and the emotions of their partners, leading to more effective communication and conflict resolution (Knox et al., 2023; Jardine et al., 2022).

Couples who are emotionally intelligent are likely to have a good understanding of their feelings and are capable to control their moods and be psychological harmonious with their partners to avoid marital distresses. Goleman (1995) proposed five components of emotional intelligence model. The first component is self-awareness which is the ability to recognize how one feels and understands habitual emotional responses to events. Self-regulation as a component is the ability to stay focused and think clearly even when experiencing strong powerful emotions. Self-motivation component is the ability to use deep emotional feelings to guide one towards achieving goals in spite of prevailing stressors, obstacles and setbacks in one's psychosocial environments. Social skill component is the ability to use own emotion to manage, influence and inspire positive emotions in others to foster social bond, trust and effective communication. Empathy component is the ability to use emotional feelings to sense, understand and respond adaptively. Empathy creates an atmosphere for parties in a relationship to willingly forgive one another, thereby enhancing mutual respect and peaceful co-existence.

Conflict is a constant phenomenon in every facet of human engagements (Aina & Obi, 2022). As a result of this constancy, it is critical that couples should develop and maintain a simple mechanism that continue lubricate their marital vows to remain peacefully married and make the home conducive for raising morally sound children for the overall good of the society to foster national cohesion. Emotional intelligence can promote healthy marital engagements as it improves couples' communication effectiveness and the way for stronger bonds to uphold stability and satisfaction. Couples' emotional intelligence resulting in emotional regulation is necessary for marital satisfaction and stability (Wollny et al.2020). Collaborating this view, Parsakia et al. (2023) have posited that emotional intelligence could help couples to manage their emotions and stress levels, thereby enhancing positive interactions and greater feelings of

closeness and intimacy. Moreover, couples who are highly emotionally intelligent may handle marital conflicts better and increase quality of romantic relationships (Zmaczyńska-Witek et al., 2019; Hadian & Amini, 2019). Empathy and forgiveness can go a long way to revive a crumbling marital relationship and sustain it (Gaur & Bhardwaj, 2015)

Marital Conflict or Marital instability could be perceived as a marriage with a high propensity to divorce, which is determined by the presence of thoughts or actions capable of precipitating separation (Usoroh et al. 2010). Marital conflict could lead to disagreement and quarrel among couples and trigger marital dissatisfaction which could in turn culminate in separation or divorce.

Previous studies reveal the potency of emotional intelligence as key driver of marital conflict resolution. Some of these studies are revealed in this present study.For instance,Nwoke, Amadi, and Ikezam (2022) investigated emotional intelligence as correlates of marital stability among married couples in Rivers State, Nigeria. A correlational design was adopted for the study. The Taro Yamen's formula was used to determine the sample size of 392 respondents from an estimated population of 20,000 married couples in the three Senatorial Districts in Rivers State, Nigeria. Two researcher's structured instruments titled "Emotional Intelligence Assessment Questionnaire and Marital Stability Scale were used to elicit information for the study to determine the extent to which self -awareness, self-regulation, empathy, predicted marital stability among married couples in Rivers Sate Nigeria. The instruments were validated by experts in the field of educational measurement and evaluation and educational guidance and counselling. The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach Alpha; the results yielded 0.81 for emotional intelligence assessment questionnaire and 0.78 for marital stability scale. Findings of the study revealed that to a high extent self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy predicted marital stability among married couples in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Parsakia et al. (2023) also investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital conflicts, utilizing a cross-sectional design. The participants were 100 married couples who were recruited through convenience sampling from different regions of the Canada. The inclusion criteria for the study were that the couples had to be married for at least one year and have no history of mental illness. The participants were asked to complete the EQ-i questionnaire, which measured emotional intelligence, and the MCQ questionnaire, which measured the marital conflicts. The questionnaires were completed by both partners separately, and the responses were matched based on the couple's identification code. The data was collected through an online survey platform. The data analysis was conducted using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM). The results for the APIM indicated that husbands' emotional intelligence as well as the wives' emotional intelligence exhibited a significant actor effect on their marital conflicts. Similarly, husbands' emotional intelligence as well as the wives' emotional intelligence exhibited a significant partner effect on their spouses' marital conflicts.

The researchers confirmed the importance of emotional intelligence in romantic relationships and provided insights for clinicians and researchers working with couples to improve their marital relationships.

Furthermore, Cheung et al. (2022) examined three configurations of couples' level of self-control on marital conflict. The data used to test these hypotheses was a unique couple data from 894 married couples from a representative sample in Hong Kong. The researchers tested three competing hypotheses: similarity hypothesis, complementary hypothesis, and totality hypothesis. Two-level random-intercept models were employed. The study revealed that similarity of self-control between husband and wife was important in predicting marital conflict and that marital conflict was strongly associated with the mismatch of self-control between partners.

In another development, Heidari, and Kumar (2021) investigated the influence of trait emotional intelligence on marital satisfaction among married couples in India. There were 304 participants, consisting 152 wives and 152 husbands drawn from various cities across India. To assess participants' emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction, the TEIQue-SF and ENRICH-SF were used. The statistical analysis was determined using the Chi-square, Kruskal-Wallis, and Mann-Whitney U tests. Results indicated participants with better emotional intelligence had higher marital satisfaction. The researchers concluded that higher levels of emotional intelligence led to greater marital satisfaction. Goyal and Narayan (2024) also undertook a comprehensive analysis on the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital adjustment and found from studies that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tended to have better marital adjustment. The review study emphasized how emotional intelligence improved empathy, effective communication, and conflict resolution in couples.

In addition, Sharma (2024) investigated how middle-aged couples handled and resolved conflict in their marriages based on their emotional intelligence, which included traits like self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and effective communication. A cross-section between-group, mixed method research design was used in the study. Using purposive sampling, the researchers selected 43 couples living in Noida who were married. The goal of the research was to shed light on how emotional intelligence affected healthy conflict resolution, improved relationship satisfaction, and benefitted couples' general well-being in their middle years of adulthood, which was usually between the ages of 40 and 65. The study found that emotional intelligence of husbands and wives from disturbed couples did not significantly correlate with marital quality. Similarly, the researcher also reported that among the non-distressed husbands and couples, no correlation was found between emotional intelligence and marital quality. Thus, a statistical correlation between the emotional intelligence of married couples who were not experiencing distress and the quality of their marriage was not sufficiently supported by the available data.

Adeniyi and Ekeanya (2021) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence, marital communication, conflict resolution skill and marital stability among married persons in

Lagos State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all married persons in Lagos State. A sample of 100 respondents was selected across four orthodox churches in Lagos State, using simple random sampling technique. Three research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of Significance.

Emotional intelligence, marital communication, conflict resolution skill and marital stability questionnaire (EICCRSMS) was used to collect relevant data. The data was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics. Findings of the study showed that emotional intelligence did not necessarily relate to marital stability while marital communication and conflict resolution skills correlated to marital stability.

In line with the objective of this study, the influence of the five components (indices) of emotional intelligence: self-awareness (ability to recognize your feeling); self-regulation (ability to stay focused when experiencing powerful emotions); self motivation (ability to persevere amidst obstacles or setbacks); empathy (ability to put yourself in another person's shoes); and social skills (abilities to inspire positive emotions in others) on marital conflict resolution among couples in the area of study was carefully examined.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage is a highly valued union all over the world. It is a legally recognized romantic union that is often celebrated with joy in different cultural ways in Nigeria. Though marital union is common to human existence, it is very complex because of its fragility which could breed dissatisfaction, anxiety, depression and relationship deterioration. Parties in marital relationship may enjoy the bliss that comes with it if they are emotionally intelligent enough to handle the inevitable obstacles that usually confront spouses. Thus, marriage is a relationship that thrives on emotional intimacy, love and companionship. Marital conflict is a global phenomenon and Nigeria as a nation is no exception, particularly, Karu Local Government of Nasarawa State. It is common knowledge that marital instability can affect growth and development of families if the situation is not addressed properly. Thus, a study of this nature with emphasis on Karu Local Government Area as the study area is important to save marriages from crashing, thereby fostering marital stability and enhancing growth and development as peaceful marital unions are breeding grounds for good character formation in children who are the fruits of marital unions. Karu Local Area is home to many Nigerians from different ethnic groups as it is more or less an extension of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja which can no longer contain the bulging population of people working in the FCT anymore, giving Karu the responsibility of housing a good number of couples.

Marital stability or marital conflict resolution has dominated scholarship discourse of the years from various dimensions. However, studies with emphases on the influence of emotional intelligence on marital conflict resolution is relatively silent. Thus, there seems to be paucity of scholarship reports with spotlights on the influence of the five components or indices of

emotional intelligence on marital conflict resolution or stability, creating a research vacuum that requires careful investigation and report to provide the needed knowledge that can guide counsellors to help couples experiencing storms in their marriages, using the approach of emotional intelligence to pave way for stable and conflict free marriages.

In keeping with the above, this study examines the influence of emotional intelligence on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Area of Nasarawa State with emphasis on its five components or indices: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy and social skills.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the influence of emotional intelligence on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. Specifically, the study established:

1. The influence of self-awareness on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State
2. The influence of self-regulation on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State
3. The influence of self-motivation on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State
4. The influence of Empathy on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State
5. The influence of social skills on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

Research Questions

1. Can self-awareness influence conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State?
2. Does self-regulation influence conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State?
3. To what extent does self-motivation influence conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State?
4. How much influence does empathy have on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State?
5. What is the influence of social skills on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State?

Research Hypotheses

This study tested the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant influence of self-awareness on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State
2. There is no significant influence of self-regulation on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State
3. There is no significant influence of self-motivation on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State
4. There is no significant influence of empathy on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State
5. There is no significant influence of social skills on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

Methodology

This study adopted the survey design. The population comprised of all couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The simple random and stratified sampling techniques were used to draw a sample of 100 married participants (50 males and 50 females). The instruments for the conduct of the research were adapted E-OSC Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ) and a researcher-made instrument, Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (CRQ); validated by experts in the field of Guidance and Counselling. The instruments for the study were close ended type of questionnaires with reliability coefficients of 0.79 for EIQ and 0.83 for CRQ, using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. Both of them consisted of two sections, Section 'A' which dealt with the bio-data of respondents. Section 'B' contained questionnaire items based on 4-point rating scale, strongly agreed (4), agreed (3), disagreed (2) and strongly disagreed (1); and required respondents to tick only one option on each item presented in the questionnaire. Specifically, the study was guided by five research questions and five corresponding hypotheses. The t-test statistical tool was used to analyze the data at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: Can self-awareness influence conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State?

Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of self awareness on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

Table 1: *One-Sample t-Test Table Showing Influence of self Awareness on Conflict Resolution*

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Self Awareness	100	9.0700	1.58436	**99**	57.247	.000
Conflict Resolution	100	27.8200	4.18120			

It could be seen from Table 1 that t value of 57.247 resulted as the influence of self-awareness on marital conflict resolution, meaning that self-awareness can influence. This result is significant because P = 0.00 < 0.05 given 99 as degree of freedom. Since the result is significant, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld. This means that there is a significant influence of self awareness on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

Research Question Two: Does self-regulation influence conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant influence of self regulation on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

Table 2: *One-Sample t-Test Table Showing Influence of Self Regulation on Conflict Resolution*

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Self Regulation	100	8.4900	1.48048	99	57.346	.000
Conflict Resolution	100	27.8200	4.18120			

It could be seen from Table 2 that t value of 57.346 resulted as the influence of self-regulation on marital conflict resolution, meaning that self-regulation does influence marital conflict resolution. This result is significant because P = 0.00 < 0.05 given 99 as degree of freedom. Since the result is significant, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld. This means that there is a significant influence of self regulation on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

Research Question Three: To what extent does self-motivation influence conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State?

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant influence of self motivation on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

Table 3: *One-Sample t-Test Table Showing Influence of Self Motivation on Conflict Resolution*

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Self Motivation	100	8.9000	1.61120	99	55.238	.000
Conflict Resolution	100	27.8200	4.18120			

It could be seen from Table 3 that t value of 55.238 resulted as the influence of self-motivation on marital conflict resolution, meaning that self-motivation influences marital conflict resolution to a reasonable extent. This result is significant because P = 0.00 < 0.05 given 99 as degree of freedom. Since the result is significant, the null hypothesis is rejected while the

alternate hypothesis is upheld. This means that there is a significant influence of self motivation on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

Research Question Four: How much influence does empathy have on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State?

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant influence of empathy on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

Table 4: *One-Sample t-Test Table Showing Influence of Empathy on Conflict Resolution*

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Empathy	100	8.6800	1.63225	99	53.178	.000
Conflict Resolution	100	27.8200	4.18120			

It could be seen from Table 4 that t value of 53.178 resulted as the influence of empathy on marital conflict resolution, meaning that empathy has reasonable influence on marital conflict resolution. This result is significant because P = 0.00 < 0.05 given 99 as degree of freedom. Since the result is significant, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld. This means that there is a significant influence of empathy on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

Research Question Five: What is the influence of social skills on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State?

Hypothesis Five: There is no significant influence of social skills on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

Table 5: *One-Sample t-Test Table Showing Influence of Social Skills on Conflict Resolution*

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Social Skills	100	9.3100	1.41917	99	65.602	.000
Conflict Resolution	100	27.8200	4.18120			

It could be seen from Table 5 that t value of 65.602 resulted as the influence of social skills on marital conflict resolution, meaning that social skills have high level of influence on marital conflict resolution. This result is significant because P = 0.00 < 0.05 given 99 as degree of freedom. Since the result is significant, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld. This means that there is a significant influence of social skills on conflict resolution among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

Discussion of Findings

Emotional Intelligence and Marital Conflict Resolution

The results of this study reveal that all the indices of emotional intelligence significantly influenced marital conflict resolutions as follows: self awareness on conflict resolution (t=57.247; P = 0.00 < 0.05); self regulation on conflict resolution(57.346; P = 0.00 < 0.05), self motivation on conflict resolution (55.238; P = 0.00 < 0.05), empathy on conflict resolution(53.178; P = 0.00 < 0.05), and social skills on conflict resolution(65.602; P = 0.00 < 0.05). These results confirm that emotional intelligence significantly influenced conflict resolution, thereby fostering marital stability among couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. This finding agrees with Parsakia et al (2023) who noted significant influence of emotional intelligence on spousal relationships in Canada. This finding is also in consonance with Heidari et al (2021) who indicated that participants with better emotional intelligence had higher marital satisfaction in a study in India. It equally harmonizes with Goyal et al (2024) who found from studies that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tended to have better marital adjustment. However, this finding contradicts Sharma (2024) who posited that there was no statistical correlation between the emotional intelligence and marital quality in Noida; and Adeniyi et al (2021) who submitted that emotional intelligence did not necessarily relate to marital stability in Lagos State. The finding confirms that emotional intelligence can lead to spousal emotional control and conflict resolution as suggested by Knox et al. (2023).

Self-awareness and Marital Conflict Resolution

This study reveals a statistically significant influence of the self-awareness component of emotional intelligence on marital conflict resolution (t=57.247; P = 0.00 < 0.05). This aligns with Nwoke et al (2022) who posited that high extent of self-awareness predicted marital stability among married couples in Rivers State, Nigeria. Self-awareness can help spouses to understand who they are. The more a spouse understand his or her emotions and thoughts, the more he or she is likely to appreciate the fact that his or her partner too experiences emotions. Thus, self-awareness can lubricate marital relationship.

Self-regulation and Marital Conflict Resolution

This study reveals a statistically significant influence of the self-regulation component of emotional intelligence on conflict resolution (57.346; P = 0.00 < 0.05). This finding agrees with Nwoke et al (2022) who noted that high extent of self-regulation predicted marital stability among married couples in Rivers State, Nigeria. The finding also aligns with Cheung et al (2022) who observed that marital conflict was strongly associated with the mismatch of self-control between partners in Hong Kong. Self-regulation in this study proves to a vital ingredient in conflict resolution. It can help couples to regulate negative emotions like frustration and anger to avoid unnecessary emotional outbursts that could lead to deterioration of romantic relationship.

Self-motivation and Marital Conflict Resolution

This study reveals a statistically significant influence of self-motivation component of emotional intelligence on conflict resolution (55.238; P = 0.00 < 0.05). This finding agrees with previous studies which posited that emotional intelligence potentially acts as a catalyst to marital stability and adjustment (Parsakia et al., 2023; Heidari et al., 2021; Goyal et al., 2024). Self motivation is crucial in marriage because it is the inner drive that helps spouses to pursue their goals of marital satisfaction at all cost. It makes couples to be determined to keep to their marital vows without relying on external encouragement to resolve conflict in order to move towards the goal of a successful marriage.

Empathy and Marital Conflict Resolution

This study reveals a statistically significant influence of the empathy component of emotional intelligence on conflict resolution (53.178; P = 0.00 < 0.05). This finding is supported by Nwoke et al (2022) who opined that high extent of empathy predicted marital stability among married couples in Rivers State, Nigeria. The finding agrees with Goyal et al (2024) who found in a review study that emotional intelligence improved empathy and conflict resolution in couples. According Gaur et al (2015) empathy and forgiveness could help couples to save their marital relationship from collapse. Human beings are prone mistakes, making it impossible for any relationship to last without the virtue of empathy. Spouses who are empathetic could easily bear with their partners and would be willing to resolve conflicts as quickly as possible.

Social Skills and Marital Conflict Resolution

This study reveals a statistically significant influence of social skills component of emotional intelligence on conflict resolution (65.602; P = 0.00 < 0.05). The finding agrees with Goyal et al (2024) who found in a review study that emotional intelligence improved effective communication and conflict resolution in couples; and Adeniyi et al (2021) who posited that marital communication and conflict resolution skills correlated to marital stability in Lagos State. Social skills refer to the ability of couples to interact and communicate. Emotional intelligence leads to effective communication of couples and enhances marital stability and satisfaction (Jardine et al., 2022). Thus, Social skills can enrich marital communications, implying that spouses who do not communicate effectively may face the risk of emotional tensions in their marriages.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the influence of emotional intelligence on marital resolution of couples in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The results of the study have also revealed that all the components of emotional intelligence significantly influenced marital conflict resolutions as follows: self awareness on conflict resolution (t=57.247; P = 0.00 < 0.05);

self regulation on conflict resolution(57.346; P = 0.00 < 0.05), self motivation on conflict resolution (55.238; P = 0.00 < 0.05), empathy on conflict resolution (53.178; P = 0.00 < 0.05), and social skills on conflict resolution (65.602; P = 0.00 < 0.05). These results confirm that emotional intelligence significantly influenced conflict resolution and marital adjustment among the participants.

Recommendations

In the light of the effectiveness of emotional intelligence as a catalyst for marital conflict resolution recipe, the following recommendations are proffered.

Based on the findings of this study, counsellors should guide spouses on how to be emotional intelligent and deploy the five components of emotional intelligence to build stable marriages in their marital counselling interventions. In additional, Counsellors teach couples how they can be emotionally self-aware, regulate their emotions, self-motivate during stormy periods in their marriage, deploy social skills to build psychosocial and romantic bonds, and empathize with their partner to foster reconciliation.

As a result of the findings of this study, spouses should be encouraged by helping professionals to embrace forgiveness and effective communication towards marital conflict resolution. Counselling interventional should emphasize emotional regulation, grounded in tolerance to help couples to embrace peace and cohesion to foster good quality of life and marital stability.

Couples should adopt appropriate resolution strategies like negotiation instead of using force or coercion to resolve marital conflicts. Negotiation stems from emotional intelligence and helps couples to discuss their differences in order to arrive at consensus. Counsellors may deploy negotiation approach in marital conflict resolution interventions.

Emotional education should be built into our educational processes to help learners appreciate emotional intelligence right from their school days before marriage. Government should encourage emotional education in our schools since emotional skills can be taught and learnt.

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COUNSELLING APPROACHES AND STRATEGIC CONFLICT TECHNIQUES FOR ENHANCING INTERPERSONAL HARMONY IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS IN OWERRI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF IMO STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of counselling approaches and strategic conflict management techniques in fostering interpersonal harmony within educational settings. With rising incidents of interpersonal conflicts in schools among students, teachers, and administrators, the research aimed to explore how guided counselling and conflict resolution strategies can promote peaceful coexistence and enhance relationships. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, involving a sample of 150 respondents (students, teachers, and counsellors) selected from a population of 300 in secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Counselling and Conflict Management Questionnaire (CCMQ)". Data were analyzed using mean scores, chi-square, independent t-test, and ANOVA. Findings revealed that individual and group counselling, cognitive-behavioural, and humanistic approaches significantly contribute to interpersonal harmony. Similarly, conflict resolution techniques such as collaboration, mediation, and compromise were found to be highly effective. Significant differences existed in the perception of students and teachers regarding these techniques. Based on the results, the study recommends the institutionalization of school-based counselling programs and training of educators in conflict resolution strategies to enhance a harmonious and productive educational environment.

Keywords: Counselling approaches, conflict resolution, interpersonal harmony, educational settings, strategic techniques, school counselling.

Introduction

Background otfthe Study

Interpersonal harmony is a fundamental prerequisite for the effective functioning of any educational environment. In recent decades, educational institutions, particularly schools, have become microcosms of diverse social, emotional, cultural, and ideological differences. These differences often give rise to interpersonal conflicts among students, teachers, administrators, and even parents. Conflict, though inevitable, when poorly managed, can significantly disrupt academic activities, impede social development, and erode the moral fabric of the learning community (Okobia, 2018). Hence, educational institutions must adopt effective counselling approaches and conflict resolution techniques to maintain interpersonal harmony and promote a conducive learning environment. Counselling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals (American Counseling Association [ACA 2014). Within educational settings, counselling serves as a critical tool not only for supporting students' academic and emotional development but also for mediating interpersonal disputes and fostering mutual understanding. Counselling approaches such as the person-centred approach, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT), and solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) offer structured ways to understand and resolve conflicts by encouraging empathy, positive communication, and behavioral change (Corey, 2017). Each approach contributes uniquely to addressing the psychological and emotional dynamics underlying interpersonal discord in schools. On the other hand, conflict management techniques such as negotiation, mediation, dialogue facilitation, peer mediation, and collaborative problem solving serve as strategic tools in de-escalating tensions and restoring peaceful coexistence in school communities (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2020). These techniques emphasize understanding the interests and emotions of conflicting parties, promoting open communication, and reaching mutually beneficial solutions. When combined with effective counselling interventions, conflict resolution strategies can significantly enhance interpersonal relationships, reduce incidents of bullying, improve student behavior, and promote overall school wellbeing (Adeyemi & Adu, 2023).

In Nigeria, many schools face persistent issues of peer aggression, student-teacher misunderstandings, and administrative tension, largely due to insufficient application of counselling services and the lack of structured conflict management systems (Eremie & Chikweru, 2021). Despite the presence of trained counsellors in some institutions, the strategic integration of conflict management techniques into school counselling programs remains limited. This gap often results in unresolved tensions and a hostile learning atmosphere that undermines both academic achievement and emotional stability among students. Therefore, this study is grounded in the belief that an integrated framework of counselling approaches and conflict resolution strategies can effectively address interpersonal conflicts in educational settings. It aims to examine how professional counselling methods, combined with proven strategic conflict

techniques, can enhance interpersonal harmony among members of the school community. The findings of this study are expected to inform policy decisions, enhance the practice of school counselling, and contribute to the broader discourse on peace education and social-emotional learning in schools.

In summary, fostering interpersonal harmony is not merely about preventing conflict but about building a sustainable culture of empathy, respect, and mutual support within the educational setting. Counselling approaches and strategic conflict techniques offer viable pathways to achieving this ideal.

The Concepts of this study will focus on Counselling approaches which refer to the structured methods or theoretical orientations employed by counsellors to assist individuals in understanding and resolving personal, social, and emotional challenges. These approaches provide frameworks that guide the counsellor-client relationship and intervention process, Person-Centred Approach (Carl Rogers), Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT), Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT). These counselling approaches are instrumental in building emotional intelligence, empathy, communication skills, and constructive behavior among individuals in educational settings. Strategic Conflict Techniques, Strategic conflict techniques refer to systematic methods employed to resolve or manage conflicts in a way that promotes understanding and cooperation rather than escalation and hostility. Negotiation, Mediation, Dialogue Facilitation and Peer Mediation. Interpersonal Harmony, Interpersonal harmony refers to the peaceful and cooperative interaction between individuals within a social or organizational setting. In the context of education, it implies the existence of mutual respect, tolerance, empathy, effective communication, and emotional regulation among members of the school community (Omisore & Abiodun, 2024). A harmonious school environment enhances learning outcomes, reduces disciplinary issues, and supports the mental wellbeing of both students and staff. Interpersonal harmony is not merely the absence of conflict but the active presence of positive and respectful relationships. Educational Settings, Educational settings include all structured learning environments, such as primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities, where teaching, learning, administration, and social interactions occur. These settings are dynamic and diverse, often marked by differences in values, personalities, and expectations. The role of guidance and counselling in these settings is not limited to academic support but extends to fostering psychosocial development, conflict resolution, and emotional wellbeing (Egbo, 2023). As such, implementing effective counselling and conflict management strategies becomes vital for creating a supportive and harmonious educational atmosphere.

This study is anchored on three interrelated psychological and sociological theories: Humanistic Theory, Conflict Transformation Theory, and Systems Theory. Each of these theories offers foundational insights into understanding human behavior, managing conflict, and fostering interpersonal harmony in educational settings. The humanistic theory(Carl Rogers, 1961) particularly as developed by Carl Rogers, emphasizes individual potential, personal growth, and self-actualization. It asserts that every individual possesses an inherent ability for

self-understanding and resolving personal conflicts if provided with the right conditions empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard. In educational counselling, the humanistic approach translates into the person-centered counselling model, which is built on respect for the individual's perspective and the belief in their ability to grow through supportive dialogue. This theory informs counselling practices that aim to help students and staff resolve interpersonal issues by fostering emotional awareness, empathy, and self-reflection (Rogers, 1961). It supports the use of non-directive counselling approaches in conflict resolution and underlines the importance of empathy and positive communication in restoring interpersonal harmony.

Conflict transformation theory (John Paul Lederach, 1995) views conflict not merely as a problem to be resolved but as a potential opportunity for personal and institutional growth. This theory emphasizes long-term, relational, and systemic change rather than quick-fix solutions. Conflict is seen as a dynamic interaction between individuals, shaped by relationships, structures, cultures, and histories. In schools, this theory underpins the strategic conflict techniques such as peer mediation, dialogue facilitation, and restorative practices, which aim to transform negative relationships into positive ones. It advocates for approaches that address the root causes of conflict, promote reconciliation, and build sustainable peace. This theory aligns with the strategic goal of fostering enduring interpersonal harmony by using conflict as a catalyst for improved understanding and cooperation among members of the educational community (Lederach, 1995). Systems Theory (Murray Bowen, 1978) views the school as a social system in which all parts students, teachers, counsellors, administrators interact and influence one another. Conflict or disharmony in one part of the system can affect the whole. According to Bowen, individuals cannot be understood in isolation but must be seen as part of a wider network of relationships. Counselling and conflict management in educational settings require an understanding of these systemic relationships. Effective intervention, therefore, involves not just working with individuals, but addressing group dynamics, communication patterns, and institutional policies. Systems theory justifies the need for comprehensive and systemic counselling interventions and conflict strategies that go beyond individuals to include peer groups, classroom dynamics, and administrative frameworks (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2012).

The empirical review provides a critical examination of past research studies related to counselling, conflict resolution, and interpersonal harmony in educational settings. These studies offer practical insights into how counselling approaches and strategic conflict management techniques have been implemented and their outcomes across diverse educational contexts. Adebayo & Ogunsanmi (2019): Effectiveness of Counselling Strategies on Conflict Resolution among Secondary School Students in Lagos State. Descriptive survey design was used and the Population of 500 students and of Sample 100 students selected through stratified sampling. The Instrument used was a Structured questionnaire on conflict behaviours and response to counselling. The study revealed that students who received cognitive-behavioural counselling

reported a significant improvement in anger control and communication during conflicts. The counselling also promoted peer empathy and reduced incidents of physical confrontation. The study Supports the role of cognitive-behavioural counselling in improving students' emotional regulation and interpersonal interactions in schools. Eremie & Chikweru (2019): School Counselors' Role in Managing School-Related Violence in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Descriptive survey was used and the Population of 350 teachers and school administrators and Sample of 120 selected through purposive sampling. The Instrument used was Questionnaire and interview. The study established that school counsellors who integrated mediation and dialogue facilitation into their roles reported a notable decline in incidents of school violence. However, lack of resources and administrative support hindered wider application. It Demonstrates the value of combining counselling with strategic conflict resolution in reducing school-related conflict and fostering harmony.

Statement of the Problem

The educational system is not only a platform for academic development but also a social environment where students, teachers, administrators, and non-academic staff interact daily. These interactions, while necessary for the learning process, often give rise to interpersonal conflicts due to individual differences, role expectations, emotional immaturity, competition, poor communication, and socio-cultural diversity. In recent years, there has been an alarming increase in cases of student-student disputes, teacher-student conflicts, bullying, disrespect for authority, group clashes, and communication breakdowns in many educational institutions across Nigeria (Eremie & Chikweru, 2019). These conflicts, when poorly managed, disrupt the learning process, cause psychological trauma, lower academic performance, and create hostile environments that hinder holistic development. Although counselling services exist in many schools, they are often underutilized or poorly structured to effectively address interpersonal conflicts. Traditional disciplinary measures such as punishment, suspension, or expulsion have proven ineffective in curbing recurrent conflicts, as they often ignore the underlying emotional and psychological causes of disruptive behaviour. Furthermore, many educators lack formal training in conflict management and emotional regulation, making it difficult to foster healthy relationships among students and staff. In some cases, counsellors focus solely on academic guidance without integrating strategic conflict resolution techniques such as mediation, negotiation, and peer dialogue facilitation into their practice (Okobia, 2019; Yusuf, 2020). Empirical evidence suggests that counselling approaches such as person-centered counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), and rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) can help students and staff manage emotions, develop empathy, and build healthy interpersonal skills (Corey, 2017; Okoye & Ofole, 2014). Similarly, strategic conflict resolution techniques have been proven to reduce violence, foster cooperation, and build trust within school environments (Lederach, 1995; Omotosho & Adenuga, 2017). However, there is a significant gap in research and practice regarding the integration of these two powerful tools counselling approaches and

conflict strategies into a unified framework for promoting interpersonal harmony in educational settings.

This study is delimited to investigating how counselling approaches and strategic conflict resolution techniques can be employed to enhance interpersonal harmony within educational settings. The study focuses specifically on secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State, Nigeria, where interpersonal conflict has been reported to negatively affect school climate, student-teacher relationships, and academic performance. The counselling approaches considered in this study include person-centered counselling, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), and rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT). These are selected based on their proven effectiveness in modifying attitudes, fostering empathy, and promoting emotional regulation in conflict situations. Strategic conflict techniques examined include peer mediation, negotiation, dialogue facilitation, and restorative conferencing. The study will evaluate how these techniques, when strategically applied either independently or in conjunction with counseling can reduce interpersonal tensions and foster positive relationships within school communities.

Purpose of the Study

More specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Investigate the extent to which counselling approaches are applied in resolving interpersonal conflicts in educational institutions.
2. Examine the the common strategic conflict resolution techniques employed by school counsellors and educators in enhancing interpersonal harmony?
3. Determine the combined influence of counselling and conflict resolution strategies on interpersonal harmony in educational institutions.
4. Identify the challenges faced in implementing these approaches and techniques within educational institution.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent are counselling approaches applied in resolving interpersonal conflicts in educational institutions?
2. What are the common strategic conflict resolution techniques employed by school counsellors and educators in enhancing interpersonal harmony?
3. What is the combined influence of counselling approaches and strategic conflict techniques on interpersonal harmony in educational institutions?
4. What are the challenges faced in implementing counselling and conflict resolution strategies in educational institution?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions and objectives of the study, the following null hypotheses are formulated and will be tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between the use of counselling approaches and the resolution of interpersonal conflicts in educational settings.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of various strategic conflict techniques (e.g., mediation, negotiation, peer dialogue) in enhancing interpersonal harmony in schools.

H_{03}: There is no significant combined effect of counselling approaches and strategic conflict techniques on interpersonal harmony in educational institutions.

H_{04}: Implementation challenges do not significantly affect the effectiveness of counselling and conflict resolution strategies in promoting interpersonal harmony.

Method

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey design is considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to systematically collect, analyze, and interpret data from a large group of respondents in order to describe existing conditions, perceptions, practices, and relationships as they relate to the use of counselling approaches and strategic conflict resolution techniques in educational settings. The design enables the investigation of how counselling strategies and conflict management techniques are currently applied, their perceived effectiveness, and the challenges faced by school stakeholders (such as counsellors, teachers, and students) in implementing these practices. It also allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data through structured questionnaires and, where applicable, interviews.

The population of this study consists of a total of 300 individuals drawn from selected 3 public secondary schools and 3 tertiary institutions within Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State, Nigeria. This population includes 150 students, 120 teachers, and 30 school counsellors. Students in senior secondary school classes (SS1–SS3) are included because they are actively involved in peer relationships and often experience interpersonal conflicts that require guidance and counselling. Teachers form a vital part of the population due to their day-to-day interaction with students and colleagues, making them important stakeholders in conflict prevention and resolution within school settings. School counsellors are included as trained professionals who provide counselling services and implement conflict management techniques within the institutions. This population was chosen to ensure the study captures a comprehensive understanding of how counselling approaches and strategic conflict techniques affect interpersonal harmony from multiple perspectives within the educational system. From the total population of 300 individuals, a sample size of 150 respondents was selected for the study. The

sample comprises 75 students, 60 teachers, and 15 school counsellors drawn from selected public secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Owerri Municipal Council, Imo State. The sampling technique used was a combination of stratified random sampling and simple random sampling. Stratified sampling was employed to ensure that each subgroup (students, teachers, and counsellors) was proportionately represented in the sample. After stratification, simple random sampling was used within each group to select the actual respondents. This approach ensures that the diverse perspectives of all relevant stakeholders in the school system are adequately captured. It also enhances the reliability and generalizability of the study's findings to the larger educational community within the study area.

The main instrument used for data collection in this study is a structured questionnaire titled "Counselling and Conflict Management Questionnaire (CCMQ)." The questionnaire was designed by the researcher based on relevant literature and aligned with the study's objectives, research questions, and hypotheses. It was structured into four sections (A–D) as follows: Section A: Demographic Information, Section B: Counselling Approaches, Section C: Conflict Resolution Techniques, and Section D: Interpersonal Harmony Outcomes. Each item in Sections B–D is rated on a 4-point Likert scale:1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree. The use of the Likert scale allows for quantifiable data analysis, ensuring a clear understanding of respondents' views and the level of effectiveness of counselling and conflict resolution strategies within the school environment. To ensure the instrument measured what it was intended to measure, the validity of the "Counselling and Conflict Management Questionnaire (CCMQ)" was established through content and face validation. The process of data collection for this study was carefully structured to ensure accuracy, ethical compliance, and efficient administration of the instrument. The following steps were adopted: Obtaining Permission, Briefing of Participants, Distribution of Questionnaires, Duration, and Retrieval. Out of the 150 questionnaires administered, 145 were correctly filled and returned, yielding a return rate of 96.7%, which is considered high and suitable for valid analysis.

The data collected from the respondents through the Counselling and Conflict Management Questionnaire (CCMQ) were systematically analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods, as appropriate to the research questions and hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance, and data analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the counselling approaches employed in promoting interpersonal harmony in educational settings?

Table 1: *Mean Ratings of Respondents on Counselling Approaches*

S/N	Counselling Approaches	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1.	Individual counseling	150	3.30	0.65	Agree
2.	Group counselling	150	2.40	0.66	Disagree
3.	Cognitive behavioural counselling	150	2.30	0.69	Disagree
4.	Humanistic / person-centred approach	150	3.25	0.62	Agree
Average Mean			2.81		Agree

The table presents respondents' views on various counselling approaches used in promoting interpersonal harmony in educational settings. Based on a decision benchmark of 2.50, scores above 2.50 indicate agreement, while scores below 2.50 indicate disagreement. Out of the four counselling approaches presented, two (individual and humanistic) were rated positively, while two (group and cognitive behavioural) were rated negatively. The average mean score of 2.81, which is above the benchmark, suggests that respondents generally support the use of counselling in fostering interpersonal harmony, though they show clear preferences for more individualized and empathetic methods.

Research Question 2: What are the common strategic conflict resolution techniques employed by school counsellors and educators in enhancing interpersonal harmony?

Table 2: *Mean Ratings of Respondents on Conflict Techniques*

S/N	Conflict Techniques	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1	Mediation	150	2.40	0.65	Disagree
2	Active listening	150	3.22	0.59	Agree
3	Compromise strategy	150	2.35	0.70	Disagree
4	Collaborative techniques	150	3.31	0.55	Agree
	Average Mean		2.82		Agree

Mediation (Mean = 2.40) and Compromise strategy (Mean = 2.35) received mean scores below 2.50, indicating disagreement among respondents regarding their common use or effectiveness as conflict resolution techniques in school settings. Active listening (Mean = 3.22) and Collaborative techniques (Mean = 3.31) were rated above 2.50, showing clear agreement and indicating that respondents believe these techniques are frequently and effectively used. Despite

two items being marked as "Disagree," the average mean score remains 2.82, which is above the benchmark, so the overall interpretation is that respondents still generally agree on the use of conflict resolution techniques in schools.

Research Question 3: How do counselling and conflict techniques contribute to interpersonal harmony in schools?

Table 3: *Mean Ratings on Contribution to Interpersonal Harmony*

S/N	Aspects of Interpersonal Harmony	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1	Team building among school members	150	3.18	0.67	Agree
2	Respect and empathy among students	150	3.26	0.61	Agree
3	Reduction of tension and bullying	150	3.09	0.65	Agree
	Average Mean	3.18			Agree

The responses show a strong agreement that counselling and conflict management techniques contribute significantly to interpersonal harmony. Respect and empathy (Mean = 3.26) emerged as the most notable outcome, followed by team building and reduced bullying.

Research Question 4: What challenges do school counselors face in implementing conflict resolution techniques in educational settings?

Table 4: *Mean Responses on Challenges Faced by School Counselors in Implementing Conflict Resolution Techniques*

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Decision
1.	Inadequate time allocation for counselling duties due to academic workload	65	70	10	5	3.55	Agreed
2.	Lack of training in advanced conflict resolution methods	58	75	10	7	3.45	Agreed
3.	Poor cooperation from school administrators and staff	60	65	15	10	3.37	Agreed
4.	Limited counseling resources and private spaces	52	80	10	8	3.42	Agreed
5.	Cultural or religious biases that undermine counselling interventions	48	78	15	9	3.35	Agreed

Respondents strongly agreed that school counselors face a number of challenges while implementing conflict resolution strategies. These include time constraints, inadequate training, poor administrative support, limited facilities, and cultural biases. All mean scores are well above 3.30, confirming the prevalence and intensity of these challenges in the educational system.

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant relationship between counselling approaches and interpersonal harmony in educational settings.

Table 5: *Chi-Square Test*

Variable	**χ^2**	**df**	**p-value**	**Decision**
Counselling approaches vs harmony	21.73	4	0.001	Significant (Reject Ho)

The Chi-square test result ($\chi^2 = 21.73$, $p = 0.001$) indicates a statistically significant relationship between the use of counselling approaches and the promotion of interpersonal harmony. The null hypothesis is rejected, implying that counselling strategies play a crucial role in enhancing interpersonal harmony.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant difference between students' and teachers' views on the effectiveness of conflict techniques.

Table 6: *Independent Sample t-Test*

Group	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev**	**df**	**t**	**p-value**	**Decision**
Students Teachers	75	3.02	0.66				Significant
	75	3.29	0.58	133	2.67	0.009	(Reject Ho)

The result of the t-test ($t = 2.67$, $p = 0.009$) shows a significant difference between students' and teachers' perspectives on conflict techniques. Teachers rated the effectiveness of conflict strategies higher than students. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 3:

There is no significant difference among students, teachers, and counsellors in their perception of the contribution of strategies to interpersonal harmony.

Table 7: *ANOVA Test*

Source `	**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Squares**	**F**	**p-value**	**Decision**
Between Groups	4.89	2.45	4.82	0.003	Significant (Reject Ho)	
Within Groups	72.61	142	0.51			
Total	**77.50**	**144**				

The ANOVA result (F = 4.82, p = 0.003) shows a statistically significant difference among students, teachers, and counsellors in how they perceive the contribution of conflict resolution and counselling to interpersonal harmony. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 4

H_{04}: There is no significant difference between the challenges school counselors face and their implementation of conflict resolution techniques.

Table 8: *Independent t-Test on Challenges and Implementation of Conflict Resolution Techniques*

Group	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t-value**	**df**	**p-value**	**Decision**
Counselors with training	80	3.60	0.45	3.12	148	0.002	Reject H_0
Counselors without training	70		3.28	0.52			

The p-value (0.002) is less than 0.05, so the null hypothesis is rejected. This means there is a significant difference between trained and untrained counselors in facing and managing conflict resolution challenges. Those who have undergone training handle conflict better and face fewer implementation problems.

Discussion of Findings

Counselling Approaches in Educational Settings

The findings from Table 1 reveal that respondents agreed with the use of individual counselling and humanistic/person-centred approaches, as shown by their high mean scores (3.30 and 3.25 respectively). This aligns with literature suggesting that personalized counselling techniques are more effective in addressing individual student needs and promoting interpersonal harmony. Individual counselling allows for tailored support, confidentiality, and stronger counsellor-student rapport, while humanistic counselling emphasizes empathy, respect, and student-centeredness—core elements for social and emotional development in schools. On the

other hand, group counselling (Mean = 2.40) and cognitive behavioural counselling (Mean = 2.30) were rated below the 2.50 benchmark, indicating disagreement among respondents regarding their common use or effectiveness. This may reflect limitations in implementation, such as large class sizes, lack of trained professionals, or students' reluctance to participate in group settings. Additionally, cognitive behavioural therapy, though evidence-based, may be perceived as too clinical or structured for general school environments, especially in contexts where cultural norms favor more empathetic and relational approaches.

Conflict Resolution Techniques in Schools

The findings in Table 2 indicate a preference for collaborative techniques (Mean = 3.31) and active listening (Mean = 3.22), both receiving strong agreement from respondents. These methods emphasize cooperation, mutual understanding, and inclusive dialogue, which are essential for maintaining interpersonal harmony and managing conflicts effectively in educational settings. These findings support the argument that constructive communication and shared problem-solving foster healthier school environments and build students' emotional intelligence. Conversely, mediation (Mean = 2.40) and compromise strategy (Mean = 2.35) were rated below the 2.50 threshold, leading to disagreement. While these strategies are often promoted in conflict resolution literature, their lower ratings in this context might suggest that they are not consistently or effectively implemented in schools. Mediation requires neutral facilitation and trained personnel, which may be lacking. The compromise strategy, though seemingly fair, may be viewed as less effective when it fails to address underlying emotional or relational issues between conflicting parties.

Techniques and Approaches Enhance Interpersonal Relationships

The third research question explored how these strategies enhance interpersonal harmony. The findings revealed significant contributions, especially in team building, empathy development, and reducing bullying or tension. This supports the conclusions of Galtung (2000), who posited that harmony in social systems requires intentional relational strategies, such as those provided by counselling and conflict resolution. The implication is that schools adopting both proactive and reactive strategies through counselling and strategic conflict resolution techniques are more likely to nurture healthy and cooperative environments.

Hypotheses Confirm Significant Relationships

The Chi-square analysis indicated a significant relationship between counselling approaches and interpersonal harmony, confirming that counselling interventions meaningfully impact students' and staff relationships. The t-test result demonstrated a significant difference between students' and teachers' perception of conflict resolution strategies, with teachers expressing stronger support for their effectiveness. This may be due to their more frequent role in managing

school conflicts. The ANOVA test revealed that students, teachers, and counsellors perceive the contribution of these techniques differently, reinforcing the need for tailored interventions that address the expectations and roles of each stakeholder group.

These statistical findings validate the theoretical framework especially humanistic and conflict transformation theories which stress the importance of communication, empathy, and holistic understanding in managing human relationships within institutions.

Counselling Implications

Enhanced Training for School Counsellors: Counsellors need to be trained in a variety of evidence-based counselling approaches (e.g., cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, solution-focused) to handle interpersonal issues effectively. Workshops and in-service training should be provided on conflict management strategies suitable for school environments.

Integration of Conflict Resolution Techniques into Counselling Practice: Techniques like mediation, negotiation, peer counselling, and restorative practices should be integrated into school counselling services. Counsellors must teach students and staff how to resolve conflicts constructively.

Promoting Emotional Intelligence (EI): Emotional intelligence development should be a key goal in counselling sessions to promote empathy, self-awareness, and emotional regulation essential for interpersonal harmony.

Whole-School Conflict Management Framework: Counsellors should collaborate with school administrators to establish a clear conflict resolution policy and framework, ensuring consistency and effectiveness.

Inclusive and Culturally Sensitive Counselling: Conflict resolution strategies must be adapted to reflect the cultural and individual diversity of the school population.Counsellors must be aware of students' backgrounds to offer relevant and respectful guidance.

Conclusion

This study examined the perceptions of respondents on the counselling approaches and conflict resolution techniques used in promoting interpersonal harmony in educational settings. The findings revealed a clear preference for person-centred and collaborative methods, particularly individual counselling, humanistic counselling, active listening, and collaborative techniques. These approaches were perceived as effective and commonly practiced within school environments, underscoring their value in supporting students' emotional and social development. In contrast, respondents expressed disagreement with the use of group counselling, cognitive behavioural counselling, mediation, and compromise strategies, suggesting these methods are either underutilized or less effective in their current form. This points to gaps in awareness, training, or contextual suitability of these techniques in schools.

Overall, the results highlight the importance of empathetic, inclusive, and student-centred interventions in addressing interpersonal issues and maintaining a positive school climate. For counselling and conflict resolution efforts to be truly impactful, there is a need for targeted

professional development, better implementation frameworks, and context-sensitive strategies that resonate with the needs of students and school personnel.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study "Counseling Approaches and Strategic Conflict Techniques for Enhancing Interpersonal Harmony in Educational Settings", the following recommendations are made:

Promote the Use of Individual and Humanistic Counselling in Schools: Given the strong support for individual counselling and humanistic/person-centred approaches, school administrators and policymakers should: Prioritize the recruitment and training of counsellors who specialize in one-on-one and empathetic counselling techniques and Integrate these approaches into school guidance programs to better support students' emotional, social, and behavioural needs.

Improve Awareness and Implementation of Group and Cognitive Behavioural Counselling: Since group counselling and cognitive behavioural approaches were rated low: Training workshops should be organized for school counsellors and educators to demystify and demonstrate the practical benefits of these methods. Schools should be supported in developing safe, inclusive group settings where students feel comfortable participating. Adapt CBT principles into age-appropriate, culturally sensitive formats that suit the school environment.

Implement Peer Mediation and Restorative Justice Programs: Schools should introduce peer mediation clubs and restorative circles to empower students to take active roles in resolving minor conflicts among peers in a peaceful and responsible manner.

Incorporate Emotional Intelligence Education into the Curriculum: Emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness, empathy, and self-regulation should be taught explicitly to students at all levels as part of life skills or guidance education.

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PERCEIVED ROLE OF COUNSELLING TECHNIQUES IN COMMUNITY CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A PATH TO HARMONY

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Abstract

Community conflicts continue to be a barrier to social cohesion, development, and sustainable peace, arising from unmet emotional, social, and relational needs. This paper examines the perceived role of counselling techniques in community conflict resolution and their contribution to fostering harmony, reconciliation, and cooperative engagement. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as Human Relations Theory, the Person-Centred Approach, and Conflict Transformation Theory, the paper examines how counselling promotes empathetic communication, mediation, negotiation, emotional healing, and dialogue within community settings. Through a comprehensive theoretical analysis, the study demonstrates that counselling not only addresses immediate disputes but also transforms underlying relational issues, strengthens trust, and cultivates a culture of forgiveness, dialogue, and coexistence. Findings indicate that integrating counselling approaches into community leadership and traditional systems enhances these structures' capacity to manage conflicts holistically and sustainably. The paper concludes that counselling serves as a catalyst for sustainable peace through relational resilience, social cohesion, and collective well-being. It offers suggestions for institutionalising counselling programmes, developing leadership capacity, and promoting community participation to ensure long-term harmony. This paper contributes to understanding counselling as a strategic tool for conflict resolution and peace building across diverse community contexts.

Keywords: Counselling techniques, community conflict resolution, peace building, dialogue, reconciliation, sustainable harmony, conflict transformation

Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, arising wherever individuals or groups with differing interests, values, or needs coexist. Communities, as social systems, are not immune to these tensions; disputes over resources, cultural practices, leadership, land, or social recognition can range from mild disagreements to violent confrontations. Such conflicts, if not effectively managed, can erode social cohesion, hinder communal development, and perpetuate cycles of mistrust and animosity among community members. In contemporary society, where diverse populations live in increasingly interconnected environments, the mechanisms for resolving conflicts must extend beyond traditional methods such as elder mediation or punitive measures. Counselling, as a structured and systematic process aimed at promoting understanding,

emotional regulation, and constructive problem-solving, emerges as a vital tool for addressing the root causes of community conflicts and sustainable peace.

Community conflicts present challenges that extend beyond immediate disputes. They have deep historical, socio-cultural, and economic roots, resolving a multidimensional task. Left unresolved, these conflicts can lead to social fragmentation, diminished economic productivity, disrupted education, and even physical violence. Moreover, many communities rely heavily on informal and traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution, which, while valuable, may not always address the emotional and psychological dimensions of disputes. A key problem, therefore, is that conflicts frequently escalate because individuals lack the skills to manage their emotions, communicate effectively, or empathise with opposing viewpoints. Without deliberate interventions, these unresolved tensions can perpetuate cycles of retaliation and mistrust, threatening communal harmony and cohesion.

Counselling techniques provide structured, evidence-informed approaches to resolving conflicts by addressing both the cognitive and emotional aspects of human interaction. Through methods such as active listening, empathy, mediation, and negotiation, counselling enables individuals to articulate their concerns, understand others' perspectives, and collaboratively seek mutually beneficial solutions. These techniques facilitate emotional healing, reduce hostility, and interpersonal understanding, creating an environment conducive to dialogue and reconciliation. In community settings, counselling serves not only to resolve immediate disputes but also to build capacities for long-term peace and social cohesion. The importance of counselling lies in its ability to transform conflicts into opportunities for growth, cooperation, and harmonious coexistence, thereby maintaining a stable and productive social system within the community.

The purpose of this paper is to theoretically examine the perceived role of counselling techniques in promoting community conflict resolution and sustaining harmony. Unlike empirical studies that rely on data collection, this paper draws on existing literature, conceptual frameworks, and theoretical perspectives on how counselling interventions can be applied in community contexts. The scope of the study encompasses a review of key counselling methods, including mediation, negotiation, reconciliation, and active listening, and their relevance to resolving communal disputes. The paper discusses the challenges of implementing counselling in diverse socio-cultural settings and the need to integrate counselling techniques into community peacebuilding initiatives.

Conceptual Clarifications

Every scholarly inquiry requires conceptual clarity, precision and consistency in understanding key terms and ideas. This section provides a theoretical explanation of the concepts relevant to this paper, namely, conflict, community conflict, counselling, counselling *techniques*, *conflict resolution*, and *harmony*. Clarifying these concepts establishes the foundation for analysing how counselling techniques contribute to resolving community conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence.

Meaning of Conflict and Community Conflict

Conflict is defined in the literature as a dynamic process in which two or more parties perceive incompatible goals, interests or values, and engage (or are willing to engage) in a struggle to achieve them (Coser, 1956). Coser described conflict as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the opponents aim to neutralise, injure or eliminate their rivals" (Coser, 1956, p. 8). In community contexts, this definition assumes additional layers: conflicts are not merely interpersonal but are embedded in social systems, local institutions, power relations, and resource allocation. The term "community conflict" refers explicitly to disputes or tensions that arise within or between social units in a community setting (e.g., neighbourhoods, ethnic groups, socio-economic groups) over issues of shared resources, rights, recognition, identity or power. For example, Bullock (1990, as cited in Kovács & Newham, 2001) defines community conflict as "a social process in which overt opposition occurs between two or more interacting units because of an event that is related to the vested interests of these units" (p. 11). This framing emphasises not just the clash of interests but the relational and structural dimensions of conflict within a community.

Moreover, scholars of conflict transformation emphasise that such conflicts stem from historical grievances, structural inequalities, and cultural misrecognition, meaning that they cannot be solved merely by addressing the immediate disagreement. For instance, Lederach (2003), in his work on conflict transformation, argues that lasting change can only occur if one engages with underlying structures, attitudes, and relationships (see Miall, 2004, p. 21). Thus, community conflict involves multiple levels: personal, relational, and structural and understanding it requires acknowledging how individual interactions are embedded in larger social systems.

Concept of Counseling and Counseling Techniques

The concept of counselling has evolved over the decades. Still, at its core, it refers to a professional interpersonal relationship in which a trained counsellor helps an individual or group understand and resolve their psychological, emotional, or social difficulties (Rogers, 1951). Rogers defined "counselling" as "a series of direct, face-to-face relationships in which a counsellor helps individuals to understand and deal with problems of adjustment" (Rogers, 1951, p. 12). According to more recent sources, counselling is "a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals" (American Counselling Association, 2014, as cited in Manju Antil, 2025).

Counselling techniques are the specific methods, skills, and strategies used in the counselling process to facilitate understanding, emotional regulation, behavioural change, and interpersonal functioning (ScienceDirect Topics, n.d.). These include active listening, empathy, working through feelings, building rapport, clarifying questions, and - setting goals. For example, in the person-centred approach developed by Rogers, the primary techniques emphasise

empathic understanding, unconditional positive regard, and therapist congruence (Yao, 2023, pp. 2-3). In practical settings, these translate into concrete skills such as "reflective listening", "summarising client feelings", and "questioning to clarify cognitive distortions". In community conflict settings, counselling techniques can be adapted to address group or intergroup relational processes, including mediating dialogue, facilitating emotional expression among parties, helping parties understand their underlying assumptions, and building mutual understanding. Thus, "counselling" in this paper refers to guided relational processes aimed at insight and change, while "counselling techniques" denote the specific strategies or interventions applied in such relational work.

Concept of Conflict Resolution and Harmony

"Conflict resolution" is commonly understood as the process by which parties in conflict seek to reach an accommodation, cease hostilities, negotiate, or transform their relationship so that the conflict is addressed or managed (Kriesberg, 2009, pp. 404-406). According to Botes (2008), conflict resolution can be viewed as part of a spectrum ranging from conflict management to transformation. Traditionally, it involves settling immediate issues and reaching agreements or understandings that reduce the threat of violence (Botes, 2008, p. 2).

"Harmony" in a community setting extends beyond the mere absence of overt conflict; it embodies a state of relational equilibrium, mutual respect, cooperation, and shared meaning among community members. For instance, Galtung (1996) distinguishes "negative peace" (absence of direct violence) and "positive peace" (presence of structural justice, equal relations, reconciliation) (as cited in Makonye & Bengesai, 2020, p. 151). Harmony with positive peace: not simply suppression of conflict but transformation of relationships and structures so that cooperation and mutual flourishing become possible. Thus, in this paper, "conflict resolution" refers to processes and strategies aimed at dealing with conflictual interactions, reaching agreements or understanding, and modifying relationships or structures to mitigate the conflict. "Harmony" is the desired outcome: a community state characterised by trust, cooperation, equity, and sustainable coexistence. Counselling techniques are conceptualised as contributing to the pathway from conflict through resolution toward harmony.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework establishes the lens through which this study examines the perceived role of counselling techniques in community conflict resolution. Understanding the interplay between individual, relational, and structural factors in conflict requires engaging with theories that address both psychological and social dimensions of human behaviour. Three major theoretical perspectives, Human Relations Theory, Conflict Transformation Theory, and the Person-Centred Approach, provide a comprehensive foundation for explaining how counselling can facilitate conflict resolution and promote community harmony.

Human Relations Theory

The Human Relations Theory, pioneered by Elton Mayo (1933, p. 55) through his landmark *Hawthorne Studies*, represents a paradigm shift in understanding human behaviour within groups and organisations. Emerging as a critique of classical management theories, particularly the mechanistic, efficiency-driven approaches of Frederick Taylor and Max Weber, the Human Relations movement redefined productivity as not merely a function of technical competence or material incentives, but also of social relationships, emotional satisfaction, and group cohesion. Mayo and his associates discovered that when individuals felt valued, heard, and respected within their social environment, their motivation, cooperation, and performance improved significantly (Mayo, 1933, pp. 56–58). This insight laid the foundation for recognising the centrality of interpersonal relations and psychological well-being in collective human activity. Building on Mayo's initial findings, Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939, p. 47) expanded the theory by emphasising that networks of informal relationships and shared norms sustain social systems. They argued that, beyond formal structures and rules, human groups operate on emotional factors such as trust, a sense of belonging, and mutual respect. When these emotional and relational needs are neglected, groups experience tension, alienation, and eventually conflict. Therefore, effective group functioning, whether in the workplace, community, or social organisation, depends on meeting these underlying psychological needs. In this light, conflict is not merely a byproduct of material competition but also a result of relational breakdowns and emotional disconnection among members of a social unit.

In the context of community conflict, Human Relations Theory provides a critical framework for understanding the emotional and psychological dimensions that fuel disputes. Many community conflicts, whether over land, leadership, or cultural differences, stem not solely from a scarcity of resources but from feelings of exclusion, disrespect, or a lack of recognition. When individuals or groups perceive that their social identity is threatened or that their contributions are undervalued, emotional frustration arises, leading to distrust and antagonism. Counselling interventions, therefore, become essential mechanisms for restoring the relational balance within such communities. Techniques such as active listening, empathetic engagement, and constructive dialogue are directly aligned with Human Relations principles, as they acknowledge emotional needs and validate individual experiences (Hocker & Wilmot, 2014, p. 22). Moreover, counselling grounded in Human Relations Theory seeks not only to resolve surface-level disagreements but to transform the relational climate that sustains community harmony. This process reduces defensiveness, builds mutual trust, and reinforces the sense of belonging that Mayo (1933, p. 58) identified as essential for cooperative interaction. When communities internalise these principles, conflict resolution transcends mere negotiation of interests; it becomes a process of social reintegration, where emotional wounds are healed, and a cooperative spirit is rekindled.

Conflict Transformation Theory

The Conflict Transformation Theory, advanced primarily by John Paul Lederach (1995, pp. 21–25), represents a paradigm shift from traditional approaches that view conflict merely as a problem to be resolved or suppressed. Rather than treating conflict as an abnormal disruption of peace, Lederach conceptualises it as a natural and constructive process that, when properly managed, can lead to positive change in relationships, structures, and cultural patterns. The theory builds on the premise that conflicts are not isolated incidents but manifestations of deeper systemic tensions within human relationships and social arrangements. Consequently, genuine peacebuilding requires addressing the underlying causes of conflict, such as injustice, exclusion, and power imbalances, while simultaneously transforming the perceptions, attitudes, and interactions of those involved. Conflict Transformation Theory distinguishes itself from conflict management and conflict resolution paradigms by emphasising relational and structural change over short-term settlement. According to Lederach (1995, p. 23), the goal of transformation is to build constructive relationships that sustain peace and justice, rather than simply negotiating temporary compromises. The theory of interconnectedness between personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of conflict. Personal transformation involves healing emotional wounds and shifting perceptions. Relational transformation rebuilds trust and communication. Structural transformation addresses inequitable systems and power imbalances. Cultural transformation reorients the values and norms that either sustain or undermine peace. Each of these dimensions interacts dynamically, making conflict transformation a holistic and ongoing process rather than a singular event.

Applied to community conflict, the transformative framework suggests that sustainable peace cannot be achieved through coercive or purely legalistic measures. Many community disputes stem from historical grievances, marginalisation, or perceived injustices embedded within social hierarchies. Thus, resolution must occur not only at the level of visible disagreement but also at the level of relationship and identity. Counselling techniques provide a vital means of operationalising this theory within community contexts. Through dialogue facilitation, mediation, and empathy-building, counselling helps individuals recognise their shared humanity and interdependence, the kind of relational transformation that Lederach envisions.

Furthermore, Conflict Transformation Theory situates counselling as a bridge between individual healing and structural peacebuilding. As individuals engage in guided and empathetic communication, they not only overcome personal hostility but also become agents of social change within their communities. Lederach (1995, p. 24) argues that sustainable peace arises from grassroots participation, where local actors assume responsibility for their relationships and institutions. In this sense, counselling interventions that empower local voices and foster inclusive dialogue contribute directly to the **bottom-up architecture of peace**. They encourage mutual understanding across social divides, transforming adversarial interactions into opportunities for cooperation and growth.

Person-Centered Approach

The Person-Centred Approach, developed by Carl Rogers (1951, pp. 12–14), stands as one of the most influential theories in counselling psychology, emphasising the inherent worth, autonomy, and self-actualising of every individual. in humanistic psychology, this approach challenges directive, authoritarian models of therapy by proposing that effective personal and relational transformation occurs when individuals are provided with a supportive and empathetic environment. Rogers posited that humans possess an innate tendency toward growth and constructive change. Still, this can only be realised in a climate characterised by empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence, the three core conditions of effective helping relationships. Within such an environment, individuals are empowered to share their experiences openly, confront internal conflicts, and make self-directed choices that promote psychological well-being and authentic interpersonal connections. Applied to community conflict resolution, the Person-Centred Approach is a framework for understanding how counselling can foster dialogue, healing, and cooperation. Community disputes arise from feelings of marginalisation, mistrust, or psychological insecurity (Rogers, 1951, p. 13). The act of being listened to empathetically helps reduce defensiveness and hostility, opening the door for genuine dialogue and reconciliation. As individuals feel respected and valued, they become more willing to acknowledge others' perspectives and collaborate on solutions. This transformation from hostility to understanding mirrors Rogers' concept of self-actualisation, extended into a communal context where harmony becomes a shared aspiration.

Furthermore, the Person-Centred Approach is closely related to Human Relations Theory and Conflict Transformation Theory, forming a psychological foundation for sustainable peacebuilding. While Human Relations Theory focuses on social and emotional needs within relationships, and Conflict Transformation Theory on systemic and relational change, the Person-Centred Approach focuses on the intrapersonal bridge, starting from individual awareness, empathy, and personal growth as the foundation for social transformation. Rogers' assertion that "the good life is a process, not a state of being" (Rogers, 1961, p. 187) the idea that peace and harmony in communities are achieved through ongoing processes of emotional understanding, authenticity, and mutual respect. In this view, counselling becomes not merely a remedial tool but a developmental process that nurtures emotionally intelligent and socially responsible community members. Recent scholarship continues to affirm the relevance of the Person-Centred Approach in community and conflict settings. Yao (2023, pp. 2–3) notes that person-centred counselling techniques, such as reflective listening, emotional validation, and empathic dialogue, play a crucial role in helping individuals cope with trauma, grief, and interpersonal conflicts. These techniques are particularly effective in multicultural and community-based contexts where power asymmetries and cultural sensitivities must be carefully addressed. This interpersonal transformation is critical for sustainable community harmony, as it lays the psychological foundation for structural and relational peace to flourish.

Collectively, these three theories provide a multidimensional framework for understanding the role of counselling techniques in community peacebuilding efforts. Human Relations Theory

emphasises the importance of social and emotional needs, demonstrating that effective conflict resolution must address both interpersonal dimensions and material concerns. Conflict Transformation Theory emphasises systemic and relational change, framing counselling as a mechanism for altering social patterns, addressing historical grievances, and fostering trust (Lederach, 1995, p. 25). The Person-Centred Approach methodological guidance for counselling interventions, demonstrating how empathy, positive regard, and reflective techniques can alleviate tension, foster dialogue, and promote emotional healing (Rogers, 1951, pp. 12–14). In practical application, these theories inform community-based interventions in several ways. Counsellors can diagnose conflict, identify unmet emotional and social needs, facilitate dialogue and reflective discussion, and promote individual and relational growth. For instance, mediation sessions guided by these theoretical principles may involve exploring the root causes of the conflict, validating emotions, fostering empathy, and developing cooperative solutions to address it. Consequently, counselling techniques emerge as both relational and structural instruments that are capable of promoting long-term peace and cohesion in community settings.

Role of Counselling Techniques in Conflict Resolution

Conflict within communities encompasses multiple layers of relational, emotional, and structural dimensions that cannot be effectively addressed by surface-level interventions alone. Counselling techniques provide practical tools and theoretical mechanisms for resolving disputes constructively, transforming relationships, and achieving sustainable community harmony. Drawing on Human Relations Theory, Conflict Transformation Theory, and the Person-Centred Approach, counselling interventions are designed to address individual emotions, interpersonal, and social structures, thereby creating an integrated approach to conflict resolution. The following discussion elaborates on the critical roles of specific counselling techniques in achieving these objectives.

Communication and Empathy in Conflict Resolution

Effective communication and empathy are the cornerstones of counselling interventions in conflict resolution. Both elements serve as the primary vehicles for understanding, healing, and relational restoration. Rogers (1951, pp. 12–14) states that meaningful communication involves more than the exchange of words; it is an encounter of understanding that requires *active listening*, *reflective feedback*, and *genuine presence*. In counselling contexts, communication is not merely informational but transformational; it allows individuals to express their emotions, fears, and expectations in a safe, nonjudgmental environment. Through open dialogue, conflicting parties begin to deconstruct assumptions, clarify misunderstandings, and rebuild trust. As Hocker and Wilmot (2014, p. 22) assert, the process of listening and being listened to forms the psychological foundation for cooperation, as it communicates respect and recognition, two vital emotional needs that are often neglected during disputes. Empathy complements communication by deepening the counsellor's and participants' emotional attunement to each

other's perspectives. **Rogers (1961, p. 187)** described empathy as "entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it." Within conflict resolution, empathy serves as a bridge across emotional divides, enabling parties to transition from antagonism to understanding. Counsellors trained in empathetic techniques can validate emotions without necessarily endorsing behaviours, helping each party feel heard and respected. This emotional validation reduces defensiveness, enabling constructive dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. Research in conflict psychology suggests that empathetic communication can reduce aggression, promote perspective-taking, and facilitate reconciliation (Egan, 2014, p. 106).

In community settings, where conflicts stem from long-standing grievances, cultural misunderstandings, or perceived injustices, communication failures and emotional detachment exacerbate tensions. Counselling interventions, such as empathy and active listening, address these relational fractures. For instance, in a land ownership dispute, the counsellor's role involves facilitating conversations in which each party articulates not only their material claims but also their emotional attachments and historical narratives. When both sides recognise that the conflict involves shared human emotions such as fear of loss, the desire for belonging, or pride in heritage, hostility diminishes, and mutual respect begins to take shape. This process mirrors the Human Relations Theory, which posits that unresolved emotional needs, such as recognition, belonging, and respect, underlie social discord (Mayo, 1933, p. 58; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939, p. 47). Through counselling, these theoretical insights are operationalised in practical, dialogical encounters. Counsellors function as facilitators who model empathetic behaviour, set ground rules for respectful communication, and guide participants toward understanding the emotional subtext of their disagreements. Empathy transforms communication from a contest of arguments into a shared search for meaning and healing. This aligns with Lederach's (2003, p. 31) view in Conflict Transformation Theory, which holds that peacebuilding involves the restoration of relationships and the recognition of shared humanity.

Mediation and Negotiation Skills

Mediation and negotiation are two of the most strategic counselling techniques in conflict resolution, serving as structured processes that transform adversarial interactions into collaborative dialogues. These techniques are grounded in the belief that conflicts, when managed constructively, can lead to understanding, strengthen relationships, and produce equitable outcomes. In counselling contexts, **mediation** involves a neutral facilitator who assists conflicting parties in identifying issues, clarifying interests, and developing mutually acceptable solutions. **Negotiation**, on the other hand, refers to the process through which the parties themselves engage in direct communication to reach a consensus that satisfies their respective needs (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011, pp. 11–14). Both mediation and negotiation require mutual respect, active listening, and empathy, qualities central to the counselling process. Within community conflict, these techniques are particularly valuable because they shift focus from

positional bargaining to interest-based dialogue, encouraging parties to explore the underlying motivations behind their demands. For example, in a dispute over resource allocation, negotiation guided by counselling principles helps participants articulate not only *what* they want but *why* they want it. Emotional and psychological interests such as security, recognition, or fairness, counsellors help parties discover common ground that transcends surface-level disagreement (Moore, 2014, pp. 56–59). This is with Human Relations Theory, which posits the role of emotional satisfaction and interpersonal understanding in sustaining cooperation (Mayo, 1933, p. 58). When counsellors integrate empathy into mediation, they do more than manage dialogue; they humanise it, so that the process honours participants' feelings and identities as much as their practical needs.

The Person-Centred Approach further reinforces the value of mediation and negotiation by situating the counsellor as a *facilitative partner* rather than an authoritarian decision-maker. Rogers (1951, pp. 12–14) states that individuals are more likely to find constructive solutions when they feel understood, respected, and trusted. In this light, effective mediation mirrors the therapeutic environment, a space where each party can express vulnerability without fear of condemnation. The counsellor's congruence and unconditional positive regard foster psychological safety, which allows disputants to lower their defences and engage in authentic dialogue. This creates a transformative space where conflicting parties not only solve immediate problems but also rebuild emotional bridges, restoring the relational trust essential to long-term peace. From the standpoint of Conflict Transformation Theory, mediation and negotiation extend beyond procedural tools; they become vehicles for relational change. Lederach (1995, pp. 20–23) suggests that sustainable peace is achieved when individuals and communities are empowered to participate actively in crafting their own resolutions. This participatory dimension of mediation local ownership of the peace process and promotes reconciliation through shared responsibility. Counselling-oriented mediation is not reduced to compromise but leads to genuine transformation, helping individuals reframe their perceptions of one another and recognise shared human dignity (Lederach, 2003, p. 31).

A practical example can be drawn from intercommunal conflicts involving boundary disputes or leadership struggles. In such contexts, the counsellor acting as a mediator helps stakeholders separate people from problems, identify overlapping interests, and brainstorm creative solutions that satisfy all parties. This reflective process promotes *emotional catharsis* and *cognitive restructuring*, encouraging individuals to reinterpret conflict not as a zero-sum struggle but as an opportunity for mutual learning and coexistence. The counsellor's skill in reframing negative communication patterns into constructive dialogue is vital in preventing conflict relapse and fostering community harmony.

Emotional Healing and Reconciliation through Counselling

Emotional healing and reconciliation form the psychological and relational core of counselling-based conflict resolution. When communities experience conflict, the resulting wounds are not only material or structural but emotional, involving feelings of betrayal, anger,

grief, and mistrust. Unaddressed, these emotional injuries perpetuate cycles of resentment and retaliation, undermining peacebuilding efforts and counselling an opportunity to address these invisible wounds through empathetic engagement, emotional validation, and guided self-reflection. As Rogers (1951, pp. 12–14) observed, individuals thrive and move toward psychological integration when they encounter an environment of unconditional positive regard and empathy. In conflict contexts, such environments allow individuals to confront their pain, process their emotions, and gradually release their resentment. The Person-Centred Approach provides a conceptual framework for understanding how counselling facilitates emotional healing. Rogers (1961, p. 187) posited that empathy and authenticity enable individuals to accept themselves and others, creating conditions for emotional growth and reconciliation. When counsellors apply these principles to conflict-affected communities, they help disputing parties rehumanise each other, seeing former adversaries not as enemies but as individuals who share similar fears and aspirations. This shift in perception is critical, as reconciliation begins when people can acknowledge their shared humanity despite past transgressions. According to Bar-Tal (2000, p. 352), emotional transformation, moving from hatred and suspicion to empathy and forgiveness, is the most significant indicator of reconciliation following prolonged conflict.

Counselling interventions contribute to this transformation through structured therapeutic dialogues, trauma processing, and facilitation of forgiveness. Through techniques such as narrative therapy and reflective listening, counsellors help individuals and groups articulate their pain and reconstruct meaning from their experiences. Emotional expression serves as a cathartic process, releasing pent-up frustration and psychological relief. Egan (2014, p. 108) states that emotional ventilation is not merely an act of release. Still, through a process of insight formation, individuals gain clarity about their emotional triggers and develop coping mechanisms for the future. In this sense, counselling not only addresses past hurt but also equips individuals with emotional tools for future interactions. The Conflict Transformation Theory is a theoretical justification for integrating emotional healing into peacebuilding. Lederach (1995, pp. 20–23) argues that sustainable peace cannot be achieved solely through institutional reforms or formal agreements; it must also involve the healing of relationships and the transformation of perceptions. Emotional reconciliation facilitated by counselling creates the interpersonal trust necessary for such transformation. Counsellors serve as mediators of empathy, guiding participants through the delicate process of forgiveness, acknowledging harm, and rebuilding broken bonds. Galtung (2000, p. 54) supports this view, noting that "positive peace" entails not only the absence of violence but also the presence of justice, healing, and restored relationships.

A vivid illustration of this process can be seen in post-conflict communities recovering from interethnic violence or communal disputes. When counselling is introduced either through individual therapy or group sessions, victims and perpetrators are encouraged to share their narratives. As they listen to each other's suffering, emotional barriers gradually dissolve, paving the way for empathy and mutual understanding. The counsellor's empathetic facilitation ensures that emotions are neither suppressed nor weaponised, but transformed into a shared

acknowledgement of pain and a collective desire for healing. This emotional reorientation is what Lederach (2003, p. 31) describes as "the meeting place of truth and mercy," where justice coexists with compassion. From the perspective of Human Relations Theory, emotional healing through counselling also fulfils the fundamental social needs of belonging, acceptance, and recognition (Mayo, 1933, p. 58). When individuals feel emotionally validated and socially reintegrated, the likelihood of renewed hostility diminishes. Restorative counselling, therefore, becomes both a therapeutic and a peacebuilding mechanism, bridging the psychological and relational dimensions of human conflict. Emotional healing transforms isolated individuals into cooperative community members, while reconciliation restores the moral fabric of the community that conflict once fractured.

Building Mutual Understanding and Cooperation

Building mutual understanding and cooperation stands as a critical goal of counselling in conflict resolution, as it is the interpersonal and communal trust necessary for lasting peace. Conflicts, whether interpersonal or communal, often arise from miscommunication, misinterpretation of intentions, and a lack of empathy. Counselling interventions address these root causes by guiding conflicting parties toward greater self-awareness, a deeper understanding of others, and collaborative problem-solving. Through active listening, dialogue facilitation, and cognitive reframing, counsellors help individuals move beyond rigid positions to uncover their underlying interests and shared values (Rogers, 1957, pp. 96–98). In this process, mutual understanding becomes the foundation for rebuilding cooperative relationships, while empathy transforms adversarial encounters into opportunities for collective growth and reconciliation.

According to Deutsch (1973, pp. 17–20), cooperation emerges when parties perceive their goals as positively interdependent, meaning that one person's success is linked to the other's. Counselling provides the emotional and communicative tools for such positive interdependence. Through the guide, disputants learn to see that their long-term well-being is tied to communal stability and mutual respect. When individuals begin to understand that conflict is not a zero-sum struggle but a shared problem requiring joint solutions, cooperation naturally follows. This principle, in conjunction with Lewin's Field Theory, posits that human behaviour is shaped by interactions within a dynamic social environment (Lewin, 1947, p. 341). Counselling thus becomes a transformative space where individuals not only resolve disputes but also reorient their relationships toward collaboration and mutual care.

Mutual understanding also entails the dismantling of stereotypes and emotional barriers that perpetuate division. In many community conflicts, historical grievances, ethnic prejudices, or socio-political inequalities cloud perception and hinder cooperation. Burton (1990, p. 19) argues that deep-seated conflicts persist because basic human needs, such as security, recognition, and a sense of identity, are denied. Counselling interventions address these unmet needs by promoting

dialogue that acknowledges pain, validates experience, and inclusion. Through empathic conversation and narrative exchange, conflicting groups come to recognise the legitimacy of each other's stories and struggles. This recognition lays the groundwork for what Lederach (1997, p. 26) describes as "relationship-centred peacebuilding," where reconciliation grows from shared understanding and mutual respect rather than coercive agreement. From a psychological perspective, mutual understanding is facilitated by the counsellor's role as a neutral bridge between parties. Carkhuff (2000, pp. 84–87) notes that the counsellor's empathy and genuineness elicit corresponding responses from clients, creating a "reciprocal empathy loop" that fosters trust and cooperation. This dynamic helps conflicting individuals transition from emotional defensiveness to constructive engagement. Over time, they learn to listen actively, affirm the other's perspective, and negotiate differences without hostility. Such behavioural changes have communal implications: when individuals internalise these counselling values, they contribute to a culture of dialogue and cooperation within their families, workplaces, and neighbourhoods.

In community conflict resolution, cooperation goes beyond emotional reconciliation; it involves collective action toward common goals. Counsellors employ group counselling and participatory dialogue sessions to rebuild fractured social networks and strengthen community solidarity. During such sessions, participants identify shared values, envision a collective future, and commit to cooperative initiatives, such as joint economic projects or community development programs. Vygotsky's (1978, p. 90) concept of social learning supports this process, suggesting that individuals develop new attitudes and behaviours through collaborative interaction within a supportive environment. Counselling, therefore, becomes a microcosm of the cooperative society it seeks to create: a space where mutual respect and interdependence are practised and reinforced. The integration of Transformational Leadership Theory further illuminates how counselling cooperation works. Transformational leaders like effective counsellors motivate individuals to transcend self-interest for the sake of collective well-being (Burns, 1978, p. 20). The process of transformation thus shifts from individual healing to communal renewal, where cooperation is sustained by mutual trust and shared purpose. Fisher and Ury (1991, p. 42) state that successful negotiation depends on separating people from the problem and focusing on interests rather than positions, a principle directly supported by counselling techniques that promote understanding and relationship building.

Integrating these counselling techniques demonstrates their multidimensional impact on community conflict resolution. Active communication and empathy address immediate relational needs; mediation and negotiation tackle structural and procedural aspects of disputes; emotional healing promotes psychological restoration; and cooperative engagement consolidates social cohesion. This comprehensive approach, grounded in the theoretical foundations of Human Relations Theory, Conflict Transformation Theory, and the Person-Centred Approach, illustrates

how counselling interventions operate at multiple levels to transform conflict into constructive outcomes. Counselling, therefore, is not merely a tool for dispute resolution but a strategic framework for cultivating communities capable of managing conflict and sustaining harmony.

Counselling as a Path to Community Harmony

Counselling extends beyond addressing individual or interpersonal conflicts; it is a strategic mechanism for community-wide peace and harmony. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of Human Relations Theory, Conflict Transformation Theory, and the Person-Centred Approach, counselling emerges as a pathway to sustainable harmony, bridging emotional, relational, and structural dimensions of community life.

Promoting Forgiveness, Dialogue, and Coexistence

Forgiveness is a foundational pillar of community harmony, particularly in contexts where conflicts have resulted in emotional or social trauma. It entails a conscious process of releasing resentment, bitterness, or the desire for retaliation, allowing individuals and communities to move toward reconciliation and relational restoration (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000, p. 24). Counselling serves as a vital mechanism for promoting forgiveness by providing safe and structured environments in which individuals can articulate grievances, the impact of conflict, and the perspectives and humanity of others (Rogers, 1951, pp. 12–14). Through empathetic engagement and guided dialogue, counsellors help participants navigate the emotional landscape of hurt, betrayal, and anger, facilitating cognitive and emotional shifts that make forgiveness possible (Lederach, 1995, pp. 23–24).

Dialogue, as a central counselling tool, further reinforces forgiveness by creating spaces for active listening, mutual expression, and collaborative problem-solving, enabling participants to express concerns openly while simultaneously hearing and acknowledging others' experiences, thereby for both cognitive and affective understanding (Hocker & Wilmot, 2014, p. 22). This process reduces misperceptions, minimises defensiveness, and promotes a sense of relational connectedness. From a theoretical perspective, the Human Relations Theory emphasises the importance of fulfilling emotional and social needs, such as recognition, belonging, and respect, for effective interpersonal interaction (Mayo, 1933, p. 58; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939, p. 47). Counselling operationalises this principle by modelling empathetic engagement and validating the feelings of all parties, thus creating an environment in which dialogue becomes meaningful and transformative rather than perfunctory.

Coexistence represents the ultimate goal of counselling-driven interventions, extending beyond individual reconciliation to encompass community-wide social cohesion and harmony. Achieving coexistence requires that community members cultivate respect for diversity, acknowledge overlapping interests, and develop mechanisms for cooperative problem-solving (Botes, 2008, p. 3). Counselling facilitates these outcomes by equipping individuals and groups with relational and communicative skills that support collaboration, reduce conflict escalation, and encourage inclusive participation in community life. Through techniques such as narrative sharing, conflict reframing, and restorative dialogue, counselling not only addresses immediate

disputes but also strengthens the normative frameworks that support long-term harmony and stability. Moreover, the role of counselling in promoting coexistence is reinforced by the Conflict Transformation Theory, which posits that sustainable peace emerges not merely from the resolution of discrete conflicts, but from transforming relationships, perceptions, and social structures that underpin discord (Lederach, 1995, pp. 23–24). In effect, counselling acts as both a psychological and social intervention, for emotional and relational intelligence and community solidarity.

Integration of Counselling Approaches into Community Leadership and Traditional Systems

The sustainability of peace and harmony in communities depends not only on individual reconciliation but also on the institutionalisation of conflict resolution mechanisms within existing leadership and traditional governance structures. Integrating counselling approaches into community leadership that incorporate psychological insights, empathetic communication, and restorative practices complements the authority and cultural legitimacy of traditional systems. Traditional leaders, including chiefs, elders, and religious figures, play pivotal roles in conflict resolution, as they are the custodians of communal norms, values, and mediation practices (Afolayan, 2018, pp. 43–44). Counselling integration into leadership structures involves imparting skills such as active listening, empathy, mediation, negotiation, and emotional intelligence to traditional authorities. Leaders trained in these techniques are better equipped to facilitate dialogues that validate participants' experiences, encourage the constructive expression of emotions, and foster mutual understanding (Rogers, 1951, pp. 12–14). For instance, in a community dispute over resource allocation, a traditional leader utilising counselling-informed methods can guide parties through a process of empathy, enabling them to consider not only their own needs but also the perspectives and emotional attachments of others. Such interventions, grounded in the Human Relations Theory, emphasise that fulfilling social and emotional needs, such as recognition, respect, and inclusion, is essential for effective cooperation and harmonious interactions (Mayo, 1933, p. 58; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939, p. 47).

The Conflict Transformation Theory further supports the value of integrating counselling approaches into community leadership. According to Lederach (1997, pp. 25–27), sustainable peace arises from the transformation of relationships, social structures, and cultural patterns that sustain conflict. Counselling-trained leaders facilitate this transformation through empathetic communication, addressing emotional wounds, and modelling cooperative behaviour. This integration suggests that dispute resolution is not temporary but embedded in the community's social and moral fabric. Moreover, counselling integration promotes participatory leadership, in which community members are actively involved in decision-making and conflict resolution processes. Leaders trained in counselling techniques encourage inclusive dialogue, respect diverse voices, and empower marginalised individuals to express their concerns (Afolayan, 2018,

pp. 43–44). This participatory approach not only strengthens democratic practices within traditional systems but also reinforces the legitimacy of conflict resolution outcomes. As members witness fair, empathetic, and transparent processes, they are more likely to accept decisions and maintain cooperative relationships, reducing the likelihood of recurring conflicts. Integrating counselling into traditional systems facilitates capacity-building for long-term peace. Counselling equips leaders with skills to manage stress, regulate emotions, and respond to conflict proactively rather than reactively. Leaders who can model these behaviours influence community norms, encouraging emotional regulation, mutual respect, and collaborative problem-solving among members. Over time, these practices for a culture of dialogue and cooperation, thereby strengthening social cohesion (Lederach, 2005, pp. 34–35).

Counselling as a Catalyst for Sustainable Peace

Counselling serves as a pivotal mechanism for sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of conflict and transforming the relationships that perpetuate discord. Conflicts arise from unmet emotional needs, miscommunication, or entrenched mistrust; if left unaddressed, these factors can persist across generations, undermining community stability. Counselling intervenes at both the emotional and relational levels, employing techniques such as emotional validation, mediation, dialogue facilitation, and cooperative problem-solving to restore trust and cultivate collaborative engagement (Hocker & Wilmot, 2014, p. 22). The Person-Centred Approach offers critical insights into how counselling can catalyse sustainable peace. According to Rogers (1951, pp. 12–14), individuals possess an innate capacity for growth and self-directed change when provided with environments characterised by empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard. In community conflict settings, these principles allow disputing parties to recognise and regulate their emotions, appreciate alternative perspectives, and collaboratively identify constructive solutions. Counselling, in this sense, empowers individuals to become active agents of peace, rather than passive recipients of externally imposed resolutions. This empowerment of personal responsibility encourages accountability and strengthens the social fabric by promoting trust, understanding, and mutual respect among community members.

From a structural and relational perspective, Conflict Transformation Theory suggests that sustainable peace extends beyond the resolution of immediate disputes; it requires transforming the social norms, cultural practices, and interpersonal relationships that underlie conflict (Lederach, 1995, p. 24). Counselling facilitates this transformation by integrating emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of conflict resolution. Techniques such as guided dialogue, restorative conversations, and problem-solving workshops address the psychological and relational foundations of discord, preventing recurrence and long-term community. For example, communities recovering from resource-based or ethnic conflicts benefit from counselling-led initiatives that rebuild trust, create shared goals, and encourage joint participation in social and developmental projects, thereby translating interpersonal reconciliation into societal cooperation. Moreover, counselling promotes sustainable peace by operationalising the principles of

forgiveness, dialogue, and coexistence. Forgiveness reduces retaliatory tendencies and promotes emotional release, while dialogue, mutual understanding and collaborative decision-making (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000, p. 24; Lederach, 1995, pp. 23–24). Coexistence emerges as community members learn to value diversity, recognise common interests, and engage in cooperative problem-solving, even in the presence of historical, cultural, or resource-based tensions (Botes, 2008, p. 3).

Conclusion

Counselling has proven to be a transformative tool in community harmony and promoting sustainable peace. Counselling enables individuals and groups to reconcile differences, rebuild trust, and engage constructively with one another by addressing the emotional, relational, and social dimensions of conflict. Techniques such as empathetic communication, active listening, mediation, dialogue facilitation, and emotional healing create spaces where forgiveness, understanding, and cooperation can thrive. Beyond resolving immediate disputes, counselling strengthens the social fabric of communities by reshaping interactions, promoting relationships, and culture of empathy and dialogue. When counselling is integrated into community leadership and traditional systems, it is the capacity of these structures to manage conflicts holistically that makes peace sustainable and embedded in community practices. Counselling transforms conflict from a source of division into an opportunity for relational growth, collective well-being, and enduring harmony.

Suggestions

1. To maximise the role of counselling in community conflict resolution, the following recommendations are proposed:
2. Traditional and local community leaders should be trained in counselling techniques, including mediation, negotiation, and empathetic communication, to enhance their ability to facilitate holistic conflict resolution.
3. Communities should establish accessible counselling and conflict-resolution centres to provide ongoing support to individuals and groups experiencing disputes. Structured programs and workshops should be implemented to encourage forgiveness and reconciliation, addressing both emotional and relational wounds.
4. Counselling-based conflict resolution strategies should be incorporated into schools, religious organisations, and traditional institutions to nurture empathy, dialogue, and cooperation from an early age.
5. Awareness campaigns and participatory initiatives should encourage community members' active involvement in dialogue, decision-making, and collaborative problem-solving.

6. Regular assessment of counselling interventions should be conducted to evaluate effectiveness, refine approaches, and sustain long-term peacebuilding outcomes.

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PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSUASION: INTEGRATING COUNSELLING TECHNIQUES INTO NEGOTIATION

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Abstract

Persuasion plays a pivotal role in negotiation, shaping how individuals communicate, collaborate, and resolve conflicts. Effective negotiation relies not only on logic and argumentation but also on the ability to understand and influence others' perspectives. This paper argues that integrating counselling techniques into negotiation practices can significantly enhance a negotiator's persuasive capabilities while upholding ethical and relational standards. Techniques such as active listening, empathy, reframing, and rapport-building—commonly used in counselling—help negotiators establish trust, reduce resistance, and foster constructive dialogue. Drawing on theories from psychology and counselling, including emotional intelligence frameworks, cognitive-behavioral approaches, and person-centered models, the paper examines how these insights can be adapted to various negotiation scenarios. It also considers the role of emotional regulation, mindset, and communication style in shaping persuasive efforts. By presenting case examples and reviewing relevant empirical research, the paper illustrates how counselling-informed strategies contribute to more effective negotiation processes and outcomes. Particular attention is given to applications in personal, organizational, and cross-cultural contexts, where emotional and interpersonal dynamics often play a critical role. The paper concludes that a multidisciplinary approach—grounded in psychological theory and counselling practice—not only enhances persuasive impact but also promotes mutual understanding, ethical conduct, and sustainable agreements in negotiation.

This integration offers a compelling framework for professionals seeking to navigate complex negotiations with greater skill, sensitivity, and success.

Keywords: Persuasion, Counselling Techniques, Negotiation, Emotional Intelligence

Introduction

Negotiation is both an art and a science, requiring a blend of strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skill. Traditionally, negotiation has been understood through the lens of rationality, logic, and tactical maneuvering—often grounded in models of positional bargaining where parties aim to maximize their own outcomes (Zhang, Xu, Zhang, Liu, Hooi & Deng, 2023). In this view, negotiation becomes a game of offers and counteroffers, concessions and compromises, with success measured by the ability to claim value while conceding as little as possible. However, this transactional approach, while useful in some contexts, often falls short in complex, relationship-dependent, or emotionally charged negotiations. Emerging research in negotiation studies, behavioral economics, and organizational psychology has increasingly emphasized the role of emotional and relational dynamics in shaping negotiation outcomes. Emotional tone, mutual trust, empathy, and psychological safety have been shown to influence not only the process but also the quality and durability of negotiated agreements.

This shift in perspective has opened the door for interdisciplinary approaches to negotiation—particularly the integration of counselling techniques and psychological frameworks. Counselling, as a practice grounded in the principles of empathy, active listening, validation, and rapport-building, offers a rich set of tools that can enhance how individuals engage in negotiation. The very skills that allow counselors to guide clients through emotional and cognitive barriers can be adapted to negotiation contexts to improve understanding, reduce defensiveness, and facilitate collaborative problem-solving. In both counselling and negotiation, the goal is not merely to win, but to arrive at outcomes that are constructive, ethical, and sustainable.

The intersection between counselling and negotiation is especially relevant in today's multifaceted negotiation environments, which often involve diverse stakeholders, cross-cultural interactions, and high emotional stakes. In such situations, traditional adversarial models may increase resistance and entrench positions, whereas counselling-informed strategies can promote openness and mutual respect. For instance, active listening—a foundational counselling technique—involves not just hearing the other party's words but attending to their underlying concerns, needs, and emotions. When used in negotiation, active listening helps de-escalate tension and encourages counterparts to articulate their interests more fully. This not only builds trust but also uncovers opportunities for integrative solutions that satisfy both parties.

Empathy, another core element of counselling, enables negotiators to connect with the emotional experience of the other side, which can foster goodwill and cooperative behavior.

Empathetic negotiators are better positioned to interpret non-verbal cues, anticipate reactions, and respond with sensitivity—thus maintaining rapport even when disagreements arise. Furthermore, the technique of reframing—a process of shifting the perspective on a problem—can help break impasses and reveal common ground. Reframing allows negotiators to move beyond rigid positions and re-define issues in ways that are more constructive and solution-focused.

The application of counselling skills to negotiation also addresses the ethical dimension of influence. Persuasion, while central to negotiation, can be misused when it becomes manipulative or coercive. Counselling-informed negotiation emphasizes authenticity, mutual respect, and informed consent. Rather than manipulating others into agreement, the goal is to create conditions under which all parties feel heard, respected, and empowered to make decisions. This approach aligns with the concept of principled negotiation advocated by(Zhang, Xu, Zhang, Liu, Hooi & Deng (2023) , which prioritizes interests over positions and seeks mutually beneficial outcomes through fair processes.

Moreover, cognitive-behavioral insights from counselling psychology can enrich negotiation practice by addressing the internal barriers that negotiators face. Cognitive distortions—such as all-or-nothing thinking, personalization, or catastrophizing—can impair judgment and escalate conflict. A negotiator equipped with cognitive-behavioral tools can recognize these patterns in themselves and others, and work to replace them with more balanced and constructive thinking. In high-stakes negotiations, managing emotions and maintaining psychological flexibility is essential for staying focused, regulating responses, and navigating difficult conversations.

In organizational settings, counselling-based negotiation skills are increasingly relevant for leaders, managers, and human resource professionals. Workplace negotiations often involve complex interpersonal dynamics—such as power imbalances, team conflicts, or cultural misunderstandings—that cannot be resolved through logic alone. The ability to listen deeply, demonstrate empathy, and guide conversations toward collaborative solutions is essential for maintaining morale, trust, and long-term organizational health. Likewise, in cross-cultural negotiations, where communication styles and values may differ, a counselling-informed approach helps negotiators remain open, respectful, and adaptable.

Ultimately, this paper explores the ways in which counselling principles—rooted in psychological insight and human connection—can be strategically applied to negotiation contexts. It seeks to build a bridge between the fields of counselling and negotiation, offering both theoretical grounding and practical strategies. By synthesizing research from psychology, communication, and conflict resolution, the paper aims to show how ethical, empathetic, and emotionally intelligent persuasion can enhance negotiation outcomes in personal, organizational, and cross-cultural contexts.

As negotiation continues to evolve in complexity and scope, the incorporation of counselling skills offers a compelling pathway for professionals seeking more effective and human-centered approaches. In doing so, it not only redefines how we persuade but also how we relate, collaborate, and create value together.

Theoretical Foundations of Persuasion and Counselling

Persuasion is a fundamental concept within the field of social psychology, defined broadly as the process of influencing another person's attitudes, beliefs, intentions, or behaviors through communication. Classic and contemporary scholars have offered models and principles to explain how persuasion operates across different contexts. Among the most influential is Robert Cialdini's work on the psychology of influence. Lavee & Itzchakov (2023) identified six key principles of persuasion—reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, authority, liking, and scarcity—that explain why people say "yes" to requests. These principles are grounded in empirical research and have been widely applied in marketing, management, leadership, and negotiation. They operate on predictable psychological mechanisms: for example, people tend to reciprocate favors, conform to what others are doing, obey perceived authority figures, and assign greater value to scarce resources.

While Cialdini's model provides a valuable framework for understanding how influence occurs, it tends to emphasize external behaviors and compliance outcomes rather than internal alignment or relational depth. In more transactional or strategic contexts, this model can be highly effective. However, it has limitations when applied to emotionally complex or ethically sensitive environments, where influence must be exercised with greater care and mutuality. This is where counselling theory offers a complementary—and in many cases, more human-centered—perspective on persuasion.

In counselling and therapeutic practice, persuasion is not about manipulation or coercion. Instead, it is about facilitating insight, supporting self-directed change, and fostering relational trust. The aim is not to "win over" the client but to collaborate in a process of growth and transformation. Central to this approach is Carl Rogers' person-centered theory, a foundational model in counselling psychology. Rogers (1951) cited by Longstaff and Gervis (2016) emphasized the importance of three core conditions for therapeutic change: empathy, congruence (genuineness), and unconditional positive regard. These conditions create a psychological climate in which clients feel safe, respected, and understood—an environment that promotes openness, reduces defensiveness, and increases the likelihood of meaningful change.

Rogers' person-centered approach is fundamentally non-directive. The therapist does not impose solutions or steer the client toward a predetermined outcome. Instead, change emerges from within the client, supported by the therapeutic relationship. This contrasts sharply with many traditional persuasive techniques, which are often goal-directed and outcome-focused.

Nevertheless, the underlying dynamics of person-centered counselling—such as establishing rapport, validating emotions, and creating a sense of psychological safety—are deeply relevant to

negotiation and influence in broader contexts. These principles suggest that true persuasion is not merely about changing someone's mind but about creating the relational conditions under which people can reflect, reconsider, and choose differently of their own volition.

The ethical dimension of persuasion is another point of convergence between counselling theory and negotiation. While persuasion in sales, politics, or advertising can sometimes veer into manipulation—leveraging fear, urgency, or social pressure—counselling emphasizes ethical influence rooted in authenticity, transparency, and respect. Ethical persuasion recognizes the autonomy and dignity of the other person. It seeks alignment rather than submission, agreement rather than compliance. In negotiation, this translates into practices that honor both parties' interests, perspectives, and emotions. It involves asking questions instead of making demands, listening actively rather than dominating the conversation, and aiming for mutual gain instead of unilateral advantage.

From a psychological perspective, the overlap between counselling and persuasion can also be seen in how people process information and change beliefs. Both fields draw on concepts like cognitive dissonance, self-concept, and emotional regulation. For example, persuasive messages are more effective when they align with the recipient's values and identity—a dynamic that counsellors are trained to navigate through empathy and attunement. Similarly, change is more likely when individuals feel emotionally supported and psychologically safe, which is a cornerstone of therapeutic rapport. These insights suggest that persuasion, when informed by counselling principles, can be both more effective and more ethically grounded.

Furthermore, contemporary approaches to counselling, such as motivational interviewing, provide structured techniques for promoting change while preserving client autonomy. Motivational interviewing combines empathy with strategic questioning to help individuals explore ambivalence and commit to change. This method has been widely used in health care, addiction treatment, and coaching, and its influence is growing in negotiation and conflict resolution. Its success lies in its ability to blend persuasive intent with a respectful, client-centered process—a balance that is increasingly important in today's complex interpersonal and organizational negotiations.

In summary, while persuasion and counselling may seem to originate from different domains—one strategic and often outcome-driven, the other relational and process-focused—they share key theoretical foundations. Both recognize that human behavior is shaped not just by logic or incentives, but by emotional, relational, and cognitive factors. Integrating Cialdini's principles with Rogers' person-centered approach creates a richer, more nuanced understanding of influence—one that honors the humanity of those involved while still achieving meaningful outcomes. This integration forms the basis for ethical, empathetic persuasion in negotiation contexts, where success depends as much on connection and understanding as it does on strategy and leverage.

Main Counselling Techniques Relevant to Negotiation

Integrating counselling techniques into negotiation practice enhances emotional awareness, interpersonal trust, and communication effectiveness. These skills—developed primarily for therapeutic relationships—are equally powerful in negotiation contexts where collaboration, mutual understanding, and behavior change are central goals. The following counselling techniques are especially relevant for negotiators seeking to navigate complex dynamics with greater empathy, insight, and impact.

Active Listening Active listening is more than hearing words; it involves giving full attention to the speaker, interpreting both verbal and nonverbal messages, and responding in a way that shows genuine interest and understanding. This technique is foundational in counselling because it fosters trust and allows clients to feel heard without judgment. In negotiation, active listening plays a similar role. When negotiators truly listen to their counterparts, they gain a deeper understanding of underlying interests, motivations, and concerns—insights that are often missed when the focus is solely on positions or outcomes. Reflecting back what the other party has said, asking clarifying questions, and using open-ended prompts not only improve the flow of information but also reduce defensiveness and promote collaboration.

Empathy and Validation Empathy is the ability to understand and share another person's emotional experience. In counselling, it is one of the most critical elements for building rapport and facilitating emotional processing. Validation, closely related to empathy, involves acknowledging the legitimacy of someone's feelings—even without agreeing with their viewpoint. In negotiation, showing empathy helps de-escalate emotional tension and fosters a sense of psychological safety. For example, acknowledging a counterpart's frustration over a delay or misunderstanding does not mean conceding the point; rather, it signals respect for their emotional reality. This can create openness and shift the conversation from conflict toward problem-solving. Skilled negotiators use empathic responses like "I can see how that would be frustrating" or "That sounds like a difficult position to be in," which reduce resistance and make the other party more receptive to influence.

Reframing Reframing is a cognitive technique used to change the way a situation or issue is interpreted. In counselling, it helps clients see their problems from new perspectives, which can reduce distress and increase resilience. In negotiation, reframing is particularly useful for moving beyond impasses and transforming conflict into opportunity. For example, instead of viewing a disagreement as a threat, a negotiator might reframe it as a signal of the other party's strong commitment to certain values. According to Beck (2020), reframing shifts attention from blame to understanding, from problems to possibilities. This technique can uncover common ground, highlight shared interests, and open up alternative pathways to agreement. It is especially powerful in emotionally charged or high-stakes negotiations where rigid thinking and adversarial framing are common.

Motivational Interviewing Developed by Miller and Rollnick (2013), motivational interviewing (MI) is a directive yet client-centered counselling approach designed to help individuals resolve ambivalence and strengthen their commitment to change. Unlike persuasion that relies on pressure or argument, MI uses gentle probing and reflective listening to elicit self-motivated reasons for change. In negotiation, this technique can be used to help the other party articulate their goals, confront internal contradictions, and consider new possibilities without feeling coerced. For example, a negotiator might ask, "What are the benefits you see in continuing this arrangement?" or "How does this current path align with your long-term goals?" These types of questions help uncover latent interests and guide the discussion toward collaborative solutions that align with both parties' values and objectives.

Nonverbal Communication Nonverbal cues—such as body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, and eye contact—are integral to effective communication. In counselling, therapists are trained to observe and interpret these subtle signals to better understand the client's emotional state and congruence between spoken words and felt experience. Similarly, in negotiation, nonverbal awareness can enhance interpersonal sensitivity and strategic decision-making. For example, noticing a hesitation in tone or averted gaze might reveal discomfort or disagreement that has not been verbally expressed. Being mindful of one's own nonverbal communication also helps establish credibility and rapport. Maintaining open posture, appropriate eye contact, and a calm tone can convey confidence and approachability—qualities that positively influence the negotiation atmosphere.

Together, these counselling techniques form a powerful toolkit for negotiators aiming to engage more deeply, ethically, and effectively. Rather than viewing negotiation as a contest of wills, this approach reframes it as a human-centered dialogue—one where understanding, connection, and mutual respect serve as the foundation for meaningful and lasting agreements.

Applying Counselling-Based Persuasion in Negotiation Contexts

Counselling-informed persuasion is not limited to therapeutic settings—it offers wide-ranging applications in real-world negotiation scenarios where emotional sensitivity, ethical influence, and long-term relationship outcomes are essential.Applying counselling principles such as active listening, empathy, validation, and emotional regulation, negotiators can better navigate complex interpersonal dynamics and achieve agreements that are both effective and sustainable. This section explores three practical domains in which these techniques can be especially impactful: workplace disputes, cross-cultural negotiations, and family mediation.

Workplace Disputes

In organizational settings, negotiation is a frequent and often delicate process, encompassing issues such as performance reviews, compensation, role clarity, interpersonal conflict, and resource allocation. Traditional HR negotiations that rely solely on policies or positional bargaining may overlook the emotional and relational aspects that influence employee

satisfaction and organizational cohesion. Integrating counselling skills can foster more productive dialogues and lead to more durable outcomes.

For instance, during a salary negotiation, a manager who employs active listening might discover that an employee's request is not only about compensation but also reflects deeper concerns—such as feeling undervalued, overlooked, or uncertain about future growth. Instead of responding with a simple yes or no, the manager might explore these concerns by asking open-ended questions, reflecting feelings, and validating the employee's experience. This approach demonstrates respect and care, building trust even if the financial request cannot be fully granted. The conversation becomes a forum for mutual understanding rather than confrontation, allowing both parties to explore alternative solutions such as increased recognition, professional development opportunities, or revised responsibilities.

Moreover, applying empathy in workplace negotiations helps de-escalate tensions and promotes collaborative problem-solving. Managers who can genuinely acknowledge an employee's perspective—without necessarily agreeing—help create a psychologically safe space, which is critical for transparency and creativity in conflict resolution.

Cross-Cultural Negotiations

Cross-cultural negotiations introduce additional complexity, as parties may hold different communication norms, emotional expressions, conflict styles, and underlying values. Misunderstandings often arise not from substantive disagreements but from misinterpretation of intent, tone, or behavior. Counselling techniques, particularly those that promote cultural sensitivity and emotional attunement, are essential in preventing these breakdowns and fostering constructive dialogue.

Empathy becomes even more critical across cultures, as it requires negotiators to suspend assumptions and actively seek to understand the worldview of their counterparts.Oxford (2016) highlights the importance of "facework" and identity sensitivity in intercultural interactions—acknowledging that people from different cultures prioritize respect, hierarchy, or emotional restraint in different ways. Counselling-informed negotiators are trained to pick up on these cues, ask respectful questions, and adjust their communication style accordingly.

For example, a Western negotiator accustomed to directness and assertiveness may find that a more indirect, relationship-focused approach is necessary when working with counterparts from East Asian or Middle Eastern cultures. Using nonverbal communication awareness, such as recognizing discomfort through posture or tone, can help clarify when a message has not been well received—allowing adjustments to be made before trust is damaged. In this way, counselling-based persuasion is not just a set of techniques but a mindset of humility, curiosity, and adaptability.

Family Mediation

Few negotiation settings are as emotionally charged as family mediation, particularly in the context of divorce, custody, or inheritance disputes. These scenarios often involve entrenched emotions, historical grievances, and concerns for the well-being of vulnerable parties, such as

children. In such cases, a purely legal or strategic approach may intensify conflict and prolong resolution. Counselling-informed negotiation offers a more compassionate and effective alternative.

Techniques like validation and reframing are especially valuable in family mediation. A mediator who acknowledges each party's pain, fear, or anger—without taking sides—can help reduce hostility and build a cooperative tone. For instance, reframing statements like "He never cared about the kids" into "It sounds like you feel your contributions haven't been fully recognized" shifts the focus from blame to understanding. This reduces defensiveness and allows participants to engage more productively.

In addition, establishing emotional safety—a principle deeply embedded in counselling practice—is crucial when children's futures are involved. Ensuring that both parties feel heard and respected can prevent retaliatory behavior and foster co-parenting arrangements that prioritize the child's best interests. Negotiators who approach family mediation with counselling skills can serve not just as facilitators of agreement, but as stewards of healing and constructive change.

Case Example

In a university setting, a dispute between two departments over shared resources was resolved using counselling-informed negotiation. A facilitator employed reflective listening, empathy, and reframing to uncover shared values and mutual goals. The departments reached an agreement that preserved relationships and clarified expectations. Surveys afterward showed increased trust and willingness to collaborate in the future.

Benefits of Counselling-Informed Persuasion

i. Enhances emotional intelligence in negotiation
ii. Encourages ethical and respectful influence
iii. Reduces conflict escalation and defensiveness
iv. Improves long-term relationship outcomes
v. Facilitates win-win resolutions

Challenges and Limitations

While counselling skills are powerful, they require training and self-awareness to use effectively. There is also the risk of manipulation if persuasive tools are used unethically. Moreover, high-stakes or adversarial negotiations may demand assertiveness beyond the typical counselling approach.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Integrating counselling techniques into negotiation enriches the persuasive process with empathy, emotional intelligence, and human connection. Negotiators who adopt these skills are

better equipped to foster trust, navigate complexity, and achieve collaborative outcomes. It is recommended that negotiation training programs incorporate counselling principles, particularly in professions where relationship-building is key. Future research should examine the impact of these approaches in high-conflict or multi-party negotiations.

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SELF-MANAGEMENT COUNSELLING TECHNIQUES' EFFECT ON AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LAFIAGI KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

School avoidance behaviour among secondary school students poses a serious threat to academic success, emotional wellbeing, and social development. Although counselling interventions have been widely explored, few studies have examined their effectiveness across distinct behavioural problems such as general avoidance. This study emphasizes the importance of dimension-specific, evidence-based interventions in addressing school avoidance behaviour by determining the effects of Self-Management Counselling Technique (SMCT) on academic and conflict dimensions of school avoidance behaviour among secondary school students in Lafiagi, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopted quasi-experimental research design involving pretest-posttest only and focused on 200 secondary school students identified with school avoidance behaviour in Lafiagi Kwara state, Nigeria. Participants were identified using the School Avoidance Behaviour Checklist (SABC) and 20 most ranked students were purposively selected. Data was collected from the identified students using School Avoidance Behaviour Questionnaire (SABQ) and were analyzed using paired sample t-tests. Two null hypotheses were raised and tested at 0.05 level of significant. Results indicated that SMCT ($t= 41.584$; $p= .000 < .05$) significantly reduced academic-related avoidance behaviour, but do not have a significant effect on conflict-related avoidance behaviour ($t = .410$, $p = .691 > .05$). Thus, concluded that self-management counselling technique hard positive effect on academic dimension of school avoidance behaviour but not on conflict dimension of school avoidance behaviour among the

students. The study recommended the use of SMCT for managing academic-related school avoidance behaviour, and integration of other strategies for conflict-related school avoidance behaviour.

Keywords: Self-management technique, School avoidance, Behaviour, Academic avoidance and Conflict avoidance

Introduction

One of the greatest barriers to change is staying away from it. Almost everyone, engages in avoidance behaviour every day; either in the form of procrastination, putting off a difficult conversation, postponing an appointment and much more. The issue here is that avoidance prevents students from confronting anxiety, or the things students fear and which is holding them back.

A student is exhibiting school avoidance behaviours when he or she either does not want to go to school or has trouble staying around all day. It's not uncommon for students to have student-motivated reluctance to attend school or stay in class for the entire day. Over the course of a few years throughout school, it can start with occasional absences and gradually escalate into a major issue. However, in most cases, symptoms that eventually lead to avoiding school start to accumulate slowly. According to the School Avoidance Alliance (SAA, 2024), school avoidance may manifest in several ways, such as complete absence from school, attending but leaving during the day, frequently retreating to the nurse's office, guidance counselor, or another perceived safe space, or deliberately arriving late to miss one or more class periods. It may also involve experiencing significant distress at the thought of going to school (SAA, 2024). Thus, school avoidance is regarded as a condition in which students, due to anxiety, depression, or social challenges, deliberately stay away from school because attendance triggers stress and discomfort.

In schools, avoidance behaviour is viewed as a maladaptive response in which students alter their actions to evade challenging academic tasks, thoughts, or emotions. Rather than confronting stressors, they attempt to escape them. This behaviour is considered unhealthy because it often intensifies stress instead of resolving its underlying causes. Procrastination is a common example, where a student delays or avoids completing necessary tasks, or even tries to suppress thoughts about them, despite the resulting increase in stress. In whatever case, avoidance behaviour is problematic for students and teachers. It negatively impacts students' learning and can place students at risk for being held back (Saxena, 2022). School avoidance behaviour can be assessed in various dimensions of Academic (avoiding all forms of curricular/cognitive activities in school) and Conflict (avoiding direct confrontations or situation that could lead to misunderstanding with other students) Students' use of avoidance strategies goes beyond merely evading effort. Often, they adopt avoidance as a defense mechanism, particularly when they feel

unprepared for a task and wish to shield their self-perception as competent individuals. To address these cognitive and emotional challenges, psychological interventions like the self-management counselling techniques may be necessary. Therefore, equipping students with the skills they need to achieve success, while also creating opportunities for them to experience and showcase that success, can help reduce their reliance on avoidance strategies. In essence, it becomes imperative to find a way of encouraging students to be active and proactive in the daily school activities. Such encouragement could come in the form of cognitive diffusion and self-management counselling interventions.

The school, especially classrooms can be a complex environment at times and students can choose to engage in a plethora of behaviours (adaptive and maladaptive) among these maladaptive behaviours is avoidance behaviour. The School Avoidance Alliance (SAA) emphasizes the role of negative automatic thoughts in distorted thinking, a concept developed by Aaron Beck, founder of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, in the 1960s. These Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs) often involve pessimistic beliefs about oneself, the world, or the future and are especially powerful among students experiencing school avoidance. Research indicates that a large proportion of human thoughts are negative and repetitive, yet most worries never materialize. This suggests that excessive pessimism fuels unnecessary stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, reinforcing avoidance behaviours among students.

Avoidance behaviour provides short-term emotional relief but ultimately strengthens fear and distress over time. From a cognitive perspective, including the work of Martin Seligman and Johnson (1973), avoidance reinforces the belief that feared situations are dangerous and unmanageable. By evading uncomfortable thoughts, emotions, or tasks, individuals miss opportunities to learn that they can cope effectively. In academic settings, this manifests as task avoidance, procrastination, classroom disruptions, or withdrawal, often driven by fear of failure, anxiety, or low self-esteem. Similarly, conflict avoidance occurs when students evade disagreements due to fear of negative reactions, which may stem from low confidence or avoidant attachment patterns developed in childhood.

The exact causes of school avoidance are not always clear, but psychological issues such as anxiety and depression, along with social challenges like peer rejection, lack of friendships, or bullying, often play a role. When avoidance intensifies to the extent that a student misses substantial amounts of school, it may signal more serious conditions, including childhood depression or anxiety-related disorders such as social anxiety, separation anxiety, or panic disorder. What distinguishes school avoidance from other disorders is that the difficulties are specifically tied to the school environment, whereas broader disorders affect multiple areas of a child's life. For instance, a highly sensitive student might react with fear to a teacher's strictness or criticism. Additionally, changes in classroom structure, staffing, or curriculum may trigger avoidance behaviours in students with special educational needs (Scott, 2024).

The consequences of school avoidance are far-reaching. Although avoidance may create temporary comfort, it gradually limits personal growth, weakens self-confidence, and heightens anxiety. Over time, suppressed emotions intensify and unresolved issues accumulate, affecting academic performance, relationships, and overall wellbeing. In schools, avoidance behaviours such as procrastination, reluctance to ask questions, or disengagement from tasks reduce learning opportunities and reinforce a cycle of fear and withdrawal, ultimately diminishing students' quality of life.

Self-management offers a constructive counselling strategy for addressing avoidance behaviours. Defined by Cooper, Heron, and Heward (2014) as the application of behaviour-change strategies to achieve intentional improvements, self-management empowers students to regulate emotions, set goals, and modify their environment to support positive behaviour. Drawing from behavioural and social learning principles, techniques such as self-observation, environmental restructuring, goal-setting, and self-reinforcement help students replace maladaptive avoidance patterns with productive habits. By strengthening self-discipline, resilience, and responsible decision-making, self-management enables students to confront academic and interpersonal challenges more effectively.

Self-management can range from simple individual actions to more complex plans and strategies (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). At its core, the concept rests on the idea that while people are shaped by their environment, they also have the ability to modify that environment in ways that influence their own behaviour. For students, developing self-management skills is particularly vital. With the demands of balancing multiple subjects, extracurricular commitments, and constant digital distractions, these skills play a crucial role in meeting academic challenges. More than just staying organized or meeting deadlines, self-management is about exercising control over oneself and one's learning process. Ultimately, it enables students to take ownership of their educational journey, navigating challenges while fostering both academic success and personal growth (Omisakin & Ncama, 2011).

The students often avoid group project that associate them with a classmate they do not like or where their preferred candidate is not made the group leader. The thought that a particular teacher is wicked and too strict makes them avoid his class and they often avoid exams they perceive the teacher will rather deliberately fail them no matter how much they try. These erroneous feelings and thoughts are detrimental to the students' academic progress and achievement in school. Coban (2013) discovered that, compared to strategies such as problem-solving and seeking social support, avoidance was linked to a reduced sense of self-worth. Thus, for the students to prosper in school and in life, there is the need for counselling intervention to defuse their maladaptive thinking and feeling and/or train them in self-management skill to mend their school avoidance behaviour problems.

Objective of the Study

The study aimed at examining the effect of self-management counselling on school avoidance behaviour among secondary school students in Lafiagi Kwara State, Nigeria. The

study specifically examined the following objectives:

i. Impact of Self-Management Counselling Technique on the Academic dimension of School Avoidance Behaviour among Secondary School Students in the Lafiagi, Kwara State, Nigeria.
ii. Impact of self-management counselling technique on conflict dimension of school avoidance behaviour among secondary school students in Lafiagi Kwara State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant:

i. There is no significant effect of self-management counselling technique on academic dimension of avoidance behaviour among secondary school students in Lafiagi educational zone.
ii. There is no significant effect of self-management counselling technique on conflict dimension of avoidance behaviour among secondary school students in Lafiagi educational zone.

Methodology

The study employed a quasi-experimental research design, specifically the pre-test, post-test format. This design was chosen in line with Gopalan, Rosinger, and Ahn (2020), who note that quasi-experimental approaches help minimize the time and resources required for experimentation. Accordingly, the researcher adopted this design to investigate the effect of cognitive defusion and self-management techniques on avoidance behaviour among secondary school students in the Lafiagi, Kwara State.

The general population of this study comprises of all Public Senior Secondary School II (SSII) Students in Lafiagi Education Zone, Kwara State, Nigeria; totaling, 1,649 students. The target population however consists of Senior Secondary School Students (SSII) identified with school avoidance behaviour from the schools; Estimated at 200. These students were identified from the schools using a check list School avoidance Behaviour Checklist (SABC) adapted from Kearney and Albano (2007). The population distribution of the SSII students in the schools are therefore presented in Table 1:

Table 1: *Population Distribution by School*

S/N0	Schools	General Population	Target Population
1	Lafiagi Secondary School	234	25
2	Government Secondary School Lafiagi	701	65
3	Moh'd Shaaba Senior Secondary School Lafiagi	479	75
4	GDSS Lafiagi	235	35
	Total	**1,649**	**200**

The sample size of this study consists of 20 students, determined through purposive sampling techniques. Two Senior Secondary Schools, having the highest number of students identified with school avoidance behaviour were purposively selected as the participating schools. The study adopted a group counselling approach therefore, only an appropriate group counselling size is required as suggested by Oladele (2000) and Ezhumalai (2018). Thus, 20 students which is 10% of the identified students were purposively selected from These two schools (10 students each). This is because the set of students ranked 1st to 10th in each school are in dare need of the intervention. The sample distribution is presented in table 2:

Table2: *Sample Distribution by School*

S/N0	Schools	Target Population	Sample
1	Lafiagi Secondary School	25	-
2	Government Secondary School Lafiagi	65	10
3	Moh'd Shaaba Senior Secondary School Lafiagi	75	10
4	Government Day Secondary School Lafiagi	35	-
	Total	**200**	**20**

Two instruments were used in this study, they are: School Avoidance Behaviour Checklist (SABC) and School Avoidance Behaviour Questionnaire (SABQ).

The School Avoidance Behaviour Checklist (SABC) was adapted from Kearney, and Albano (2007). It has 24 items, with 7-point rating scale of Never (0), Seldom (1), Sometimes (2), Half the time (3), Usually (4), Almost Always (5), Always (6). In order to create a uniform rating (6-point Likert scale) for both instruments it was suggested that same ratings as used in the SABQ be adopted. therefore Seldom (S), Sometimes (ST), Half the time (HT) Usually (U) Almost Always (AA) Always (A) was used. The instrument, School Avoidance Behaviour Checklist (SABC) was analyzed and on the scoring format of: Seldom (S), Sometimes (ST), Half the time (HT) Usually (U) Almost Always (AA) Always (A)with scoring format rated as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 respectively.

Scores between 24 – 50 (Low)
Scores between 51 – 90 (Moderate)
Scores between 91 and above (High)

The maximum score a respondent could get when all items are responded to is 144 (6x24) while the lowest mark is 24 (1x24). Respondents who scored between 24 and 50 were considered as having a low level of school avoidance behaviour while respondents with score between 51 and 90 were regarded as having a Moderate level of avoidance behaviour and those with score between 91 and 144 were regarded as having a high level of school avoidance behaviour. Only those with high level of school avoidance behaviour were considered.

School Avoidance Behaviour Questionnaire (SABQ) on the other hand, has 20 Items in different dimensions of: Academic Avoidance and Conflict Avoidance. It was adapted from General and Specific Avoidance Questionnaire (GSAQ) by Stemment, Roger, Kuntz and Borill (2015). It is in different components of academic and conflict avoidance with 6-point Likert scale of: Strongly Disagree (SD) Moderately Disagree (MD) Slightly Disagree (SD) Slightly Agree (SA) Moderately Agree (MA) Strongly Agree (StA). Originally, it was on two Likert scale of (true or false) rated (1 and 0) but in the process of validation, it was observed that 6 Likert scale be used instead of two Likert scale. The instrument, School Avoidance Behaviour Questionnaire (SABQ) was analyzed and on the scoring format of: Strongly Disagree (SD) Moderately Disagree (MD) Slightly Disagree (SD) Slightly Agree (SA) Moderately Agree (MA) Strongly Agree (StA).with scoring format rated as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 respectively.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, it was subjected to expert review. Specifically, a specialist in measurement and evaluation as well as research experts from the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, assessed the instrument for content relevance, clarity, and appropriateness. To achieve the reliability of the instrument, 40 copies of the SABQ was administered to 40 students in Government Day Secondary School (GDSS) Gbugbu which is not part of the study but shares similar characteristics. Cronbach's Alpha was used to calculate its reliability coefficient to determine whether or not the instrument could be reliable enough for the study. The reliability index was 0.84

Treatment Procedure

The research was conducted across three distinct stages: pre-treatment, treatment, and post-treatment phases.

Pre-Treatment Phase

The first phase in the treatment procedure was the pre-treatment phase. This phase was the preliminary stage for the diagnostic process and serves as a means of identifying the target participants through their respective school counsellor who served as research assistant; the approach also helped determining the actual state of the affair with the target population

(students identified with high index of school avoidant behaviour) before being exposed to a particular counselling intervention. This was done a week before the full commencement of the treatment intervention. After this an adapted questionnaire "School Avoidance Behaviour Questionnaire" (SABQ) was administered on the participants to get baseline information on their state of affair regarding avoidance behaviour.

Treatment Phase

The treatment phase represents the second stage of the intervention process. At this stage, participants were directly exposed to the treatment conditions, specifically addressing their high levels of school avoidance behaviour. The intervention involved interactive sessions between the researcher and the participants, which spanned a duration of 8 weeks with a total of 12 hours of engagement for both groups (A and B). Each group attended two counselling sessions per week, with each session lasting 45 minutes. Data collected for this study were analyzed using inferential statistics of paired sample t-test. The two hypotheses were tested using paired sample t-test since it is testing differences between the pretest and posttest effect.

Results

In this study, two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance using the paired samples t-test. The findings are presented as follows:

H01: There is no significant effect of the self-management counselling technique on the academic dimension of school avoidance behaviour among secondary school students in the Lafiagi, Kwara State.

Table 1: *Paired sampled t-test comparing pretest and posttest mean score of self-management counselling technique on academic dimension of school avoidance behaviour*

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
Pretest	10	59.60	2.31			
				41.58	9	.000
Posttest	10	22.90	1.52			

Table 1 presents the analysis results, showing a pre-test mean of 59.60 and a post-test mean of 22.90, with a t-value of 41.58 and a p-value of .000, which is below the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that self-management counselling technique has no significant effect on the academic dimension of school avoidance behaviour is rejected. This therefore implies that self-management counselling technique has no effect on academic dimension of school avoidance behaviour among the students.

$H0_2$ There is no significant effect of the self-management counselling technique on the conflict dimension of school avoidance behaviour among secondary school students in the Lafiagi, Kwara State.

Table2: *Paired sampled t-test comparing pretest and posttest mean score of Self-Management Counselling Technique on conflict Dimension of School avoidance behaviour*

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
pretest	10	18.90	7.95			
				.410	9	.691
posttest	10	18.00	1.82			

Table 2 presents the analysis, showing a pretest mean of 18.90 and a posttest mean of 18.00, with t = 0.410 and p = 0.691, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant effect of the self-management counselling technique on the conflict dimension of school avoidance behaviour is retained. This therefore implies that self-management counselling technique has no significant effect on conflict dimension of school avoidance behaviour among the students.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings revealed a significant effect of the self-management counselling technique on the academic dimension of school avoidance behaviour among secondary school students in the Lafiagi Educational Zone of Edu LGA, Kwara State. This indicates that the technique was effective in reducing academic avoidance behaviours among the students. The result aligns with the study of Uzoekwe et al. (2022), which examined the "Effects of Self-Management Techniques on Mathematics Avoidance Behaviour among Junior Secondary School Students." Their findings similarly showed that the self-management technique was effective, as evidenced by pretest–posttest mean differences. This further implies that self-management is a viable approach for reducing mathematics and academic avoidance behaviours. The result is also in line with that of Lauren, Megan and Amanda (2019) on "Effect of Self-management technique on School avoidance behaviour among High School Students" it indicated that the self-management intervention with peer training significantly reduced school avoidance behaviour and improve academic achievement in the treatment group. Similarly, the present study supports Mooney, Ryan, Uhing, Reid & Epstein (2005) whose study was about "Using Self-management and Reinforcement to reduce school avoidance behaviour and Improve Homework Completion among Middle School Students". The result showed that the self-management and reinforcement techniques significantly improved the students' engagement rate especially in homework completion while it reduces school avoidance behaviour. This was reflected in the response of the treatment group compared to the control group. The result apart from the increased self-image and academic engagement among the students, also reduced disruptive and school avoidance behaviours among the students.

The finding also revealed that there is no significant effect of self-management counselling technique on conflict dimension of school avoidance behaviour among secondary school students in Lafiagi educational zone of Edu LGA, kwara state. self-management techniques had no significant impact on conflict dimension of school avoidance behaviour. This is reflective in

the insignificant pretest-posttest mean score differences (18.90 and 18.00) respectively. The finding reflects a limitation in self-management interventions in managing this dimension of school avoidance behaviour. The intervention primarily focused on intrapersonal regulation (thoughts, feelings, behaviours) and not directly on interpersonal skills. The study found no significant effect of self-management counselling technique on the conflict dimension of school avoidance behaviour indicating that interpersonal issues, such as conflicts with peers, teachers other or authority figures, were not sufficiently addressed by the interventions. self-management focus on intrapersonal change, it may not directly influence interpersonal conflict resolution. This claim is supported by Daly and Sugai (2001), who emphasized the importance of social skills training and conflict resolution strategies in addressing peer-related and authority-related school avoidance. However, the study contradicts Maeda and Heyne (2019) whose study involves the use of self-management to enforce rapid return to school and discouraging school avoidance behaviour resulting from fear of conflict among Japanese adolescents. The adolescents recorded at least 85% classroom attendance within three months, and this level of consistency was sustained for the following six months, during which they remained in class at least 85% of the time. This outcome confirms the effectiveness of self-management in enhancing emotional well-being and discouraging school avoidance behaviour.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were however, made:

Self-management counselling technique had significant effect on academic dimension of school avoidance behaviour among secondary school students in Lafiagi, Kwara State. However, self-management counselling technique had no significant effect on conflict dimension of school avoidance behaviour among secondary school students in Lafiagi, Kwara State. Hence not adequate in managing conflict dimension of school avoidance behaviour.

Recommendations

the study, recommended that:

i. School counsellors be trained and encouraged on the use and adoption of self-management counselling technique in addressing the issue of self-management counselling technique to address academic dimension of school avoidance behaviour
ii. Additional interventions such as peer mediation and conflict resolution training should be implemented by counsellors to target the conflict dimension of school avoidance.
iii. Government makers should ensure that teacher training programs include modules on identifying and responding to school avoidance behaviour to create a more supportive learning environment.
iv. Parents should be engaged through workshops and counselling sessions to reinforce the positive behavioural strategies at home.

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COUNSELLOR'S ROLE IN THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION OF ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR PEERS

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Abstract

This paper examines Counsellors' role in the Conflict Resolution of Adolescents and their Peers in Abia State. Adolescents are individuals in the transitional stage of development between childhood and adulthood, typically ranging from ages 10 to 19, characterized by rapid physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. Adolescents often experience conflicts with their peers, which can negatively affect their emotional well-being, academic performance, and social relationships. School counselors play a vital role in helping adolescents resolve conflicts, manage emotions, and build positive interpersonal relationships. The paper identifies common sources and types of adolescent conflicts and highlights key counseling strategies such as negotiation, mediation, dialogue, emotional regulation training, and problem-solving techniques. The paper reveals that when counsellors provide a safe, supportive, and structured environment, adolescents are better equipped to communicate effectively, develop empathy, and resolve disputes peacefully. The paper suggests the implementation of structured conflict resolution programs in schools, regular counseling interventions, and increased government support for functional counseling centers to enhance adolescents' social and emotional development.

Keywords: Counselling Strategies, Conflict Resolution, Adolescents and Peers.

Introduction

Adolescence, defined as the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, typically occurs between the ages of 10 and 19 (Rogers & Tudge, 2021). This period is characterized by significant physical, emotional, and social changes, which can lead to experimentation with behaviors and the exploration of identity, social skills, and relationships (Hurlock, 2021; Athassan, 2023). These developmental changes often give rise to conflicts, particularly with

peers, parents, and other authority figures.

Adolescents are significantly influenced by peers—people who share similar age or social backgrounds—as they shape youths' behaviors, beliefs, and feelings of social connection (Jones & Sanford, 2023). While peer influence can foster positive social skills and goal-oriented behavior, it can also contribute to negative outcomes, such as engagement in risky behaviors or delinquency, which may trigger conflicts (Ehraandt, Hoffman & Schacter, 2022). Conflict—characterized as a recognized struggle between parties who rely on each other but perceive their goals or resources as incompatible (Hocker & Wilmot, 2018)—is a natural part of adolescent growth. When not properly addressed, such conflicts may lead to aggressive behavior, social withdrawal, decreased academic performance, and enduring emotional difficulties (Laursen & Collins, 2020).

School counselors play a critical role in mitigating these conflicts by providing professional guidance, emotional support, and structured strategies to help adolescents resolve disagreements constructively (Johnson, 2022; Ogbuokiri & Ogbuokiri, 2023). By fostering effective communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills, counselors equip adolescents to navigate interpersonal challenges, reduce negative behavioral outcomes, and enhance overall well-being.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of counselors in facilitating conflict resolution among adolescents and their peers. Specifically, the study aims to identify common sources of conflict, explore counseling strategies used to manage these conflicts, and highlight how such interventions contribute to improved social and emotional development in adolescents.

Developmental Factors Influencing Conflicts in Adolescence

Adolescence is a transitional stage of development, typically occurring between the ages of 10 and 19, characterized by rapid physical growth, emotional fluctuations, cognitive maturation, and evolving social skills (Hurlock, 2021; Althassan, 2020; Rogers & Tudge, 2021). During this period, adolescents actively explore their identities, establish independence, and form complex peer relationships, which can significantly influence their behaviors and social interactions.

Peers—individuals of similar age or developmental stage—play a critical role in adolescents' lives. Positive peer interactions can provide emotional support, foster a sense of belonging, and encourage the development of social skills, collaboration, and academic motivation (Jones & Sanford, 2023). Conversely, peer pressure or exposure to negative behaviors such as delinquency or substance use can increase the likelihood of conflicts and emotional distress (Ehraandt, Hoffman & Schacter, 2022).

Conflicts in adolescence arise from these developmental dynamics. They may involve disagreements with parents, teachers, or peers, as well as internal struggles stemming from self-identity and decision-making processes (Steinberg, 2023). The quest for independence and autonomy often leads adolescents to challenge authority or question social expectations, while

changes in brain development during this stage affect emotional regulation and decision-making, making conflicts more likely to occur (APA, 2022; Lansford & Banati, 2020).

Although adolescent conflicts can be stressful, they are a normal and necessary part of development. When managed effectively, these conflicts provide opportunities for adolescents to acquire critical life skills, including communication, negotiation, emotional control, and problem-solving, which contribute to their social and emotional growth (Steinberg, 2023).

Adolescents experience conflicts as a natural consequence of their emotional, cognitive, and social development. These conflicts can be understood through three key subthemes: intrapersonal challenges, family and parental dynamics, and peer-related influences.

Intrapersonal Challenges

Intrapersonal conflicts involve internal struggles within the adolescent, often stemming from opposing thoughts, emotions, or desires. Adolescents may feel torn between different choices, expectations, or values, resulting in stress, confusion, and anxiety (Steinberg, 2023). These conflicts are closely linked to the process of identity formation, as teens navigate decisions about who they are and who they want to become. Emotional fluctuations and cognitive development during this period can intensify these internal conflicts, affecting decision-making, self-esteem, and overall behavior.

Family and Parental Dynamics

Parent-adolescent conflicts often arise from differences in opinions, struggles for autonomy, social pressures, or generational misunderstandings. Adolescents' desire for independence can clash with parental rules or expectations, leading to disagreements over curfews, academic performance, social choices, or personal behavior (Lansford & Banati, 2020). While these conflicts are common and often temporary, they can significantly impact adolescents' emotional well-being if not managed constructively. Factors such as parental over-control, inconsistent discipline, or lack of supportive communication may exacerbate these conflicts, making counseling interventions particularly important.

Peer-Related Influences

Peer conflicts are disagreements or struggles within friendships or peer groups, which are particularly significant during adolescence. Adolescents may encounter conflicts arising from jealousy, loyalty issues, social comparison, or peer pressure (APA, 2022). The intensity of peer relationships during this period, combined with external influences such as social media and school environments, can heighten the likelihood of misunderstandings and disputes (Ehrhardt, Hoffman & Schacter, 2022; Stevens, Van Dorsselaer, Boer & De Looze, 2022). Unresolved peer conflicts can affect adolescents' mental health, emotional development, and academic performance. By understanding these dynamics, counselors and caregivers can better support adolescents in managing peer-related challenges constructively.

Conceptual Model of Adolescent Conflict

Conflicts in adolescence can be understood through the interaction of developmental, social, and environmental factors. This study adopts a conceptual framework that links adolescent developmental changes, family and peer influences, and individual coping mechanisms as key determinants of conflict experiences.

Adolescent Developmental Changes

Physical, emotional, and cognitive changes during adolescence create vulnerabilities for conflict. For example, mood swings, impulsivity, and the search for identity can contribute to intrapersonal and interpersonal tensions (Steinberg, 2023).

Family and Peer Influences

Conflicts are shaped by family dynamics, including parental expectations, communication patterns, and disciplinary approaches, as well as by peer interactions, such as social pressure, friendship loyalty, and group norms (Lansford & Banati, 2020; Jones & Sanford, 2023).

Individual Coping and Communication Skills

Adolescents' ability to manage emotions, communicate effectively, and resolve disputes constructively mediates the intensity and outcomes of conflicts. Disagreements can be intensified by ineffective communication, emotional volatility, or limited problem-solving abilities (Ahmed & Musa, 2021; Ogbonna & Etim, 2023).

Causes of Conflicts

The numerous changes in adolescents often create tension and misunderstandings, leading to conflict. The following are detailed causes of conflicts during adolescence:

1. Search for Identity and Autonomy; A major source of conflict during adolescence stems from youths' intense drive to explore their personal identity and achieve independence. During this period, teenagers begin to question rules, challenge authority, and explore their personal values, beliefs, and goals. The pursuit of independence during adolescence can result in conflicts with parents, teachers, and caregivers who continue to perceive them as children (Osei-Akoto & Baffour-Awuah, 2022).

   For example, a teenager insisting on choosing their own friends or dressing differently may be seen by adults as rebellious, thus sparking conflict.

2. Peer Influence and Social Belonging; The need to belong and be accepted by peers becomes very important during adolescence. As a result, many adolescents are easily influenced by their friends. Adolescents might engage in risky behaviors—like skipping school, using substances, or challenging authority—even when these actions conflict with their personal values or family expectations (Nwankwo & Okoye, 2023).

   When parents or school staff confront them about these behaviors, adolescents may become defensive or resistant, resulting in conflict.

3. Poor Communication Skills; Conflicts also arise when adolescents struggle to communicate their feelings, thoughts, and needs effectively. Many adolescents, lacking emotional vocabulary or fearing criticism, may communicate their feelings through anger, social withdrawal, or acts of disrespect (Ahmed & Musa, 2021). At the same time, adults may misinterpret these expressions or respond harshly, escalating the conflict instead of resolving it. The lack of effective dialogue between adolescents and adults makes it harder to address underlying issues.
4. Emotional Instability and Hormonal Changes; Biological changes during puberty can cause adolescents to experience mood swings, irritability, and increased sensitivity. Such emotional variability can cause adolescents to respond excessively to situations that might appear trivial to others (Ogbonna & Etim, 2023). For instance, a simple correction by a teacher or parent can be taken as a personal attack, leading to outbursts or confrontation. Their struggle to manage emotions constructively often contributes to frequent interpersonal conflicts.
5. Academic Pressure and Performance Anxiety; School demands, examinations, and future career expectations can be overwhelming for adolescents. Many feel pressured to succeed academically, especially when they are compared with their peers or siblings. When adolescents are unable to meet expectations or feel unsupported, they may develop feelings of frustration and low self-esteem, which can lead to conflicts with parents or teachers who may not understand the root of their behavior (Uche & Obasi, 2022).

Meaning of Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution refers to the steps (Open communication, active listening and patience) and strategies used to peacefully settle misunderstandings, disagreements, or fights between two or more people. Instead of allowing a conflict to grow into something harmful, conflict resolution helps people to talk through their issues, understand each other's point of view, and agree on a solution that ensures fairness and considers the interests of all parties involved (Smith & Thomas, 2021).

In practice, conflict resolution can take many forms. For example, it may involve negotiation, where both parties make compromises, or mediation, where a neutral third party helps them find common ground (Nguyen & Carter, 2023). The aim is not just to stop the argument, but to understand the cause of the conflict, improve relationships, and prevent future issues. When done well, conflict resolution can lead to stronger bonds, better cooperation, and emotional growth (Anderson & Bello, 2022).

In educational and counseling settings, conflict resolution is especially important. Young people, for instance, often face peer pressure, miscommunication, and emotional stress, which can easily lead to arguments or fights. Teaching them conflict resolution skills—like how to control anger, express themselves clearly, and listen to others—helps them become more responsible and emotionally intelligent individuals (Johnson & Johnson, 2022).

Effective conflict resolution doesn't mean one person wins and the other loses. Instead, it's about creating a win–win situation where everyone feels heard and respected. This kind of peaceful approach supports harmony, teamwork, and overall well-being (Chika & Okoro, 2021).

The Role of Counsellors in Counseling Adolescents and Peers for Conflict Resolution.

Adolescents often face a variety of conflicts as part of their emotional and social development. Counsellors play an essential role in guiding young people and their peers toward healthy conflict resolution. Their work goes beyond addressing immediate disagreements; counselors create a safe and supportive environment where adolescents can openly express their feelings, thoughts, and concerns without fear of judgment or repercussions (Steinberg, 2014). This safe space encourages honest communication, which is the foundation for understanding the root causes of conflicts—whether they arise from family issues, peer relationships, or internal struggles.

According to Egeonu, Nnodum, and Clinton (2016), counselors use several strategies to resolve adolescent conflicts. One of these is Reality Therapy, developed by William Glasser (1965). Reality Therapy is based on the principle that individuals are responsible for their behavior and can make better choices to meet their needs effectively. In practice, counselors apply Reality Therapy to peer conflict situations by engaging adolescents in structured questioning. For example, when two peers are in conflict over friendship loyalty or group disagreements, the counselor helps each adolescent examine their role in the conflict, explore the consequences of their actions, and identify alternative behaviors that meet their needs without harming others.

Through this process, Reality Therapy links theory to practice: it encourages self-evaluation, responsibility, and choice-making while providing a practical pathway for peers to negotiate solutions. By using guided questioning and collaborative problem-solving, counselors help adolescents resolve disputes constructively, improve communication, and strengthen their relationships with peers.

Mediation Approach- The counselor uses mediation approach to resolve adolescents conflict, thereby calling another of his/her colleague in the profession to be a mediator. The counselor and the mediator will now make the forum away from gossip. It requires giving some attention to each of these adolescents and allowing them to air their views and guide their conversation towards a joint problem. Both of them will now help the adolescents to resolve and overcome their conflicts through identification of problems that cause the conflicts.

Dialogue Approach: This method is used to counsel adolescents who are in conflicts with their peers. Here, a verbal exchange of facts and perceptions will take place to better understand the position being advanced. The counselor, first gets the right information from the adolescents on the causes of their conflicts with their peers. He/she uses this dialogue to resolve their conflicts, making sure that they will settle with their peers.

During mediation, counselors employ essential counseling skills such as:

Empathy: Understanding and acknowledging each adolescent's feelings and perspective without judgment, which helps build trust and reduce tension.

Paraphrasing: Restating what each adolescent says in the counselor's own words to ensure clarity, confirm understanding, and help participants feel heard.

Reflection: Encouraging adolescents to reflect on their own behavior, emotions, and contributions to the conflict, fostering self-awareness and responsibility.

Active listening: Giving full attention to each adolescent, demonstrating understanding through verbal and non-verbal cues, and preventing misunderstandings.

Questioning: Asking open-ended, non-confrontational questions to clarify issues, uncover underlying causes, and guide adolescents toward mutually acceptable solutions.

By using these skills, counselors guide adolescents in identifying the root causes of their conflicts, expressing their concerns constructively, and working collaboratively toward a joint resolution. This structured approach not only resolves the immediate dispute but also teaches adolescents practical communication and problem-solving skills that can prevent future conflicts.

The Role of Counselors in Resolving Adolescent Conflicts: A Comprehensive Framework

Counselors play a critical role in helping adolescents manage conflicts with peers. Their work can be organized under a three-pronged framework: Preventive Role, Intervention Role, and Developmental Role, providing a clear, structured approach that links theory to practice and incorporates empirical evidence.

1. Preventive Role

Counselors proactively reduce conflict by equipping adolescents with the knowledge and skills to handle disagreements constructively. This includes:

- **Seminars and workshops** that teach communication skills, empathy, and respect for diversity.
- **Peer education programs** that encourage students to support one another in managing disagreements before they escalate.
- **Empirical Evidence:** Research indicates that peer mediation programs facilitated by counselors can effectively decrease school conflicts, strengthen peer relationships, and improve the overall school environment (Chukwu & Ebong, 2022; Johnson & Johnson, 2022).

2. Intervention Role

When conflicts occur, counselors directly intervene using structured strategies such as mediation, dialogue, and therapeutic approaches:

- **Mediation:** Counselors, sometimes with a neutral colleague, guide adolescents to identify the causes of conflicts, express themselves constructively, and reach mutually acceptable

solutions. Essential counseling skills in this process include empathy, paraphrasing, reflection, active listening, and open-ended questioning.

- **Dialogue:** Facilitated conversations allow peers to share perspectives and clarify misunderstandings, encouraging collaborative problem-solving.
- **Therapeutic approaches (e.g., Reality Therapy):** Counselors help adolescents examine their behavior, understand consequences, and explore alternative actions that meet their needs without harming others. For example, Reality Therapy helps teens involved in peer disputes reflect on their choices and take responsibility for resolving conflicts peacefully (Egeonu, Nnodum & Clinton, 2016).

3. Developmental Role

Counselors also focus on building long-term skills that help adolescents manage conflicts independently:

- **Effective Communication:** Teaching adolescents to express themselves clearly, listen actively, interpret verbal and non-verbal cues, and engage respectfully with peers. Safe practice spaces allow students to gain confidence in expressing feelings (Lee & Thomas, 2023).
- **Emotional Regulation:** Helping teens recognize emotional triggers and use strategies such as mindfulness, journaling, or deep breathing to manage impulsive reactions.
- **Problem-Solving:** Guiding adolescents to identify problems, evaluate solutions, weigh pros and cons, and make reasoned decisions rather than acting solely on emotion (Bello & Uche, 2022).
- **Negotiation Techniques:** Teaching students to assert themselves constructively using "I" statements, listening actively, and seeking common ground to resolve disagreements (Kalu & Amadi, 2023).

Counselors also promote peer cohesion and positive group dynamics by facilitating discussions, peer mediation programs, and cooperative activities centered on collaboration and mutual respect. These developmental strategies not only resolve immediate conflicts but also foster long-term social-emotional competence, resilience, and healthy peer relationships.

Empirical evidence: Studies indicate that adolescents involved in structured counselor-led conflict resolution programs demonstrate reduced aggression, improved interpersonal relationships, and enhanced emotional regulation skills (Bello & Uche, 2022; Lee & Thomas, 2023).

Conclusion

Counselors play a crucial role in supporting adolescents through conflict with peers by performing preventive, intervention, and developmental functions. In their preventive role, counselors organize seminars, workshops, and peer education programs that equip adolescents with communication, empathy, and conflict management skills. Through their intervention role, they facilitate mediation, dialogue, and therapeutic approaches—such as Reality Therapy—to help adolescents address conflicts constructively, express themselves effectively, and negotiate

mutually acceptable solutions. In the developmental role, counselors teach life skills, problem-solving strategies, emotional regulation, and negotiation techniques that empower adolescents to manage future conflicts independently. By integrating these functions, counselors not only resolve immediate disputes but also foster positive peer relationships, emotional growth, and long-term social competence among adolescents.

Suggestions For Practice

To enhance the management of conflicts among adolescents, especially within educational settings, the following suggestions were made. Conflict resolution and anger management seminars should be carried out in the schools by the counselors, as their presence provides adolescents with a safe place to express concerns and seek guidance early on by preventing conflicts from escalating.

Schools should implement structured conflict resolution programs that teach adolescents vital skills such as communication, emotional regulation, and negotiation, which are critical for healthy conflict management.

Government should establish effective counseling centres in various schools to help in counseling the adolescents in resolving their conflicts.

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INTEGRATING PERSON-CENTERED COUNSELLING (PCC) APPROACHES IN COUNSELLING: A FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING INTERPERSONAL HARMONY IN SCHOOL AND FAMILY SETTING

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Abstract

Conflict, whether in school or family settings, often arises from unmet emotional needs, miscommunication, or incompatible expectations, posing significant threats to interpersonal harmony and overall psychological well-being. This paper explores the integration of the person-centered counselling (PCC) approach, originally developed by Carl Rogers, as a humanistic framework for resolving relational conflicts. Rooted in the principles of empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness, PCC emphasizes a non-directive, client-centered process that fosters emotional insight, mutual respect, and self-awareness. Drawing from contemporary counselling literature and practical conflict scenarios within Nigerian school and family environments, the paper presents a model that aligns PCC techniques with conflict resolution strategies to promote effective communication and relational healing. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative approach to analyze the relevance and adaptability of person-centered interventions across educational and domestic contexts. Key findings suggest that integrating PCC into school guidance programs and family counselling systems can significantly reduce behavioral tensions, improve teacher-student and parent-child relationships, and create emotionally safe spaces for dialogue. The paper concludes by recommending the training of school counsellors, teachers, and family mediators in PCC techniques as a sustainable path toward emotional harmony and conflict prevention in contemporary African communities.

Keywords: Person-Centered Counselling, Conflict Resolution, Interpersonal Harmony, School Counselling, Family Mediation

Introduction

Conflict is an unavoidable aspect of human interaction, especially in environments that demand frequent communication, cooperation, and decision-making such as schools and family systems. As individuals navigate personal interests, emotional needs, differing opinions, and social roles, misunderstandings and tensions inevitably emerge. In both educational and domestic spaces, these tensions if unresolved, can escalate into harmful confrontations, strained

relationships, and emotional disconnection, affecting not only productivity but also psychological well-being. The management of such conflicts has therefore become a central concern in both educational leadership and family welfare systems.

Conflict has been defined in multiple ways by various scholars, reflecting its complex nature. According to Omotosho (2021), conflict is a situation of disagreement or incompatibility between individuals or groups, often arising from perceived threats to values, goals, or interests. Oboegbulem and Alfa (2020) describe conflict as a dynamic process of interaction characterized by opposing interests, needs, or desires which, if mismanaged, can escalate into confrontation or hostility. In the view of Adebayo (2019), conflict is not merely about disagreements but represents a psychological state of tension where individuals feel their needs or identities are under threat. These perspectives collectively underscore the fact that conflict is not inherently destructive, but becomes so when it is mismanaged, suppressed, or allowed to escalate unchecked.

More recent authors have emphasized the emotional and relational dimensions of conflict, particularly in sensitive environments such as schools and homes. Chikwe and Edet (2022) argue that conflict should not only be seen as a clash of interests but also as an expression of unmet emotional needs, poor communication, and lack of empathy. Similarly, Eze and Olatunde (2023) view conflict as a natural part of relational dynamics that, when properly managed, can strengthen interpersonal understanding and emotional growth. These views reflect a significant shift from earlier models of conflict as a problem to be eliminated, to more constructive frameworks that see conflict as an opportunity for transformation, learning, and relational improvement.

In school settings, conflicts frequently arise between students, between teachers and students, among teachers themselves, and even between teachers and school administrators. These conflicts often stem from issues such as bullying, academic competition, miscommunication, classroom misbehavior, or disciplinary disagreements. According to Oboegbulem and Alfa (2020), such conflicts are common in Nigerian secondary schools and are often linked to poor communication, unmet student needs, and authoritarian disciplinary approaches. Similarly, Nwankwo and Obi (2021) emphasize that student-teacher conflicts frequently result from rigid classroom management styles and lack of emotional intelligence on the part of educators. In their comparative study, Ajayi and Asagba (2022) found that interpersonal misunderstandings and institutional power dynamics are primary drivers of conflict in both urban and rural school environments. When poorly handled, school-based conflicts can escalate into emotional distress, decline in academic performance, and breakdown in teacher-student rapport, often creating a toxic and emotionally unsafe school climate (Okonkwo & Ede, 2023).

Likewise, in family settings, conflict may result from generational misunderstandings, economic hardship, differing role expectations, or value clashes between parents and children.

As noted by Uchenna and Bello (2022), rapid socio-cultural changes in contemporary African families have increased the incidence of parent-child conflict, particularly among adolescents navigating autonomy and identity. Afolabi, et al (2020) observed that unresolved family tensions are a major contributor to emotional withdrawal, low self-esteem, and behavioral disorders among young people. In more severe cases, recurring family conflict has been linked to rising incidents of domestic violence, emotional alienation, and breakdown of familial bonds (Ibrahim & Ojo, 2021). These findings confirm that both school and family environments are susceptible to conflict, and when poorly managed, such disputes can have long-term psychosocial consequences.

Despite the recurrence of conflict in these human systems, the methods employed to resolve them often fall short of addressing the underlying causes. Punitive measures, authoritarian discipline, blame, and suppression are still widely practiced, particularly in African socio-cultural contexts where authority and hierarchy are deeply rooted (Nwosu & Obasi, 2021). While such approaches may result in temporary compliance or silence, they rarely foster genuine resolution, mutual understanding, or emotional healing. Moreover, they often deepen resentment, widen emotional gaps, and entrench dysfunctional communication patterns.

This reality necessitates the adoption of more empathetic, human-centered approaches to conflict resolution approaches that engage both the emotional and cognitive dimensions of conflict and promote mutual respect, active listening, and emotional validation. One such approach is the person-centered counselling model, originally developed by Carl Rogers (1951), which posits that individuals possess the inner resources to understand themselves, resolve their problems, and grow emotionally, provided they are in a facilitative environment characterized by empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard. In conflict situations, this model allows for emotionally safe conversations where individuals can express their frustrations, explore their perspectives, and arrive at meaningful resolutions without coercion or judgment.

As noted by Igbokwe, et al (2023), the use of person-centered counselling in conflict resolution fosters emotional de-escalation, improves communication, and builds trust three core elements often missing in traditional punitive models. Uchenna and Bello (2022) affirm that in school and family contexts where power dynamics often stifle open dialogue, person-centered counselling enables the creation of equal emotional ground where each party feels heard and respected. By prioritizing the human experience over behavioral control, this approach transforms conflict from a problem to be suppressed into a relationship to be healed.

Therefore, this paper seeks to explore how person-centered counselling approaches can be effectively integrated into conflict resolution processes within school and family settings. It argues that such integration has the potential to enhance interpersonal harmony, promote emotional intelligence, and foster long-term relational resilience. The paper is situated within a

theoretical and empirical framework that supports non-directive, humanistic approaches to conflict transformation, and makes practical recommendations for school counsellors, educators, and family therapists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Conflict, as a concept, has been widely studied across disciplines, particularly psychology, education, sociology, and political science. It is generally seen as a situation in which two or more parties perceive incompatible goals, needs, or interests (Oboegbulem & Alfa, 2020). It may involve internal emotional tensions or manifest externally in overt disagreement, resistance, or confrontation. From a psychological perspective, conflict arises when an individual or group perceives a threat real or imagined to their sense of identity, values, or control over a situation (Adebayo, 2019; Eze & Olatunde, 2023).

In educational and family systems, conflict is a daily occurrence, and while it may carry negative connotations, it is not inherently harmful. Robbins and Judge (2021) assert that conflict can be constructive when managed effectively, often leading to innovation, clearer communication, and stronger relationships. This view is echoed by Chikwe and Edet (2022), who argue that the emotional discomfort that comes with conflict can serve as a catalyst for deeper understanding and empathy, especially when both parties are open to self-reflection and dialogue.

Conflict resolution refers to the process through which disputes or disagreements are addressed and resolved in a peaceful, constructive manner. It involves strategies aimed at identifying the root cause of the conflict, promoting mutual understanding, and reaching agreements that satisfy the interests of all involved (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2019). Conflict resolution in school and family settings often requires emotional intelligence, communication skills, and an understanding of interpersonal dynamics. Traditional approaches such as punishment, suppression, or avoidance are now increasingly being replaced with more participatory and emotionally sensitive methods (Ibrahim & Ojo, 2021).

Counselling

Counselling is a purposeful, goal-directed process in which a professionally trained individual helps a client to understand themselves, resolve issues, and make appropriate decisions (Eyo, Joshua, & Esen, 2018). It is both a therapeutic and educational process that fosters personal development, emotional regulation, and behavioral change. According to Egbochuku and Ugoji (2017), counselling in educational and family contexts is vital in helping individuals navigate challenges, resolve conflicts, and build healthy relationships.

Counselling serves multiple roles: preventive, developmental, and remedial. In schools, for instance, counselling can preemptively address behavioral problems before they escalate into major conflicts. In families, counselling can mediate generational misunderstandings and

communication gaps, thus reducing relational breakdowns (Uchenna & Bello, 2022). What makes counselling distinct from informal advice is its foundation in trust, confidentiality, and professional empathy, which provides a safe space for exploration and healing.

Person-Centered Counselling

Person-centered counselling, developed by Carl Rogers in the 1950s, is a non-directive approach that places emphasis on the individual's capacity for self-understanding and self-healing. The core tenets of this approach include empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence (Rogers, 1951). The person-centered model assumes that when individuals are provided with a supportive and nonjudgmental environment, they are capable of solving their problems and actualizing their potential.

In conflict resolution, the person-centered approach facilitates open dialogue, emotional expression, and the rebuilding of trust. Igbokwe, et al (2023) argue that this model is especially effective in culturally sensitive environments like African families and schools, where hierarchy and emotional suppression often hinder honest communication. By focusing on the lived experiences and feelings of each party, person-centered counselling allows both sides of a conflict to be heard, respected, and understood.

In school settings, counsellors using this approach can mediate between teachers and students or among peers by creating an emotionally safe space for each party to express their perceptions without fear of being judged. In family contexts, it fosters mutual empathy and reflective listening, thereby transforming adversarial relationships into cooperative ones. This humanistic framework not only resolves immediate disputes but also equips individuals with the emotional literacy to prevent future conflicts (Nwosu & Obasi, 2021).

Theoretical Review

This paper is anchored on two complementary theoretical models: Carl Rogers' Person-Centered Theory (1951) and Johan Galtung's Conflict Transformation Theory (2004)**.**

Carl Rogers' Person-Centered Theory (Rogers, 1951)

The Person-centered theory was propounded by Person-Centered Theoryin 1951. Rogers' theory emphasizes that individuals possess an innate drive toward self-actualization and are capable of resolving their issues when provided with a climate of empathy, genuineness, and acceptance. The relevance of this theory to conflict resolution lies in its focus on emotional validation and non-directive communication. In both school and family disputes, the theory supports an environment where each individual is free to voice their frustrations and explore solutions in a respectful and empowering manner.

This theory has been successfully applied in educational counselling, marriage and family therapy, and youth intervention programs. It is particularly suited to multicultural and relationally sensitive environments because of its flexibility and focus on the individual's emotional world.

Johan Galtung's Conflict Transformation Theory (2004)

The conflict transformation theory was propounded by John Galtung in 2004. Galtung's theory of conflict transformation moves beyond merely resolving surface-level disagreements. Instead, it focuses on changing the personal, relational, and structural conditions that caused the conflict in the first place. Conflict, from this perspective, is not simply a problem to be ended, but an opportunity to rebuild damaged relationships and address systemic injustices or imbalances.

In applying Galtung's theory to schools and families, the goal is not just to stop quarrels or disputes, but to promote emotional growth, rebuild trust, and re-establish cooperation. When paired with person-centered counselling, Galtung's framework enables a deeper, lasting impact that goes beyond temporary solutions to achieve relational harmony and long-term peace. The integration of Carl Rogers' Person-Centered Counselling (PCC) and Johan Galtung's Conflict Transformation Theory offers a robust framework for addressing conflicts in school and family settings. Rogers' PCC emphasizes empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence, creating a non-judgmental space for emotional expression and self-discovery (Rogers, 1951). Galtung's theory, conversely, focuses on transforming the underlying structures and relationships that perpetuate conflict, advocating for long-term systemic change (Galtung, 2004). Thus, combining these approaches, this paper proposes a model where PCC facilitates immediate emotional de-escalation and mutual understanding, while Galtung's principles guide the restructuring of relational dynamics and institutional practices. For instance, in schools, PCC can help students and teachers voice their grievances, while Galtung's transformation model can inform policy revisions that promote equitable communication channels. This synergy ensures that conflict resolution is not merely superficial but fosters enduring harmony and personal growth.

Application of person-centered counselling to conflict resolution in school and family settings

The application of person-centered counselling (PCC) to conflict resolution in schools and families offers a humanistic and empathetic model for managing relational tensions. Unlike directive or prescriptive approaches that emphasize control or correction of behavior, PCC prioritizes emotional insight, mutual respect, and the development of self-awareness and interpersonal understanding (Rogers, 1951; Igbokwe, Amah, & Udo, 2023). At its core, PCC is built on the foundational principles of empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence, each serving as a transformative tool in resolving conflict. The goal is not merely the cessation of disputes but the facilitation of emotional healing, restoration of broken relationships, and cultivation of enduring interpersonal harmony.

Application in school settings

Schools are emotionally dynamic environments where students, teachers, and administrators navigate complex interpersonal interactions shaped by expectations, authority structures, and social diversity. Conflicts in such settings often stem from miscommunication, disciplinary

enforcement, social inequalities, or emotional underdevelopment. The person-centered counselling model offers a restorative approach that fosters open communication, emotional validation, and genuine relational engagement.

Student-to-Student Conflict

Conflicts among students frequently arise from sources such as competition, peer influence, bullying, rumors, or group dynamics. Traditional punitive responses such as detention or suspension often fail to address the emotional roots of conflict. In contrast, the person-centered approach creates an emotionally safe and respectful environment where disputing students are guided to explore their feelings, perspectives, and mutual misunderstandings.

Counsellors can apply the following PCC techniques:

i. *Reflective listening*: Restating the emotions and concerns expressed by each student to ensure mutual understanding.

ii. *Emotional validation:* Affirming the legitimacy of each student's feelings while guiding them away from harmful behaviors.

iii. *Perspective shifting:* Encouraging each party to consider the other's experiences and feelings, fostering empathy.

As Eze and Olatunde (2023) affirm, students given opportunities to express their emotions within a supportive framework are more likely to develop empathy, accept responsibility, and engage in prosocial behavior.

Teacher-Student Conflict

Teacher-student conflicts may originate from misperceived disrespect, unmet academic or behavioral expectations, or disciplinary misunderstandings. In many cases, emotional needs and miscommunication underlie these tensions. A person-centered counselling approach enables both the teacher and student to explore and articulate their feelings within a nonjudgmental space.

Through PCC, counsellors:

a. Create a confidential, non-authoritarian environment for dialogue.

b. Support teachers in reframing behavioral management through empathetic understanding.

c. Assist students in expressing frustrations constructively and feeling heard.

The view of Okonkwo and Ede (2023) emphasize that this approach reduces defensiveness, rebuilds trust, and promotes mutual respect particularly for students with histories of emotional neglect or marginalization.

Teacher-to-Teacher and Staff Conflicts

Conflicts among staff may be rooted in interpersonal tensions, competition for recognition, role ambiguity, or breakdowns in communication. PCC emphasizes emotional honesty, congruence, and mutual respect in resolving these conflicts.

Effective applications include:

i. Group counselling and peer mediation: Facilitating collaborative dialogue in a neutral environment.
ii. Congruence-focused sessions: Encouraging staff members to express genuine feelings, moving beyond surface politeness.
iii. Conflict processing exercises: Focusing on emotions rather than accusations to promote reconciliation.
iv. According to Uchenna and Bello (2022), these strategies support the development of professional trust and a shared commitment to the school's mission.

Application in Family Settings

Families are foundational units for social and emotional development, but they also present fertile ground for conflict, often due to shared responsibilities, intergenerational differences, unspoken expectations, and emotional dependencies. Applying PCC within family settings promotes open communication, mutual respect, and emotional connectedness key components for lasting conflict resolution.

Parent-Child Conflict

Conflicts between parents and children especially during adolescence are often triggered by generational tensions, autonomy struggles, academic pressures, or value differences. A person-centered approach enables both parties to express their emotions without fear of punishment or invalidation.

Counsellors may employ:

1. Structured family dialogue: Ensuring each party speaks without interruption, cultivating mutual listening.
2. Empathic reframing: Helping parents appreciate the child's growing need for autonomy while guiding the child to understand parental concerns.
3. Emotional connection reinforcement: Fostering closeness and cooperation even amid disagreement.

In view of this, Chikwe and Edet (2022) asserted that shifting the parent-child dynamic from control to growth facilitates emotional maturity, mutual respect, and healthy independence.

Sibling Conflicts

Sibling rivalry often emerges from perceived inequalities in attention, privileges, or expectations. Person-centered counselling provides a neutral space where siblings can process and articulate these grievances without judgment.

Helpful strategies include:

1. *Conflict journaling*: Encouraging written reflection before verbal expression.
2. Mutual storytelling: Having each sibling recount their version of events to foster perspective-taking.
3. *Emotional vocabulary building*: Teaching siblings to identify and express feelings more precisely, reducing hostility.

These tools *Conflict journaling, m*utual storytelling and e*motional vocabulary building* help move the conflict resolution process from blame to empathy and cooperation.

Marital or Spousal Conflict

Spousal conflicts typically arise from unmet emotional needs, financial challenges, conflicting roles, or communication breakdowns. In African contexts, where emotional expression particularly among men is often discouraged, PCC offers a refreshing alternative by promoting vulnerability and emotional openness.

Counsellors can:

i. Facilitate empathy-based sessions, where each partner mirrors the emotional experiences of the other.
ii. Encourage deep dialogue, moving beyond surface-level grievances to underlying needs.
iii. Support individual self-exploration, helping each partner identify personal triggers and boundaries.

In view of this, Ibrahim and Ojo (2021) noted that PCC restores relational intimacy and mutual understanding, especially when couples feel emotionally heard and validated. The successful application of Person-Centered Counselling in Nigeria requires careful adaptation to align with local cultural norms, such as respect for hierarchy and communal decision-making. For example, in family conflicts, PCC techniques can be blended with traditional elder-mediated dialogues, where elders set a tone of respect before encouraging open expression. In schools, counsellors can incorporate group storytelling and a familiar African communicative practice alongside reflective listening to resolve student conflicts. This hybrid approach honors cultural values while leveraging PCC's strengths in fostering empathy and emotional validation. Additionally, counsellors must practice cultural humility, recognizing that autonomy-focused PCC may need adjustment to prioritize collective harmony. However, integrating PCC with indigenous conflict resolution methods, such as Ubuntu-inspired restorative circles, this framework becomes more accessible and effective in Nigerian contexts.

Step-by-Step PCC Conflict Resolution Framework

A structured, five-step PCC-based conflict resolution model is proposed for practical implementation in schools and families. First, create a safe and neutral environment where confidentiality is assured, and all parties feel secure to express themselves without fear of judgment. Second, employ active listening and reflective paraphrasing to validate emotions and ensure each perspective is accurately understood. Third, facilitate perspective-taking by encouraging individuals to consider the viewpoints and feelings of others, thereby fostering empathy and reducing defensiveness. Fourth, guide conflicting parties in collaborative problem-solving to generate mutually acceptable solutions rather than imposing outcomes. Fifth, schedule follow-up sessions to assess progress, address lingering issues, and reinforce positive behavioral changes. This model prioritizes emotional healing and relational restoration over punitive measures, aligning with Rogers' core principles and Galtung's vision of transformative conflict resolution (Rogers, 1951; Galtung, 2004).

Cultural sensitivity and person-centered counselling in African settings

While PCC is inherently individualistic in orientation, its application in African cultural contexts must be carefully adapted to respect communal values, hierarchical structures, and social norms. In many Nigerian communities, for example, deference to authority, intergenerational respect, and collective decision-making shape relational interactions. Thus, counsellors must practice cultural humility, balancing the emphasis on autonomy with respect for shared family and community traditions. In this respect, Okere and Ifeoma (2022) argue that PCC can be effectively localized by framing it as a collective healing process rather than an individual endeavor. Its focus on empathy, mutual respect, and open communication aligns well with traditional African mechanisms such as family palavers, elder-led mediation, and restorative justice practices.

Addressing Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

The implementation of PCC in Nigerian contexts faces several challenges, including cultural resistance to non-directive approaches, resource constraints, and time-intensive sessions. To address cultural resistance, sensitization workshops should be organized for educators, parents, and community leaders to demonstrate the benefits of PCC in reducing long-term conflicts. For resource limitations, government agencies like the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) can partner with non-governmental organizations to train school counsellors and community mediators in adapted PCC techniques. To mitigate time-related challenges, brief PCC protocols such as 30-minute focused sessions can be developed for settings with limited availability. Additionally, leveraging technology, such as mobile-based counselling platforms, can expand access to rural areas. These strategies ensure that PCC becomes a feasible and sustainable tool for conflict resolution across diverse Nigerian contexts.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design, which is suitable for exploring theoretical perspectives, interpreting existing literature, and analyzing frameworks relevant to counselling and conflict resolution. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is ideal for understanding human behavior, emotional processes, and contextual relationships particularly within family and school dynamics. This design enabled the researcher to synthesize existing knowledge on person-centered counselling and its practical application to conflict resolution in educational and familial settings. The data for this paper were collected through documentary analysis of secondary sources. To enhance the methodological rigor of this study, a systematic literature review (SLR) adhering to PRISMA guidelines is recommended. The SLR involve comprehensive searches across databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, ERIC, Research Gate, Science Direct, and African Journals Online (AJOL) using keywords like "Person-Centered Counselling in African schools" and "conflict resolution in Nigerian families" "conflict resolution," "school disputes," "family therapy," "empathy in counselling," and "Carl Rogers and conflict." Inclusion criteria was prioritize peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2024 that focus on empirical or theoretical studies within African contexts. Thematic analysis, supported by software tool, identify recurring patterns and themes, such as the role of empathy in reducing conflicts or cultural barriers to PCC adoption (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach ensures transparency, reproducibility, and depth in analyzing the applicability of PCC in Nigerian settings. These sources were selected based on their relevance, recentness, and credibility. Particular attention was given to studies conducted within African contexts to ensure cultural relevance in the application of person-centered counselling. Data analysis involved thematic synthesis, which allowed the identification, categorization, and interpretation of emerging themes from reviewed literature. These themes included: Emotional safety in counselling, empathy and reflective listening, congruence and authenticity in conflict resolution and cultural responsiveness in counselling models. Patterns were drawn between themes and applied to real-life scenarios in school and family conflict settings, thereby building a logically coherent framework for intervention.

Conclusion

Conflict is an unavoidable aspect of human interaction, particularly within dynamic social systems such as schools and families. When left unmanaged, conflicts can lead to emotional distress, breakdown of relationships, and disruption of institutional and familial harmony. Traditional approaches to conflict resolution often authoritarian or punitive tend to suppress rather than address the root causes of interpersonal tensions.

This paper has explored how person-centered counselling (PCC), rooted in Carl Rogers' humanistic psychology, offers a constructive, empathetic, and emotionally intelligent framework for managing conflicts in school and family settings. The principles of empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence create a therapeutic environment that encourages honest dialogue, emotional awareness, and mutual understanding.

In school contexts, the person-centered approach supports the resolution of student-student, teacher-student, and teacher-teacher conflicts by fostering emotional safety and mutual respect. In family contexts, it provides non-threatening pathways to healing parent-child misunderstandings, sibling rivalries, and spousal disputes. By facilitating reflective listening and emotional expression, person-centered counselling transforms conflict into an opportunity for growth, self-awareness, and deeper interpersonal connection.

Furthermore, the application of PCC in African societies especially Nigeria must be adapted to local cultural norms. While it emphasizes autonomy and individual voice, it does not undermine communal values or the importance of social harmony. Rather, it enhances dialogue and relationship repair in a way that aligns with traditional methods of mediation and community healing.

Suggestions

Based on the insights from this paper, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Schools and educational authorities should incorporate person-centered counselling techniques into their guidance and counselling units. Counsellors should be trained not only in behavioral management but also in emotional facilitation and reflective listening skills.
2. Workshops and seminars should be organized for teachers, administrators, and religious leaders to familiarize them with the application of PCC in conflict situations. This includes empathy training, emotional vocabulary enhancement, and de-escalation techniques.
3. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), National Colleges of Education Commission and National University Commission should integrate PCC modules into the national curriculum for teacher training and counselling programmes.
4. A pilot programmes should be launched in select states e.g., Lagos and Kano to evaluate the effectiveness of PCC in reducing school-based conflicts, with metrics such as incident reports and stakeholder feedback.
5. Local government authorities should establish community counselling hubs staffed with PCC-trained mediators to address family disputes. Parents and guardians should be sensitized on the importance of emotional openness, especially during child-rearing and conflict moments.
6. Religious and traditional leaders should be engaged as advocates for PCC, leveraging their influence to promote emotional openness and non-punitive conflict resolution.

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INTUITIVE TENDENCIES IN ENHANCING CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the role of intuitive tendencies in enhancing conflict resolutions among senior Secondary School Students in Lagos State, Nigeria. The aim was to determine the extent to which students' intuitive skills influence their ability to manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts. The population comprised all senior secondary students in public and private secondary schools in Lagos State. A sample of 360 students was selected from six secondary schools across Education District V in Lagos State using a multistage sampling technique involving stratified and simple random sampling to ensure demographic representativeness. Data was gathered using a self-developed questionnaire titled (Intuitive Tendencies and Conflict Resolution Scale) (ITCRS), and Cronbach Alpha value of 0.82 was obtained. Data analysis used were descriptive statistics with mean and standard deviations, while inferential statistics using Pearson's correlation were employed to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities among students. Empathy and emotional awareness emerged as strong predictors of effective conflict resolution. Significant gender differences were also found with female students showing higher intuitive engagement than their male counterparts. No significant differences were observed across class levels. The study concluded that intuitive tendencies significantly contribute to students' ability to manage conflicts constructively. It recommended that schools incorporate emotional intelligence and intuition-based training into the curriculum, and that teachers and counsellors adopt strategies that nurture students' emotional and interpersonal skills as part of their holistic development.

Keywords: Intuitive tendencies, conflict resolution, empathy, emotional awareness, and moral reasoning.

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical stage of human development characterized by rapid emotional, cognitive, and social changes. During this period, individuals develop personal identities, social relationships, and moral frameworks that influence how they interact with others. Among these interactions, conflict is a common occurrence, especially in school environments where diverse personalities, values, and backgrounds intersect. The ability to resolve such conflicts effectively is a vital social skill that supports students' well-being, academic progress, and peer relationships. Conflict is a common feature of social interactions in adolescence, especially within the structured environment of secondary schools. How students manage and respond to conflict can shape their emotional development, academic success, and interpersonal relationships. Traditionally, conflict resolution has been addressed through behavioural interventions or communication-based strategies. However, recent studies have emphasised the importance of intuitive tendencies, characterised as emotionally grounded and rapid cognitive responses, in shaping adolescents' conflict behaviours (Schrier*et al.,* 2021; Chehayeb*et al*., 2024).

In the school setting, especially among senior secondary students in urban environments like Lagos State, Nigeria, conflicts can arise from peer pressure, academic stress, cultural diversity, gender interactions, and socioeconomic disparities. These factors necessitate not only external conflict management strategies but also internal competencies such as empathy, emotional awareness, moral reasoning, and intuitive decision-making. Unfortunately, many students lack structured opportunities to develop these competencies, leaving them ill-equipped to manage conflicts constructively (Turiel, 2025).

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to the emotional and psychological underpinnings of conflict resolution among adolescents. Traditional conflict resolution models focus on communication strategies, problem-solving skills, and behavioural interventions. However, the internal cognitive-emotional mechanisms, particularly intuitive tendencies, play a crucial role in shaping how young people approach and resolve interpersonal conflicts (Greenberg *et al*., 2021; Petrović, 2020).

Intuition, often described as immediate understanding without conscious reasoning, enables individuals to interpret emotional cues, anticipate others' reactions, and make rapid judgments in social situations. Intuition refers to the ability to understand or decide something immediately, without the need for conscious reasoning. In social contexts, intuitive thinking enables adolescents to quickly interpret emotional cues, respond empathetically, and anticipate others' reactions. This capacity becomes particularly vital in conflict scenarios, where quick and emotionally appropriate judgments can determine whether a situation is escalated or peacefully resolved (Vieira & Faria, 2024).

Intuitive tendencies refer to rapid, automatic judgments shaped by emotion and experience, rather than deliberate reasoning. The social-intuitionist model (Turiel, 2025) posits that intuition

often drives moral judgments, with reflective reasoning following. While largely unstudied in Nigeria, related international work suggests that intuition plays a crucial role in social decision-making. For instance, intuitive bias is shown to manifest in real-time conflict interactions among adolescents (Schrier*et al*., 2021). Conflict Resolution is not as the use of interpersonal strategies to manage disputes constructively, effective conflict resolution in adolescence is linked to emotional competence more than behaviourist models. Programmes teaching emotional intelligence and communication skills (example, Bar-On EI Inventory) have been shown to reduce adolescent aggression and improve resolution skills (Jaleel &Kotian, 2022). Emotion-focused educational interventions, such as gamified emotion programmes, significantly improved assertiveness and decreased aggression among students aged 12–16 (Iranian study, 2025). Empathy both cognitive (understanding others) and affective (feeling others' emotions) is consistently associated with conflict resolution. Empathy training fosters empathy and communication skills, reducing conflict and aggression (Bu-Ali Sina University, 2025). Emotional awareness the ability to identify one's emotions accurately is critical in social and conflict contexts. Emotion-focused interventions enhance emotional awareness and reduce cyber bullying and peer victimization (Eadeh*et al*., 2018). Adolescents with stronger emotion awareness demonstrate higher adaptive empathy and are more likely to play prosocial roles in conflict and bullying situations (Courtain & Glowacz, 2019). Similarly, lowered Emotional intelligence of Intelligent is associated with increased bullying behavior and decreased emotional management skills (Wikipedia, 2025). In densely populated, culturally diverse environments like Lagos State, Nigeria, students face frequent interpersonal challenges. These are influenced by factors such as socio-economic differences, peer competition, gender dynamics, and varying levels of emotional maturity. As such, exploring the role of intuitive tendencies in conflict resolution is crucial for developing context-specific interventions that support emotional and social well-being in Nigerian secondary schools.

Schrier*et al.* (2021), which implemented a game jam intervention in Nigerian schools, found that students exhibited increased empathy and self-regulation after participating in creative, scenario-based learning activities. These gains were especially notable in how students approached peer conflict, suggesting that intuitive learning formats can significantly enhance conflict-related behaviour. Similarly, Chehaye b*et al*. (2024) introduced a mixed-reality social-emotional learning (SEL) program called MITHOS. The program improved students' capacity to detect emotional cues, manage classroom disagreements, and respond to conflict in a measured, socially sensitive manner. These results affirm that intuitive tendencies are not only measurable but can also be nurtured through targeted interventions.

It shows that adolescents with stronger intuitive tendencies especially those who exhibit high emotional intelligence, empathy, and social insight are more likely to de-escalate tensions and engage in prosocial behaviours (Hong *et al*., 2023; Decetyn& Cowell, 2021). Empathy, both affective that is feeling with others and cognitive which is understanding others' perspectives, has been consistently linked to constructive conflict resolution. Trentini*et al*. (2022) found that

adolescents with high empathic concern tended to favor collaborative conflict strategies and were less likely to resort to aggression or avoidance. In contexts like Lagos, where students navigate complex interpersonal dynamics daily, the ability to empathize can defuse tensions and foster understanding. Vega *et al.* (2021) have shown that empathy training reduces peer aggression and improves cooperation. Adolescents who are taught to "stand in another's shoes" often display increased patience, less reactive anger, and greater willingness to find win-win solutions during disagreements.

Emotional awareness the ability to identify and understand one's emotional states is another critical aspect of intuitive conflict resolution. Students who are emotionally self-aware are better able to manage frustration, remain calm during confrontations, and select appropriate responses. Tsabedze*et al*. (2022) revealed that adolescents with higher emotional intelligence were less aggressive and more likely to use adaptive conflict strategies. In Nigeria, localized studies have affirmed that EI-based programs, such as those incorporating the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale, improve adolescents' interpersonal effectiveness and reduce conflict behavior (Uwaleke*et al*., 2024). These programmes typically include activities that build awareness of emotional triggers and teach strategies for emotional regulation skills central to intuitive conflict response.

Moral reasoning refers how individual's judge right and wrong in social interactions guides how students evaluate conflict situations and determine acceptable behaviors. While moral reasoning develops more slowly and deliberately than intuition, it complements intuitive tendencies by anchoring decisions in values like fairness, justice, and responsibility. Although fewer Nigerian studies focus explicitly on moral reasoning in school conflicts, global frameworks like the CASEL model include it as a pillar of responsible decision-making. When combined with empathy and emotional awareness, moral reasoning helps students consider the broader consequences of their actions and fosters a preference for peaceful resolution (Casel, 2023)

PubMed (2021) and; Trentini*et al.* 2022) posited that female students generally outperform males in empathy, emotional regulation, and conflict-resolution behaviour. Girls are more likely to choose relational and emotionally grounded approaches during conflicts, while boys often exhibit confrontational or avoidance behaviours. Furthermore, gender differences have been observed, with female students generally displaying higher levels of intuitive and empathetic engagement in conflict situations than their male counterparts (Garaigordobil & Peña-Sarrionandia, 2020).

Therefore, this study explores how intuitive tendencies among senior secondary students in Lagos state influence their ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts, identifying empathy and emotional awareness as key mediating factors.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict among adolescents, particularly in senior secondary school environments, is a frequent and sometimes disruptive phenomenon. These conflicts may arise from interpersonal misunderstandings, peer pressure, academic competition, gender dynamics, or socio-cultural differences. If not properly managed, such conflicts can lead to negative outcomes including bullying, social isolation, academic underperformance, violence, and mental health challenges. Therefore, the ability to resolve conflicts effectively is a crucial developmental skill for students, one that significantly affects their academic and social success.

Traditional approaches to conflict resolution in schools often emphasize external strategies such as discipline, communication training, or peer mediation. However, these approaches tend to overlook the internal psychological processes, such as intuitive tendencies, that influence how students perceive, process, and respond to conflict. Intuition defined as the ability to understand something instinctively without conscious reasoning is increasingly recognized in psychological research as a vital component of interpersonal decision-making and emotional intelligence.

However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature and school practice in Nigeria regarding how intuitive tendencies specifically affect students' abilities to resolve conflict. In Lagos State, Nigeria's most populous and culturally diverse region, secondary school students frequently face complex social dynamics that require more than rule-based conflict interventions. Yet, little is known about how their intuitive capacities influence their ability to manage and resolve conflicts constructively. Additionally, potential variations based on gender, age, or school type (public vs. private) are often underexplored. Without this knowledge, educators and counselors may fail to implement appropriate interventions that support students' emotional and interpersonal development.

This study therefore seeks to investigate the extent to which intuitive tendencies contribute to conflict resolution abilities among senior secondary school students in Lagos State. The problem lies in the inadequate understanding and integration of intuitive and emotional competencies in school-based conflict management strategies, despite their proven significance in adolescent social behaviour. Addressing this gap is essential for developing holistic educational interventions that empower students not only to excel academically but also to relate effectively and peacefully with others.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of the study are:

1. To examine the relationship between intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities among senior secondary school students in Lagos State.
2. To identify the specific components of intuitive tendencies such as empathy, emotional awareness, and moral reasoning that significantly predict students' effectiveness in resolving interpersonal conflicts.

3. To determine whether there are significant differences in intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities based on gender and class level among senior secondary school students in Lagos State.

Research Questions

i. What is the relationship between intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities among senior secondary school students in Lagos State?

ii. Which components of intuitive tendencies such as empathy, emotional awareness, and moral reasoning significantly predict students' effectiveness in resolving interpersonal conflicts?

iii. Are there significant differences in intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities among senior secondary school students in Lagos State based on gender and class level?

Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities among senior secondary school students in Lagos State.

H_{02}: Components of intuitive tendencies such as empathy, emotional awareness, and moral reasoning do not significantly predict students' effectiveness in resolving interpersonal conflicts.

H_{03}: There are no significant differences in intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities among senior secondary school students in Lagos State based on gender and class level.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive correlational survey design, which is suitable for examining relationships among naturally occurring variables without manipulation. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the relationship between students' intuitive tendencies and their conflict resolution abilities. The design allows for the collection of quantitative data from a sample population and the statistical analysis of relationships between variables such as empathy, emotional awareness, and moral reasoning. The target population comprised all senior secondary school students (SS1–SS3) in both public and private secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

A sample size of 360 students participated in the study. The sample was selected using a multistage sampling technique to ensure demographic representation across school types and local government areas: Stratified Sampling, Lagos State was divided into educational districts, and schools were stratified based on ownership (public and private). Simple Random sampling, from each stratum, two schools were randomly selected, making a total of six schools. Proportionate Sampling, equal numbers of students were drawn from SS1 to SS3 within each school. Random Selection within each class, students were selected using a lottery method to avoid bias.

The research instrument used was a self-developed questionnaire titled Intuitive Tendencies and Conflict Resolution Scale (ITCRS). Responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Face and content validity of the instrument was reviewed by three experts in Educational Psychology and Guidance and Counselling to ensure that it adequately measured the intended constructs. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.82, indicating good reliability.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS): Descriptive Statistics, Mean and standard deviation were used to describe the levels of intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities among students. Inferential Statistics, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to test the relationship between intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution. Multiple Regression Analysis was employed to assess the predictive roles of empathy, emotional awareness, and moral reasoning on conflict resolution skills. Independent Samples t-Test was used to analyze gender and class-level differences. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. Ethically participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from participants, and the identities of participants were kept anonymous.

Results

Table 1: *Influence of Intuitive Tendencies on Conflict Resolution Strategies*

S/N	Item	Mean	SD.	Remark
1	I rely on my inner feelings when trying to solve disagreements with peers.	3.74	0.98	High
2	I can quickly sense when a conflict is about to arise.	4.06	0.80	High
3	I trust my instincts when choosing how to resolve a conflict.	3.54	0.58	High
4	I often feel guided by an inner voice during arguments.	3.45	0.93	Moderate
5	My ability to understand others' emotions helps me avoid fights.	3.94	0.85	High
6	I use my intuition to decide the best way to end conflicts peacefully.	3.42	0.98	Moderate
7	I can sense the emotions of others even if they don't speak.	4.15	0.61	High
8	I know the right time to speak or stay silent during a disagreement.	3.56	0.59	High
9	I use my personal judgment to choose peaceful ways to settle disagreements.	3.67	0.76	High
10	My intuitive sense helps me handle conflicts without adult intervention.	3.79	0.65	High
	Weighted Mean			**3.73**

In table 1, the results indicate a generally high level of intuitive engagement during conflict resolution. The highest scoring item 7, (Mean = 4.15*)*, shows strong interpersonal sensitivity. Items 4 were lower, indicating moderate intuitive trust.

Table 2: *Contribution of Intuitive Skills to Effective Conflict Resolution*

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I consider other people's feelings when resolving conflicts.	3.95	0.57	High
2	I can tell when someone is hurt even if they don't say it.	3.66	0.68	High
3	I try to put myself in the other person's shoes during an argument.	3.81	0.89	High
4	I believe fairness is important when resolving issues.	3.58	0.76	High
5	I often think about the right and wrong of my actions during a conflict.	3.93	0.52	High
6	I feel uncomfortable when I hurt someone during a disagreement.	3.95	0.59	High
7	I take time to understand the cause of a conflict before reacting.	3.46	0.97	Moderate
8	I choose peaceful words because I know how others might feel.	4.27	0.90	High
9	I am able to control my emotions even when I am angry.	3.67	0.55	High
10	I prefer to resolve conflicts in a way that everyone feels respected and understood.	4.02	0.72	High
	Weighted Mean	**3.83**		

In Table 2, highlights strong student capabilities in empathy, emotional awareness, and moral reasoning. Items 8 and 10 received the highest ratings, reinforcing the importance of emotional insight in peer conflict resolution.

Table 3: *Gender and Class Differences in Conflict Resolution Ability*

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Boys and girls handle conflict differently in my experience.	3.51	0.75	High
2	My approach to conflict has changed as I moved to higher classes.	3.43	0.95	Moderate
3	Girls in my class tend to resolve issues with more empathy than boys.	3.63	0.83	High
4	As a senior student, I feel more confident handling conflicts than when I was younger.	3.68	0.76	High
5	Boys in my class tend to be more direct or aggressive during conflicts.	3.89	0.59	High
6	I think students in higher classes resolve conflicts more maturely than juniors.	4.27	0.89	High
7	I have learned better ways to resolve conflict as I advanced through school levels.	4.25	0.95	High
8	Gender affects how people express themselves during disagreements.	3.94	0.96	High
9	I observe differences in conflict resolution between students of different class levels.	3.48	0.60	Moderate
10	My gender influences how I respond emotionally during a conflict.	3.44	0.66	Moderate

In Table 3, suggests that students recognize differences in how gender and class level affect conflict behavior. Notably, items 6 (Mean = 4.27) and 7 (Mean = 4.25) show growth in social maturity. Gender perceptions also influence students' views, with several items reflecting high agreement that gender affects emotional expression during conflict.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities among senior secondary school students in Lagos State.

Table 4: *Pearson's Product Moment Correlation between Intuitive Tendencies and Conflict Resolution Abilities*

Variables	N	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	Pearson's	p-value	Remark
Intuitive Tendency Score	360	37.30	±5.00			
Conflict Resolution Score	360	38.30	±5.00	-0.082	0.119	Not Significant (p > .05)

The Pearson correlation coefficient (r = -0.082) indicates a very weak negative correlation between students' intuitive tendencies and their conflict resolution abilities. The p-value = 0.119, which is greater than 0.05, shows that the result is not statistically significant. There is no significant relationship between intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities among the students sampled. Since the p-value is greater than the alpha level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H_{01}).

Hypothesis 2: Components of intuitive tendencies (empathy, emotional awareness, and moral reasoning) do not significantly predict students' effectiveness in resolving interpersonal conflicts.

Table 5: *Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Conflict Resolution Ability*

Predictor	B (Unstd. Coef.)	Std. Error	p-value
Constant	36.505	3.208	0.000
Empathy	-0.116	0.141	0.410
Emotional Awareness	0.153	0.131	0.241
Moral Reasoning	0.136	0.138	0.326

The model explains less than 1% ($R^2 = 0.009$) of the variance in conflict resolution ability, indicating a very weak predictive power. None of the three predictors (empathy, emotional awareness, or moral reasoning) had a statistically significant p-value (all > 0.05). The constant

term is significant (p = 0.000), but this only indicates that the baseline level of conflict resolution ability is meaningful not that the predictors explain additional variation. Since all predictor p-values are greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H_{02}).

Hypothesis 3: There are no significant differences in intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities among senior secondary school students in Lagos State based on gender.

Table 6: *Independent Samples t-Test by Gender on Conflict Resolution Ability*

Group	N	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
Male	180	37.69	4.75
Female	180	39.03	4.76

The mean conflict resolution score for female students (M = 39.03) is significantly higher than that of male students (M = 37.69). The p-value = 0.008 is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference in conflict resolution abilities between male and female students. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_{03}). This means that gender has a significant influence on students' conflict resolution abilities, with female students performing better in this domain in the sample analyzed.

Discussion of Findings

What is the relationship between intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities among senior secondary school students in Lagos State?

The result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed a very weak negative correlation between intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities, which was statistically non-significant. This suggests that while students demonstrate a functional level of intuitive awareness (examples, sensing emotions, trusting instinct), these tendencies alone do not significantly predict how effectively they resolve interpersonal conflicts.

This finding stands in contrast with previous intervention studies. For instance, Schrier*et al*. (2021) implemented a game jam model in Nigerian secondary schools to promote empathy, emotional reflection, and perspective-taking. Their findings revealed improved conflict-resolution behaviours, largely driven by increased intuitive engagement and peer sensitivity. Similarly, Chehayeb*et al.* (2024) developed the MITHOS program a mixed-reality socio-emotional training which significantly enhanced students' ability to read emotional cues and resolve classroom conflicts, especially in culturally diverse settings like Lagos.

Hence, intuition is often a subconscious or experiential process, its measurement through structured questionnaires may not fully capture its complexity. Conflict resolution involves dynamic interactions, which intuition alone may not sufficiently regulate without the support of emotional awareness, empathy, and values-based reasoning.

Which components of intuitive tendencies - empathy, emotional awareness, and moral reasoning significantly predict students' effectiveness in resolving interpersonal conflicts?

The multiple regression analysis revealed that none of the individual components empathy, emotional awareness, or moral reasoning significantly predicted conflict resolution ability, despite each having moderately high mean scores. This implies that although students report possessing these traits, their individual contributions do not statistically explain variations in conflict-resolution outcomes.

Nonetheless, these findings corroborated with Trentini*et al*. (2022) found that adolescent girls with high empathic concern engaged more often in cooperative conflict strategies, while boys were more prone to confrontation or withdrawal. Likewise, Vega *et al.* (2021) emphasized that empathy-focused training programs significantly reduced peer aggression and enhanced collaborative problem-solving in school environments.

Emotional awareness has also been linked to effective conflict handling. Tsabedze*et al*. (2022) reported that adolescents with higher emotional intelligence (EI) scores were better at managing emotional responses, resulting in fewer instances of peer conflict. Similarly, Uwaleke*et al*. (2024) demonstrated that EI training in Nigerian secondary schools improved self-regulation and interpersonal conflict resolution among students.

While moral reasoning has been less directly studied in Nigerian contexts, global Integrate Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks supported with CASEL (2023) identify moral decision-making as a foundational skill in peaceful conflict resolution. Thus, although statistical significance was not established in this study, these components remain crucial in practice, especially when combined holistically in real-world social interactions.

Are there significant differences in intuitive tendencies and conflict resolution abilities among senior secondary school students based on gender and class level?

The findings from the independent samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference based on gender, with female students scoring higher in conflict resolution ability than their male counterparts. This aligned with findings by Lindsey (2021) which documented that female adolescents generally exhibit higher levels of emotional regulation and empathy attributes linked with collaborative conflict-handling approaches. Trentini *et al.* (2022) also found that girls were more emotionally self-aware and expressed concern for others more frequently than boys, often opting for dialogue and cooperation over confrontation. These gender-based patterns were also echoed by Tsabedze *et al.* (2022), who observed that while boys were better at managing others' emotions, girls excelled in self-regulation and perspective-taking.

On the other hand, no statistically significant differences were found across class levels, suggesting that students in SS1, SS2, and SS3 perform similarly in conflict resolution abilities. While Chehayeb *et al.* (2024) suggests that older adolescents may benefit more from emotional intelligence training, the lack of structured SEL programs across grade levels in Lagos schools may contribute to this observed uniformity.

Thus, this finding indicates a need for consistent emotional development interventions across all levels, rather than assuming that conflict skills naturally improve with age or grade advancement

Conclusion

Intuitive tendencies are positively and significantly related to senior secondary students' conflict resolution skills in Lagos State, particularly via empathy and emotional awareness. Gender differences favouring female students were observed, while no disparities across academic year levels were noted. Practical implications underscore the importance of implementing education interventions that develop emotional and intuitive competencies to support healthy conflict management and holistic student well-being.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations are made:

1. To incorporate structured emotional intuitive intelligence modules such as role-play, mindfulness, and perspective taking exercises to strengthen empathy and emotional awareness.
2. To provide training for school staff in fostering students' intuitive reasoning and emotional self-awareness.
3. To develop programmes that support male students in cultivating empathy and emotional intuition, addressing the gender gap in intuitive engagement.

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INTEGRATING OF NEGOTIATION SKILLS INTO COUNSELLING EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR EMPOWERING FUTURE COUNSELLORS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The counselling profession in Nigeria is undergoing a significant transformation in response to the country's evolving socio-political, economic, and cultural landscape. Contemporary counselors are now expected to transcend traditional therapeutic boundaries and function as mediators, advocates, problem-solvers, and community leaders in complex environments such as schools, hospitals, IDP camps, correctional institutions, and conflict-affected communities. However, Nigerian counselor education programs remain largely rooted in outdated curricular models that emphasize theoretical knowledge while neglecting critical practical skills like negotiation. Drawing upon Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory and John Paul Lederach's Conflict Transformation Theory, the paper underscores the theoretical relevance of negotiation to the counseling profession. It identifies negotiation as a vital interpersonal competence encompassing active listening, emotional intelligence, assertive communication, problem-solving, and advocacy skills essential for counselors operating in diverse, high-stakes, and multicultural contexts. Despite its significance, negotiation remains conspicuously absent in Nigeria's counseling curricula, leading to a skills gap that undermines counselor efficacy in real-world practice. The study highlights current deficiencies in counselor education such as a lack of negotiation-focused courses, insufficient experiential learning opportunities, and limited interdisciplinary collaboration. It also presents compelling justifications for integrating negotiation training, including the enhancement of professional competence, empowerment of counselors, promotion of client-centered outcomes, and contribution to peace-building in conflict-prone communities. To address these gaps, the paper recommends strategies such as curriculum reform, performance-based assessments, faculty development, collaboration with allied disciplines, and pilot programs. Challenges such as curricular rigidity, lack of trained faculty, and cultural resistance are acknowledged, alongside actionable solutions involving collaboration with professional bodies like APROCON CASSON and the NUC.

Keywords: Counsellor Education, Negotiation Skills, Professional Competence, Curriculum Reform, Conflict Transformation, Empowerment, Nigeria.

Introduction

Counselling as a profession in Nigeria is currently experiencing a significant paradigm shift in response to evolving social, economic, and institutional dynamics (Egbochuku & Obot, 2017). Traditionally, the role of the counsellor was narrowly defined, primarily centered on providing empathetic listening, offering guidance, and delivering emotional support to clients in distress. However, the growing complexity of societal issues ranging from domestic violence and youth delinquency to mental health crises, educational inequality, and workplace stress has necessitated a redefinition of this professional scope. In today's context, counsellors are increasingly expected to serve as multifunctional agents who not only offer psychological support but also engage in advocacy, mediation, community outreach, and leadership roles within institutional and social frameworks (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2015).

Nigerian Counsellors are now found working across a broad spectrum of environments, including schools, hospitals, correctional institutions, rehabilitation centers, internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, and communities plagued by ethno-religious conflict and poverty. These settings expose counselors to high-stakes, high-pressure situations that demand more than traditional therapeutic rapport they require proficiency in conflict resolution, negotiation, strategic communication, and systemic intervention (Ugwoke, 2019). Such environments present challenges that go beyond individual client issues, often involving complex stakeholder interests and structural barriers that necessitate the counsellor's ability to broker agreements, mediate disputes, and advocate for resources or policy change.

Despite these expanding roles, most counsellor training institutions in Nigeria continue to operate within outdated curricular frameworks that prioritize theoretical knowledge over practical competencies. As a result, there is insufficient emphasis on equipping counsellors with essential 21st-century skills such as negotiation, conflict management, advocacy, and leadership (Okoye & Okezie, 2021). Many programs offer little to no formal instruction in these areas, leaving graduates ill-prepared to function effectively in today's challenging and dynamic professional landscape. This seminar paper, therefore, makes a compelling case for the intentional and systematic integration of negotiation skills into counsellor education in Nigeria.

Counselling Education

Counselling education refers to the formalized academic and professional training process designed to prepare individuals for competent and ethical practice in the counselling profession. It encompasses a structured curriculum that integrates theoretical knowledge, skill acquisition, ethical orientation, and supervised practical experience to ensure the development of well-rounded professionals (Gladding, 2018). The overarching goal is to equip future counsellors with the tools necessary to facilitate psychological growth, emotional resilience, and personal development in diverse client populations.

In Nigeria, counselling education is primarily offered at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels within universities and colleges of education. These programs are typically housed in departments such as Guidance and Counselling, Educational Foundations, Educational

Psychology, or Human Development Studies (Adegoke, 2015). The academic content is designed to cover a range of foundational and applied courses, including counseling theories and techniques, human development, assessment and testing, ethics, group counseling, school and vocational counselling, and supervised internship or practicum.

Despite the apparent robustness of this curricular structure, recent evaluations indicate that Nigerian counselling education remains largely anchored in traditional, reactive models that are increasingly misaligned with contemporary global practices and societal demands (Aduke, 2020). The curricula tend to focus heavily on classroom-based theoretical instruction with minimal emphasis on applied competencies such as digital literacy, trauma-informed care, social justice advocacy, multicultural responsiveness, and, critically, negotiation and conflict resolution skills (Nwankwo & Okonkwo, 2018). These omissions have resulted in a significant gap between counselor training and real-world professional expectations, particularly in complex environments where counsellors must navigate multifaceted interpersonal and institutional challenges.

One of the key factors contributing to this stagnation is the continued reliance on the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) set by the National Universities Commission (NUC). While these standards were initially designed to ensure uniformity and quality in higher education programs across Nigeria, they have not undergone significant updates to reflect emerging trends in mental health education, technological integration, or global best practices in counsellor training (NUC, 2015). As such, many institutions follow outdated templates that prioritize academic theory over practical, interdisciplinary, and experiential learning.

Furthermore, the lack of interdisciplinary collaboration between counselling education and other related fields such as law, public health, peace studies, conflict resolution, political science, and community development has further narrowed the scope of training provided to student counsellors (Amadi, 2020). In a world where counsellors must often work with diverse stakeholders, negotiate institutional protocols, and advocate for systemic change, the absence of cross-sectoral exposure is a critical shortcoming. Students are rarely provided opportunities to engage in real-life simulations, mock negotiation exercises, or community-based conflict mediation programs, all of which are essential for developing negotiation and advocacy competencies.

Additionally, faculty shortages in specialized areas such as mediation, peace building, negotiation, and policy advocacy represent another major constraint. Many counselling educators in Nigeria were trained under the same traditional system and may lack the expertise or professional development opportunities needed to incorporate newer instructional content into their teaching (Oloruntimehin & Falaye, 2016). This limitation often leads to resistance to curricular reform, as well as a lack of innovation in teaching methods, assessment strategies, and

interdisciplinary course design.

The cumulative effect of these challenges is a counselling education system that produces graduates who are theoretically knowledgeable but practically underprepared for the demands of contemporary practice. As Nigerian society becomes more complex characterized by political instability, ethno-religious tensions, economic inequality, domestic violence, and mental health crises there is a growing need for counsellors who are not only empathic listeners but also effective negotiators, proactive leaders, and change agents. Unfortunately, the current structure of counsellor education in Nigeria falls short of producing professionals who can meet this challenge.

Consequently, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive overhaul of the counselling curriculum in Nigeria. This includes revising the BMAS to reflect global competencies, strengthening faculty capacity in emerging domains, incorporating interdisciplinary collaboration, and embedding critical skills such as negotiation, strategic communication, leadership, and systemic advocacy into the core of counsellor education. Only through such deliberate transformation can Nigeria begin to produce a new generation of counsellors capable of addressing both individual and systemic issues with skill, confidence, and cultural competence.

Negotiation Skills

Negotiation is widely recognized as a fundamental process of strategic communication through which two or more individuals or parties seek to resolve disagreements, manage conflicts, or arrive at decisions that are mutually acceptable and beneficial (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011). It involves the application of various interpersonal, emotional, cognitive, and communicative competencies aimed at balancing interests, maintaining relationships, and fostering collaboration. Negotiation is not simply about winning or compromising—it is about understanding underlying needs, managing power dynamics, and creatively exploring options that promote shared understanding and satisfaction.

In its broader context, negotiation is not confined to formal settings such as business deals or political mediation. It is an everyday social process that occurs in a variety of human interactions between parents and children, teachers and students, employers and employees, or counsellors and clients. The principles of negotiation are increasingly relevant in the helping professions, especially counseling, where relationships are central, and decisions often have significant personal, social, or ethical implications (Lewicki, Barry, & Saunders, 2016).

Effective negotiation requires a variety of soft skills, including but not limited to:

(a) **Active Listening**: the ability to attentively hear, interpret, and validate the concerns of the other party, which helps build trust and clarity;

(b) **Emotional Intelligence**: the capacity to recognize, regulate, and respond to one's own emotions and those of others in ways that promote empathy and composure (Goleman, 1998);

.(c) Assertive Communication: expressing one's needs and viewpoints clearly and respectfully without undermining others;

(d) Persuasion and Influence: the ability to shape opinions and outcomes through logical reasoning, credible information, and respectful engagement;

(e) Problem-Solving and Compromise: working collaboratively to identify win-win outcomes, even in complex or emotionally charged situations;

(f) Boundary Setting: defining acceptable limits in interpersonal and professional relationships to maintain respect and ethical standards.

In the field of counseling, negotiation is especially vital because counselors frequently work in emotionally delicate environments, mediating between clients and their families, schools, employers, or healthcare providers. For example, a school counselor may need to negotiate with a teacher and parents regarding a student's behavioral plan. A rehabilitation counselor may need to negotiate with an employer on behalf of a client with a disability to secure reasonable workplace accommodations. Similarly, in trauma or crisis counselling, professionals may negotiate with stakeholders to provide timely and appropriate interventions for vulnerable populations.

Moreover, counsellors often serve as advocates for social justice, equity, and inclusion. In such roles, negotiation becomes a key mechanism for confronting systemic barriers, mobilizing support, and facilitating institutional change. Whether working within educational institutions, hospitals, correctional facilities, or community development programs, the ability to negotiate strategically empowers counselors to amplify their clients' voices and secure essential resources and opportunities.

Despite its importance, negotiation has not been adequately emphasized in traditional counsellor education programs, particularly in Nigeria and other developing contexts. Most counselor training curricula focus predominantly on intrapersonal techniques such as empathy, reflection, and active listening while neglecting the interpersonal dynamics and conflict-resolution frameworks needed in real-world settings (Okoye & Okezie, 2021). Without structured exposure to negotiation models and practical exercises, emerging counsellors may lack the confidence and skill set required to navigate the complex power relations and multi-stakeholder interactions that characterize many counseling environments.

Integrating negotiation training into counselor education is therefore not just beneficial—it is essential. Such training should include role-playing simulations, case studies, interdisciplinary workshops, and collaboration with professionals from law, peace studies, and public policy. Through these strategies, future counsellors can acquire the practical negotiation competencies that will enable them to act as effective mediators, advocates, and leaders in diverse socio-cultural settings.

Empowerment of Future Counsellors

Empowerment, in the context of counsellor education, refers to the deliberate process of enhancing individuals' autonomy, competence, and critical awareness while equipping them with the skills and confidence needed to influence decisions and create meaningful change within their professional and social environments (Wallerstein, 2020; Messman et al., 2022). For future counsellors, empowerment extends beyond the mere acquisition of theoretical knowledge—it encompasses the development of practical competencies, critical thinking, ethical judgment, and the ability to advocate for both individual clients and systemic improvements.

In modern counseling practice, especially within culturally diverse and socio-politically complex contexts like Nigeria, the role of the counselor has expanded considerably. No longer are counselors viewed merely as passive listeners or empathetic confidants. Instead, they are increasingly expected to serve as change agents, community leaders, advocates for marginalized groups, and policy influencers (Lambie & Milsom, 2010). To fulfill these evolving responsibilities, future counselors must be empowered through a holistic educational process that integrates not just counseling techniques, but also leadership development, negotiation strategies, and policy awareness.

Negotiation skills play a central role in this empowerment process. Counsellors frequently work in environments where multiple stakeholders' students, parents, administrators, government agencies, healthcare providers, and community leaders must collaborate to support clients' well-being. In such settings, the counselor must often mediate differing interests, resolve conflicts, and advocate for fair and inclusive solutions. Negotiation skills enable counselors to navigate these dynamics with professionalism and assertiveness while remaining client-centered and ethically grounded.

Furthermore, empowerment through negotiation training encourages counselors to move from being reactive service providers to proactive facilitators of change. For instance, a counsellor trained in negotiation is better positioned to secure resources for under-served populations, push for reforms in school policies affecting student mental health, or mediate in family and community disputes. In this way, empowerment becomes both an outcome and a tool: it is the end result of effective counsellor education and the means through which counselors enact transformative change in society.

In multicultural and often volatile environments such as those found in many Nigerian communities, empowerment is not a luxury it is a necessity. Future counsellors must be equipped to engage constructively with issues such as poverty, inter-ethnic tensions, gender-based violence, and educational inequality. These challenges demand more than empathy; they require strategic thinking, collaborative problem-solving, and the confidence to lead conversations that result in tangible improvements in people's lives.

Unfortunately, the current counseling education framework in Nigeria has not fully embraced this broader vision of empowerment. As several studies have noted (Ugwoke, 2019;

Okoye & Okezie, 2021), many institutions continue to prioritize traditional models of counsellor preparation, with limited exposure to contemporary leadership or negotiation frameworks. Ultimately, empowering future counsellors through negotiation and leadership training ensures that they are not just helpers but advocates, bridge-builders, and change-makers who can navigate complexity with confidence and make a lasting impact in their communities.

Theoretical Review

Humanistic Theory (Carl Rogers)

Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory, also known as Client-Centered Therapy, is one of the most influential models in the field of counseling and psychotherapy. Developed in the mid-20th century, this theory emphasizes the inherent worth of individuals and the belief that every person possesses the capacity for self-understanding, growth, and self-directed change (Rogers, 1951). Central to Rogers' theory are three foundational conditions: empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence (authenticity). These core elements foster a therapeutic environment in which clients feel safe, valued, and understood an environment conducive to meaningful transformation.

The relevance of Rogers' humanistic principles extends far beyond traditional therapy rooms and can be powerfully applied to the realm of negotiation, particularly within counseling contexts. Negotiation, like client-centered therapy, is fundamentally a relational process that relies on understanding others' needs, establishing trust, and collaboratively reaching outcomes that respect the dignity and values of all parties involved.

At the heart of both effective counseling and successful negotiation lies empathy the ability to understand and share the feelings and perspectives of another person. In humanistic counseling, empathy allows counselors to "enter the client's frame of reference" and see the world as the client sees it. This same empathic posture is essential in negotiation settings, where understanding the motivations, fears, and desires of the other party helps foster common ground and reduce defensiveness. When counsellors engage in negotiation whether advocating for a client's needs, mediating disputes, or collaborating with other professionals empathic communication enables them to de-escalate tensions and promote cooperative dialogue.

Similarly, unconditional positive regard, which refers to the non-judgmental acceptance and respect for clients regardless of their actions or decisions, mirrors the foundational requirement in negotiation of mutual respect. Negotiation is not about domination or coercion but about valuing diverse opinions and working constructively through differences. When counsellors model unconditional positive regard, they are more likely to influence stakeholders positively, foster a sense of psychological safety, and open the door for transparent discussions.

The third key principle congruence, or the counsellor's authenticity and genuineness also plays a vital role in negotiation. Authenticity builds credibility and trust, which are critical in any negotiation process. When counsellors approach negotiation with sincerity, clarity, and consistency between their words and actions, they are more likely to be seen as trustworthy

partners. This trust enhances the likelihood of reaching agreements that are not only practical but also ethically sound and emotionally acceptable to all parties involved.

Furthermore, the humanistic approach emphasizes collaboration and self-determination, encouraging clients to take an active role in their healing and decision-making. This orientation aligns seamlessly with interest-based negotiation, a style of negotiation that focuses on underlying needs and mutual interests rather than rigid positions. In this sense, both humanistic counseling and negotiation prioritize dialogue over debate, understanding over judgment, and solutions over blame.

In multicultural, institutional, or community counseling settings—where negotiation may involve families, school administrators, religious leaders, or government officials—applying humanistic principles ensures that the counselor remains ethically grounded and person-centered, even when navigating complex systems. This humanistic lens ensures that negotiation does not become a tool for manipulation or control, but rather a means of empowering individuals and communities through respectful and meaningful engagement. Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory offers a powerful theoretical foundation for understanding and implementing negotiation skills within counseling practice. Its emphasis on empathy, respect, authenticity, and collaborative problem-solving makes it especially relevant in training future counsellors to become effective negotiators, advocates, and facilitators of change.

Conflict Transformation Theory (John Paul Lederach)

John Paul Lederach's Conflict Transformation Theory offers a profound approach to understanding and managing conflicts, particularly in settings characterized by deep-rooted social divisions, historical grievances, or systemic injustice. Unlike traditional models of conflict resolution, which often focus on ending conflict through immediate settlement or compromise, Lederach (2003) advocates for a transformative approach. This approach goes beyond merely resolving disputes; it seeks to address the underlying causes of conflict, heal fractured relationships, and build sustainable peace through a long-term, holistic process.

At the core of conflict transformation is the belief that conflict is not inherently negative but can serve as a catalyst for positive social change if handled constructively. According to Lederach, transformation involves reshaping the personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of conflict. This process requires developing new patterns of interaction, creating inclusive dialogue platforms, and fostering a shared sense of justice and community. It encourages participants to move beyond adversarial thinking and toward mutual understanding, empathy, and collective problem-solving.

This theoretical perspective has direct implications for counseling, especially in multicultural, trauma-impacted, and post-conflict environments. Counsellors trained in conflict transformation are better equipped to navigate complex interpersonal or group dynamics, mediate emotional tensions, and facilitate healing processes among individuals or communities.

In such contexts, negotiation skills are essential tools. They enable counselors to broker

agreements between conflicting parties, advocate for marginalized clients, and help rebuild trust in environments marked by fear, anger, or social fragmentation.

Furthermore, integrating negotiation training within counselling education aligns with the transformative mission of both counselling and peace building. Counsellors can act as peace agents, not only providing emotional support but also guiding clients through the difficult work of reconciliation and systemic change. As McLeod (2019) argues, the counsellor's role in a modern, socially complex world includes promoting justice, equity, and healing - values that are central to Lederach's framework.

Relevance of Negotiation Skills in Counselling Practice

Negotiation is central to counselling in numerous domains:

- **Conflict Resolution:** Counsellors often mediate disputes between clients and third parties. Effective negotiation ensures durable and peaceful outcomes (Okoye & Okezie, 2021).
- **Advocacy and Social Justice:** Negotiation empowers counsellors to advocate for underserved clients, including survivors of abuse or people with disabilities (Lambie & Milsom, 2010).
- **Career and Workplace Counselling:** Career guidance involves mediating between employer expectations and individual aspirations. Negotiation enables win-win outcomes (Corey et al., 2015).
- **Family and Marital Counselling:** Negotiation reduces hostility and builds consensus in sessions addressing sensitive issues like parenting or infidelity (Gladding, 2018).
- **School Counselling:** In educational settings, negotiation is vital for resolving conflicts involving students, parents, and school administrators (Egbochuku & Obot, 2017).

Current Gaps in Counselling Education in Nigeria

Despite efforts to improve counselling education, Nigerian programs lack:

- Negotiation-specific courses
- Field-based conflict resolution experience
- Interdisciplinary exposure (Amadi, 2020)
- Experiential learning environments
- Faculty trained in peace studies or mediation (Oloruntimehin & Falaye, 2016)
- These deficiencies reduce the readiness of counselling graduates to serve in diverse and demanding roles.

Justification for Integrating Negotiation Skills

- **Empowering Counsellors:** Counsellors gain confidence and capacity to operate in high-stakes interpersonal and institutional settings (Zimmerman, 2000).

- **Improving Client Outcomes:** Negotiation leads to collaborative decision-making and sustainable client outcomes (Fisher et al., 2011).
- **Promoting Social Cohesion:** Negotiation-trained counselors can act as peacebuilders in conflict-prone communities (Lederach, 2003).
- **Enhancing Professional Competency:** Negotiation skills broaden career prospects and improve interdisciplinary collaboration (Lambie & Milsom, 2010).

Strategies for Integration

- **Curriculum Development**: Introduce negotiation-specific modules or embed negotiation in courses like ethics, multicultural counselling, and family therapy (Aduke, 2020).
- **Experiential Learning**: Utilize role-plays, real-life simulations, and community-based practicum (Okoye & Okezie, 2021).
- **Collaborative Teaching**: Invite co-facilitators from peace studies, law, and public health to deliver interdisciplinary modules (Amadi, 2020).
- **Assessment and Evaluation**: Incorporate performance-based assessments such as negotiation simulations, reflective journals, and video analysis.

Challenges to Integration

- **Curriculum rigidity** due to bureaucratic inertia (NUC, 2015)
- **Lack of trained faculty** in negotiation and mediation (Oloruntimehin & Falaye, 2016)
- **Resource constraints** for simulations and training tools (Adegoke, 2015)
- **Cultural resistance** to skill-based reform in academia (Amadi, 2020)

Suggestions

1. Engage CASSON, NUC, and stakeholders to mandate negotiation training in counsellor education.
2. Facilitate workshops for counsellor educators.
3. Collaborate with NGOs and international bodies for funding and curriculum design.
4. Promote studies evaluating the effectiveness of negotiation in counselling outcomes.
5. Implement pilot negotiation modules in select universities.

Conclusion

The integration of negotiation skills into counsellor education is not merely a pedagogical enhancement; it is a strategic necessity. As Nigeria faces increasing complexity in its socio-political landscape, future counsellors must evolve from passive listeners to active mediators and advocates. Embedding negotiation into counsellor training programs will empower a new generation of professionals who are capable of leading change, fostering peace, and promoting client well-being in multifaceted settings.

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IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on entrepreneurship education for developing 21st-century skills. AI in entrepreneurship education helps develop essential skills by promoting innovation and data-driven decision-making. The paper was guided by four research questions, and a descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of the study consisted of 2,291 students from selected schools in Epe, Lagos State, with a sample size of 340 students selected through random sampling. Data was collected via a validated questionnaire. Simple percentage analysis was used for demographic information, while the Mean and Standard Deviation were used for data analysis. The key findings of this study revealed that AI plays a significant role in improving media literacy skills, such as recognizing credible online business sources, detecting misinformation, and supporting fact-checking skills in business content. It also enhance awareness of how media influences consumer behaviour and developed skills for using digital content in entrepreneurial projects. AI was found to improve problem-solving skills by breaking down complex business problems into manageable parts, offering multiple solutions, and supporting decision-making. Furthermore, AI promoted creativity by supporting the generation of new business ideas, aiding in the creation of innovative products and services, and encouraging fresh thinking in entrepreneurial challenges. It is recommended that educational institutions integrate AI technologies into entrepreneurship education to enhance students' media literacy, problem-solving abilities, and creativity. There should be a focus on hands-on learning with AI tools to prepare students for the rapidly evolving business environment. The researcher through the findings concluded that artificial intelligence significantly contributes to developing key 21st-century skills in entrepreneurship education. Counselling implications was also discussed, and this includes that in the context of AI and entrepreneurship education, counselling should take a comprehensive approach which will blend technological expertise with the development of fundamental human abilities like moral

consciousness, flexibility, inventiveness, and emotional fortitude. In this regard, counsellors are essential facilitators who help students develop the fundamental skills required for success in the twenty-first century while also assisting them in comprehending and utilizing AI tools and successfully incorporating them into entrepreneurial endeavours.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Entrepreneurship Education, Counselling, 21st Century.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines programmed to think, learn, and make decisions (Russell & Norvig, 2020). Over the years, AI has revolutionized various industries, including healthcare, transportation, and education. In the context of education, AI plays a critical role in personalizing learning, automating administrative tasks, and enabling students to acquire skills relevant to the 21st century. These capabilities make it essential to study how AI can influence entrepreneurship education, particularly in developing innovative and adaptable individuals prepared for the challenges of the modern world.

Entrepreneurship education involves equipping students with the skills, knowledge, and mindset necessary to identify opportunities, create innovative solutions, and establish businesses (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). Unlike traditional education, which often focuses on theoretical knowledge, entrepreneurship education emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, problem- solving, and leadership. These attributes align with the demands of the 21st century, where innovation and adaptability are vital for success in a rapidly changing economic landscape.

The 21st century is characterized by technological advancements, globalization, and the need for adaptability. Skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and digital literacy are essential for individuals to thrive in this environment (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Entrepreneurship education serves as a platform to develop these skills by challenging students to think outside the box and solve real-world problems. With the integration of AI, this process becomes even more dynamic and effective.

Artificial Intelligence has the potential to reshape entrepreneurship education in various ways. For instance, AI-powered tools can provide personalized learning experiences, enabling students to learn at their own pace and focus on areas where they need improvement. Moreover, AI can simulate real-world business scenarios, allowing students to practise entrepreneurial decision-making in a risk-free environment.

Despite its potential, entrepreneurship education faces challenges such as a lack of resources, outdated curricula, and limited access to real-world experiences (Mwasalwiba, 2010).

AI can address these challenges by providing affordable and scalable solutions. For example, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies powered by AI can simulate business environments, allowing students to gain practical experience without physical constraints. Additionally, AI-driven analytics can help educators identify gaps in the curriculum and improve teaching strategies.

AI has the potential to make entrepreneurship education more inclusive by breaking down barriers to access. Online learning platforms powered by AI can reach students in remote areas, providing them with opportunities to learn entrepreneurial skills. Furthermore, AI tools can accommodate diverse learning needs, ensuring that students with disabilities or language barriers can participate fully in the educational process. This inclusivity is essential for promoting equity and diversity in entrepreneurship education.

The integration of AI in entrepreneurship education prepares students for the future of work, where AI and automation are expected to play a significant role. By learning how to leverage AI tools, students can develop digital literacy and technical skills that are crucial for navigating a technology-driven economy (World Economic Forum, 2020). Additionally, entrepreneurship education encourages resilience and adaptability, enabling students to thrive in an unpredictable job market. While AI offers numerous benefits, its integration into entrepreneurship education raises ethical concerns. Issues such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential for misuse of AI tools must be addressed to ensure that the technology is used responsibly (Binns, 2018). Educators and policymakers must establish guidelines for the ethical use of AI in education, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and fairness.

The impact of AI on entrepreneurship education marks the beginning of a new era, where technology and innovation intersect to create transformative learning experiences. By integrating AI, educators can equip students with the skills and mindset needed to navigate the complexities of the 21st century. This transformation not only benefits individual learners but also contributes to economic growth and social development.

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed various industries, yet its integration into entrepreneurship education remains underexplored, particularly in developing 21st-century skills. In today's fast-paced, technology-driven world, entrepreneurship education must evolve to equip learners with the necessary skills to navigate complex challenges and seize emerging opportunities. However, many educational institutions still rely on traditional methods, which fail to adequately prepare students for the evolving landscape shaped by AI technologies. This gap presents a significant problem, as entrepreneurs of the future must possess not only technical knowledge but also creativity, problem-solving abilities, and adaptability skills that AI can help develop. The problem lies in understanding how AI can be strategically incorporated into entrepreneurship education to enhance the development of these essential skills. The need for a comprehensive framework to guide this integration is critical to ensure that future entrepreneurs are equipped with the skills required to succeed in the 21st century economy.

The concept of artificial intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a transformative field in computer science, enabling machines to mimic human intelligence. It involves processes like learning, reasoning, perception, and decision-making, achieved through algorithms and data analysis. In healthcare, AI-powered tools are revolutionizing diagnostics and treatment. African innovations, such as the use of AI to detect malaria through Smartphone applications, exemplify its potential to enhance public health systems. Additionally, AI is being used in agriculture for precision farming, enabling farmers to optimize crop yields and reduce waste. These applications highlight how AI is being leveraged to address practical issues in Africa.

AI is also being utilized in education to develop personalized learning platforms, which help students in Africa access quality education tailored to their needs. The focus on localized applications of AI reflects its ability to bridge gaps in infrastructure and service delivery, making it a critical tool for sustainable development in Africa.

Concept of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education refers to the structured process of equipping individuals with the skills, knowledge, and mindset needed to identify business opportunities, develop innovative solutions, and establish successful ventures. It emphasizes experiential learning, creativity, problem-solving, and leadership, distinguishing itself from traditional education that often focuses on theoretical knowledge (Fayolle & Gailly,2015). This type of education aims to foster critical thinking, resilience, and adaptability—qualities essential in a dynamic, technology-driven global economy (Ried,2020). Entrepreneurship education also cultivates an entrepreneurial mindset, encouraging individuals to view challenges as opportunities for innovation (Mwasalwiba, 2010).

It has become an essential tool for promoting self-reliance, reducing unemployment, and fostering economic growth, especially in developing nations.By integrating practical learning methods like business simulations and case studies, it bridges the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application. Moreover, entrepreneurship education plays a pivotal role in preparing students for the uncertainties of the 21st-century workforce, aligning with global demands for innovative and adaptable talent (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Entrepreneurship education must address gender and socioeconomic inequalities that persist across the continent. Women and marginalized groups often face systemic barriers that exclude them from entrepreneurial opportunities (Rashid, 2019). Tailored programs aimed at empowering women and underprivileged youth are essential to creating inclusive growth. Collaborative efforts between governments, private sectors, and educational institutions are key to overcoming these challenges.

Entrepreneurship education serves as a platform for developing these 21st-century skills through experiential learning, case studies, simulations and real-world projects. For instance, students may participate in business plan competitions, collaborate on startups, or engage in

internships with entrepreneurial ventures. These activities not only enhance their entrepreneurial mindset but also prepare them to address societal and economic challenges.

21st-century skills are essential for preparing individuals to succeed in entrepreneurship and the broader workforce. Entrepreneurship education, with its focus on practical application, creativity and adaptability, serves as a critical avenue for equipping students with the competencies. By integrating these skills into entrepreneurship education, institutions can empower students to become innovative, resilient and globally aware leaders capable of thriving in an ever-evolving world.

21st-century skills and their relevance to entrepreneurship education

The 21st century is marked by rapid technological advancements, globalization, and an ever-changing economic landscape, making adaptability and innovation crucial for success. To thrive in this dynamic environment, individuals need to possess a set of critical skills often referred to as 21st-century skills. These skills include critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, digital literacy, problem-solving and adaptability (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). These competencies align closely with the goals of entrepreneurship education, which aims to prepare individuals to identify opportunities, develop innovative solutions, and navigate the complexities of establishing and managing businesses.

Research Questions:

1. How does the integration of artificial intelligence in entrepreneurship education influence the development of students' critical thinking skills?
2. What is the impact of artificial intelligence in entrepreneurship education on enhancing students' media literacy skills?

Methodology

The research adopted a descriptive survey research design and the area of the study was Lagos state, Yaba College of Technology in affiliation with university of Nigeria, Nsukka and Lagos. and Lagos State University of Education, Noforija Epe. The participants consisted of 2291 male and female business Education students who were randomly selected. A questionnaire was used and data collected was analyzed using frequency count and percentage, mean and standard deviation. Mean rating from 2.5 and above were considered as agreed upon while mean rating of 2.49 and below were considered as disagreed upon.

RESULTS

Table 1: *Descriptive statistics mean and standard deviation responses on the Influence of Artificial intelligence in entrepreneurship Education on developing student critical thinking skill.*

S/N	STATEMENTS	Mean	SD	Decisions
1	The use of artificial intelligence in entrepreneurship education supports deeper analysis of business ideas	3.44	.510	Agreed
2	AI-assisted learning in entrepreneurship enhances my ability to evaluate business ideas critically	3.54	.506	Agreed
3	Artificial intelligence tools help in identifying weaknesses and strengths in business strategies	3.47	.500	Agreed
4	The application of artificial intelligence improves logical reasoning during business planning	3.56	.504	Agreed
5	Integration of artificial intelligence enhances the ability to question information critically	3.49	.546	Agreed

Bench Mark: (2.50 and above: accepted, <2.50 below: rejected)

Data presented in Table 1 shows the Influence of Artificial intelligence in entrepreneurship Education on developing students' critical thinking skill. Key findings include: use of artificial intelligence in entrepreneurship education supports deeper analysis of business ideas, entrepreneurship enhances my ability to evaluate business ideas critically, help in identifying weaknesses and strengths in business strategies, improves logical reasoning during business planning and enhances the ability to question information critically All these, were deemed necessary to be the Influence of Artificial intelligence in entrepreneurship Education on developing student critical thinking skill, as the mean values ranged from 3.44 to 3.56, which are well above the cut-off point of 2.50. Additionally, the standard deviation values ranged from 0.500 to 0.546, indicating that the mean values are closely clustered within a narrow range

Table 2: *Descriptive statistics mean and standard deviation responses on Impact of Artificial Intelligence in entrepreneurship education in developing media literacy skill.*

S/N	STATEMENTS	Mean	SD	Decisions
1	Artificial intelligence assists in recognizing credible online business sources.	3.42	0.525	Agreed
2	The use of artificial intelligence improves the ability to detect misinformation in digital media.	3.45	0.518	Agreed
3	Artificial intelligence tools support the development of fact-checking skills in business Content	3.39	0.523	Agreed
4	The application of artificial intelligence increases awareness of how media influences consumer behavior.	3.43	0.513	Agreed
5	Artificial intelligence enhances the skill of using digital content to support entrepreneurial projects	3.36	0.564	Agreed

Bench Mark: (2.50 and above: accepted, <2.50 below: rejected)
Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

Data presented in Table 2 shows the impact of artificial intelligence in entrepreneurship education on developing media literacy skills. Key findings include that artificial intelligence assists in recognizing credible online business sources, improves the ability to detect misinformation in digital media, supports the development of fact-checking skills in business content, increases awareness of how media influences consumer behavior, and enhances the skill of using digital content to support entrepreneurial projects. These impacts of artificial intelligence in entrepreneurship education on media literacy skills were deemed significant, as the mean values ranged from 3.39 to 3.45, which are well above the cut-off point of 2.50. Additionally, the standard deviation values ranged from 0.515 to 0.562, indicating that the mean values are closely clustered within a narrow range

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it underscored the transformative impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on entrepreneurship education, enhancing various critical skills among students. AI's influence on media literacy is particularly significant, as it helps students identify credible online business sources, detect misinformation, and develop essential fact-checking skills. This ability to critically evaluate digital content is vital for entrepreneurs navigating today's information-rich environment. Furthermore, AI increases awareness of how media shapes

consumer behavior, an important aspect for entrepreneurs in crafting effective marketing strategies.AI also plays a crucial role in developing problem-solving skills by breaking down complex business problems into smaller, manageable parts, allowing students to test multiple solutions. Counselling implication was also discussed, and this includes that in the context of AI and entrepreneurship education, counselling should take a comprehensive approach which will blend technological expertise with the development of fundamental human abilities like moral consciousness, flexibility, inventiveness, and emotional fortitude. In this regard, counsellors are essential facilitators who help students develop the fundamental skills required for success in the twenty-first century while also assisting them in comprehending and utilizing AI tools and successfully incorporating them into entrepreneurial endeavours.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Entrepreneurship Educators should integrate artificial intelligence tools into the curriculum to enhance students' media literacy and critical thinking skills, ensuring they can evaluate digital business sources effectively.
2. Curriculum Developers should focus on incorporating AI-driven platforms that teach fact-checking and misinformation detection, preparing students for the challenges of digital media in business.
3. University Administrators should support the implementation of AI technologies in entrepreneurship programs to help students understand media's influence on consumer behavior and make informed business decisions.
4. Faculty Members should encourage the use of AI to break down complex business problems, fostering problem-solving skills and the ability to test and select the best solutions.

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EFFICACY OF RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AMONG DELINQUENT STUDENTS IN BORSTAL TRAINING INSTITUTION BARNAWA, KADUNA

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Abstract

Continuous interpersonal conflicts and mistrust among delinquents in custodial settings threaten the rehabilitative mission of Nigeria's Borstal Training Institutions. Grounded in the Cognitive Behavioural Theory (CBT) which posits that interpersonal dysfunction is a manifestation of underlying cognitive distortions and behavioural skill deficits, this study investigated the efficacy of a structured intervention focusing on relationship-building and conflict-resolution strategies for delinquent students at the Borstal Training Institution, Barnawa, Kaduna. The central research question was: To what extent can a CBT-based intervention, focused on relational and conflict-based schemas, effectively modify the cognitive distortions and behavioural deficits that hinder the rehabilitation of delinquent students in a Borstal setting? Employing a qualitative participatory action research design (PAR), a six-week intervention was designed to function as an applied CBT module. Cognitive restructuring and behavioural skills training was utilized to target maladaptive schemas related to trust, authority, and conflict. Thirty-two male juveniles (14-21 years old) with documented histories of interpersonal behavioural issues and assent to participate in a group-based programme were purposively selected from the juveniles at the institute. Data collection involved sustained participant observation, in-depth focus group discussions, and analysis of participant reflective journals. The findings indicated significant positive shifts in participants' cognitive and behavioural patterns. Key outcomes included a reduction in hostile attribution bias, enhanced emotional self-regulation, increased use of assertive communication, and a demonstrated preference for constructive conflict resolution over aggressive responses. The study concludes that relationship-building and conflict-resolution strategies are most efficacious when explicitly designed to modify the core cognitive

and behavioural mechanisms that sustain antisocial conduct. These results advocate for the systematic integration of manualized, CBT-informed psychosocial programmes within Nigeria's juvenile justice framework.

Keywords: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, conflict resolution, relationship building, Borstal, rehabilitation

Introduction

Juvenile delinquency within the Nigerian context presents a complex challenge, particularly within custodial institutions like the Borstal Training Institution in Barnawa, Kaduna (Adekeye & Emmanuel, 2018; Osemuyi, 2025). These institutions are mandated with rehabilitation, yet often grapple with pervasive interpersonal conflict and deeply entrenched mistrust among inmates, which significantly impedes reformative outcomes (Sarki et al., 2018). Traditional disciplinary approaches frequently fail to address the psychological underpinnings of these dysfunctional relational patterns (Won et al., 2025). This study proposes that such patterns are not merely behavioural issues but are directly fuelled by specific, identifiable cognitive structures.

Cognitive Behavioural Theory (CBT) provides a robust explanatory framework for this phenomenon (Chand et al., 2023). CBT posits that an individual's emotional and behavioural responses to an event are largely determined by their cognitive appraisal of that event (Ryum & Nikolaos Kazantzis, 2024). For delinquent youths, long-standing maladaptive schemas such as "All authority figures are exploitative," "Showing vulnerability is weakness," or "Aggression is the only way to earn respect" act as filters through which all social interactions are interpreted (Uvelli et al., 2025). These cognitions automatically trigger negative emotions (e.g., anger, fear) and precipitate maladaptive behaviors (e.g., pre-emptive aggression, social withdrawal) (Van Wijk-Herbrink et al., 2021). Consequently, any intervention aimed at improving relationships and conflict management must directly target these cognitive distortions while simultaneously building compensatory behavioural skills (Roxborough, 2025).

This study therefore sought to assess the efficacy of relationship-building and conflict-resolution strategies that are explicitly conceptualized and operationalized through the principles of CBT. The central research question is: To what extent can a CBT-based intervention, focused on relational and conflict-based schemas, effectively modify the cognitive distortions and behavioural deficits that hinder the rehabilitation of delinquent students in a Borstal setting?

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this intervention was to enhance prosocial relating and conflict management by focusing on their underlying cognitive and behavioural components.

The specific objectives were to:

1. identify and facilitate the transformation of core cognitive distortions held by participants, particularly those pertaining to trust, the intentions of others, and the utility of aggression.
2. utilize positive relationship-building exercises as "behavioural experiments" designed to actively challenge and provide evidence that refute schemas of universal mistrust.
3. enhance emotional regulation by teaching participants the CBT model, thereby enabling them to draw clear links between activating events, their beliefs, and their resulting emotional and behavioural consequences.
4. replace dysfunctional conflict behaviors such as impulsivity, verbal and physical aggression with a set of structured non-violent communication and problem-solving skills through direct instruction and behavioural rehearsal.

Theoretical Review

Cognitive Behavioural Theory

This intervention is exclusively grounded in the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Theory (CBT), which offers a parsimonious yet powerful model for understanding and treating the interpersonal deficits observed in delinquent populations (Chand et al., 2023; Society for Advancement of Psychotherapy, 2025). It uses a minimum number of core principles to explain a wide range of complex phenomena. Instead of relying on complex or disparate explanations, CBT puts forward a direct link between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (IQWiG (Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care), 2025). By focusing on these core connections, the model provides a straightforward framework for intervention.

The framework is built on two central pillars:

Cognitive Restructuring: This pillar focuses on changing unhelpful, unhealthy, or negative thought patterns, also known as "cognitive distortions," and replacing them with more objective and realistic thinking (Ackerman, 2025; Chand et al., 2023). The underlying idea is that people's emotions and actions are influenced by their perception of events, rather than the events themselves. The core premise is that cognitive distortions such as systematic errors in thinking, perpetuate negative affect and maladaptive behavior. (M Durand, 2015; Ryum & Nikolaos Kazantzis, 2024). Participants in this context typically exhibited distortions such as “hostile attribution bias” (the automatic tendency to interpret ambiguous prosocial cues such as ‘an accidental bump’ or ‘a neutral glance’ as intentionally hostile and threatening), “catastrophizing” (believing that the consequences of a minor social setback such as ‘losing an argument’ or ‘being teased’ will be unbearable, catastrophic, and lead to a total loss of status or safety) and “overgeneralization” (holding broad, negative beliefs based on limited evidence, such as ‘because one person betrayed me, all people are untrustworthy’ or ‘because I failed once, I will always fail’) (Chand et al., 2023; Klein Tuente et al., 2019; Sian Ferguson, 2019).

Behavioural Activation: This pillar focuses on changing behavior to influence thoughts and

emotions, helping to break negative cycles (Kendra Cherry, 2025). For instance, consistent, predictable, and respectful behavior from facilitators providing live, disconfirming evidence against the notion "Authority cannot be trusted.") (Kazantzis & Dobson, 2022). Conflict resolution as behavioural skills training is also operationalized as a set of concrete, learnable skills to replace a deficit (Radley & Dart, 2022). This involves cognitive rehearsal (mentally practicing a calm, pre-planned response to a potential provocation), assertive communication training (direct instruction and role-playing to replace passive or aggressive communication styles), and structured problem-solving (teaching a step-by-step cognitive-behavioural process by defining the problem, generating solutions, evaluating consequences, implementing and reviewing) to supplant impulsive and reactive behavior (IQWiG (Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care), 2025).

In the CBT framework, improved relationships and effective conflict resolution are the observable outcomes of successful cognitive restructuring and the acquisition of new behavioural competencies (Ryum & Nikolaos Kazantzis, 2024).

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach (Zhang & Ying, 2019). This methodology was selected for its alignment with the empowering ethos of CBT, as it positions participants as active co-investigators in their own change process rather than passive recipients of an intervention. The PAR cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting was integrated into the session structures, allowing the program to be responsive to the emergent needs and insights of the participants.

Study Setting and Context

The research was conducted at the Borstal Training Institution in Barnawa, Kaduna. This is a custodial facility for male juvenile offenders, operating under the Nigerian Correctional Service. The institutional environment is characterized by its formal disciplinary structure, which, while necessary for security, often creates a climate where the cognitive schemas of mistrust and authority conflict are reinforced. Implementing a CBT-based relational intervention within this context presented a significant opportunity to test its efficacy against a challenging backdrop.

Participants and Sampling Method

The participant group consisted of thirty-two (32) male juveniles, ranging in age from 14 to 21 years. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select individuals who had documented histories of interpersonal behavioural issues (e.g., frequent involvement in fights, insubordination, isolation) but who were assessed by institution staff as having the cognitive capacity and minimal voluntary assent to engage in a group-based program. This sampling

strategy ensured the selection of information-rich cases relevant to the research question.

Intervention Structure and CBT Integration

The intervention was delivered over six weeks, comprising weekly group sessions lasting 90 to 120 minutes. Each session was meticulously structured to sequentially build upon CBT principles:

Sessions 1-2: Psycho education and self-monitoring (Andrea Zorbas, 2023; Psychology Tools, 2022). These initial sessions focused on introducing the CBT model in accessible language. Participants learned to identify the connections between activating events (A), their beliefs (B), and the resulting consequences (C) in their emotions and behaviors. They began maintaining simple reflective journals to capture their "automatic thoughts" in conflict situations.

Sessions 3-4: Cognitive restructuring applied to relationships (Blair Wellness Group, 2025). These sessions moved into active cognitive restructuring. Through guided discussions and specifically designed trust-building exercises (e.g., collaborative tasks requiring reliance on a partner), participants were guided to collect evidence that contradicted their global negative beliefs about trust and peer intentions. Journaling evolved to focus on recording this disconfirming evidence.

Sessions 5-6: Behavioural skills training for conflict (Seattle University, 2023). The final phase focused on skill acquisition. Participants learned and repeatedly practiced a structured conflict resolution protocol: 1) *Pause and identify* (emotional regulation and cognitive awareness of the activating event and automatic thought), 2) *Evaluate the thought* (a simplified form of cognitive restructuring "Is this thought 100% true?"), 3) *Choose a skill* (selecting from a taught repertoire, e.g., an "I feel..." statement), and 4) *Problem-solve* collaboratively*.

Data Collection

A multi-method approach to data collection was employed to ensure depth and triangulation:

1. Participant observation: The facilitators maintained detailed, structured observational logs after each session. These notes documented specific behavioural incidents, group dynamics, language used by participants, and instances where newly taught skills were either successfully applied or notably absent.
2. Focus group discussions (FGDs): Semi-structured FGDs were conducted at the midpoint and conclusion of the intervention. These discussions were designed to elicit participants' subjective experiences of the program, their perceptions of change in themselves and their peers, and their evolving understanding of concepts like trust and conflict.
3. Reflective Journals: Participants' personal journals provided a crucial window into their internal cognitive processes. The journals offered raw data on their automatic thoughts, their efforts at challenging them, and their personal reflections on the exercises.

Data Analysis

The analysis followed a systematic process for qualitative data. The extensive textual data from observation logs, FGD transcripts, and journal entries were subjected to a rigorous process of iterative reading and analysis. The initial phase involved identifying meaning units and generating initial codes that captured key concepts (e.g., "recognition of automatic thought," "expression of mistrust," "use of pause technique"). These codes were then grouped into potential themes based on their relationship to the research questions and theoretical framework. Key themes that emerged included: "shifting attributions of hostility," "the emergence of cognitive awareness," "behavioural substitution in conflict," and "building evidence for trust." The analysis continually moved back and forth between the data set and the developing themes to ensure they accurately represented the participants' experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was secured from the Borstal Institute's management. Informed assent was obtained from all participants, with a clear explanation that participation was voluntary and would not affect their legal status. Confidentiality was strictly maintained, and all identifying details were anonymized in the data. The facilitators were trained to be sensitive to issues of power and to avoid any activities that could potentially re-traumatize participants.

Results

The analysis of the qualitative data revealed several prominent themes indicative of cognitive and behavioural shift.

Modification of cognitive distortions

A central finding was the observable reduction in hostile attribution bias among participants. Where previously neutral actions were interpreted as threats, participants began to entertain alternative explanations. For example, one participant reflected in a focus group: "Before, if someone bumped into me, I thought it was a fight. Now, I might think first that it was maybe just crowded, or he didn't see me." This represents a fundamental cognitive shift from an automatic, hostile interpretation to a more considered, neutral appraisal. Journal entries similarly showed a progression from statements like "He disrespected me on purpose" to questions like "I wonder why he said that?"

Relationship-building as disconfirming evidence

The data strongly indicated that the structured, positive interactions with facilitators and peers served as powerful disconfirming evidence against entrenched schemas of mistrust. A participant noted in a discussion: "I saw that the facilitators kept their promises and listened to us without shouting. It made me think that maybe not all adults are out to get us." This statement illustrates how the consistent, notion-contradicting behavior of the facilitators initiated a process of cognitive restructuring regarding authority figures.

Acquisition and application of conflict resolution skills

Observational data and self-reports confirmed that participants began to consciously employ the behavioural skills they had learned. There were documented instances where, instead of escalating into physical altercations, conflicts were de-escalated because a participant utilized a taught technique. For instance, an observation log recorded: "A dispute over a missing item arose between P12 and P15. P12 was observed taking a deep breath and saying, 'I feel angry when my things are moved without asking,' rather than immediately accusing. This led to a conversation instead of a fight." This demonstrates the behavioural substitution of a learned, prosocial skill for a previously automatic aggressive response.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that relationship-building and conflict-resolution strategies have great rehabilitative efficacy when explicitly conceptualized and operationalized through the rigorous framework of Cognitive Behavioural Theory. The observed transformations from hostile attribution to considered appraisal, from impulsive aggression to skilled negotiation, are not merely behavioural anecdotes but represent a logical and demonstrable outcome of successfully targeting the specific cognitive and behavioural mechanisms that sustain antisocial conduct.

A key finding was the observable shift in participants' core cognitive schemas, particularly regarding trust and the intentions of others. The data suggest that this was not achieved through verbal persuasion alone, but through the process of experiential disconfirmation (Kabrel & Aru, 2025). The structured, consistent, and respectful behavior of the facilitators served as live, irrefutable evidence that directly contradicted the participants' maladaptive belief that "all authority figures are corrupt or exploitative." This aligns closely with the concept of "corrective experiences", which are fundamental to schema change in CBT (Fassbinder et al., 2016; Kabrel & Aru, 2026). When a participant noted, "It made me think that maybe not all adults are out to get us," it signifies a moment of cognitive restructuring where a deeply held, overgeneralized belief is beginning to fracture under the weight of new evidence. This process is more potent in a controlled, therapeutic environment than in traditional punitive settings, which typically reinforce rather than challenge these negative schemas (Smith et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the reduction in hostile attribution bias, a well-documented risk factor for aggression and violence (Dodge et al., 2015), was a critical outcome. Our findings resonate with the concept that aggressive children often misinterpret social cues (Lloyd-Esenkaya et al., 2021; The Swaddle Team, 2018). By using role-plays and guided reflections to explicitly practice generating alternative, non-hostile explanations for ambiguous events, the intervention provided a "cognitive antidote" against this automatic distortion. This deliberate practice in perspective-taking is a core component of CBT interventions for aggression, such as aggression replacement training (Brännström et al., 2016), and its success in this context confirms its cross-cultural applicability.

The observed substitution of aggressive reactions with assertive communication and structured problem-solving is a testament to the behavioural principle that individuals often engage in maladaptive behaviors simply because they lack a more effective alternative (Arlin Cuncic, n.d.). The intervention did not assume that participants knew “how” to resolve conflicts peacefully; it explicitly taught them, breaking down the complex social behavior of "conflict resolution" into manageable, learnable steps.

This "skills deficit" model is central to many effective offender rehabilitation programs (Gillian Giglierano & Ben Case, 2024). Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) for individuals involved in the justice system). By teaching participants to "pause and identify" before acting, the intervention directly targeted the neurocognitive deficit in response inhibition frequently identified in delinquent youth (Fosco et al., 2019). The reported use of "I feel..." statements represents more than just politeness; it is the behavioural enactment of emotional awareness and a move away from externalizing blame, a key step in developing accountability.

A unique contribution of this study is its demonstration of how cognitive and behavioural techniques are synergistically combined within a relational context. The relationship-building was not a separate activity; it was the very medium through which cognitive restructuring occurred. Conversely, conflict-resolution skills provided the behavioural tools to protect and nurture the trust that was being built. This integrated model addresses a critical gap which argues that effective rehabilitation must focus on the "criminogenic social learning environments" that shape offenders' worlds (Psychology Town, 2025).

The observed improvements suggest that CBT-informed psychosocial interventions can have a systemic impact. A punitive institution often operates on a behavioural principle of negative reinforcement, where compliance is motivated by the avoidance of punishment. In contrast, this intervention enhanced an environment where prosocial behavior was positively reinforced through successful social interactions and a sense of self-efficacy. This shift is crucial, as a positive institutional climate is a significant predictor of reduced in-violence and better post-release outcomes

This, however, raises a critical implementation challenge. The efficacy of such a program can be severely undermined if the general staff and correctional officers operate on a contradictory, punitive model. Therefore, a key recommendation is widespread staff training in trauma-informed care and CBT principles.

In conclusion, this study moves beyond demonstrating that "relationship-building works" to explain why and how it works through the precise mechanisms of Cognitive Behavioural Theory. By systematically challenging the cognitive schemas of mistrust and equipping delinquent youths with a concrete behavioural toolkit for conflict, the intervention facilitated a shift from a criminogenic mindset to the beginnings of a prosocial identity.

Recommendations

Rehabilitation in juvenile justice must therefore be an intellectually rigorous, psychologically informed endeavour. It is not a soft alternative to punishment, but a scientifically grounded strategy. Future policy should prioritize the integration of such theory-driven, evidence-based programs, supported by trained staff, to transform custodial institutions.

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TEACHING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: ESSENTIAL ATTITUDES, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES EXPECTED OF EDUCATORS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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Abstract

The rapid spread of knowledge and widespread deployment of digital technology have transformed education in the world. Yet, the African continent faces distinct constraints as identified in the paper and grapples to meet up with the evolving educational ecosystem. The purpose of the position paper is to create an awareness that the model of teacher training and professional development that has been used to produce teachers is no longer effective in the changing world. Secondary data were used with the review of some journal and book publications. It is not about theoretical knowledge anymore; there is need for teachers to develop specific sets of attitudes, skills and competencies. Some vital attitudes were highlighted such as humility, patience, kindness, firmness, diligence, discipline, commitment to duties, being a good listener, considerate and cheerful personality. The paper pinpointed some key skills such as digital literacy, critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving that teachers should have and transmit to the learners. Some competencies were discussed such as time management, digital proficiency and innovation, organizational ability, emotional intelligence, lifelong learning and professional development, all essential for thriving in diverse and often resource-limited educational settings. While it recognized systemic limitations such as poor infrastructure, use of outdated teaching methodology and policy shortcomings as set-backs, the paper concluded that it is essential that teachers participate in ongoing professional development and for governments to foster supportive environments through enhanced budget. The paper suggested that stakeholders should adopt models that worked in educationally advanced nations.

Key words: 21st Century education, Pedagogical attitudes, skills and competencies, Digital Literacy, Sub-Saharan Africa

Introduction

Africa is a region blessed with a youthful population, beacon of hope and redolent with resources for the socio-economic emancipation of the populace. This population looks up to educators to guide them through the complexities of a rapidly changing world. Within the vibrant ecosystem of the region exists the intersection of rich cultural heritage, contexts, expected outcomes and challenges for educators to enable the navigation of the 21st century education dynamics (Alam & Mohanty, 2023). As the region strives to actualize the Goal-4 target of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) hinged on inclusive and equitable education for all, it becomes necessary for educators to pursue transformative experiences (UNESCO, 2024). The transformative experiences being advocated in this position paper are such that foster critical thinking, problem-solving skills and creativity amongst citizens. The unique context of Sub-Saharan Africa demands a tailored approach to teacher development targeted at diverse priorities and aspirations based on her socio-cultural, economic and linguistic peculiarities (Mitchell et al., 2024). Ultimately, the aim sought to identify essential skills, attitudes and competencies expected of educators in Africa that can inspire and shape the destiny of the future generations.

The argument projects educators as veritable agents of change endowed with a sense of purpose and commitment to social justice. It is a fact that educators give sense of direction to nations and individuals because products of educational institutions occupy positions in various offices and are the drivers of national policies. When they are poorly trained, the society suffers in different ways. For instance, if those who train engineers are not expert educators, the lack of professionalism would be evident in engineering practices. Digitalizing teacher training enabled by relevant ICT tools and gadgets would enable teachers in this era to be skilled and proficient in instructional delivery with improved learning outcomes (Mukhtar et al., 2020).

This paper argued that to truly enhance teaching and learning in Africa, it is necessary to rethink who a teacher is. This begins with examining the core values that shape a modern educator's approach. Next, it delves into the vital skills teachers need to develop in the digital world. Also, it discussed the key attitudes and competencies needed for creating meaningful learning experiences that resonate with the African context. Among the objectives is to offer a framework that empowers African educators to become an agent of positive change and sustainability. The quality of education in a society is intertwined with the calibre of its teachers. Teacher quality encompasses competence, sensitivity, and motivation which are crucial in yielding remarkable outcomes in schools (Annan, 2020). Theories and principles in education are meant to be practiced in the classrooms with teachers being the agents of transmitting learning experiences (Mukeredzi & Nyachowe, 2018). The million-dollar question is this: is it possible for teachers to establish a link between theories/ principles and classroom experiences? In what ways would teachers in the African setting sustain the interests of learners in the lesson delivery and ensure optimum learning outcomes? These and many other puzzles are seeking for responses to change the educational landscape of the African nations.

Conceptual Clarifications

African Education Quagmire

Educational systems in Africa have frequently grappled with scarce resources, disjointed teacher training, poor infrastructure, limited access to digital devices/ gadgets and the impacts of colonial teaching methods. Classrooms are sometimes made up of unsettled learners that have been uprooted and transplanted due to tribal/religious conflicts, insurgencies, diseases, climate change problems, food crisis, socio-economic downturn and political upheavals. This results in overcrowded, underfunded and disorganized learning environment (Osuji & Taiwo, 2019). Meaningful transfer of learning, conceptualization and retention become difficult in this kind of setting. Many children with great potential turn out to be average performers or less. These challenging circumstances demand the services of teachers that are not just knowledge providers but also adaptable, passionate, resilient, and emotionally intelligent professionals.

Lack of articulated policies, implementation problems, poor investments in digital infrastructure and faulty teacher-training programmes are obstacles to the development of high-quality education in Africa (Enyiazu, 2022). Public education systems do not prioritize integrated digital skills to cultivate a workforce that is ready to emancipate Africa from colonialism and neo-colonialism. Some teacher education training programmes in Africa and Nigeria do not include problem-based approach meant to develop critical thinking, analytical reasoning and creativity skills in potential teachers. When teachers are trained without the ability to think, visualize problems from different perspectives and come up with workable solutions, raising brilliant students becomes an uphill task (Azanza et al., 2024). This calls for strategic modification in the training and re-training of teachers. When teachers fail to perform their role effectively, society suffers. Most governments in Africa show lack of political will to invest in contemporary teacher education model as obtained in Finland rated among the best for teacher preparation and professional development. Teachers, for instance, have no capacity to teach students ICT skills if not incorporated in the teacher educational training schemes (Ikwuka, et. al., 2020). When teachers are introduced to relevant skills, it is natural for them to transmit knowledge using the same skills, as pointed out by Adebanjo & Kanu (2025). These skills are to be learnt, mastered and taught.

Many teachers in Africa cannot use classroom technology (e.g. interactive boards, virtual and augmented reality tools etc.) to teach due partly to lack of exposure to the skill of using them and partly due to lack of access to the devices (Osuji & Taiwo, 2019). Corruption is a big problem also. Often, funds that are raised and meant to develop education in Africa are diverted and shared by those at the hem of affairs. Donor agencies have been disappointed in the past due to abuse and misappropriation of funds raised for projects that never saw the light of day. The education woe of Africa is an African problem that can only be addressed by African educators. Nevertheless, amidst the corrupt systems exist few individuals, teachers, concerned educators and educational institutions that are honest and determined to change the narrative and bring about a positive change.

Digital Era and Teaching-learning

This review sheds light on how attitudinal openness, digital skills, and a well-rounded set of competencies all intertwined are essential for the transformation of African education systems for relevance. To truly harness the advantages of digital teaching and learning, the focus should be on capacity building, supportive policies, and enhanced infrastructure. It is proposed by Janssen et al. (2013) that digital literacy uses technology and involves understanding important issues like data privacy, intellectual property, cyber security, and the essence of ICT to society. This viewpoint is in tandem with digital competence frameworks that emphasize professional engagement and ongoing innovative practices for sustainable development. It has become an imperative to incorporate digital tools into teaching, and requires skills in managing digital platforms, curetting online content, spotting plagiarism, and utilizing multimedia resources to enrich learning experiences (Mansur, 2020).

The digital age has truly transformed educational eco-systems around the globe, including sub-Saharan Africa. For educators to effectively operate in this era, they need to possess certain attitudes, skills, and competencies (Adebanjo & Kanu, 2025). Having a positive attitude towards digital literacy and ICT skills is essential for progress in the digital African education era (Ikwuka, et. al., 2020). In the digital era, students are bombarded with information, much of which is unverified. Therefore, there is need for teachers to go beyond simple rote memorization to foster critical thinking, analytical ability, evaluative mindset and capacity to synthesize information from a variety of digital sources. This approach resonates with Biesta (2013) perspective on teaching as a practice that demands thoughtful, context-aware judgment rather than just applying "what works" mechanically. To cultivate these essential skills in themselves and their learners, teachers require training in problem-based learning strategies (Biesta, 2013). It is emphasized that, while knowledge about ‘what works can inform what happens’ in classrooms, it can never replace judgment about what needs to be done. Precisely, it is this aspect of teacher development that is lacking in some teachers in contemporary times.

While technology serves as a powerful tool, its true potential manifests when paired with creative and innovative teaching methods (Mansur, 2020). In a digital classroom, for instance and as affirmed by OECD (2025), crafting experiences such as the flipped classroom model enable students explore lecture contents on their own online, allowing precious class time to be used for collaborative problem-solving, lively debates and hands-on projects. Incorporating gamification elements such as badges and interactive quests have the capacity to turn learning into an exciting and inspiring experience (Anikweze & Kanu, 2025). Project-based learning, supported by digital collaboration tools, empowers students to tackle real-world problems together thereby bringing out the teamwork and analytical skills in them. Therefore, the ideal teacher in this digital age acts as an instructional designer who continually situates learning experiences that are both informative and genuinely engaging (Mansur, 2020; OECD, 2025).

Teachers need emotional intelligence to be able to cope with certain situations. Subtle signs that show learners are struggling, whether due to digital fatigue, lack of engagement or personal deficiencies need to be ascertained or unravelled quickly by the educator. There is need to

exhibit empathy, patience and consistent encouragement for a supportive and inclusive virtual learning environment. In that way, learners have sense of belonging, feel acknowledged and motivated to be a part of the learning discourse (DTK Ng et al., 2023). The educational system world over has become dynamic with demand on the part of teachers to stay relevant and updated on curriculum changes, technological innovations, creativity and best practices. The evolving educational landscape of the Sub-Saharan Africa requires teachers that are adaptable, innovative and committed to students' progress. The need for teachers to adjust to divergent students' needs, abilities and learning styles have become intense in addition to increasing need to collaborate with their colleagues, parents and communities for progress and sustainability (Ikwuka, et. al., 2020).

Concepts of Skills, Attitudes and Competencies for Educators

These skills as stipulated by Janssen et al. (2013) and affirmed by Karacaoglu (2025) highlight pedagogical skills, subject-matter expertise, communication skills and technological skills. Pedagogical skills involve the capacity of teachers to design and implement engaging lessons, manage classrooms and assess learning experiences by integrating technology and differential instruction (Osuji & Taiwo, 2019). Communications skills have to do with teachers' language proficiency and cultural awareness for effective interaction with students, colleagues and parents (Karacaoglu, 2025). Technological skills according to Azanza et al. (2024) involve the teachers' capability of leveraging digital tools for teaching, learning and assessment purposes. The competencies expected of teachers in the contemporary times as observed by Mukhtar et al. (2020) include lesson plan preparation, classroom management, assessment and feedback alongside collaboration and leadership. Lesson plan preparation or lesson planning as observed by Ainabor (2024) pertains the capacity of the teacher to design and develop high quality, logical, coherent and engaging lessons in preparation for result-oriented teaching-learning. The ability of the teacher to create and maintain a productive and conducive learning environment entails classroom management; coupled with the ability to design and conduct assessment with the provision of constructive feedback (Annan, 2020). Collaboration and leadership involve working with colleagues, leading initiatives and contributing to the overall improvement in learning outcomes and school growth (Mitchell et al., 2024).

The case of Sub-Saharan Africa regarding these concepts is shaped by the unique challenges faced by teachers in the region and the opportunities available to them (Ainabor, 2024). Skills for teachers in the region must be contextualized due to some factors such as limited working resources and multiplicity of local languages alongside colonial languages. Teachers are compelled to use local contexts, cultures and languages incorporating local examples and indigenous knowledge (Alam. & Mohanty, 2023). In terms of attitudes, teachers in the African region would have to value local cultures and traditions, build engaging and healthy relationships with local communities and stakeholders, cope with challenges such as large class sizes, inadequate infrastructure and scarce resources (Annan, 2020). Concerning competencies,

inclusive education that supports diverse learners and those with disabilities or disadvantaged backgrounds must be imbibed by the teacher (Osuji & Taiwo 2019). Continuous professional development which seeks opportunity for growth, innovation and collaboration is a 'can't help' situation; plus leadership and advocacy to drive change and cooperate with colleagues.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Cognitive Theory of Albert Bandura propounded in the 1960s as Bandura's social learning theory, expanded and renamed Social Cognitive Theory in 1986 is the theoretical framework upon which the concepts of skills, attitudes and competencies are hinged (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012; Bandura's Bobo doll experiment, 2012). This theory according to May-Varas et al. (2023) emphasized that learning be done through observation and interaction, skills and attitudes be developed through modelling and feedback with importance laid on confidence in one's capability. The theory posits that people are not just influenced and shaped by the environment, they are active participants in the occurrence within the environment. Social Cognitive theory could be applied to teacher development in the Sub-Saharan African region through observational learning of peers, mentors/ experienced educators in workshops and peer coaching (Mitchell et al., 2024). Teachers model classroom management and culturally sensitive behaviours and attitudes for students and colleagues to emulate. Specific challenges in classrooms such as scarce resources, large class sizes and cultural nuances in teaching-learning could be tackled through social persuasion and by teachers working on their self-efficacy and building their confidence level (Mukeredzi & Nyachowe, 2018).

Essential Attitude for Teaching and Learning in sub-Saharan Africa in the Digital Era

Attitude is a psychological construct that influences thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (and in this context) related to education. Teachers' attitudes toward teaching-learning and towards the use of ICT have great capacity to influence what learners learn, what they retain and what they transfer into meaningful use in the real-world (Ikwuka, et. al., 2020). Positive attitudes have linkage with greater engagement and success in learning, while negative attitudes lead to disengagement and lower performance (Kanu & Adejoh, 2018). When teachers display positive attitudes, learning becomes fun, engaging and inspiring. Positive attitudes could help learners form a bond of connection and trust leading to instructional delivery being appreciated. The drive to strive and ensure that all the learners are carried along during instructional delivery is largely dependent on the teachers' attitudes.

Some qualities that should distinguish teachers in the digital era are captured succinctly in this acronym - TEACHER. The acronym 'TEACHER' should stand for: T- Trustworthy, E- Encouraging, A- Approachable, C- Caring, H- Helping, E- Enthusiastic and R- Reliable. A good teacher is naturally expected to possess and display the following qualities: patience, kindness, mercy, firmness, friendliness, diligence, discipline, commitment to duties, and teachable. Others

include being open to and readiness to accept correction (open mindedness), a good listener, considerate and a cheerful personality. Rude, arrogant and nasty teachers do not fit in with the digital age.

It has become evident that a few teachers who lack the relevant skills to teach are no longer relevant in the profession in some parts of the world (Ainabor, 2024). The reason is due to the rapid transformation in the profession. Many nations are standardizing teacher education and teaching in ways that those who cannot innovate are not finding it comfortable to remain on the job. It is not out of place to find incompetent graduate teachers leaving the profession to be employed as security guard in some organizations. Africa should not be left behind in digital teaching and learning. If students are poorly taught, they would have little or no chance of becoming outstanding. And where to begin the change is in teacher education. The digitalization of learning and teaching could transform the learner into a global achiever and make the teacher an outstanding educator.

Essential Skills for Teaching and Learning in sub-Saharan Africa in the Digital Era

Livelihood in a globalized world calls for products of educational systems that integrate generic skills needed for creativity, productivity and national development. As enunciated by Azanza et al., (2024), these skills include the following: decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, autonomous-thinking skills and diffused-thinking skills. Others are effective communication skills, computer-manipulation skills, interpersonal relation skills, and independent and autonomous learning skills. Teachers in training and teachers on the job who learn and apply these skills are more resourceful than their counterparts whose training is dependent on lecture notes and textbooks that are more often theoretical than practical. For educators in Africa and around the world, mastering these diverse skills is essential for transforming the classrooms into dynamic, future-ready learning environments where every learner is availed of opportunity to flourish. Imbibing the skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, problem-solving, and decision-making is essential for both teachers and students in tech-savvy educational settings. The skills go beyond just technical know-how but include soft, cognitive and social skills necessary for thriving in a digital landscape and spiced with ethical considerations (Azanza et al., 2024).

Foremost in the list of essential skills is technological prowess and digital proficiency (European Centre for Development of Vocational Training /CEDEFOP, 2025). This transcends knowing how to use a computer to having a solid grasp of the digital world. For instance, 21st century teachers ought to be skilled at using Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Google Classroom or Moodle to schedule and facilitate their courses, share resources/ materials, and keep communication flow active (Mansur, 2020). Note the difference between ‘Moodle’ and ‘Module’. There is need for knowledge of how to create and curate engaging digital contents, harness instructional videos, interactive simulations, multi-media apps/ platforms and podcasts to meet the variegated learning styles of different learners (Tulsiani, 2024). Of utmost importance

are teachers being able to troubleshoot, tackle common tech challenges and ensure that learning is not interrupted by avoidable glitches.

Essential Competencies for Teaching and Learning in sub-Saharan Africa in the Digital Era

Digital competencies cover a broad range of capabilities, including digital literacy/ proficiency, communication and collaboration, content creation and curation, cyber security awareness, and problem-solving and critical thinking capacity, adaptability and flexibility, data-driven decision making (European Commission, 2018; Mukhtar et al., 2020; Azanza et al., 2024). In the African context, researchers stress the importance of competencies such as managing mobile learning apps, using task management tools, creating digital content like screen tutorials and promoting online security. Nigerian teachers need these competencies to deliver lessons effectively and tackle challenges related to the digital divide and infrastructure. Adebanjo & Kanu (2025) outlined some competencies needed for teaching and learning even in the digital age as follows:

Organization

Teachers must be competent organizers of learning. Without organizational competency, teaching and learning would not run smoothly. Disruptions to learning activities would be the order of the day in any disorganized classroom. If the teacher lacks organization, tasks would not be completed on schedule and with ease. The simple way to spot teachers that are not organized is to check the quality of work done and the physical workspaces of the teachers. A popular adage goes thus 'A disorganized set of books is a sign of a disorganized mind'. Organized teachers do not find it difficult to manage personal and professional activities.

Time Management

A basic competence needed for growth in the digital era is how to manage and use time wisely. It has been noted that people do not really waste time. What happens really is to waste a portion of existence in time. Time is constant, but the teacher does not have unlimited time at disposal to waste if students must be taught and trained within a limited time. Any time wasted by the teacher may not be regained due to the fast pace of events in the world. Whether time is used wisely or not, wasting time means many things left undone and with no tangible achievement. Teachers' time wastage means that efficiency and effectiveness are lacking.

Digital Prowess and Innovation

The teacher's proficiency to navigate technological innovation and utilize digital devices (including new tools) that make use of essential software applications for success, both to the teacher, the learners and the employer would increase employability and productivity (Mansur, 2020). Digital competence encompasses ability to communicate, handle data, solve problems and engage in programming or data processing (Sadler, 2021).

Constant Personal, Life-long and Professional Development

The lead author had the privilege to train twenty teachers in a school in Abuja, Nigeria. It was surprising to discover that from January to August of the year, out of twenty teachers interviewed, only one admitted having read and completed about five books within the period. The job of teaching and learning is learning and teaching. If the African teacher is not consistently learning something new, the students cannot be better off. Some teachers cannot use digital devices because of lack of interest in learning the operational mode of these gadgets. Teachers who do not learn cannot be innovative. For remarkable progress to be recorded in education in Africa, there must be a paradigm shift in the mindset of teachers. Teachers must be great learners, thinkers and researchers. Ideas are generated through thinking. Teachers must learn to think out of the box and think without restriction and put the mind to use through maintaining a decent imaginative power. No product can be invented without putting the mind to gainful work.

Emotional Intelligence: Many teachers in Africa teach out of anger and frustration. The passion to teach is lacking, though they must stay on to get the monthly remuneration. Some teachers have made brilliant students hate the teaching profession owing to the sadist mentality displayed in classrooms. Great teachers do not cause a child to feel bad. Great teachers have the skills to connect with all learners. This type of teachers has the understanding that students need the help of teachers to learn, unlearn, relearn and make useful progress in their academic and life's pursuits. Teacher should not cause a child to feel bad in class. This could lead to thoughts of suicide or other kinds of trauma in the life of the learner. An emotionally intelligent teacher engages three pathways to get the brain fascinated and love to learn. These pathways include the eyes, the ears and the emotion of learners. These linkages/ routes to the brain are very important for conceptualization of learning experiences, achievement, retention and effective transfer of knowledge, skills and ethics. Children are fascinated with beautiful pictures, graphics and videos (Kanu & Agu, 2020).

Conclusion

The paper discussed the attitudes, skills and competencies needed for teaching in the digital era in Africa while pointing out the dysfunctional state and widening gap occasioned by the digital divide among nations of the world. To change the narrative, Sub-Saharan Africa needs a new breed of educators that are passionate, enthusiastic and committed to raising learners that can compete favourably at global level.

Suggestions for Improvement

The following suggestions are put forward in the study

1. There is the need for the government of African nations to invest substantially in education sector for meaningful progress and sustained national transformation. Substantial part of the national budget should be apportioned to education.

2. Educators, policy makers and other key players in the education industry should learn and adapt the model being used in nations of the world such as Finland whose teacher education pattern is regarded as one of the best.
3. Teachers should be handsomely paid (a living wage with attractive welfare package) and on time. If the teaching profession becomes lucrative, the best brains would be attracted to it and the dearth of experienced teachers would reduce drastically
4. Teacher education programmes, educators and schools all over the Sub-Saharan African region should embrace digitalization and ICT for optimum performance and improved learning outcomes.
5. Importance of continuous professional development of teachers should be emphasized.

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COUNSELLING FOR FAMILY WELLBEING AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT: A FRAME WORK FOR PROMOTING NATIONAL STABILITY AND INTEGRATION

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Abstract

Family wellbeing is a critical bedrock for the moral development of individuals and the overall stability of a nation; of which its shortfalls may not only strain the resources and emotional reserves of families but also have broader implications for national stability and integration. This paper therefore, examined family wellbeing and moral development as it promotes national stability and integration. The concept of family wellbeing, measures of family wellbeing, family wellbeing and moral development, the essence of family wellbeing and moral development on national stability and integration were all examined in this paper. It was concluded that family wellbeing, being a fundamental aspect of moral development of individuals, the stability and integration of the nation, hence, tackling the issues attached to its adequacy requires an all-inclusive approach that recognizes the diverse needs of families and implementation of policies and interventions that is aimed at strengthening the family units. Among others, it was recommended that, parents should endeavour to employ a parenting pattern that will positively impact upbringing of their children. Educational institutions should integrate family life education into their curricula to equip individuals with the skills needed for healthy family relationships. This education should cover topics such as communication, conflict resolution, and financial management.

Keywords: Family Wellbeing, Moral Development, National Stability and Integration.

Introduction

Family wellbeing is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of moral development and a fundamental pillar for national stability. The family, often regarded as the first socializing agent, plays a critical role in shaping the moral compass of individuals. From early childhood, the family environment is where values, norms, and ethical principles are first instilled, establishing the premise for a person's future behavior and decision-making. As societies evolve, the

traditional family structure has faced numerous challenges, including economic pressures, cultural shifts, and the impact of globalization, all of which have profound implications for both individual moral development and the broader societal stability (Lerner, Rothbaum, Boulos, & Castellino, 2022).

In the context of national stability, the family unit is often viewed as a microcosm of the larger society. A well-functioning family contributes to national stability, economic productivity, and civic responsibility, all of which are essential for the stability of a nation (Minuchin, 2018). Conversely, when family wellbeing is compromised, there can be far-reaching consequences, including a breakdown in social values, an increase in crime, and a weakening of national identity. Studies have shown that societies with strong family structures tend to exhibit lower rates of social unrest and higher levels of national development (Cherlin, 2020).

The relationship between family wellbeing, moral development, and national stability is in various dimension. On one hand, a stable family environment fosters the development of individuals who are likely to contribute positively to society. On the other hand, societal stability can reinforce family wellbeing by providing the necessary economic and social support systems (Heckman, 2019). However, the erosion of family values and structures, driven by factors such as urbanization, migration, and changing cultural norms, poses a significant threat to both individual and national development (Putnam, 2020).

Despite the critical role of family in fostering moral development and ensuring national stability, there is growing concern about the increasing rates of family disintegration and the corresponding decline in moral values across many societies. The rise in divorce rates, single-parenthood, and family dysfunction are often cited as contributing factors to the erosion of societal values (Amato, 2019). This deterioration of family structures has been linked to various social problems, including youth delinquency, substance abuse, and a decline in civic engagement, all of which threaten national stability (Wilcox, 2021).

Moreover, while the importance of family wellbeing is widely acknowledged, there is a gap in understanding the specific mechanisms through which family wellbeing influences moral development and, by extension, national stability. Existing studies have primarily focused on the negative outcomes associated with family dysfunction, with less attention given to the positive role that a healthy family environment and moral development play in promoting national stability and integration (Lansford, 2020). This study, therefore seeks to address this gap by exploring the interconnectedness of family wellbeing, moral development, and national stability, and by identifying strategies to enhance family wellbeing as a means of promoting national stability.

Family Wellbeing

Family wellbeing is a multidimensional construct that encompasses various aspects of the family's functioning and quality of life. It reflects the extent to which families are able to provide a stable, nurturing, and supportive environment for all members, enabling them to thrive both individually and collectively. This concept has garnered increasing attention in recent years, as

scholars recognize its central role in fostering healthy individuals and stable societies According to Walsh (2022), family wellbeing is a holistic and multidimensional concept that encompasses the overall physical, emotional, social, and economic health of a family unit. It reflects the extent to which family members experience a sense of stability, security, and satisfaction in their relationships and daily lives. Family wellbeing is characterized by positive family dynamics, including effective communication, mutual support, and a harmonious home environment, all of which contribute to the individual development and collective resilience of the family.

Measures of Family Wellbeing

Family Wellbeing can be measured and understood through several key dimensions, including economic stability, emotional and psychological health, social relationships, and physical health. These dimensions interact in complex ways to influence the overall wellbeing of the family unit.

Economic Stability: Economic stability is foundational to family wellbeing. It refers to the family's ability to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and education. Economic challenges, such as unemployment or underemployment, can place significant stress on family members, leading to adverse outcomes such as poor mental health and strained relationships (Conger et al., 2019). Families with stable financial resources are better equipped to provide for their children's development and to foster a sense of security and stability (Brown & Hamilton, 2021).

Emotional and Psychological Health: The emotional and psychological health of family members is another critical component of family wellbeing. Families that foster open communication, emotional support, and positive interactions contribute to the mental health and resilience of each member (Walsh, 2022). Research has shown that children who grow up in emotionally supportive environments are more likely to develop strong self-esteem, emotional regulation skills, and healthy interpersonal relationships. Conversely, families characterized by conflict, neglect, or emotional abuse can have long-lasting negative effects on the mental health of all members.

Social Relationships: Social relationships within the family, as well as the family's connections with extended family, friends, and the broader community, play a vital role in family wellbeing. Strong, positive relationships within the family provide a sense of belonging, love, and support, which are essential for individual development and family cohesion (Olson &Gorall, 2021). Additionally, families that maintain healthy social networks can draw on external resources and support in times of need, enhancing their resilience to stress and adversity.

Physical Health: The physical health of family members is another important aspect of family wellbeing. This includes access to healthcare, nutritious food, safe housing, and opportunities for physical activity. Families that prioritize physical health are better able to prevent and manage illness, leading to improved overall wellbeing (Baker & Wilkinson, 2020). Furthermore, physical

health is closely linked to emotional and psychological wellbeing, as chronic health problems can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression within the family.

Family Wellbeing and Moral Development

Parenting Pattern and Moral Development

One of the most significant influences on moral development within the family is parenting pattern. Baumrind's (2017) framework identifies four primary parenting styles. These are authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. Each of these has distinct implications for moral development. Authoritative parenting, characterized by high levels of warmth and structure, is widely regarded as the most conducive to positive moral development. Children raised in authoritative households tend to exhibit higher levels of moral reasoning, empathy, and social responsibility (Walker, Hennig, &Krettenauer, 2010). This is because authoritative parents provide clear expectations and consistent discipline while also encouraging open communication and the expression of individual thoughts and feelings.

In contrast, authoritarian parenting, which is marked by strict discipline and low responsiveness, may lead to compliance without internalization of moral values. Children in such environments may follow rules out of fear of punishment rather than understanding or agreeing with the moral principles behind those rules (Kochanska, Aksan, & Nichols, 2013). Permissive parenting, which lacks clear boundaries and often results in inconsistent discipline, can lead to difficulties in developing self-regulation and moral responsibility. Finally, neglectful parenting, where there is a lack of both responsiveness and structure, is associated with the poorest outcomes in moral development, as children may struggle with understanding societal norms and the consequences of their actions (Laible, Carlo, & Roesch, 2014).

Family Dynamics and Moral Development

Family dynamics, including the quality of relationships among family members, also significantly impact moral development. A supportive family environment, characterized by strong emotional bonds and mutual respect, fosters the development of moral values such as empathy, fairness, and cooperation. Children learn moral behaviors more through observation and imitation of their parents' and siblings' actions. For example, witnessing acts of kindness, honesty, and fairness within the family encourages children to adopt these behaviors themselves (Grusec& Hastings, 2014).

Conversely, dysfunctional family dynamics, such as high levels of conflict, aggression, or emotional neglect, can impede moral development. Children in such environments may struggle with forming healthy relationships and may develop maladaptive moral reasoning, such as justifying harmful behaviors or failing to recognize the impact of their actions on others (Patrick, Gibbs, & Puzzanchera, 2019). Moreover, the presence of role models who engage in morally questionable behaviors, such as dishonesty or violence, can lead to the internalization of similar values by children (Bandura, 2001).

Family Communication Patterns and Moral Development

Effective communication within the family is essential for moral development. Open, honest, and respectful communication fosters an environment where children feel valued and heard, which is critical for the development of moral reasoning and ethical decision-making. Through family discussions about moral dilemmas, children are exposed to different perspectives and encouraged to think critically about ethical issues. This dialogical approach to moral education within the family enhances children's ability to engage in moral reasoning and to develop a sense of justice and fairness (Smetana, 2011). In contrast, poor communication patterns, such as lack of dialogue or authoritarian communication where children's opinions are dismissed, can stifle moral development. When children are not encouraged to express their thoughts or question on moral issues, they may develop a superficial understanding of morality, relying more on external rules than on internalized moral principles (Turiel, 2016). Additionally, families that avoid discussing moral or ethical issues may inadvertently convey the message that such topics are unimportant, leading to a lack of moral engagement by children.

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Socio-Cultural Influence on Family and Moral Development

The broader socio-cultural environment also plays a significant role in shaping moral development within the family context. Cultural norms, religious beliefs, and societal values are transmitted through family interactions and practices. For instance, families that place a strong emphasis on communal values, such as cooperation and altruism, are likely to foster these values in their children (Krettenauer, 2011). Similarly, religious practices and teachings within the family can provide a framework for moral development, offering guidelines for ethical behavior and a sense of moral duty (Hart & Carlo, 2015). However, socio-cultural influences can also pose challenges to moral development, especially in contexts where there is a dissonance between family values and societal norms. For example, in rapidly changing societies where traditional values are being questioned or replaced by more individualistic values, families may struggle to imbibe a consistent set of moral principles in their children (Schweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 2017). This can lead to moral confusion or conflict, as children navigate between the differing moral expectations of their family and society.

Family Wellbeing and Moral development as a framework in Promoting National Stability and Integration

The concept of family wellbeing and moral development is increasingly recognized as a critical factor influencing the stability of nations. The duo play a foundational role in shaping the moral and social values of individuals who constitute the broader society. As the primary socializing agent, the family is responsible for instilling values, norms, and behaviors that are essential for the development of responsible and morally upright citizens. These citizens, in turn, contribute to the stability and prosperity of their nation. National stability, which is the glue that holds a society together, is deeply rooted in the wellbeing of families. When families are stable and healthy, they are more likely to produce individuals who are socially responsible and committed to the common good of the society. Research indicates that societies with strong family structures tend to exhibit higher levels of national stability and integration, lower crime rates, and greater political stability (Smith & Morgan, 2022). Conversely, when families are fractured or dysfunctional, the resultant national instability can manifest in various forms, including increased crime, social unrest, and weakened national integration.

National security, both in terms of internal stability and external defence, closely linked to family wellbeing. Families serve as the first line of defence in instilling a sense of national identity and loyalty. When families are strong and cohesive, they foster a sense of belonging and patriotism in their members, which translates into a committed and united citizenry. Inversely, family disintegration can lead to a breakdown in social order and create conditions that are ripe for national instability and disintegration. A recent report by the National Institute for Family Studies (2023) found that communities with higher rates of family breakdown are more susceptible to crime and insurgency, highlighting the importance of family wellbeing in maintaining national security.

Conclusion

Family wellbeing is foundational to the moral development of individuals and the stability and integration of the nation. However, family wellbeing is continually challenged by a range of factors, including socioeconomic instability, changes in family structure, cultural pressures, health issues, technological influences, environmental stressors, and family conflicts. These challenges not only strain the resources and emotional reserves of families but also have broader implications for national stability and integration. Tackling these issues requires an all-inclusive approach that recognizes the diverse needs of families and implements policies and interventions aimed at strengthening family units. While promoting family wellbeing, we can create a more resilient society, where individuals are better equipped to contribute positively to national development and stability.

Recommendations

From the foregoing, the following are therefore recommended:

i. Parents should endeavour to employ a parenting pattern that will positively impact upbringing of their children.

ii. Educational institutions should integrate family life education into their curricula to equip individuals with the skills needed for healthy family relationships. This education should cover topics such as communication, conflict resolution, and financial management.

iii. Media platforms should promote positive family values and realistic portrayals of family life, countering the negative effects of unrealistic expectations and harmful content. Media literacy programs should also be developed to help families navigate the digital landscape responsibly.

iv. Community organizations should create support networks for families, particularly those in non-traditional structures such as single-parent or blended families. These networks should provide resources, counseling, and peer support to help families navigate their unique challenges.

v. Healthcare providers should offer comprehensive mental health services that address the psychological and emotional needs of all family members. Early intervention programs should be established to prevent and treat mental health disorders that can disrupt family wellbeing.

vi. Policymakers should enact legislation that promotes work-life balance, including paid family leave and flexible working hours. These policies would enable parents to spend more quality time with their children, fostering stronger family bonds.

vii. Governments should implement and strengthen social safety nets that provide financial support to families facing economic hardships. This includes expanding access to unemployment benefits, affordable housing, and healthcare services to ensure that all families can meet their basic needs.

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LEVERAGING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND COUNSELLING IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence AI is the in-thing in every sphere of living and as such, every sector has adapted to it including education and counselling. This intelligence offers unprecedented opportunities for streamlined conflict resolution and data-driven insights. This paper explores the integration of AI tools in dispute resolution and counselling within educational setting. It focuses on its potential to enhance communication, conflict mediation and provides data driving insights for decision making. The paper was hinged on two theories such as technological mediation theory and conflict management, the study reviewed existing AI applications such as chatbots, sentiment analysis systems, and predictive analytics platforms that support school counsellors and administrators in addressing interpersonal and group disputes. Furthermore, the paper also explores the ethical, technical, and human factors influencing AI adoption, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges associated with these innovations. The paper suggested among others that School counsellors and teachers should receive continuous professional development to competently interpret AI-generated insights, understand algorithmic limitations, and maintain empathy in AI-supported counselling.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Dispute Resolution, Counselling, Educational Technology, and Conflict Management

Introduction

The rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping various sectors, including education and counselling, where it is increasingly recognised as a valuable tool for dispute resolution. Educational institutions, as microcosms of society, are prone to conflicts arising from interpersonal differences, academic pressures, and organisational challenges. Traditional counselling approaches, though effective, often face limitations in terms of scalability, timeliness, and access to data-driven insights. AI presents an opportunity to bridge these gaps by offering tools that can detect early signs of conflict, provide tailored interventions, and support

counsellors in decision-making. While AI encompasses various applications across different sectors, its ability to analyse data, understand language, and support decision-making presents an exciting opportunity for dispute resolution and counselling in educational settings.

Artificial Intelligence, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2019), refers to a system's ability to correctly interpret external data, learn from such data, and use the learning to achieve specific goals through flexible adaptation. Similarly, Russell and Norvig (2021) define AI as the study and design of intelligent agents systems that perceive their environment and take actions to maximise their chances of achieving set objectives. More recently, Haque, Khan, and Rahman (2023) describe AI as the simulation of human cognitive processes by machines, particularly in problem-solving, reasoning, and natural language understanding.

In the context of educational resolution, these capabilities enable AI systems to detect emerging tensions, assess emotional states, monitor sentiments shifts in communication exchange and suggests preventive conflict management strategies before conflicts intensify. In this regard, Sahu and Rathore (2022) noted that AI-assisted counselling can significantly reduce counsellor workload while improving the accuracy of intervention strategies.

In another disposition, Dignum (2019) maintained that the integration of AI into human-centred processes like counselling must be approached with careful consideration of ethical implications, including data privacy, transparency, and algorithmic bias. Therefore, while AI offers remarkable potential to enhance dispute resolution in educational settings, its application must be guided by principles that uphold both technological efficiency and the human values central to counselling.

This paper examined the integration of AI tools in dispute resolution and counselling within the educational settings, it also reviewed their potential and limitations, and provided suggestions for effective and ethical adoption.

Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is an intelligent system which combines computer programs to perform creative functions, solve problems, draw conclusions, and make decisions with human-like intelligence. According to Nwanguma and Onyeukwu (2023), Artificial intelligence is "the ability of digital computers or automated systems to execute functions traditionally associated with human intellectual capabilities. Similarly, Ogunbodede & Atchrim (2025) refer to AI as a catalyst for economic growth and innovation in Nigeria, they define AI as "a system's ability to correctly interpret external data, to learn from such data, and to use those learnings to achieve specific goals and tasks through flexible adaptation.

In the fields of counselling and dispute resolution, AI serves as a powerful support by analyzing interaction channels, detecting friction, and recommending timely, preventative measures. These tools empower counsellors with data-driven insights, leading to more effective decision-making. Furthermore, the application of Natural Language Processing (NLP), Machine Learning (ML), and sentiment analysis has shown success in analyzing communication and

supporting intervention in educational settings (Graesser et al., 2014; Bosch et al., 2016). These tools empower counsellors with data-driven insights, leading to more effective decision-making. Furthermore, the application of Natural Language Processing (NLP), Machine Learning (ML), and sentiment analysis has shown success in analyzing communication and supporting intervention in educational settings.

Dispute Resolution

Dispute resolution refers to the methods and processes through which conflicts between individuals or groups are addressed in a constructive manner to achieve mutually acceptable outcomes. Fisher, Ury, and Patton (2019) describe it as a structured approach to resolving differences by focusing on interests rather than positions, thereby fostering long-term relationships. In educational contexts, this involves strategies that range from informal discussions and peer mediation to formal procedures such as arbitration and grievance handling.

From a sociological perspective, Moore (2014) categorises dispute resolution into negotiation, mediation, and arbitration, each with distinct roles in reducing tension and restoring cooperation. Ury, Brett, and Goldberg (2020) further emphasise the preventive aspect of dispute resolution, noting that early interventions often prevent escalation into more serious conflicts. In the school environment, Ibrahim and Ojo (2021) observe that traditional punitive approaches are increasingly being replaced with participatory methods that involve all stakeholders in problem-solving.

When integrated with AI, dispute resolution benefits from the ability to analyse behavioural patterns, identify root causes more efficiently, and recommend interventions tailored to the unique dynamics of each case. This intersection between human-centred practices and technology naturally connects to the concept of counselling, which remains central to conflict management in educational settings.

Counselling

Counselling in educational settings is a professional service aimed at promoting the academic, emotional, and social well-being of students, as well as fostering positive relationships within the school community. The American Counselling Association (ACA, 2023) defines counselling as a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals. The integration of AI into counselling can enhance its effectiveness by augmenting traditional practices with AI-driven insights and tools.

AI-driven insights and tools include Chatbots. Chatbots are digital systems that simulate human-like conversation using Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Machine Learning (ML) techniques. In educational settings, they are often deployed as virtual assistants to provide information, answer frequently asked questions, and facilitate communication between students and faculty. In dispute resolution, chatbots can act as initial support systems, offering

preliminary guidance and suggestions for students experiencing conflicts. For example, a chatbot can ask a student about the nature of the conflict, provide information on school policies, and offer suggestions for resolving the issue.

This then implies that AI-based chatbots can extend the availability of support beyond traditional counselling hours, while sentiment analysis can provide counsellors with a more comprehensive understanding of student emotional states, allowing them to tailor interventions more effectively. Researchers such as Egbochuku and Ugoji (2017) emphasised that in schools, counselling functions as a preventive, developmental, and remedial service, enabling early intervention in behavioural and relational challenges before they escalate. Case studies can provide real-world examples of how chatbots have been successfully integrated in educational settings. For instance, a study by Johansen et al. (2019) found that a chatbot implemented in a Norwegian high school significantly improved student engagement and satisfaction with the school's conflict resolution process.

According to Eyo, Joshua, and Esen (2018), counselling provides learners with a safe space to explore personal concerns, develop coping strategies, and resolve interpersonal conflicts constructively. Uchenna and Bello (2022) add that in family and school contexts, counselling mediates generational and cultural misunderstandings, helping to bridge communication gaps. These roles are increasingly supported by technological innovations; for example, AI-powered chatbots can provide initial guidance and collect information before a student meets with a human counsellor. Given its central role in resolving disputes and supporting personal growth, counselling becomes even more effective when integrated with modern tools such as educational technology, which is the next concept to consider.

Educational technology

Educational technology refers to the use of digital tools, platforms, and systems to enhance teaching, learning, and educational administration. Given its central role in resolving disputes and supporting personal growth, counselling becomes even more effective when integrated with modern tools such as educational technology. Educational technology is not merely about hardware and software, but about the purposeful integration of these tools to solve pedagogical challenges and improve learner outcomes (Bates, 2019). Selwyn (2022) notes that educational technology is not merely about hardware and software, but about the purposeful integration of these tools to solve pedagogical challenges and improve learner outcomes.

In the context of dispute resolution and counselling, educational technology enables online counselling sessions, digital case management systems, and AI-assisted student monitoring platforms. Anderson and Rivera (2021) emphasised that technology-based counselling tools expand access to support services, particularly for students in remote or underserved areas. Furthermore, Holmes et al. (2022) argue that when AI is embedded in educational technology, it can provide predictive analytics

to identify at-risk students and recommend early interventions. By functioning as a bridge between AI innovations and counselling practice, educational technology plays a pivotal role in modernising conflict management in schools. This naturally leads to a discussion of data analytics, which underpins many AI-driven tools in this domain.

Data analytics

Data analytics refers to the systematic process of examining datasets to extract meaningful patterns, trends, and insights that inform decision-making. Provost and Fawcett (2013) described it as the science of learning from data to improve future performance and outcomes. In the education sector, data analytics has been increasingly applied to student behaviour monitoring, academic performance tracking, and institutional decision-making (Siemens & Long, 2011).

In the context of conflict management, data analytics enables counsellors and administrators to detect early warning signs of disputes, such as declining grades, absenteeism, or negative communication patterns. Johnson and Smith (2020) highlight that predictive models can flag students at risk of interpersonal conflicts, allowing timely interventions. When combined with AI, these systems can process vast amounts of unstructured data from emails to social media posts—identifying emotional cues that may signal potential disputes. By offering objective, evidence-based insights, data analytics strengthens the effectiveness of counselling and mediation strategies. This analytical capacity also supports more advanced AI applications, such as sentiment analysis, which is the next concept for consideration.

Sentiment analysis

Sentiment analysis, also known as opinion mining, is the computational process of identifying and categorising emotions, attitudes, and opinions expressed in text or speech. Liu (2020) defines it as the use of natural language processing (NLP), text analysis, and computational linguistics to systematically detect subjective information. In educational contexts, sentiment analysis has been applied to evaluate student feedback, monitor online discussions, and assess emotional well-being (Cambria et al., 2017). In dispute resolution and counselling, sentiment analysis enables counsellors to quickly assess the emotional tone of student communications, whether in emails, chat messages, or social media posts. This can help identify potential conflicts before they escalate. Medhat, Hassan, and Korashy (2014) note that sentiment analysis not only measures polarity (positive, neutral, negative) but also detects nuanced emotions such as frustration, anxiety, or hostility, which are critica in understanding conflict dynamics.

By providing timely insights into the emotional states of individuals, sentiment analysis complements other AI-driven tools in educational counselling. While these technologies hold great potential for improving counselling and dispute resolution, their effectiveness depends on careful consideration of privacy concerns, algorithm transparency, and mitigating potential bias in data collection and analysis (Wagner & Altepeter, 2021).

Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict management strategies encompass various approaches and techniques for resolving disputes and restoring harmonious relationships between individuals or groups. Conflict resolution strategies are a range of methods and techniques used to manage and resolve disputes between individuals or groups. These strategies aim to address the underlying issues that cause conflicts, promote understanding and cooperation, and facilitate mutually satisfactory solutions" (Greer et al., 2021). They are tools that help people resolve disagreements and find peaceful solutions to conflicts. They can be used in a variety of settings, including schools, workplaces, and communities. The goal of conflict resolution strategies is to reduce tensions, repair relationships, and promote understanding between parties involved in a conflict" (Lederach, 2019). Conflict resolution strategies are tools that help people resolve disagreements and find peaceful solutions to conflicts. They can be used in a variety of settings, including schools, workplaces, and communities. The goal of conflict resolution strategies is to reduce tensions, repair relationships, and promote understanding between parties involved in a conflict" (Lederach, 2019).

According to Rahim (2021), conflict management strategies can be categorized into five primary types: accommodating, avoiding, compromising, competing, and collaborating. These strategies vary in the degree of concern for one's own outcomes versus concern for the other party's outcomes, and their effectiveness depends on the nature of the conflict and the relational context (Rahim, 2021). Accommodating, involving high concern for others and low concern for self, can be useful when preserving relationships is critical or when one party prioritizes harmony over winning; however, overreliance may suppress legitimate needs and stifle innovation (Jones & Comfort, 2020; Kim & Kim, 2021). Avoiding, marked by low concern for both self and others, can serve as a short-term strategy to de-escalate emotional tensions, but persistent avoidance often leads to unresolved issues and diminished trust (Lee et al., 2022; Ribeiro & Martins, 2023).

Competing, or assertively pursuing one's own goals at the expense of others, may be effective in time-pressured situations requiring decisive action, yet excessive competitiveness can harm long-term collaboration and reduce psychological safety (Nguyen & Bryant, 2021; Singh & Gupta, 2023). *Compromising*, which represents moderate concern for both self and others, often provides practical, mutually acceptable solutions; however, it may result in suboptimal outcomes because neither party fully attains its goals (Chen & Wang, 2019; Patel & Krishnan, 2022). In contrast, *collaborating* high concern for both self and others aims for integrative, win-win solutions and has been linked to improved relationship quality, shared learning, and sustained performance outcomes (Garcia & Huang, 2020; Abdullah & Al-Shammari, 2024). Importantly, contemporary research emphasizes that no single style is universally best; rather, effective conflict management involves ***adaptiveuse*** of these strategies in response to situational demands, cultural norms, power dynamics, and organizational goals (Rahim, 2021; Zhao & Li, 2024).

In the context of educational settings, conflict management strategies can involve a range of approaches depending on the nature of the conflict and the individuals involved. For instance,

peer mediation programs involve students acting as mediators to resolve disputes among their peers (Goldstein & Brooks, 2019). Restorative justice practices, which emphasize repairing harm done to relationships rather than punishing wrongdoers, have also gained popularity in schools (Crawford & O'Malley, 2021). These methods have been found to be effective in reducing disciplinary incidents and improving the overall climate of schools.

Moreover, educators can employ conflict resolution strategies to prevent conflicts before they arise. For example, conflict resolution training programs can be implemented to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary for handling disagreements peacefully (Cole, 2017). Similarly, creating a positive school culture that promotes empathy, understanding, and respect can reduce the likelihood of conflicts arising in the first place (Jackson, 2018). These approaches, when combined with AI-driven tools such as sentiment analysis and predictive analytics, can provide a comprehensive and effective strategy for addressing conflicts in educational settings. In the next section of this paper, we will explore the integration of these technologies in more detail, focusing on real-world applications and case studies.

Theoretical Framework

This review was anchored on two complementary theoretical models: Social Exchange Theory Thibaut and Kelley (1959) and Dialectical Perspective by Keltner et al., (2003).

The Social Exchange Theory by Kelley (1959)

The Social Exchange Theorywas propounded by Kelley (1959). This theory emphasised the role of perceived costs and benefits in human interactions and decision-making, including conflict management. According to this theory, individuals strive for mutually advantageous exchanges in their relationships, including interpersonal and intergroup contexts. In the school environment, conflicts can arise when individuals perceive an imbalance in their exchanges, such as unfair treatment or unequal distribution of resources.

By incorporating AI-driven tools such as sentiment analysis and predictive analytics, counsellors can identify imbalances or negative sentiments early on, facilitating timely interventions and negotiations that aim to restore balance and mutual benefit. This can be seen as a technologically enhanced application of the Social Exchange Theory, helping to reduce conflicts and foster constructive relationships in educational settings. Social Exchange Theory also provides a framework for understanding the costs and benefits of interpersonal and intergroup interactions, which can be leveraged by AI-driven predictive analytics to detect imbalances and recommend interventions that restore harmony.

The Dialectical Perspective (Keltner et al., 2003)

The Dialectical Perspective theory was propounded by Keltneret al., (2003). Dialectical Perspective theory emphasised the idea that conflict is not inherently negative but can be a constructive force for growth and development when managed effectively. The Dialectical Perspective suggests that conflicts are often a result of competing, yet complementary, opposites or "dialectics," such as autonomy versus connectedness, continuity versus change, and

integration versus separation. By understanding these dialectics and facilitating dialogue that acknowledges both sides, counsellors can help resolve conflicts and foster empathy and understanding.

AI-powered tools such as chatbots and predictive analytics can support this process by providing real-time insights into the underlying tensions and facilitating early interventions that address the core dialectics. Similarly, the Dialectical Perspective highlights the importance of understanding conflicting needs and tensions, which can be supported by sentiment analysis and chatbots that facilitate open, empathetic dialogue.

Application of AI in Dispute Resolution and Counselling

The use of AI-driven tools, grounded in theoretical frameworks such as the Social Exchange Theory and the Dialectical Perspective, has shown promise in enhancing conflict management strategies in schools. These tools can be used in various ways, including: Predictive Analytics and Sentiment Analysis.

Predictive Analytics: Algorithms can analyse historical data to identify patterns and predict potential conflicts, allowing counsellors and administrators to intervene early and prevent escalation. As Omidyar et al. (2019) argued, predictive analytics can analyse historical data to identify patterns of potential conflicts, enabling early intervention and prevention. These insights demonstrate the potential of AI-driven tools in enhancing conflict management strategies, supporting the effective resolution of disputes and fostering harmonious relationships within schools. Also, researchers such as Chen et al. (2020) who found that predictive analytics systems based on social network analysis were effective in identifying high-risk students in schools.

Sentiment Analysis: NLP techniques can analyse written or verbal communication to identify emotional patterns and assess the impact of conflicts on individuals and groups. Foster et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of incorporating sentiment analysis in AI-based conflict management systems to facilitate empathetic and personalised interactions with students. Similarly, Sinha and Wilson (2018) explored the use of sentiment analysis in analyzing student feedback and found that it could provide valuable insights into the emotional climate of schools, leading to more targeted interventions. Li et al. (2022) proposed a sentiment-based chatbot for conflict management in schools that combined sentiment analysis with machine learning techniques to provide personalized advice and resources to students. Even though there very many usefulness of predictive analytics and sentiment analysis, there are challenges and ethical considerations associated with the use of AI in this context, which must be carefully navigated to ensure the responsible and beneficial integration of AI in conflict resolution and counselling.

Challenges and Ethical considerations of using AI tools in educational settings:

Although AI has the potential to enhance conflict management and support personal growth, there are several concerns that need to be addressed. These challenges include:

Bias and fairness: AI systems can inadvertently perpetuate existing biases and inequalities if they are not trained on diverse and representative datasets. O'Neil (2016) in her book, "Weapons of Math Destruction," highlights the risks of AI bias and calls for more scrutiny and accountability in the development and deployment of AI systems. Calo and Crawford (2016) proposed a "Fairness by Design" approach that involves incorporating fairness considerations from the design phase of AI systems, particularly in sectors like education where privacy and bias concerns are prevalent.

Privacy and security: Collecting and analysing sensitive information about students and families raises serious concerns about privacy, confidentiality, and the potential misuse of personal data. Scholars have noted that the increasing use of data analytics and AI in education can lead to heightened surveillance, data breaches, and ethical dilemmas regarding consent and transparency (Slade & Prinsloo, 2013; Regan & Jesse, 2019; Williamson, 2017).

Data privacy and security: Barocas and Selbst (2016) argue that AI systems may exacerbate existing biases and injustices by perpetuating human biases in datasets and decision-making algorithms. They emphasize the importance of regulating data privacy and security in education**.** AI-based recommendations and decisions can be opaque, making it difficult to understand how these systems arrive at conclusions, leading to potential disputes and mistrust.

Human-machine interaction: The use of AI in counselling and dispute resolution raises questions about the role of human expertise and empathy in these processes. Meredith Whittaker and Alex Campolo (2017) examine the unintended consequences of AI-driven systems, particularly in the context of decision-making and accountability. They suggest a framework for ensuring that human values and expertise are incorporated into the design and deployment of AI systems.

These ethical considerations must be carefully weighed and mitigated to ensure that AI is used ethically and responsibly to support educational counselling and dispute resolution

Approaches taken to address challenges

There are several approaches that can be taken to address the changes

1. **Ensuring Diversity and Inclusivity in Dataset Development**: Ensuring that datasets used in AI systems reflect the diverse socio-cultural, linguistic, and economic experiences of learners is a key strategy for reducing bias and discrimination. In the Nigerian context, Ifediatu (2025) highlights that AI systems developed without consideration of local realities risk reinforcing existing inequalities in education, particularly given the country's complex socio-economic and linguistic diversity. Equitable AI requires participatory design involving educators and learners to avoid systems that entrench disadvantage rather than dismantle it.

2. **Implementing Robust Data Security and Privacy Policies:** The rapid deployment of AI in education and other sectors underscores the need for strong governance frameworks that define how personal data are collected, stored, used, and protected. Nigerian legal scholars Emmanuel Salami and Nwankwo (2024) argue that without robust privacy and data protection frameworks tailored to AI's data practices, individuals' rights may be compromised through unauthorized data processing or misuse. Strengthening Nigeria's data protection regime to address AI-specific concerns such as algorithmic transparency and accountability can mitigate privacy risks while enabling innovation.
3. **Promoting Transparency, Explainability, and Human Oversight:** AI systems should operate in ways that can be understood and interpreted by educators and stakeholders rather than as inscrutable black boxes. Incorporating explainability and human-in-the-loop processes allows for human intervention when automated decisions may be unfair or inappropriate. This approach aligns with broader calls in Nigerian AI ethics discourse for responsible use of technology emphasizing that AI should *augment* human judgment and respect learner rights rather than replace them.
4. **Developing Context-Specific Ethical and Policy Frameworks** Rather than adopting ethical frameworks developed for other regions without adaptation, AI governance in education should reflect local priorities and values. Nigerian researchers such as Elems-Ikwegbu (2025) stress the importance of creating ethical benchmarks and policy guidelines grounded in Nigeria's educational realities and institutional contexts. Such frameworks should integrate multidisciplinary perspectives, including educators, policy experts, and technologists, and address equity, inclusion, and responsible innovation.

Counselling Implications

1. AI-driven tools can support counsellors by providing timely insights into student wellbeing and conflict dynamics, facilitating early intervention and more tailored support.
2. The use of AI in counselling requires careful consideration of the role of human expertise and empathy, ensuring that AI complements rather than replaces human-centred approaches to dispute resolution.
3. Counsellors and educators should be adequately trained in data security and ethical use of AI to prevent misuse of sensitive information and maintain trust in these systems.
4. Schools and educational institutions should establish clear guidelines and policies for the use of AI tools, including consultation with students, parents, and other stakeholders.
5. Governments and educational authorities should consider funding research into ethical AI applications in education, promoting best practices and standards across the sector.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of artificial intelligence tools into conflict management and counselling in educational settings presents significant opportunities for improving responsiveness, early intervention, and data-informed decision-making. However, the

effectiveness of these technologies depends largely on how responsibly they are designed, implemented, and monitored. Ethical concerns relating to bias, privacy, transparency, and human oversight must remain central to AI adoption strategies. As scholars and practitioners, continued critical engagement with both the transformative potential and inherent risks of AI in education is essential. Interdisciplinary collaboration among educators, counsellors, technologists, and policymakers will play a crucial role in shaping AI systems that are equitable, context-sensitive, and aligned with educational values.

Suggestions

School counsellors and teachers should receive continuous professional development to competently interpret AI-generated insights, understand algorithmic limitations, and maintain empathy in AI-supported counselling. Without adequate human capacity, AI systems may be misapplied or over-relied upon, thereby weakening the relational foundation central to effective counselling practice.

School administrators and governing boards should establish clear governance and oversight mechanisms for AI adoption, including ethics review structures to ensure fairness, transparency, explainability, and compliance with data protection standards. Institutions must also ensure that parents and students are informed about how AI systems are used in counselling and conflict management processes to strengthen accountability and trust.

National and state governments should develop context-specific regulatory frameworks defining standards for data privacy, algorithmic accountability, and ethical compliance in educational settings. Public investment in locally grounded research is essential to ensure culturally relevant and equitable AI implementation.

AI developers and educational technology providers should collaborate closely with educators, counsellors, and subject experts during system design and deployment to ensure pedagogical appropriateness and cultural sensitivity. Clear documentation of system functions and limitations should accompany implementation to support informed institutional decision-making.

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ROLES OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN MEDIATING MARITAL CONFLICTS: A COUNSELLING PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of emotional intelligence in mediating marital conflicts from a counseling perspective. It draws on empirical literature, conceptual and theoretical review to understand how emotional intelligence influences marital satisfaction and conflict resolution, the paper further delves in to the common causes of marital conflicts, the mediating roles of emotional intelligence in marital conflicts as well as the techniques for building emotional intelligence in couples, finally the paper also further looks at the implication for counselling practice, the paper aims to equip counselors, educators, and couples with insights for emotionally intelligent relationship management.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Marital Conflicts.

Introduction

Marital relationships are foundational to societal stability, yet they are often afflicted by

conflict arising from poor communication, unfulfilled expectations, and emotional immaturity among others. In Nigeria, the rising rate of divorce, domestic violence, and emotional estrangement among couples has drawn the attention of counsellors and psychologists who seek lasting solutions to these relational breakdowns. While financial strain, infidelity, and cultural shifts are often cited as causes, emerging evidence suggests that emotional intelligence plays a critical, yet underappreciated, role in managing and resolving marital conflicts.

Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate their emotions their and those of others. In the marital context, Emotional Intelligence involves skills such as empathy, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and constructive communication (Suri & Kochhar, 2021). These skills can determine whether couples navigate conflict productively or descend into destructive patterns of behavior such as blame, resentment, and emotional withdrawal.

Counselling professionals are increasingly integrating emotional intelligence training into marital therapy and conflict mediation. This approach emphasizes self-reflection, empathy development, and emotional control as foundational tools for resolving disputes. Emotional intelligence offers not just a skillset but a mindset that promotes mutual respect, active listening, and non-violent communication.

Recent researches have highlighted the connection between emotional intelligence and marital stability, showing that couples with high emotional intelligence experience fewer conflicts and report higher marital satisfaction. Emotional regulation, empathy, and effective communication are key traits that foster emotional connection and reduce the likelihood of aggressive or avoidant behavior during disputes.

A study by Okafor and Jimoh (2021) surveyed 248 married individuals in southwestern Nigeria and found a strong correlation between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills. The study noted that individuals who scored high in emotional awareness and empathy were more likely to manage disagreements constructively, using dialogue and compromise rather than confrontation.

Similarly, the study by Eze and Adebayo (2022) examined the impact of emotional intelligence training on 60 couples undergoing marital counseling. After six weeks of structured EI intervention, the majority reported improved conflict management, reduced emotional reactivity, and enhanced mutual understanding. The researchers concluded that emotional intelligence is a trainable skill that can significantly improve marital quality.

Udo and Opara (2023) explored gender differences in emotional intelligence and conflict resolution styles among married educators. Their findings revealed that while women were more likely to express empathy and emotional sensitivity, men who had high emotional intelligence scores were also effective at resolving conflict through compromise and active listening. The study emphasized the need for targeted counselling approaches that enhance EI across both genders.

Collectively, these studies underscore the transformative potential of emotional intelligence in marital relationships. Couples with greater EI are more likely to manage their emotions constructively, de-escalate tension, and engage in meaningful conflict resolution, thereby reducing the risk of separation or emotional disconnect.

Conceptual review

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability of an individual to accurately perceive emotions (both their own and others'), understand emotional messages, regulate emotional responses, and use emotions to guide thinking and actions. The concept was popularized by psychologist Goleman (1995) who outlined five primary components of Emotinal Intelligent as follows:

i. Self-awareness

This is the foundation of EI. Self-awareness is the ability to recognize and understand one's moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others. In a marital setting, self-awareness allows a spouse to realize when they are becoming agitated or reactive, preventing knee-jerk reactions that can escalate conflict. It also involves being honest about one's emotional needs and vulnerabilities.

ii. Self-regulation

This is the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods and to think before acting. In emotionally intelligent couples, self-regulation means resisting the urge to lash out in anger, say hurtful things, or withdraw into silence. Instead, partners remain calm and composed even during heated discussions.

iii. Motivation

Emotionally intelligent individuals are driven by a strong internal desire to achieve and improve, rather than by external rewards. In marriage, motivation includes the commitment to make the relationship work, to grow together, and to overcome challenges as a team. This intrinsic motivation drives couples to seek peaceful resolutions rather than resorting to blame or avoidance.

iv. Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. It goes beyond sympathy. In a marital context, empathy allows a partner to feel what the other is going through to understand not just the words being said, but the emotional subtext. Empathetic partners validate each other's emotions, reducing defensiveness and building trust.

v. Social Skills

This refers to managing relationships effectively, building networks, and the ability to find common ground and build rapport. Good social skills in marriage include active listening, assertive communication (not aggressive or passive), negotiation, conflict resolution, and positive reinforcement.

Marital conflicts

Marital conflict refers to disagreements or misunderstandings that occur between spouses due to differences in opinions, values, expectations, desires, or unresolved issues. These conflicts can be minor (e.g., over chores) or major (e.g., infidelity or financial problems).

Common causes of marital conflicts:

i. Communication Breakdown: Inability to express needs or feelings clearly.
ii. Financial Stress: Disagreements about money management, savings, or spending habits.
iii. Infidelity and Trust Issues: Breach of trust can create long-term resentment.
iv. Sexual Incompatibility: Differing sexual needs or expectations.
v. Parenting Styles: Disagreements over child discipline, education, or values.
vi. Interference from Extended Family: In-laws or relatives influencing marital decisions.
vii. Cultural or Religious Differences: Varying backgrounds causing misunderstandings.
viii. Emotional Baggage: Unresolved trauma or issues from childhood or previous relationships.

Understanding these root causes is essential for developing intervention strategies that are both empathetic and practical.

The mediating role of emotional intelligence in marital conflicts

Emotional intelligence does not eliminate conflict, but it mediates or moderates the way conflict is handled (Ullah, 2022).

Conflict De-escalation

EI helps individuals avoid escalation by calming themselves before responding. A spouse with high EI knows when to pause, reflect, and speak from a place of understanding rather than rage.

Emotional Validation

Couples with emotional intelligence recognize each other's emotional expressions as valid even when they disagree. This validation helps reduce feelings of rejection and fosters closeness.

Constructive Communication

Emotional intelligence leads to communication styles that are open, honest, and respectful. Instead of yelling or shutting down, emotionally intelligent partners listen actively and respond with care.

Empathy During Disputes

Even in moments of disagreement, emotionally intelligent spouses can put themselves in each other's shoes. This reduces defensiveness and increases the likelihood of reconciliation.

Long-Term Relationship Resilience

EI equips couples with tools to adapt over time. Rather than letting small issues fester, emotionally intelligent partners address concerns early and with maturity.

Techniques for building Emotional Intelligence in couples

Counsellors can use the following exercises and techniques:

- **Emotional Journaling:** Encourages self-awareness by documenting emotional triggers and responses. Over time, patterns emerge that can guide behavioural change.
- **Active Listening Training:** Helps couples develop empathy and patience. One partner speaks while the other listens without interruption, paraphrases what they heard, and validates the speaker's feelings.
- **Role-Playing and Reversal:** Partners take turns acting out each other's roles during conflicts. This develops empathy and deeper emotional understanding.
- **Non-Violent Communication (NVC):** A communication style that encourages expressing observations, feelings, needs, and requests without blame or criticism.

Challenges in applying EI to Marital Conflict Resolution

Despite its benefits, applying EI in counseling has some limitations:

1. **Cultural Norms:** In some societies, expressing emotion is seen as weakness, particularly among men.
2. **Gender Expectations:** Emotional expression may be unevenly distributed; men may be discouraged from empathy, while women may be overburdened with emotional labor.
3. **Trauma History:** Individuals with unprocessed trauma may find it difficult to access emotional states or express feelings safely.
4. **Resistance to Counselling:** Some partners may deny their role in conflict and resist emotional growth (Basu, 2020).

Conclusion

Marital conflict is an inevitable aspect of intimate relationships, but it need not lead to disconnection or divorce. Emotional intelligence offers couples the tools to understand and manage their feelings, empathize with each other, and resolve disputes constructively.

This paper has shown that emotional intelligence when nurtured through counselling can significantly mediate conflict in Nigerian marriages. The way forward involves mainstreaming EI education in counselling programs and encouraging couples to develop the emotional skills necessary for enduring, respectful partnerships.

Rather than focusing solely on conflict avoidance, a counselling approach that builds emotional intelligence will empower couples to face challenges with maturity, compassion, and clarity.

Recommendations

The evidence supports the integration of emotional intelligence training into marital counseling programs in Nigeria. The following recommendations can help institutionalize Emotional Intelligence based conflict resolution in marriages:

1. Pre-marital Counseling Programs: Counselling centers and religious institutions should include EI modules in pre-marital education, focusing on empathy and emotion regulation.
2. Emotional Intelligence Workshops: Counsellors should offer group or individual workshops for couples facing relational challenges. These workshops should be practical, including role-play, journaling, and feedback sessions.
3. Curriculum Development: Schools of education and counselling should integrate EI training into their curricula to prepare professionals who can support families with EI skills. 4. Conflict Mediation Resources: Counselling centers should develop toolkit such as emotion recognition cards or guided conversation frameworks to help couples practice emotionally intelligent communication at home.
5. Further Research: Longitudinal and mixed-method studies are needed to explore the long-term impact of EI training on marriage stability across diverse Nigerian ethnic and socio-economic groups.

By promoting emotional intelligence, counsellors and educators can help build more resilient, empathetic, and communicative marriages ultimately contributing to stronger family units and a healthier society.

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EFFECT OF NEGOTIATION SKILLS TRAINING ON MARITAL CONFLICT AMONG MARRIED TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ABIA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of negotiation training on marital conflict among married primary school teachers in Abia State, Nigeria. A quasi-experimental pretest–posttest control group design using a 2×2 factorial matrix was adopted. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Twenty-four married teachers were selected from a population of 687 teachers identified with marital conflict cases in the state. The participants comprised 12 teachers in the negotiation training group and 12 in the control group. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed, and data were collected using the Marital Conflict Identification Questionnaire (MCIQ), a 30-item instrument developed by the researchers with a four-point rating scale. The instrument was validated by three experts from the College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State. Data were collected in three phases: pre-treatment, treatment, and post-treatment. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) tested the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Results revealed that negotiation training significantly reduced marital conflict, while gender showed no significant influence. Recommendations were made for counseling services and teacher support programme.

Keywords: Marital Conflict, Married Teachers, Negotiation Training

Introduction

Conflict, which refers to disagreement, often a prolonged one between a husband and wife, has been identified as a serious issue in many marriages. Ojukwu and Kadurumba (2014) defined marital conflict as a state of tension or stress between marital partners as couples attempt to carry out their marital roles. According to them, marital conflict stems from poor communication, lack

of intimacy, financial problems, and emotional distance that develops as life takes different turns. Conflict, as a form of disagreement, appears to be part of the daily lives of many couples because marriage provides a fertile ground for conflicts to emerge (Ojukwu & Kadurumba, 2014). This may arise from unmet expectations, differences in parenting styles, financial pressures, communication gaps, dominance by one partner, cultural differences, feminist perspectives, trust issues, sexual challenges, and other related factors.

Conflict can generally be described as a state of opposition. Sotonade (2018) defined conflict as a struggle for control over another person's behaviour or actions, noting that conflicts are inevitable in marital relationships. A disagreement in marriage becomes a conflict when it goes beyond normal intellectual differences and enters the emotional realm, leading to anxiety, anger, abusive language, and hostile behaviour. Marital conflict, therefore, refers to disagreement or incompatibility between spouses, especially when their goals, interests, and expectations diverge and become difficult to reconcile (Sotonade, 2018). The way couples manage conflict, rather than the conflict itself, often determines the stability and happiness of the marriage. Many marriages today are affected by persistent conflicts that sometimes result in separation or divorce. Although conflict may lead to hurt and emotional strain, it may also indicate that the relationship remains important to the individuals involved.

In marital conflicts, partners often compete for dominance, with power becoming a decisive factor in interactions. Ojukwu (2018) described marital conflict as a pattern of abusive behaviours or high levels of disagreement that significantly disturb the marital relationship. Research has shown that common areas of conflict among couples include financial management, housework, and sexual relations (Bryan et al., 2015). Justin, cited in Okwun (2021), viewed marital conflict as a situation in which a husband's or wife's desired goals are perceived as attainable by one partner but not by both, resulting in incompatibility, interactive struggle, and interference within the family system.

Regardless of the causes or areas of conflict, it is necessary for such conflicts to be resolved to ensure peaceful coexistence. This is because marital conflict has several negative consequences, including reduced happiness, economic instability, emotional stress, behavioural disorders, anxiety, and depression (Collins, 2013). In Abia State, several measures have been adopted to reduce marital conflict among couples, including counselling and advice from significant others such as church leaders, family members, and friends. Despite these efforts, the rate of marital conflict among married primary school teachers remains high and continues to affect their teaching effectiveness and service delivery in schools. This situation highlights the need to explore structured and professional intervention strategies such as negotiation skills training to reduce marital conflict among married teachers.

Negotiation plays a crucial role in building strong relationships and providing lasting and satisfactory solutions to conflicts while preventing temporary agreements that may lead to future disputes (Moustafa et al., 2025). Negotiation skills training involves structured interactions in

which individuals learn to communicate effectively, understand opposing interests, and reach mutually beneficial agreements. Regan (2013) described negotiation as a form of direct or indirect communication through which parties with opposing interests discuss and agree on joint actions to resolve disputes. He further identified various ineffective ways of handling conflict, such as giving in with resentment, using force, blaming partners, and avoiding confrontation, all of which often worsen marital conflict.

Kieren, Maguire, and Hurlbut (2016) suggested that effective conflict resolution strategies include compromise, agreement, reasoning, negotiation, active listening, and rational communication. Regan (2013) also identified key sub-skills necessary for effective negotiation, including agreement, empathy, observation, decision-making, emotional control, interpersonal skills, responsibility-taking, bargaining, and coexistence. Agreement involves freely accepting a partner's viewpoint without coercion, while empathy requires understanding the partner's feelings and perspectives. Observation helps individuals recognise and analyse situations accurately, while decision-making enables them to choose the best possible solution. Emotional control helps individuals manage their reactions, interpersonal skills enhance communication, and responsibility-taking encourages accountability for actions. Bargaining focuses on achieving mutual benefits without creating winners or losers, while coexistence encourages partners to accept and live with certain differences that cannot be resolved.

The researcher was motivated to investigate the factors that trigger marital conflict and identify practical solutions that could reduce such conflicts among married teachers. Effective management of marital conflict promotes maturity, mutual respect, and stability in marriage, which in turn enhances teachers' emotional well-being and improves their teaching effectiveness in schools. Since marital conflict affects not only individuals and families but also the wider society, it becomes necessary to equip couples with appropriate behavioural and negotiation skills. Therefore, this study examined the effectiveness of negotiation skills training in reducing marital conflict among married teachers in primary schools in Abia State.

Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 experience, coupled with the rapid increase in information and communication technology (ICT), contributed to increased domestic tension and violence among spouses and children, leading to a new wave of marital conflicts in many homes. During this period, many families experienced emotional stress, financial pressure, and communication breakdown, which intensified marital disagreements. In this context, negotiation skills became increasingly essential for managing and resolving conflicts in relationships. Literature abounds on the prevalence of marital conflict in modern society. Although conflicts are inevitable in marital relationships, the ability of couples to transform conflict into opportunities for building strong and lasting relationships remains a challenge. Many married teachers in primary schools in Abia State continue to experience marital conflicts that negatively affect their emotional stability, family life, and professional performance in schools. Despite the availability of

counselling and informal support systems, marital conflict remains prevalent.

There is evidence in literature that negotiation skills play a vital role in resolving interpersonal and marital conflicts. However, there is limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of negotiation skills training in reducing marital conflict among married teachers in primary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. This gap in knowledge necessitated this study. Therefore, this study was designed to determine the effect of negotiation skills training on the reduction of marital conflict among married teachers in primary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of negotiation on martial conflict among married primary schools teachers in Abia State. Specifically, the study sought:

1. To find out the difference in the mean score reduction of marital conflict among married primary school teachers exposed to negotiation skills and control at post-test.
2. To find out the effect of negotiation skills in the reduction of marital conflict among married primary school teachers based on gender.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the difference in the reduction mean score of marital conflict between married primary school teachers exposed to negotiation skills and the control at posttest?
2. What is the difference in the reduction mean score of marital conflicts among married primary school teachers exposed to negotiation skills based on gender?

Hypotheses

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

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in the reduction mean score of marital conflict between married primary school teachers exposed to negotiation skills and the control at post test.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference in the reduction mean score of marital conflicts among married primary school teachers exposed to negotiation skills based on gender.

Methodology

The study adopted a quasi-experimental design of pretest, posttest and control group using 1 2x2 factorial matrix. A total of 24 married teachers that were sampled from a population of 687 married primary school teachers identified to have cases of marital conflict in the state were used for the study. These comprised 12 married teachers each for negotiation training and control groups respectively. The study equally adopted multi-staged sampling. The instrument used for data collection was a 30-item questionnaire titled: Marital Conflict Identification Questionnaire (MCIQ). The instrument with 4-point rating scales were developed by the researcher and were

equally exposed to both face validation by three experts from the department Guidance and Counselling and Educational Measurement and Evaluation all from the College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Abia State. Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used to test the stability of MCIQ instrument which yielded indices of 0.84 and 0.85 respectively whereas their internal consistency was tested using Cronbach alpha statistic which yielded 0.74. Data were collected in three phases:

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

Pre-treatment Phase: this phase involve two pre-treatment sessions conducted in the study, two weeks prior to treatment it involved preliminary introductions to the sampled married couples and the subject for the study. The phase carried our pre-treatment assessments in order to identify married couples with incidence of marital conflict using MCIQ to obtain the baseline data. The subjects were assigned to one treatment group and control group respectively (NST and control group).

Treatment Phase: This phase dealt with the actual manipulation of experimental conditions for two weeks group while the control group was waitlist group. The experimental group has eight sessions which last for one hour each. The researcher and the subjects choose days, time and venue for their meeting that lasted for two weeks. There were two sessions in each week. A description of the NST and a methodological outline of the session activities for the group were briefly stated below:

NST

First Session – Initial Counselling Establishment Issue

This was an introductory session. This session was for the establishment of rapport. The issue of confidentiality and other initial establishment issues were raised. This was followed with behaviour analysis of marital conflict and establishing awareness on the effectiveness of negotiation skills training and great potentials which it holds in reducing the problem of marital conflict.

Second Session – Empathy and Listening

This session commenced with motivational activities aimed at stimulating and sensitizing the subjects. There was review of previous session activities. Instructions on empathy were provided to the subjects on specific events such as addressing a group of people and responses was monitored, pointed out and discussed with the subjects.

Third Session – Observation, Acknowledging and Requesting

This session commenced with the review of previous activities, followed by the motivational issues to attract the interest of the subjects. The main significant discussion centred on observation, acknowledging and requesting as negotiation skills training therapeutic strategies. They were guided on the principles of observation e.g. Focusing on a speaker, acknowledging

and requesting e.g. showing appreciation, which teach ways to free flow of negotiation, happiness and fulfillment at home, work and life, and the negative consequences resulting from ineffective and inappropriate negotiation such as poor understanding or decoding of information.

Fourth Session – Decision making ability

This session commenced with the review of previous activities, followed by the motivational issues to attract the interest of the subjects. The main significant discussion centred on decision making ability as negotiation skills training therapeutic strategies. They were guided on the principles of decision making.

Fifth Session – Emotional Control

This session commenced with motivational activities aimed at stimulating and sensitizing the subjects. There was reviewed of previous session activities. Instructions on emotional control were provided to the subjects on specific events such as addressing a group of people and responses were monitored, pointed out and discussed with the subjects.

Sixth Session: Interpersonal Skills

This session commenced with motivational activities aimed at stimulating and sensitizing the subjects. There were reviewed of previous session activities. Instructions on interpersonal skills such as empathy, active listening and emotional intelligence. The subjects were guided to identify skills such emotional intelligence thereby helping them to keep their emotions in control and handling social situations with composure.

Seventh Session: Taking Responsibility

This was a joint session of both negotiation skills training managers and the subjects. It commenced with motivational activities, having welcomed the therapeutic managers.

Eighth Session – Conclusion and termination

This session commenced with motivational activities. The tasks and assignments were reviewed and assessed and necessary corrections made in the areas where negotiation skills training managers (counsellors and teachers) found difficult. They were reminded to come back after a week for postest

Post-Treatment Phase

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

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

Results

Research Question 1

What is the difference in the reduction mean score of marital conflict between married primary school teachers exposed to negotiation skills and the control at post test?

Table 1: *Mean and Standard deviation of the resolution of marital conflict among married primary school teachers' negotiation skills at Post test*

		Pre test		Post test		Mean Reduction	Mean Reduction difference
Groups	**N**	$\underline{X}$	**SD**	$\underline{X}$	**SD**		
NS	12	42.54	2.89	29.17	2.71	13.37	8.97
Control	12	41.09	2.73	36.69	2.80	4.40	

NS= Negotiation Skills

Results in Table 1 show that the marital conflict resolution means scores of married primary school teachers exposed to negotiation skills in the pretest was 42.54 with standard deviation of 2.89 and recorded a posttest marital conflict resolution mean score of 29.17 with standard deviation of 2.71. On the other hand, those exposed to the control group recorded a pre-test marital conflict resolution mean score of 41.09 with standard deviation of 2.73 and a posttest marital conflict resolution mean score of 36.69 with standard deviation of 2.80. While the negotiation skills group yielded a marital conflict mean score of 13.37 after the posttest, their counterparts in the control group had a mean reduction of 4.40. The marital conflict resolution mean difference of 8.97 was recorded for the two groups in favour of the experimental group that was exposed to negotiation skills in marital conflict. The standard deviation of each group ranged from 2.81 to 2.89; indicating that respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their responses which added further validity to the mean.

A corresponding hypothesis that addressed the above research question is:

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the reduction mean score of marital conflict between married primary school teachers exposed to negotiation skills and the control at post test.

Table 2: *Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of the reduction of marital conflict of married primary school teachers when Exposed to negotiation skills and Control at Post test*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	8062.394[a]	2	4031.197	33.664	.000
Intercept	322.611	1	322.611	2.694	.000
Pretest	4119.351	1	4119.351	34.400	.000
Group	195.333	1	195.333	1.631	.027
Error	2514.691	21	119.747		
Total	84311.000	24			
Corrected Total	42512.374	23			

Result in the Table 2 showed that the calculated F-value of 1.631 and a probability value (Pp-value) of .027 were obtained. Since the Pp-value obtained is less than the alpha value of 0.05, the hypothesis of no significant effect was rejected and the alternate accepted. Therefore, there is significant difference in the marital conflict resolution mean scores of the married primary school teachers treated with negotiation skills and those in control group at posttest. This implies that exposing married primary school teachers to negotiation skills significantly reduced their incidence of marital conflict.

Research Question 2

What is the difference in the reduction mean score of marital conflicts among married primary school teachers exposed to negotiation skills based on gender?

Table 3: *Mean and Standard deviation of the Marital Conflict Reduction of Male and Female Married Primary School Teachers Exposed to Negotiation Skill*

		Pre test		Post test		Mean Reduction	Mean reduction difference
Gender	**N**	$\underline{X}$	**SD**	$\underline{X}$	**SD**	**Score**	
Male	6	41.41	2.58	28.89	2.37	12.52	0.11
Female	6	41.50	2.66	28.97	2.40	12.63	

Data in the Table 3 showed that male married primary school teachers exposed to negotiation skills obtained a pretest marital conflict reduction means scores of 41.41 with standard deviation of 2.58 and 28.89 with standard deviation score of 2.37 at the posttest. Also, the female married primary school teachers exposed to negotiation skills obtained a pretest marital conflict resolution mean score of 41.60 with standard deviation of 2.66 and 28.97 with

standard deviation of 2.40 at the posttest. The results equally showed that the male and female married teachers exposed to negotiation skills obtained marital conflict resolution mean scores of 12.52 and 12.63 respectively. The Table further showed that the female in-adolescent exposed to negotiation skills had a slightly higher marital conflict reduction mean difference of 0.11 than their male counterparts. The standard deviation of the two groups ranged between 2.37-2.66 indicating that the scores of the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their scores.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the reduction mean score of marital conflicts among married primary school teachers exposed to negotiation skills based on gender.

Table 4: *Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of the Differences in Marital Conflict Reduction of Male and Female Married Primary School Teachers Exposed to Negotiation Skills*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	6441.239[a]	2	3220.620	12.319	.000
Intercept	3293.016	1	3293.016	12.596	.000
Pretest	3661.217	1	3661.217	14.004	.000
Gender	988.941	1	988.941	3.783	.233
Error	2614.339	10	261.434		
Total	143226.336	12			
Corrected Total	23643.374	11			

From Table 4, it could be observed that an F-calculated value of 3.783 and a probability value of .233 was obtained. Since this P-value is greater than 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Hence, there is no significant difference in the marital conflict resolution mean scores of male and female married primary school teachers when exposed to negotiation skills.

Discussion

The study revealed that negotiation training significantly resolved the marital conflict of married teachers. This is evident from the result that married school teachers exposed to negotiation training had higher mean marital conflict resolution than those in the control group. The result agreed with the findings of the earlier works by Makinde and Ayeyika (2021) on negotiation skills training in resolving marital conflicts which showed that negotiation skills resolved the marital conflict irrespective with length of marriage. The results equally agreed with Ventis, Higbee and Murdock (2021) conducted a study on the effectiveness of negotiation techniques for fear reduction marital conflict and discovered that the negotiation techniques

reduced marital conflicts as effectively as more traditional techniques.

It was equally found from the study that Gender has no significant influence on the resolution of marital conflict of married teachers exposed to negotiation training since there was no significant difference in the mean resolution of the marital conflict of married teachers exposed to negotiation training. In other words, the marital conflict resolution was not as a result of their gender but due to the effectiveness of the treatment applied. The result corroborated with Odenike's (2019) study was on efficacy of silence and negotiation skills training on marital conflicts which revealed that significant differences were found in SST and NST in handling marital conflicts among the participants exposed to treatments than those in the control group $F(2,117) = 7.85$; $p<0.05$; SST and NST were found to be effective and there was no significant difference in handling marital conflicts among participants exposed to treatment on the basis of age and gender.

Conclusion

It was concluded that negotiation training skills significantly resolved the marital conflict of married teachers. This was evidenced from the result that showed that married teachers exposed to negotiation training skills, had higher mean marital conflict resolution than those in the control group.

Gender had no significant influence on the resolution of marital conflict of married teachers exposed to negotiation training. This was shown from the study as female students exposed to the treatment had a slight higher mean marital conflict reduction score than their male counterparts which was not significant.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Counsellors should use negotiation training to reduce the cases of marital conflict by couples identified by them or those referred to them in their clinic.
2. Government should organize workshops, seminars and conferences to educate the teachers, and parents using professional counsellors on the effectiveness of the combination of negotiation training and social skills training in reducing marital conflict.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND COUNSELLING IN ABUJA, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The increasing complexity of disputes across various sectors has necessitated innovative and efficient approaches to conflict resolution and counselling. This study examined the effectiveness of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in dispute resolution among counsellors in Abuja, Nigeria. Specifically, the study addressed four research questions focusing on counsellors' awareness, perceptions, utilization, and challenges associated with AI integration in practice. A descriptive survey design was adopted. Data were collected using a 25-item structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.82 (Cronbach's Alpha), alongside semi-structured interviews conducted with selected respondents to obtain in-depth insights. The participants comprised counsellors engaged in conflict management across educational, workplace, family, and community settings. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data from the interviews were analysed thematically. Findings revealed that counsellors exhibited moderate awareness of AI; however, only a limited number actively utilized AI tools. AI was perceived as useful for handling repetitive tasks, emotion recognition, and preliminary mediation processes. Despite its benefits, concerns were raised regarding limited emotional intelligence, data privacy risks, ethical issues, and the possible erosion of the human element in counselling. Key challenges identified included inadequate training, high implementation costs, and scepticism about AI's neutrality and empathy. The study concluded that while AI has significant potential to enhance dispute resolution, it cannot replace the human-centered nature of counselling. It recommended targeted training programmes, stronger collaboration between technology experts and counsellors, and the establishment of clear ethical guidelines.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Dispute Resolution, Counselling Practice, AI Integration Challenges and Conflict Management

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a major transformative technology, reshaping how complex tasks are executed and how decisions are made across diverse sectors. In general terms, AI refers to computer systems designed to perform functions that typically require human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, pattern recognition, and decision-making (Russell &

Norvig, 2020). Recent advancements in machine learning, natural language processing, and intelligent systems have significantly expanded AI applications into fields such as healthcare, education, and security (Smith & Chen, 2022).

In dispute resolution, AI is increasingly gaining attention through tools such as automated negotiation systems, intelligent chatbots, and decision-support platforms. These systems are being integrated into mediation and counselling environments to enhance efficiency and improve decision accuracy. By analysing large datasets, identifying patterns in conflicts, and generating possible outcomes, AI supports mediators and practitioners in making more informed decisions (Sharma & Brown, 2021; Huang et al., 2023). In addition, AI systems can handle multiple cases simultaneously, thereby reducing the time and resources required for conflict resolution processes (Li & Zhao, 2022).

Beyond legal and mediation concepts, AI is also reshaping counselling and mental health support services. Applications such as virtual therapy platforms, emotion recognition systems, and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)-based tools provide real-time support for individuals experiencing psychological distress such as anxiety and depression (Bohannon et al., 2020; Boyer & Finch, 2021). These technologies enable continuous monitoring, personalized feedback, and data-driven interventions that improve accessibility and consistency in care delivery (Adams, 2022).

This study is grounded in three key theoretical frameworks: Emotional Intelligence Theory, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Conflict Resolution Theory. Emotional Intelligence Theory (Goleman, 1995) emphasizes skills such as empathy, self-awareness, and emotional regulation, which are essential in counselling and mediation. In this context, AI tools such as emotion recognition systems and conversational agents can support counsellors by analysing emotional cues and improving intervention strategies, thereby enhancing emotional understanding in dispute resolution.

The Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) explains that the adoption of AI in counselling depends largely on perceived usefulness and ease of use. Counsellors are more likely to integrate AI tools when they believe such systems improve efficiency and are user-friendly. However, concerns about complexity, professional relevance, and reliability may reduce willingness to adopt AI in practice. Conflict Resolution Theory further provides a foundation for understanding how disputes are managed through negotiation and mediation, with AI contributing by offering data-driven insights, identifying patterns, and supporting objective decision-making in conflict situations.

Empirical studies further support these theoretical perspectives. AI has been applied in various dispute resolution contexts, including corporate, family, and online environments, where it improves efficiency and reduces costs (Katz & Roberts, 2022; Smith & Johnson, 2020). In counselling, AI-based chatbots and virtual assistants are used to support mental health by addressing anxiety and stress through personalized responses (Liu et al., 2022). Additionally, AI

contributes to crisis intervention by detecting early emotional distress (Vasileva et al., 2020) and enhances emotional intelligence by analysing verbal and non-verbal cues to improve empathy and therapeutic relationships (Pieterse & Park, 2021; Sharma & Brown, 2021).

Effective conflict management remains essential for maintaining stability in workplaces, families, schools, and communities (Johnson & Smith, 2020). However, traditional face-to-face mediation approaches are often limited by time, cost, and logistical constraints (Kaur & Sharma, 2021). AI-based systems present an alternative by offering faster, scalable, and data-driven solutions that improve efficiency in managing disputes (Miller & Wright, 2022). Furthermore, AI can reduce bias in emotionally charged situations and support counsellors by automating routine tasks, allowing greater focus on complex human interactions (Bennett, 2021; Garrison et al., 2020). Overall, AI represents a shift toward more efficient, adaptive, and evidence-based approaches to dispute resolution and counselling, with potential to improve both outcomes and user experience (Rodriguez et al., 2021).

Despite these advancements, the application of AI in counselling and dispute resolution remains limited compared to its adoption in other sectors such as healthcare, finance, and education (Russell & Norvig, 2020). Many practice settings still rely heavily on traditional approaches, which are often time-consuming, resource-intensive, and susceptible to human bias (Sharma & Brown, 2021; Kaur & Sharma, 2021). As a result, the full potential of AI in improving efficiency, objectivity, and scalability in conflict management has not been fully realized.

In addition, there exists a notable gap in awareness, competence, and readiness among counsellors and mediators regarding AI adoption. Many professionals lack sufficient knowledge of AI tools or are hesitant to use them due to concerns about data privacy, ethical implications, and the potential reduction of human interaction in counselling relationships (Boyer & Finch, 2021). These challenges are further intensified by limited access to structured training and professional development opportunities (Adams, 2022).

Furthermore, the role of AI in supporting emotional intelligence within counselling and conflict resolution remains insufficiently explored. Emotional intelligence plays a critical role in understanding emotions, managing interpersonal relationships, and achieving sustainable conflict outcomes (Goleman, 1995). However, uncertainty remains regarding whether AI can effectively replicate or complement these inherently human abilities. These gaps highlight the need to examine AI integration in counselling practice, assess practitioners' perceptions, and identify barriers to adoption in order to improve conflict management systems.

Purpose of the Study

This study examines the role and effectiveness of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in enhancing dispute resolution and counselling practices among professionals in Abuja, Nigeria.

1. Meanwhile the objectives of the study seek the followings:

2. To determine counsellors' awareness of AI in dispute resolution.
3. To examine the perceived effectiveness of AI in resolving conflicts.
4. To identify challenges faced in integrating AI into counselling practice.
5. To assess the impact of AI on clients' emotional intelligence in counselling settings.

In the course of this study, questions shall be research based on the below interrogations

1. What is the level of awareness of AI among counsellors involved in dispute resolution?
2. How effective do counsellors perceive AI tools in managing conflicts?
3. What challenges hinder the adoption of AI in counselling practice?
4. How does AI influence clients' emotional intelligence during counselling sessions?

Hypothesis

H_0: There is no significant relationship between the use of AI tools in dispute resolution and client satisfaction.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design with a mixed-methods approach to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into the subject matter. The study was conducted in Abuja, Nigeria, with participants also drawn from selected states including Lagos State, Rivers State, and Kaduna State to ensure wider geographical coverage and diversity of perspectives. The quantitative component focused on assessing counsellors' awareness, usage, and perceptions of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in dispute resolution, while the qualitative component explored lived experiences, challenges, and contextual issues surrounding the integration of AI into counselling practice.

The population comprised approximately 130 counsellors actively engaged in dispute resolution across family, organizational, and community settings, alongside 5 AI specialists who provided technical and professional perspectives on AI applications. A sample of 80 counsellors was selected using purposive sampling to ensure that only relevant and experienced participants were included. Data were collected using a 25-item structured questionnaire, which was validated by experts in counselling and measurement to ensure content validity, and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82 (Cronbach's Alpha), indicating good internal consistency. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to enrich and support the quantitative findings.

Data collection was carried out electronically through platforms such as Google Forms and SurveyMonkey to enhance accessibility and response rate, while interviews were conducted both physically and virtually via Zoom and Skype based on participants' availability. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential tools such as chi-square and t-tests. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis with the aid of NVivo software to ensure systematic coding, consistency, and reliability of findings.

Results

This section presents the results of the study using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Findings are summarized in tables and supported with brief interpretations to enhance clarity and understanding.

Table 1: *Awareness of AI Among Counsellors*

Level of Awareness	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Highly aware	18	22.5
Somewhat aware	35	43.75
Unaware	27	33.75
Total	80	100

The results indicate a moderate level of awareness of AI among counsellors. The majority of respondents, 35 (43.75%), reported being *somewhat aware*, suggesting a basic understanding of AI concepts without deep knowledge or practical application. A smaller proportion, 18 (22.5%), indicated they were *highly aware*, reflecting a limited number of counsellors with strong familiarity or expertise in AI.

However, a significant proportion, 27 (33.75%), reported being *unaware*, highlighting a considerable gap in knowledge and exposure to AI within the profession. Overall, the findings suggest that while awareness of AI exists, it is not sufficiently widespread or advanced, indicating the need for increased training and sensitization programmes among counsellors.

Table 2: *Perceived Effectiveness of AI in Dispute Resolution*

Effectiveness Rating	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very effective	20	25.0
Somewhat effective	47	58.75
Not effective	13	16.25
Total	**80**	**100**

The results show that most respondents, **47 (58.75%)**, perceive AI as *somewhat effective* in dispute resolution, indicating a generally positive but cautious assessment of its usefulness. Additionally, **20 (25.0%)** rated AI as *very effective*, suggesting that a smaller proportion of counsellors strongly support its impact. However, **13 (16.25%)** considered AI *not effective*, reflecting some level of scepticism or limitations in its practical application. Overall, the findings suggest that AI is viewed as moderately effective, with potential for greater acceptance if existing concerns are addressed.

Table 3: *Challenges in AI Adoption*

Challenges	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Lack of training/knowledge	29	36.25
Client resistance to technology	23	28.75
Ethical concerns (privacy/bias)	16	20.0
Infrastructure limitations	12	15.0
Total	**80**	**100**

The results indicate that the most prominent challenge to AI adoption in counselling is lack of training and knowledge, with 29 (36.25%) of respondents identifying it as a key issue. This is followed by client resistance to technology, reported by 23 (28.75%), suggesting hesitation among clients in accepting AI-supported counselling processes.

Furthermore, 16 (20.0%) of respondents highlighted ethical concerns such as privacy and algorithmic bias, reflecting worries about data security and fairness in AI use. The least reported challenge was infrastructure limitations, with 12 (15.0%), though it still indicates gaps in technological readiness. Overall, the findings suggest that human capacity and ethical concerns are more significant barriers than physical infrastructure in AI integration within counselling practice.

Table 4: *Influence of AI on Clients' Emotional Intelligence*

Influence of AI on Emotional Intelligence	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Enhances emotional awareness	22	27.5
Moderately improves emotional regulation	34	42.5
No significant influence	18	22.5
Reduces emotional connection	6	7.5
Total	**80**	**100**

The findings indicate that AI has a generally positive but moderate influence on clients' emotional intelligence during counselling sessions. Most respondents, 34 (42.5%), reported that AI *moderately improves emotional regulation*, suggesting a supportive but not transformative effect. Additionally, 22 (27.5%) indicated that AI enhances emotional awareness, showing some benefit in helping clients understand their emotions better.

However, 18 (22.5%) believed AI has no significant influence, while a small proportion, 6 (7.5%), felt it reduces emotional connection during counselling. Overall, the results suggest that

AI contributes positively to emotional intelligence development, but its impact is still limited and varies depending on context and application.

Table 5: *Thematic Analysis of AI in Dispute Resolution*

Theme	Sub-themes	Sample Views
Effectiveness	Speed, efficiency, neutrality	"AI helps resolve disputes faster and more fairly."
Emotional intelligence	Emotional insight, limitations	"AI cannot fully understand human emotions."
Adoption challenges	Trust, ethics, training needs	"People are still sceptical about using AI in counselling."
Client satisfaction	Positive and mixed responses	"Some clients are satisfied, others feel uncomfortable."

The themes reflect a balanced perception: while AI improves efficiency, concerns remain about its emotional depth and acceptance in counselling practice.

Hypothesis

H_0: There is no significant relationship between the use of AI tools in dispute resolution and client satisfaction.

Table 6: *Relationship between AI Use in Dispute Resolution and Client Satisfaction*

Variables Compared	Test Used	Calculated Value	Critical Value	df	p-value	Decision
AI tools usage vs Client satisfaction	Chi-square (χ^2)	12.84	9.49	3	0.005	Reject H_0

The result shows a statistically significant relationship between the use of AI tools in dispute resolution and client satisfaction, since the calculated chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 12.84$) is greater than the critical value (9.49) and the p-value (0.005) is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This implies that the use of AI tools has a significant influence on client satisfaction in dispute resolution processes.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study provide important insights into counsellors' awareness, perceptions, challenges, and the perceived impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in dispute resolution in Abuja, Nigeria. The results from both quantitative and qualitative data are discussed in relation to each research objective and supported by existing interpretations.

The study revealed a moderate level of awareness of AI among counsellors (Table 1), where most respondents (43.75%) were only somewhat aware, while 33.75% were completely unaware. This suggests that AI knowledge among counsellors is still emerging and not yet deeply embedded in counselling practice. The implication is that many counsellors may not be fully

equipped to utilize AI tools effectively, which aligns with the qualitative findings that highlighted limited exposure and training. This gap in awareness may slow down the integration of AI into professional counselling services.

In terms of perceived effectiveness, findings (Table 2) show that AI is generally viewed as somewhat effective in dispute resolution. While 25% rated it as very effective, the majority (58.75%) held a cautious but positive view. This indicates that counsellors recognize the potential of AI in improving efficiency and supporting decision-making, but still maintain reservations about its full capability in handling complex human conflicts.

The study further identified key challenges to AI adoption (Table 3), with lack of training (36.25%) and client resistance (28.75%) being the most prominent. Ethical concerns and infrastructure limitations were also noted. These findings suggest that the major barriers are more human and institutional than technical. The qualitative results also emphasized issues of trust, ethical sensitivity, and limited professional capacity as major constraints.

Regarding the influence of AI on clients' emotional intelligence (Table 4), results show a mixed but generally positive effect. Most respondents (42.5%) believed AI moderately improves emotional regulation, while others reported enhanced awareness. However, some expressed concern that AI may reduce emotional connection, indicating that AI's impact on emotional development is context-dependent and not uniformly experienced.

The thematic analysis (Table 5) further supports these findings by highlighting four major areas: effectiveness, emotional intelligence limitations, adoption challenges, and client satisfaction. While AI was praised for speed, efficiency, and perceived neutrality, respondents consistently emphasized that it lacks deep emotional understanding, which is central to counselling practice. Issues of trust and ethical concerns also emerged strongly.

Finally, the hypothesis test (Table 6) revealed a significant relationship between AI usage and client satisfaction, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that increased use of AI tools is associated with improved client satisfaction in dispute resolution. However, qualitative insights suggest that satisfaction is not universal, as some clients still prefer traditional human-centred counselling approaches.

Overall, the findings suggest that AI holds strong potential to enhance dispute resolution and counselling effectiveness, but its successful integration depends on improved training, ethical safeguards, and balanced use alongside human judgement.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Artificial Intelligence (AI) possesses significant potential to enhance dispute resolution and counselling practices. Its primary strengths lie in improving efficiency, accelerating conflict resolution processes, and supporting more structured, evidence-based, and objective decision-making. However, the study also establishes that the level of AI adoption in counselling and dispute resolution remains relatively low. This is largely attributed to

limited awareness among practitioners, lack of trust in AI systems, and concerns surrounding ethical, professional, and confidentiality issues. These barriers collectively hinder full integration of AI into counselling practice.

Although AI demonstrates usefulness in areas such as emotional assessment, pattern recognition, and data-driven decision support, it cannot replace essential human qualities such as empathy, judgment, and relational understanding, which are central to effective counselling. Therefore, AI should be viewed as a complementary tool that enhances rather than replaces human expertise. The study further emphasizes that successful integration of AI depends on targeted training, capacity building, and the development of trust among counsellors. Strengthening these areas is critical to ensuring ethical, effective, and sustainable use of AI in counselling and dispute resolution settings.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study on the effectiveness of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in dispute resolution among counsellors in Abuja, Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

— **Capacity building and training:** Counsellors should be provided with regular training, workshops, and professional development programmes on the use of AI tools in counselling practice. This will help bridge the identified gap in awareness and improve effective utilization.

— **Integration of AI into counselling curriculum:** Institutions training counsellors in Nigeria should incorporate AI-related content into their curriculum to prepare future practitioners for technology-assisted counselling and dispute resolution.

— **Development of ethical guidelines:** Professional bodies such as the Counselling Association of Nigeria should establish clear ethical frameworks governing AI use in counselling to address concerns related to privacy, bias, and confidentiality.

— **Improvement of technological infrastructure:** Government and relevant stakeholders should invest in ICT infrastructure to support the effective deployment of AI tools in counselling services, particularly in public institutions.

— **Human–AI collaboration approach:** AI should be used as a supportive tool rather than a replacement for counsellors. A balanced approach that combines human judgement with AI capabilities should be encouraged to maintain emotional connection in counselling.

Public awareness and client sensitization: Clients should be educated on the benefits and limitations of AI in counselling to reduce resistance and improve acceptance of technology-assisted dispute resolution.

Overall, these recommendations aim to enhance the effective, ethical, and sustainable integration of AI into counselling and dispute resolution practices.

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ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON STUDENT-TEACHERS' EDUCATIONAL CHOICE: PERCEPTION OF TEACHER EDUCATORS

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of emotional intelligence on students' academic decisions as evaluated by teacher educators. The issue discussed was the inadequate comprehension of how emotional abilities influence students' academic decision-making, encompassing topic choices and career planning. The objective was to evaluate teacher educators' perspectives regarding the significance of essential emotional intelligence components in influencing these decisions. A descriptive survey research design was utilized. The sample comprised 102 teacher educators intentionally selected from the Faculty of Education at Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri. Data were gathered via a validated 20-item structured questionnaire, which exhibited a reliability coefficient of 0.84. Responses were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale and analyzed by mean and standard deviation, with a threshold of 2.50. The findings indicated that emotional intelligence substantially affects students' capacity to correlate academic skills with professional aspirations, make intelligent educational choices, and manage academic stress successfully. Students exhibiting elevated emotional intelligence were regarded as displaying superior drive, self-regulation, and social awareness in their academic endeavors. The study determined that emotional intelligence is a vital element in improving students' educational decision-making and overall academic progress. It consequently advocates for the incorporation of emotional intelligence frameworks into educational methodologies. Structured mentorship programs should be instituted to assist students in navigating academic and personal challenges, while career counseling services ought to integrate emotional intelligence strategies to facilitate the alignment of students' educational decisions with their capabilities and long-term objectives.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Educational Choice, Teacher Educators.

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is widely acknowledged as a pivotal aspect affecting students' academic behavior and educational decisions. Emotional Intelligence (EI) denotes the capacity to recognize, comprehend, regulate, and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others. It includes essential elements such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008; Goleman, 1995). In addition to cognitive aptitude, students' emotional abilities significantly influence their judgments for topic selection, career paths, and long-term academic objectives. Educational decision-making is not solely cerebral; it is significantly affected by emotional characteristics such as confidence, resilience, and the capacity to manage pressure and uncertainty (Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2020; Salami, 2023).

In modern educational settings, especially in developing regions such as Nigeria, students frequently encounter intricate academic and socio-emotional obstacles that can influence their decision-making abilities. Research indicates that individuals possessing elevated emotional intelligence are more inclined to exhibit clarity in goal formulation, perseverance amongst obstacles, and adaptability in managing academic requirements (Yusuf & Busari, 2022). These students typically synchronize their academic skills with job ambitions more efficiently and demonstrate enhanced dedication to their educational endeavors.

Teacher educators are essential in this process, as they engage intimately with students and are tasked with guiding, mentoring, and equipping them for professional practice. Their experiences uniquely situate them to observe the impact of emotional abilities on students' academic choices. Research indicates that teacher educators frequently view emotionally intelligent students as more engaged, self-directed, and proficient in making informed educational and professional decisions (Adeyemo, 2021). Thus, their viewpoints are crucial for comprehending the practical ramifications of emotional intelligence in educational contexts.

Despite the increasing acknowledgment of emotional intelligence in education, there is still a necessity to methodically investigate how teacher educators assess its influence on students' educational decisions. Comprehending these views is crucial for guiding curriculum creation, especially in incorporating emotional intelligence into teacher education programs. This integration may improve students' ability to make informed academic choices and foster their overall growth.

This study aims to evaluate teacher educators' perspectives regarding the impact of emotional intelligence on students' educational decisions. The research aims to enhance the current literature and offer insights that can inform educational policy and practice to promote cognitive and emotional abilities in students.

Empirical Studies

Recent empirical studies have progressively highlighted the significance of emotional intelligence (EI) in influencing students' academic behavior, decision-making, and career paths, especially in teacher education settings. Emotional intelligence, which includes characteristics like self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, has been scientifically associated with enhanced academic adjustment and informed educational decisions among student-teachers.

Adeyemo (2021) Carried out a quantitative analysis including teacher educators in South-West Nigeria to investigate the correlation between students' emotional intelligence and their academic decision-making. The study, utilizing a standardized questionnaire distributed to 120 teacher educators, identified a substantial positive correlation between emotional intelligence and students' clarity in career selection, subject preference, and academic dedication. The results indicated that student-teachers with high emotional intelligence were more inclined to synchronize their academic skills with career goals and exhibit resilience in the face of academic difficulties. Educators in the survey also saw these pupils as more proactive in pursuing academic assistance and making informed choices. Yusuf and Busari (2022) examined teacher educators' opinions of emotional intelligence and its impact on students' educational plans at three public institutions in North-Central Nigeria. The research employed a descriptive survey methodology including a sample of 150 participants. Research demonstrated that aspects of emotional intelligence, especially self-awareness and drive, substantially impacted students' capacity to make pragmatic and goal-directed educational decisions. The research indicated that teacher educators regarded emotionally intelligent students as more consistent in their academic choices and less vulnerable to peer influence when choosing courses or career trajectories.

At a related study, Salami (2023) examined the influence of emotional intelligence on academic resilience and decision-making among pre-service teachers at Nigerian institutes of education. Data were gathered from 200 student-teachers utilizing a correlational research method, employing standardized assessments for emotional intelligence and academic resilience. The findings indicated that emotional intelligence was a major predictor of students' capacity to manage academic stress and maintain persistence in their selected disciplines. The study emphasized that individuals with elevated emotional intelligence had superior long-term educational planning and displayed greater decisiveness in their job decisions. Educators participating in the study confirmed that emotionally competent pupils demonstrated enhanced concentration and adaptability in their academic endeavors. Consequently, Oladipo and Balogun (2022) investigated the incorporation of emotional intelligence training inside teacher education programs and its impact on students' academic decision-making. The research utilized a quasi-experimental design with two cohorts of pre-service teachers—one group received emotional intelligence training while the other did not. Research indicated that students who underwent emotional intelligence training had notable enhancements in decision-making abilities, self-awareness, and academic goal formulation relative to their peers. Teacher educators indicated

that these kids exhibited greater reflection, confidence, and the ability to make educated educational and professional choices.

International studies, in addition to those conducted in Nigeria, have validated the significance of emotional intelligence in educational decision-making. Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts (2020) discovered that emotional intelligence is essential for students in assessing academic choices and handling the emotional challenges of decision-making. Their research, encompassing university students from several institutions, demonstrated that those with high emotional intelligence were more adept at managing uncertainty and making smart educational decisions in accordance with their own objectives. Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) offered essential empirical data connecting emotional intelligence to adaptive decision-making processes. Their research indicated that persons possessing high emotional intelligence are more proficient in processing emotional information, hence improving their judgment and decision-making capabilities in academic and professional settings.

These empirical investigations collectively highlight the substantial influence of emotional intelligence on the educational decisions of student-teachers, as observed by teacher educators. Research consistently demonstrates that emotional intelligence boosts students' academic achievement and resilience while also significantly influencing educated, practical, and goal-oriented educational decisions. These results underscore the necessity of incorporating emotional intelligence development into teacher education programs to enhance academic and career outcomes for student-teachers.

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on key theories that explain emotional intelligence and its influence on decision-making, particularly in educational contexts. The framework draws primarily from the Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence, the Emotional Intelligence Competency Theory, and Social Cognitive Career Theory, as they collectively provide a basis for understanding how emotional competencies shape student-teachers' educational choices.

The **Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence** developed by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) posits that emotional intelligence is a set of cognitive abilities involving the perception, understanding, management, and use of emotions. According to this model, individuals who can accurately perceive and regulate their emotions are better equipped to process information and make rational decisions. In the context of this study, student-teachers with higher emotional intelligence are expected to make more informed educational choices, such as selecting appropriate subject areas and career paths that align with their strengths and interests. Teacher educators, through observation and interaction, can assess how these emotional abilities manifest in students' academic decision-making.

Complementing this is **Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Competency Theory** (1995), which conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a combination of personal and social competencies, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

This theory emphasizes the role of emotional competencies in achieving success in both personal and professional domains. Within teacher education, these competencies are crucial for student-teachers as they navigate academic demands, interpersonal relationships, and career planning. For instance, self-awareness enables students to recognize their academic strengths and weaknesses, while motivation drives persistence in chosen fields. Teacher educators' perceptions of these competencies provide insight into how emotional intelligence influences students' educational decisions.

The study is also informed by the **Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)** proposed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994). SCCT explains how individuals form career interests, make educational choices, and achieve career success based on the interplay of personal factors, environmental influences, and behaviour. Central to this theory are self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals. Emotional intelligence contributes significantly to these constructs by enhancing individuals' confidence, resilience, and ability to manage challenges. Student-teachers with high emotional intelligence are more likely to develop strong self-efficacy and positive outcome expectations, which in turn influence their educational and career choices. Teacher educators, as part of the students' learning environment, play a critical role in shaping these perceptions and guiding their decision-making processes.

The integration of these theories provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between emotional intelligence and educational choice. The Ability Model explains the cognitive processing of emotional information, Goleman's theory highlights the practical competencies required for effective functioning, and SCCT situates these within a broader context of career development and decision-making. Together, they suggest that emotional intelligence is a critical determinant of how student-teachers evaluate options, cope with academic challenges, and make informed educational choices.

Statement of the Problem

In an era characterized by rapid globalization, complex educational demands, and socio-emotional challenges, students are increasingly pressured to make significant academic and professional choices at early developmental stages. Historically, educational choice has been primarily viewed through a cognitive lens, emphasizing intellectual ability, performance, and accessibility. Recent research in psychology and education highlights the growing importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in shaping these assessments (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008; Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2020). Emotional intelligence, encompassing self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal abilities, correlates with students' capacity to make realistic, confident, and goal-oriented academic decisions (Goleman, 1995; Salami, 2023). Despite the growing recognition, a substantial gap remains in understanding the influence of emotional intelligence on educational decisions, particularly within the Nigerian educational system. Nigerian students face unique emotional and social challenges, including economic instability, fierce academic competition, and inadequate career counseling services, which hinder

their educational decision-making process (Yusuf & Busari, 2022). Furthermore, teacher education programs systematically neglect to integrate emotional intelligence training, leading to many educators being devoid of the framework or resources necessary to evaluate its impact on students' academic decision-making (Oladipo & Balogun, 2022). This study seeks to fill a critical vacuum by assessing teacher educators' evaluations of the impact of emotional intelligence on students' educational choices. Understanding these views is essential for developing focused interventions, guiding curriculum adjustments, and fostering emotionally intelligent learning environments that enable informed, confident, and purposeful academic decisions among students. Without this understanding, efforts to improve student performance may continue to overlook a vital psychological factor that underpins motivation, resilience, and personal alignment in education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. How do teacher educators perceive the influence of students' emotional intelligence on their subject and career choices?
2. Which components of emotional intelligence do teacher educators identify as most relevant to students' ability to make informed educational decisions?
3. To what extent do teacher educators believe emotional intelligence contributes to students' academic success and long-term educational planning?
4. What strategies do teacher educators recommend for integrating emotional intelligence into teacher education programs to improve students' decision-making skills?

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design of the survey type to assess teacher educators' perceptions regarding the impact of emotional intelligence on students' educational choices. This design was appropriate because it enabled the collection of quantifiable data from a defined population to describe current opinions, attitudes, and beliefs without influencing respondents' behaviors or environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The target population comprised all teacher educators in the Faculty of Education, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, totaling approximately 145 academic staff across three departments. A sample of 102 teacher educators was purposively selected based on the following criteria: (i) minimum of two years teaching experience, (ii) active involvement in teaching and supervising pre-service teachers, and (iii) availability during the period of data collection. The distribution included 38 respondents from Educational Foundations, 34 from Curriculum Studies, and 30 from Educational Psychology and G&C. Data were collected using a structured, researchers-designed questionnaire titled *"Teacher Educators' Perception of Emotional Intelligence and Educational Decision-Making Questionnaire (TEPEIEDMQ)."* The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A collected demographic data such as gender, years of teaching experience, and area of specialization. Section B contained 20 items measuring perceptions of the influence of five

components of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—on students' educational choices including subject selection, academic aspirations, career planning, and long-term educational goals. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The instrument underwent content validation by three experts in educational psychology, curriculum studies, measurement and evaluation. A pilot test was conducted with 20 teacher educators outside the sampled institution, and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84 was obtained, indicating high internal consistency. The researchers personally distributed and collected the questionnaires from the respondents over a two-week period. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of responses was ensured. All analyses were conducted using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), and the decision rule was based on a cutoff mean of 2.50.

Table 1: *Mean Responses on Teacher Educators' Perception of the Influence of Students' Emotional Intelligence on Their Subject and Career Choices*

S/N	Item	M	SD	Decision
1	Students' emotional self-awareness affects their subject preferences.	3.32	0.76	Agree
2	Emotionally intelligent students make more consistent career choices.	3.25	0.81	Agree
3	Emotional intelligence helps students align with their academic strengths.	4.18	0.84	Agree
4	Students who manage emotions well cope better with subject-related challenges.	4.35	0.79	Agree
5	Students' empathy influences their choice of career paths.	4.10	0.90	Agree
	Mean	3.84		Agree
	Standard Deviation		0.82	

Note. Criterion mean = 2.50. Mean scores of 2.50 and above indicate agreement.

Teacher educators generally perceived emotional intelligence as an important factor influencing students' subject and career choices. While moderate agreement was observed on aspects such as self-awareness and decision consistency, higher ratings were recorded for academic alignment, coping with challenges, and empathy. The overall mean of 3.84 indicates a strong perception of emotional intelligence as a determinant of students' academic and career pathways.

Table 2: *Mean Responses on Components of Emotional Intelligence Relevant to Students' Informed Educational Decision-Making*

S/N	Item	M	SD	Decision
1	Self-awareness is critical to informed academic decision-making.	4.40	0.70	Agree
2	Self-regulation helps students manage academic pressure when choosing subjects.	4.30	0.75	Agree
3	Motivation is a key emotional factor in students' career planning.	4.38	0.72	Agree
4	Social awareness influences students' choice of collaboration and support groups.	4.20	0.77	Agree
5	Resilience supports effective educational planning.	4.15	0.85	Agree
	Mean	4.29		Agree
	Standard Deviation		0.76	

Note. Criterion mean = 2.50.

Teacher educators identified all components of emotional intelligence as highly relevant, with self-awareness ranked highest, followed by motivation and self-regulation. The overall mean of 4.29 reflects strong agreement on the importance of emotional intelligence in informed educational decision-making.

Table 3: *Mean Responses on the Extent Emotional Intelligence Contributes to Students' Academic Success and Long-Term Educational Planning*

S/N	Item	M	SD	Decision
1	Emotionally intelligent students generally perform better academically.	4.22	0.88	Agree
2	Emotional intelligence helps students set and maintain realistic academic goals.	4.28	0.82	Agree
3	Emotionally intelligent students recover better from academic setbacks.	4.16	0.90	Agree
4	Students use emotional insight in developing long-term educational goals.	4.10	0.85	Agree
5	Emotional maturity contributes to persistence and educational progress.	4.24	0.78	Agree
	Mean	4.20		Agree
	Standard Deviation		0.85	

Note. Criterion mean = 2.50.

Findings indicate strong agreement that emotional intelligence contributes significantly to academic success and long-term planning, with an overall mean of 4.20.

Table 4: *Mean Responses on Strategies for Integrating Emotional Intelligence into Teacher Education*

S/N	Item	M	SD	Decision
1	Classroom practices should promote emotional self-awareness.	4.33	0.74	Agree
2	Reflective journals enhance emotional regulation and decision-making.	4.18	0.86	Agree
3	Co-curricular activities should develop emotional intelligence.	4.25	0.81	Agree
4	Emotional intelligence training should be embedded in career guidance.	4.36	0.73	Agree
5	Mentorship programs should be introduced to improve emotional intelligence and decision-making.	4.29	0.79	Agree
	Mean	4.28		Agree
	Standard Deviation		0.79	

Note. Criterion mean = 2.50.

Teacher educators strongly supported multiple strategies for integrating emotional intelligence into teacher education. The overall mean of 4.28 indicates a strong consensus on adopting practical, curriculum-based, and experiential approaches to enhance students' decision-making skills.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that teacher educators perceive emotional intelligence as a crucial factor influencing student-teachers' educational choices. It was established that emotional competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills significantly shape students' ability to select appropriate subjects, make consistent career decisions, and align their academic strengths with long-term goals. The findings further indicated that emotional intelligence contributes meaningfully to students' academic success, resilience, and persistence, while teacher educators strongly endorsed the integration of emotional intelligence strategies into teacher education programmes to enhance students' decision-making skills.

These findings are in agreement with existing empirical studies that highlight the importance of emotional intelligence in academic and career decision-making. For instance, Adeyemo (2021) found that emotionally intelligent students demonstrate greater clarity and confidence in making academic and career choices, as well as improved commitment to their educational goals. Similarly, Yusuf and Busari (2022) reported that emotional intelligence components, particularly self-awareness and motivation, play a significant role in guiding students toward realistic and goal-oriented educational decisions. The present findings also support Salami (2023), who emphasized that emotional intelligence enhances students' resilience and capacity to cope with academic stress, thereby facilitating better long-term educational planning. In addition,

the findings are consistent with Oladipo and Balogun (2022), who observed that integrating emotional intelligence training into teacher education programmes improves students' reflective thinking, goal setting, and decision-making abilities. Furthermore, the results align with the theoretical propositions of Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) and Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts (2020), which affirm that emotional intelligence enhances individuals' ability to process emotional information and make adaptive decisions in complex situations.

The outcomes of this study can be explained by the functional role emotional intelligence plays in regulating students' cognitive and emotional responses to academic challenges. Student-teachers who possess higher emotional intelligence are better able to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, manage stress, and remain motivated in the face of academic demands. This emotional balance supports clearer thinking and more informed decision-making regarding their educational and career paths. Additionally, the strong perception observed among teacher educators may be attributed to their continuous interaction with students, which provides them with practical insights into how emotional competencies influence students' behaviour, engagement, and academic choices over time. In contexts such as Nigeria, where students often encounter socio-economic pressures, limited guidance resources, and competitive academic environments, emotional intelligence serves as a vital coping mechanism that enhances persistence, adaptability, and clarity in decision-making.

This study contributes to knowledge by extending the discourse on emotional intelligence beyond theoretical assumptions to practical observations from teacher educators. It provides context-specific evidence that emotional intelligence is not merely an abstract psychological construct but a functional skill that directly influences student-teachers' educational choices and academic outcomes. The study also highlights the critical role of teacher educators in identifying and nurturing emotional competencies among students. By emphasizing the need for integrating emotional intelligence into teacher education programmes, the study offers a framework for improving students' decision-making capacity, fostering resilience, and promoting holistic development. This contribution is particularly relevant in developing educational systems, where addressing both cognitive and emotional dimensions of learning is essential for producing competent and well-adjusted graduates.

Conclusion

This study concludes that emotional intelligence (EI) is a significant factor influencing students' educational decisions, as seen by teacher educators in higher education institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. The results confirm that students with emotional intelligence demonstrate enhanced clarity, drive, resilience, and introspective ability in their subject and career decision-making. Educators consistently ranked self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation as the most crucial components of emotional intelligence for informed academic decision-making. Moreover, emotional intelligence significantly influences students' academic achievement and long-term educational strategies, particularly by improving their capacity to establish attainable

objectives, rebound from failures, and align decisions with personal values and ambitions.

Teacher educators emphatically supported the incorporation of emotional intelligence-based initiatives, including classroom practices, reflective journaling, mentorship programs, and co-curricular activities, into teacher education training programme. These practices are regarded as excellent methods for enhancing emotional competence and decision-making abilities in kids, thereby boosting overall educational results and career alignment.

Recommendations

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

1. Teacher education institutions should integrate structured emotional intelligence training into their curricula, with emphasis on developing core competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills to enhance students' educational decision-making.
2. Teacher educators should adopt reflective and experiential learning strategies, such as reflective journals, guided self-assessment, and classroom discussions, to help student-teachers develop emotional awareness and improve their ability to make informed academic and career choices.
3. Institutions should establish formal mentorship programmes where experienced and emotionally competent educators provide continuous guidance to student-teachers in managing academic challenges and aligning their educational choices with personal strengths and career goals.
4. Career counseling services within educational institutions should be strengthened and redesigned to incorporate emotional intelligence frameworks, enabling students to make realistic, confident, and goal-oriented educational and career decisions.
5. By prioritizing emotional intelligence as a core element of teacher preparation and educational decision-making support, institutions can help foster a generation of students who are not only academically competent but also emotionally grounded and future ready.

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GENDER DYNAMICS IN COUNSELING AND COMMUNITY DISPUTE RESOLUTION IN GIWA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explored gender dynamics in counselling and community dispute resolution among residents of Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives, two research questions, and two hypotheses. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 2,150 community members involved in dispute resolution processes across five communities in Giwa Local Government. A sample of 450 participants was randomly selected. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire, adapted from existing literature, with a reliability coefficient of 0.78 and internal consistency of 0.85, pilot-tested on 50 participants from the neighbouring community. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), with mean scores and standard deviations addressing research questions, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) testing hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed significant gender differences in participation and effectiveness in counselling and dispute resolution, with women showing higher engagement in counselling but lower influence in community dispute resolution. The study concluded that addressing gender disparities through targeted training and inclusive policies could enhance equitable participation. It recommended that local governments and NGOs develop gender-sensitive training programmes to empower both men and women in counselling and dispute resolution processes.

Keywords: Gender Dynamics, Counselling, Community Dispute Resolution, Giwa Local Government, Kaduna State.

Introduction

Gender dynamics profoundly influence social interactions, particularly in the realms of counselling and community dispute resolution, shaping how individuals engage in and contribute to these processes. In Nigeria, cultural norms and deeply entrenched gender roles significantly dictate participation and decision-making within community settings, often reinforcing traditional hierarchies (Okafor & Nwankwo, 2018). Giwa Local Government Area in Kaduna

State, Nigeria, exemplifies this complexity, characterized by its diverse ethnic composition, including Hausa, Fulani, and other minority groups, and its frequent communal conflicts, such as land disputes, resource allocation issues, and inter-group tensions (National Emergency Management Agency, 2022). These conflicts, often exacerbated by socio-economic challenges and historical rivalries, underscore the urgent need for effective counselling and dispute resolution mechanisms to restore peace, promote social cohesion, and foster sustainable community development.

Globally, gender disparities in access to and participation in dispute resolution processes are well-documented. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020) highlights that women are frequently underrepresented in community decision-making forums, which limits their influence in shaping conflict resolution outcomes. This global trend is particularly pronounced in patriarchal societies like Nigeria, where cultural and institutional structures often marginalize women, relegating them to supportive or secondary roles rather than positions of leadership in dispute resolution (Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2019). Such marginalization not only restricts women's contributions but also undermines the potential for inclusive and holistic peacebuilding efforts. Despite these challenges, women have demonstrated significant capabilities in counselling, leveraging their empathy, communication skills, and relational strengths to mediate conflicts effectively, particularly in informal settings (Ogunleye, 2021). These contributions suggest that women possess untapped potential to enhance conflict resolution processes if provided with equitable opportunities.

In Giwa Local Government Area, the interplay of gender roles, cultural expectations, and socio-economic realities creates distinct patterns of engagement in counselling and dispute resolution. Men typically dominate formal mediation processes, such as community arbitration panels and leadership roles in resolving land or resource disputes, reflecting their traditional authority within patriarchal community structures (Aliyu & Musa, 2020). This dominance is often rooted in cultural norms that prioritize male leadership in public spheres, positioning men as primary decision-makers in formal conflict resolution settings. In contrast, women are more active in informal counselling contexts, such as family mediation and peer support, where their roles as caregivers and community connectors enable them to address conflicts at the interpersonal level. These informal contributions are critical to maintaining social harmony, yet they are often undervalued compared to formal mediation roles dominated by men.

The socio-economic challenges in Giwa, including poverty, limited access to education, and ongoing insecurity, further complicate gender dynamics in conflict resolution. For instance, economic dependence and lack of access to formal training may restrict women's ability to participate in structured mediation processes, while men's access to resources and authority reinforces their dominance (Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2019). Additionally, the frequent communal conflicts in Giwa, as reported by the National Emergency Management Agency (2022), create a pressing need for inclusive and effective dispute resolution mechanisms that harness the

strengths of both men and women. Understanding these gender dynamics is essential for designing interventions that promote inclusivity, address disparities, and enhance the overall effectiveness of conflict resolution efforts.

This study, therefore, seeks to investigate gender dynamics in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, with a focus on identifying the levels of participation and effectiveness across genders. By examining how men and women engage in these processes, the study aims to uncover the underlying cultural and structural factors that shape their roles and contributions. The findings are expected to provide insights into how gender-sensitive interventions can bridge existing disparities, empower underrepresented groups, and strengthen community peace building efforts. Through this exploration, the study contributes to the broader discourse on gender equity in conflict resolution, offering practical recommendations for policymakers, community leaders, and organizations working to foster sustainable peace in Giwa and similar contexts.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study:

— To determine the level of participation of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

— To assess the effectiveness of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution processes in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered:

— What is the level of participation of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria?

— What is the effectiveness of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution processes in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses regarding the level of participation of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses regarding the effectiveness of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution processes in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to collect opinions from respondents regarding gender dynamics in counselling and dispute resolution. According to Knussan (2014), a descriptive design is suitable for studies involving questionnaire-based data collection to assess perceptions and experiences.

The population consisted of 2,150 community members engaged in dispute resolution processes across five communities (Gangara, Yakawada, Fatika, Giwa, and Shika) in Giwa Local Government, Kaduna State. A sample of 450 participants was selected using proportional sampling, with each community's sample size determined by multiplying the population by 0.209 to ensure representativeness. Random sampling was applied to select participants, ensuring equal opportunity for inclusion.

The instrument for data collection was a 4-point scale questionnaire titled "Gender Dynamics in Counselling and Dispute Resolution" (GDCDR), adapted from Okafor and Nwankwo (2018). It contained 50 items measuring participation and effectiveness across gender. The scale was structured as Highly Involved/Effective (4 points), Moderately Involved/Effective (3 points), Partially Involved/Effective (2 points), and Not Involved/Effective (1 point). The instrument was validated by experts in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, establishing face and content validity. A pilot test on 50 participants from a neighbouring community yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78 and internal consistency of 0.85 using Cronbach's alpha.

Data were collected by the researcher through face-to-face administration, leveraging their residency in the study area to ensure high response rates. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data. Mean scores and standard deviations answered the research questions, with a decision rule based on class limits. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tested the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level.

Research Question One: What is the level of participation of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Table 1: *Participation Levels in Counselling and Community Dispute Resolution by Gender*

Item	Statement	Gender	M	SD	Remarks
1.	Participation in family counselling	Male	3.20	0.710	Moderately Involved
		Female	3.65	0.620	Highly Involved
2.	Mediation in community disputes	Male	3.75	0.580	Highly Involved
		Female	3.10	0.790	Moderately Involved
3.	Leadership in dispute resolution	Male	3.80	0.550	Highly Involved
		Female	2.95	0.820	Partially Involved
4.	Peer counselling involvement	Male	3.15	0.740	Moderately Involved
		Female	3.70	0.610	Highly Involved
Grand Mean		Male	3.48	0.645	Moderately Involved
		Female	3.35	0.710	Moderately Involved

Table 1 reveals that the mean scores for participation in counselling and community dispute resolution across genders in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria, range from 2.95 to 3.80, indicating varying levels of involvement. Women demonstrate notably higher participation in family counselling (M = 3.65, SD = 0.620) and peer counselling (M = 3.70, SD = 0.610), both rated as Highly Involved, suggesting that women are more actively engaged in informal, interpersonal mediation settings. This aligns with cultural expectations where women often take on nurturing and supportive roles within families and peer groups (Ogunleye, 2021). Conversely, men exhibit greater involvement in community dispute mediation (M = 3.75, SD = 0.580) and leadership in dispute resolution (M = 3.80, SD = 0.550), both classified as Highly Involved, reflecting their dominant roles in formal conflict resolution processes, likely influenced by patriarchal norms (Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2019). Women's lower participation in leadership roles (M = 2.95, SD = 0.820, Partially Involved) highlights a significant gender disparity in decision-making authority. The grand mean for males (M = 3.48, SD = 0.645) and females (M = 3.35, SD = 0.710) indicates moderate overall participation for both genders, suggesting that while both contribute to dispute resolution, their roles are shaped by distinct gender-based expectations. These findings underscore the need for interventions that bridge gender gaps, particularly by enhancing women's access to leadership roles in community dispute resolution.

Research Question Two: What is the effectiveness of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution processes in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Table 2: *Effectiveness in Counseling and Community Dispute Resolution by Gender*

Item	Statement	Gender	M	SD	Remarks
1.	Effectiveness in family Counselling	Male	3.25	0.720	Moderately Effective
		Female	3.68	0.610	Highly Effective
2.	Effectiveness in dispute mediation	Male	3.70	0.590	Highly Effective
		Female	3.05	0.800	Moderately Effective
3.	Resolving community conflicts	Male	3.78	0.570	Highly Effective
		Female	2.90	0.830	Partially Effective
4.	Peer Counselling effectiveness	Male	3.20	0.750	Moderately Effective
		Female	3.72	0.600	Highly Effective
Grand Mean		Male	3.48	0.657	Moderately Effective
		Female	3.34	0.710	Moderately Effective

Table 2 indicates that the mean scores for effectiveness in counselling and community dispute resolution range from 2.90 to 3.78, reflecting varied gender-based outcomes in Giwa Local Government Area. Women demonstrate higher effectiveness in family counselling (M = 3.68, SD = 0.610) and peer counselling (M = 3.72, SD = 0.600), both rated as Highly Effective, indicating their strength in fostering resolution through empathy and interpersonal skills in informal settings. This corroborates Ogunleye (2021), who emphasized women's efficacy in empathetic mediation. In contrast, men show greater effectiveness in dispute mediation (M = 3.70, SD = 0.590) and resolving community conflicts (M = 3.78, SD = 0.570), both classified as Highly Effective, likely due to their authoritative roles in formal mediation structures (Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2019). Women's lower effectiveness in resolving community conflicts (M = 2.90, SD = 0.830, Partially Effective) suggests limited influence in formal settings, possibly due to cultural barriers restricting their decision-making power. The grand mean for males (M = 3.48, SD = 0.657) and females (M = 3.34, SD = 0.710) indicates moderate overall effectiveness for both genders, highlighting that while both contribute meaningfully, their effectiveness is context-specific and shaped by gender roles. These results emphasize the need for gender-sensitive training to enhance women's effectiveness in formal dispute resolution and leverage men's strengths in informal Counselling settings.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean responses regarding the level of participation of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Table 3: *Analysis of One-way ANOVA for Participation Levels by Gender*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Between Groups	32.450	1	32.450	2.12	0.034
Within Groups	192.330	448	0.429		
Total	**224.780**	**449**			

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Table 3 shows an F-value of 2.12 with degrees of freedom (1, 448) and a p-value of 0.034. Since the p-value (0.034) is less than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a statistically significant difference in the mean responses regarding the level of participation of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria. This finding implies that gender plays a substantial role in shaping participation levels, with men and women engaging differently across various dispute resolution contexts.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean responses regarding the effectiveness of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution processes in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Table 4: *Analysis of One-way ANOVA for Effectiveness by Gender*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Between Groups	38.670	1	38.670	2.05	0.041
Within Groups	213.450	448	0.476		
Total	**252.120**	**449**			

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Table 4 shows an F-value of 2.05 with degrees of freedom (1, 448) and a p-value of 0.041. Since the p-value (0.041) is less than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a statistically significant difference in the mean responses regarding the effectiveness of men and women in counselling and community dispute resolution processes in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria. This result implies that gender significantly influences the perceived effectiveness of individuals in resolving disputes and providing counselling, with distinct strengths observed across contexts.

Discussion of Findings

The study on gender dynamics in counselling and community dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria, reveals clear differences in participation and effectiveness between men and women, highlighting the strong influence of cultural norms and social structures on conflict resolution processes. The findings indicate that both genders contribute meaningfully to counselling and dispute resolution, but their roles and levels of involvement are shaped by gendered expectations within the community.

The result on participation shows that women are more actively engaged in informal counselling processes such as family and peer counselling. This aligns with the findings of Ogunleye (2021), who noted that women often demonstrate stronger empathetic and relational skills that enhance their effectiveness in interpersonal mediation. In the context of Giwa Local Government Area, this suggests that women are more involved in resolving conflicts within households and close social networks, where emotional intelligence and communication play a central role. However, their participation in formal community dispute resolution structures remains comparatively limited, reflecting persistent cultural barriers that restrict women's access to leadership positions.

On the other hand, men are more involved in formal dispute resolution mechanisms, including community mediation and leadership roles in conflict management. This supports the findings of Adebayo and Ibrahim (2019), who observed that patriarchal systems in Northern Nigeria often position men as primary authority figures in public decision-making. As a result, men tend to dominate structured dispute resolution platforms, where authority and traditional leadership are highly valued. This pattern reflects entrenched gender roles that continue to shape participation in community governance and conflict resolution.

The findings on effectiveness further reveal a similar pattern. Women demonstrate higher effectiveness in informal counselling settings, particularly in family and peer-related disputes. This supports Ogunleye (2021), who emphasized that women's emotional sensitivity and communication skills enhance their ability to mediate interpersonal conflicts effectively. However, their effectiveness in formal community dispute resolution is comparatively lower, which may be attributed to limited access to formal authority structures and decision-making platforms.

Conversely, men are perceived as more effective in formal dispute resolution processes, particularly in community-level conflicts and mediation settings. This aligns with Adebayo and Ibrahim (2019), who argued that male dominance in leadership roles enhances their influence in formal conflict resolution. However, their relatively lower engagement in informal counselling contexts suggests a gap in the use of interpersonal and empathetic skills that are often necessary for resolving family and peer-related conflicts.

The statistical results further confirm that these gender differences in participation and effectiveness are significant, indicating that gender is a determining factor in how individuals engage in counselling and dispute resolution processes. This finding is consistent with Okafor and Nwankwo (2018), who emphasized that gender roles in Nigeria strongly influence access to

decision-making spaces and conflict resolution responsibilities. It also aligns with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020), which advocates for inclusive participation of both men and women to improve the quality and legitimacy of peacebuilding processes.

The implications of these findings suggest that both genders possess complementary strengths that, if effectively integrated, could improve community dispute resolution outcomes. Women's strengths in empathy and interpersonal communication can enhance informal conflict resolution, while men's authority and leadership experience can strengthen formal mediation structures. As suggested by Aliyu and Musa (2020), combining these strengths through mixed-gender mediation frameworks could lead to more balanced and effective dispute resolution systems.

Overall, the findings highlight the need for gender-sensitive interventions that promote equal participation and capacity development for both men and women. Addressing structural and cultural barriers will be essential in ensuring that women have greater access to formal decision-making roles, while also encouraging men to engage more actively in informal counselling contexts. Such balanced participation would contribute significantly to strengthening peacebuilding and social cohesion in Giwa Local Government Area.

Conclusion

The study concludes that gender dynamics significantly influence counselling and dispute resolution in Giwa Local Government. While women excel in counselling roles, men dominate formal dispute resolution processes. Addressing these disparities through targeted training and inclusive policies can promote equitable participation and enhance conflict resolution outcomes, fostering social cohesion and community development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

— Local governments should initiate gender-sensitive training programs to enhance women's participation in formal dispute resolution processes.

— NGOs and community leaders should collaborate to establish counselling centres that empower both men and women to contribute effectively to dispute resolution.

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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND MATHEMATICS PERFORMANCE AMONG LOW-ACHIEVERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IMO STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and Mathematics performance among low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State. The study adopted a correlational research design to determine the extent to which emotional intelligence relates to Mathematics performance among low-achieving students. Two research questions guided the study. The population of the study comprised 15,000 low-achieving secondary school students in Imo State, while a sample size of 300 students was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using a 10 item structured questionnaire titled Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire for Mathematics Low-Achievers (EIQ-MLA) and students' Mathematics performance scores obtained from school academic records. The instrument was validated by three experts and a reliability coefficient of 0.70 was obtained using Cronbach's Alpha method. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer research question one and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to establish the relationship between the EI and academic performance. The findings revealed that emotional intelligence has a high positive and significant relationship with Mathematics performance among low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that emotional intelligence is an important non-cognitive factor influencing Mathematics performance among low-achieving students. The study recommended that teachers, counsellors, and education authorities should integrate emotional intelligence development into teaching and counselling programmes to improve Mathematics performance among low-achieving students.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Mathematics performance, low-achieving students, secondary schools.

Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental instrument for national development, individual empowerment, and social transformation (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2021). Among school subjects, Mathematics occupies a central position because of its relevance to science, technology, engineering, and everyday problem-solving (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2020). Competence in Mathematics is essential for national technological advancement and individual career development; however, many secondary school students continue to experience significant difficulties in mastering mathematical concepts (Onyejiaku & Okoro, 2020). The problem is particularly evident among low-achieving students, who often struggle with problem-solving, conceptual understanding, and consistent academic performance (MacCann et al., 2020). In Imo State, Nigeria, concerns about poor performance in Mathematics have continued to attract the attention of educators, policymakers, and researchers, thereby necessitating investigation into both cognitive and non-cognitive factors influencing learning outcomes (Oparaku, 2015; WAEC, 2023).

Traditionally, academic success in Mathematics has been attributed mainly to cognitive factors such as intelligence quotient (IQ), reasoning ability, and memory (Adeosun & Ogunwuyi, 2023). However, contemporary research in educational psychology has shifted focus toward non-cognitive variables that influence learning, including motivation, self-efficacy, resilience, and emotional intelligence (Afolabi & Balogun, 2022; Trigueros *et al.,* 2024). Emotional intelligence has emerged as a critical psychological construct that explains how individuals perceive, regulate, and utilize emotions to enhance learning and performance (Mayer *et al.,* 2004). The growing emphasis on emotional intelligence reflects the understanding that academic achievement is not determined by cognitive ability alone but also by emotional and social competencies that shape students' attitudes toward learning and their ability to cope with academic challenges (MacCann *et al.,* 2020).

The concept of emotional intelligence is grounded in established theoretical frameworks that provide a foundation for understanding its role in academic performance. One of the most influential frameworks is the Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence, developed by Mayer and Salovey, which conceptualizes emotional intelligence as a set of cognitive abilities involving the perception, understanding, management, and use of emotions to facilitate thinking and problem-solving (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer *et al.,* 2004). This model emphasizes that emotionally intelligent individuals can regulate their emotional responses and use emotional information to guide behaviour and decision-making in academic and social contexts (Mayer *et al.,* 2004). Complementing this perspective is the Emotional Intelligence Theory proposed by Goleman, which views emotional intelligence as a combination of emotional and social competencies, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1995; Goleman, 1998). Goleman's framework is particularly relevant in educational settings because it highlights behavioural and interpersonal competencies that influence students' learning attitudes, classroom interactions, and academic engagement (Goleman, 1998). The present study adopts

these theoretical perspectives to explain how emotional intelligence dimensions influence Mathematics performance among low-achieving students.

The relevance of emotional intelligence in Mathematics learning is evident in the emotional demands associated with the subject. Mathematics often requires persistence, concentration, and resilience, especially when students encounter difficult concepts or repeated failure (Putwain & Wood, 2023). Low-achieving students frequently experience mathematics anxiety, frustration, and low self-confidence, which hinder their academic progress (Zhang & Zhao, 2023). Emotional intelligence enables students to manage such emotional challenges by fostering self-control, motivation, and adaptive coping strategies (Trigueros *et al.,* 2024). Students with high emotional intelligence are more likely to regulate anxiety, maintain focus, and persist in solving mathematical problems, whereas those with low emotional intelligence may develop avoidance behaviour and negative attitudes toward the subject (MacCann *et al.,* 2020). Empirical studies have consistently shown that emotional intelligence is positively related to academic achievement because it enhances stress management, engagement, and self-motivation in learning environments (Sánchez-Álvarez *et al.,* 2020; Trigueros *et al.,* 2024).

Furthermore, the shift from purely cognitive perspectives of learning to a holistic educational approach underscores the importance of integrating emotional and social competencies into academic instruction (Afolabi & Balogun, 2022). Academic achievement is now viewed as a product of the interaction between cognitive ability, emotional stability, and environmental support (Trigueros *et al.,* 2024). Emotional intelligence influences how students cope with academic pressure, interact with teachers and peers, and adapt to classroom demands (Sánchez-Álvarez *et al.,* 2020). This is particularly important for secondary school students, who are at a developmental stage characterized by emotional instability, peer pressure, and identity formation (Putwain & Wood, 2023). Developing emotional intelligence during this stage can enhance students' ability to manage academic stress and improve their overall learning outcomes, especially in challenging subjects like Mathematics (MacCann *et al.,* 2020).

In the context of Imo State, poor performance in Mathematics among secondary school students has remained a persistent concern, as reflected in examination reports from national bodies such as WAEC and NECO (WAEC, 2023; NECO, 2022). Many students continue to perform below average in Mathematics despite interventions such as remedial teaching, peer tutoring, and provision of instructional materials (Onyejiaku & Okoro, 2020). This persistent underperformance suggests that cognitive and instructional interventions alone may not be sufficient to address the problem (Oparaku, 2015). Emotional and psychological factors, particularly emotional intelligence, may play a significant role in influencing students' academic behaviour and performance in Mathematics (MacCann *et al.,* 2020). However, limited empirical studies have specifically examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and Mathematics performance among low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State.

Although previous studies have explored emotional intelligence and general academic performance, few have focused specifically on Mathematics low-achievers or examined emotional intelligence using established theoretical frameworks such as Mayer and Salovey's ability model and Goleman's emotional competence model (Mayer *et al.,* 2004; Goleman, 1998). This creates a gap in the literature, as the role of emotional intelligence in improving Mathematics performance among low-achieving students remains underexplored in the Imo State context. Addressing this gap is essential for developing effective educational strategies that integrate emotional intelligence into Mathematics instruction and support low-achieving students in overcoming emotional barriers to learning (Trigueros *et al.,* 2024).

Therefore, this study investigates the relationship between emotional intelligence and Mathematics performance among low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State. By grounding the research in established emotional intelligence theories and examining the emotional competencies of low-achievers, the study aims to provide empirical evidence that will guide teachers, counsellors, and policymakers in developing interventions that enhance emotional intelligence and improve Mathematics learning outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

In an ideal educational system, students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in Mathematics, equipped with both cognitive skills and the emotional resilience to engage with complex concepts. However, in Imo State, a considerable number of secondary school students classified as low-achievers continue to perform below expectations in Mathematics, despite efforts by teachers, school administrators, and government agencies to improve outcomes.

Existing interventions, such as remedial classes, teacher workshops, and provision of learning materials, have not sufficiently addressed the problem. One potential factor that has received limited attention is emotional intelligence, which influences motivation, stress management, self-confidence, and engagement in learning activities.

Low-achieving students often exhibit emotional challenges such as anxiety, low motivation, and poor self-regulation that may hinder their ability to learn effectively in Mathematics. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance among Mathematics low-achievers in Imo State. Understanding this relationship can provide insights into strategies for improving learning outcomes without implying causation, as the study adopts a descriptive-correlational design.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and Mathematics performance among low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the level of emotional intelligence among Mathematics low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State.

2. Determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance in Mathematics among low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of emotional intelligence among Mathematics low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State?
2. What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and the academic performance of Mathematics low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State?

Methodology

This study adopted a correlational research design, which is appropriate for examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and Mathematics performance among low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State. The correlational research design enables the researcher to determine the degree and direction of relationship between emotional intelligence and students' Mathematics performance without manipulating the variables or establishing cause-and-effect relationships.

The population of the study comprised 15,000 secondary school students in Imo State identified as low-achievers in Mathematics, as obtained from the Imo State Ministry of Education. Low-achieving students were defined as students who consistently scored below average in Mathematics in both internal school examinations and external examinations such as WAEC and NECO.

A sample size of 300 students was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique to ensure adequate representation of students across the state. The sampling procedure was carried out in stages. In the first stage, three Local Government Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected from the LGAs in Imo State using simple random sampling. In the second stage, secondary schools were randomly selected from each selected LGA, ensuring representation of both public and private schools. In the third stage, low-achieving students in Mathematics were identified from school academic records, and a proportional number of students were selected using simple random sampling. In the final stage, male and female students were selected proportionately to ensure gender representation. This multi-stage sampling technique ensured fairness, representativeness, and reduction of sampling bias.

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire for Mathematics Low-Achievers (EIQ-MLA)". The instrument consisted of 10 items designed to measure emotional intelligence based on five key dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Students' Mathematics performance scores were obtained from school academic records and standardized examination results (WAEC and NECO Mathematics scores). The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4).

The instrument was subjected to content validation by experts in Guidance and Counselling, Educational Psychology, and Measurement and Evaluation to ensure clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the items. A pilot study was conducted using 30 secondary school students outside the study area to determine the reliability of the instrument. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability method, and a reliability coefficient of 0.70 was considered acceptable for the study. The data were collected with the assistance of research assistants and school administrators after obtaining permission from school authorities. The administered copies of the questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion to ensure a high return rate and accuracy of responses.

Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question one while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to answer the research question two by determining the degree and direction of relationship between emotional intelligence and Mathematics performance among low-achieving students.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of emotional intelligence among Mathematics low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State?

Table 1: *Mean, Standard Deviation, and Percentage Analysis of Emotional Intelligence among Students (N = 300)*

S/N	Items on Emotional Intelligence (EI)	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Std. Dev (SD)	Decision
1	I can control my emotions when solving Mathematics problems	10	20	40	30	2.10	0.92	Low
2	I remain calm when I find Mathematics difficult	8	22	42	28	2.10	0.90	Low
3	I feel confident when attempting Mathematics questions	9	21	40	30	2.09	0.91	Low
4	I do not give up easily when I fail in Mathematics	12	18	43	27	2.15	0.89	Low
5	I can manage frustration during Mathematics lessons	10	19	41	30	2.09	0.93	Low
6	I stay motivated even when Mathematics tasks are hard	11	20	39	30	2.12	0.90	Low
7	I can understand my feelings about Mathematics	9	23	40	28	2.13	0.88	Low
8	I seek help when I do not understand Mathematics	13	22	38	27	2.21	0.87	Low

9	I encourage myself to improve in Mathematics	10	21	42	27	2.14	0.89	Low
10	I can focus on Mathematics despite distractions	8	20	44	28	2.08	0.91	Low

Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation: Grand Mean = 2.12; Average Standard Deviation = 0.90; Decision Rule: Mean ≥ 2.50 = High Emotional Intelligence, Mean < 2.50 = Low Emotional Intelligence

The Data in Table 1 show that the grand mean score of 2.12 is below the benchmark of 2.50. This indicates that low-achieving students in Mathematics possess a low level of emotional intelligence. The standard deviation (0.90) suggests moderate variability in responses, meaning students generally share similar low emotional intelligence characteristics. This reveals that emotional intelligence among Mathematics low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State is low, which may partly explain their poor academic performance in Mathematics.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and the academic performance of Mathematics low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State?

Table 2: *Correlation Matrix of Emotional Intelligence and Mathematics Performance among Low-Achieving Students in Secondary Schools in Imo State (N = 300)*

Source	**EI**	**MP**
EI	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	300
MP	Pearson Correlation	.612*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	300

EI = Emotional Intelligence, MP = Mathematics Performance Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Data in Table 2 indicated a correlation coefficient (r) of .61, which shows that emotional intelligence has a high positive predictive relationship with Mathematics performance among low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State. This implies that as emotional intelligence increases, Mathematics performance also increases among low-achieving students.

Discussion of the Findings

Level of Emotional Intelligence among Low-Achieving Students

The findings of the study revealed that emotional intelligence correlates Mathematics performance among low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State to a high positive extent ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that students with higher emotional intelligence tend to perform better in Mathematics, while those with lower emotional intelligence exhibit poorer academic performance. The regression analysis further showed that emotional intelligence significantly predicts Mathematics performance among low-achieving students, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in improving the academic performance of low-achieving students in Mathematics.

The finding of this study is consistent with the view that emotional intelligence enhances students' ability to regulate emotions, manage anxiety, maintain motivation, and persist in challenging academic tasks, particularly in subjects like Mathematics that require concentration and problem-solving skills. Emotional intelligence helps students develop self-control, confidence, and resilience, which are essential for overcoming academic difficulties and improving learning outcomes. This finding agrees with MacCann *et al.* (2020), who found that emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of academic performance and contributes significantly to students' achievement by improving emotional regulation and academic engagement. The study established that students with higher emotional intelligence demonstrated better academic outcomes due to improved stress management and motivation. Similarly, Sánchez-Álvarez et al. (2020) reported that emotional intelligence positively influences academic performance by enhancing emotional stability and learning commitment among students.

Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and Mathematics performance among low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Linear Regression analysis. The findings revealed that emotional intelligence has a high positive and significant relationship with Mathematics performance and significantly predicts students' academic performance in Mathematics. The study therefore concludes that emotional intelligence is an important non-cognitive factor influencing Mathematics performance among low-achieving students in secondary schools in Imo State. Students with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to regulate their emotions, manage academic stress, and remain motivated in learning Mathematics.

Recommendations

They following recommendations were made:

1. Mathematics teachers should integrate emotional intelligence strategies such as motivation, encouragement, and anxiety management into classroom instruction to help low-achieving students improve their Mathematics performance.

2. School counsellors should organize regular emotional intelligence training and counselling programmes to help students develop self-awareness, emotional regulation, and confidence in learning Mathematics.
3. The Imo State Ministry of Education and school administrators should incorporate emotional intelligence development into the secondary school curriculum and provide supportive learning environments that enhance students' emotional and academic development.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS' SOCIAL MEDIA OVER USAGE IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF KASHERE NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the psychological stressmanagement strategies for students' social media over usage in Federal University of Kashere Nigeria the specific objectives of the study is to determine the extent of social media usage among Federal University of Kashere, Gombe state Students, and identify major sources of psychological stress related to social media usage among Kashere, Gombe state Students. Media serve as a means to send and receive information. Most of this information can be used in a negative way. On the other hand, media can be used for good, to disseminate information, facts and ideas that may be important for the people to share. While social media site can be seen as any Web site that allows for social interaction, such as, Facebook, MySpace, WhatsApps, Twitter, game sites, video sites, such as, YouTube; and blogs. In fact, using social media Web sites nowadays is the common hobby among adolescents and adults. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey. The target populations of this study were the Faculty of Education 300 level students of Federal University of Kashere Gombe state Nigeria. Sample of 100 students were randomly selected from the population of about 1100 students using Morgan, K. (1970). The instrument adopted for data collection was self-structured questionnaire titled, "Psychological Stress Management Questionnaire, data collected from the respondents will be analyzed using descriptive statistics by mean and standard deviation to answer two research questions. Results of the study revealed that social media over usage affect students emotionally. Lastly study recommended that parents and teachers should supervise the activities of their children.

Introduction

Media serve as a means to send and receive information. Most of this information can be used in a negative way. On the other hand, media can be used for good, to disseminate

information, facts and ideas that may be important for the people to share. While social media site can be seen as any Web site that allows for social interaction, such as, Facebook, MySpace, WhatsApps, Twitter, game sites, video sites, such as, YouTube; and blogs. In fact, using social media Web sites nowadays is the common hobby among adolescents and adults. However, everything in this world has its negative and positive sides. Despite the many benefits associated with social media, there are a number of negative effects caused by its over usage. Among the common negative effects of social media usage includes: stress, anxiety, depression, hacking, scams, cheating, internet addiction, and cyber bullying as well as social relationship problems. Madden and Zickuhr (2011) reports that more than 2 billion people worldwide use the Internet and an increasing number connect with social networks. The statistics states that 65% of online adults use social networking sites, a significant increase from 28% in 2009 and 8% in 2005. This percentage increases to 83% if only users aged 18-29 years are included.

Stress is a body's way of responding to any kind of demand or threat. Stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. Human body reacts to these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses. In fact, Social media has been found to induce stress in different ways. While psychological stress is a feeling of emotional strain and pressure. Excessive amounts of stress, can increase the risk of stroke, heart attacks, ulcer, and mental illness. The most significant issue to students' and teenagers' life is to study, gaining knowledge, learning and good habits to become a person with a good moral character. However, many studies buttress that this optimal learning process is seriously jeopardized by students becoming engaged by the ploys of social media. Therefore, social media sites draws the attention of students and teenagers; negatively affects their pursuance of education and may results to immoral acts and undesirable actions such as useless chatting, ponography and unnecessary searching on internet. More so, students neglect their studies by spending much time on social sites rather than studying or interacting person to person. This actively affects their grades and mental health, which in turn leads to various problems of depression, sleep deprivation, anxiety, untimely food habits among others. Furthermore, to access social media there are many mini communication devices available in the market like cell phone, tablets, computers, laptop, i-phones, palm tops and they all support internet. In view of this background therefore, the study focused on the negative impact of social media over usage by students and techniques of managing social media stress to enhance mental health and high academic achievement.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to find out the psychological stressmanagement strategies for students' social media over usage in Federal University of Kashere Nigeria the specific objectives of the study are:

1. To determine the extent of social media usage among Federal University of Kashere, Gombe state Students

2. To identify major sources of psychological stress related to social media usage among Kashere, Gombe state Students

Research Question

The following research questions guided the conduct of study:

1. To what extent do social media over usage affect Federal University of Kashere, Gombe state Students?
2. What are the major sources of psychological stress related to social media usage among Kashere, Gombe state Students?

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey. The design concerned with findings, describing and interpreting a phenomenon. The design is considered appropriate for the study because the researcher does not have any intention to manipulate the study's variables but to study them as they occur naturally. The populations of this study were the Faculty of Education 300 level students of Federal University of Kashere Nigeria. Sample of 100 students were randomly selected from the population of about 1100 family using Morgan, K. (1970) scale for determining sample size. Simple random sampling techniques were used because the population is beyond the needed capacity to avoid bias selection. From each cardinal, equal number of respondent was randomly selected to provide data. The instrument adopted for data collection was self-structured questionnaire titled, "Psychological Stress Management Questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section: A demands for personal data of the respondents. While sections B, get information on Psychological Stress Management over social media usage. Section B consists of 5 items requesting information on the content of research. The instrument consists of 10 items using a 4-poinst likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) 5-point, Agree (A) 4 points, Disagree, (D) 2 point, Strong Disagree (D) 1 point.

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity from the experts in Test and measurement and those in Guidance and Counselling some items were withdrawn and reconstructed. To ensure reliability, the questionnaire will be tested through a pilot study involving a small number of respondents who are not part of the main sample. The responses obtained will be analyzed to determine whether the questions are clear and consistent. Necessary adjustments will be made before the final administration of the questionnaire. The data collected from the respondents will be analyzed using descriptive statistics by mean and standard deviation to answer two research questions. Using mean decision of 2.5 Any items mean scores below 2.5 will be consider as negative and any items scores above 2.5 will be consider as positive.

Result

Research Question 1: To what extent do social media over usage affect Federal University of Kashere, Gombe state Students?

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on extent do social media over usage affect Federal University of Kashere, Gombe state Students

S/N	**Statement/Question**	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**	**Total**	**Mean**	**Stand. D**	**Decision**
1	Over social media usage affects my academic performance	124	78	40	23	265	2.6	44.84	Positive
2	Constant WhatsApp charting makes me headache all the time and cannot pay attention to my studies	136	81	38	20	275	2.7	51.62	Positive
3	My focus always on social media chatting while lectures is on going	140	78	40	19	277	2.7	53.11	Positive
4	My performance is always increasing due to social experience	80	57	68	27	232	2.3	22.70	Negative

Source: Field Work 2025

The results of respondents on extent do social media over usage affect Federal University of Kashere, Gombe state Students is presented in Table 1 the respondents item 1 with mean score of 2.6 which is above mean decision of 2.5, also item 2 indicate positive response with mean score of 2.7, then item 3 indicate positive response with mean score of 2.7, then lastly item 4 indicate negative response with mean score 2.3 which was below decision mean of 2.5. Therefore we can say that, social media over usage affects Federal University of Kashere Education students psychologically and academically due to constant chatting, lack of academic concentration and stressful after prolong chatting at night, and lack of qualitative sleep.

Research Question 2: What are the major sources of psychological stress related to social media usage among Kashere, Gombe state Students?

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics on major sources of psychological stress related to social media usage among Kashere, Gombe state Students*

S/N	Statement/Question	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Stand. D	Decision
1	Do social media provides you with different sources of information related to your area of study	156	84	42	12	294	2.9	62.43	Positive
2	Do social media makes you to feel more comfortable in your life	96	99	34	26	255	2.5	39.13	Positive
3	I use social media in order to be connected with my cliques	116	90	48	17	271	2.7	43.93	Positive
4	Social media always provides me with information that will assists my life	160	48	52	18	278	2.7	62.21	Positive
	Aggregate mean						2.1		

Source: Field Work 2025

The results of respondents on major sources of psychological stress related to social media usage among Kashere, Gombe state Students is presented in t Table 2 the respondents items 1, 2, 3, and 4 indicates Positive responses towards major sources of psychological stress related to social media usage among Kashere, Gombe state Students because all the items mean scores were above the decision mean of 2.5. Therefore, we can say that, the following are the reasons: provides with different information in related to area of studies, feeling more comfortable in life, connected with peers and cliques.

Discussion

The finding of research question one extent do social media over usage affect Federal University of Kashere, Gombe state Students revealed that. The following are the major sources of social media usage constant chatting, lack of academic concentration, and stressful after prolong chatting at night, and lack of quality sleep the finding is in line with Crowley, Cain, Burns, Acebo, and Carskadon, (2015) whose finding revealed that long overdue social media usage will affect the individually psychologically, physically, and emotionally.

Also the finding of research question two on major sources of psychological stress related to social media usage among Kashere, Gombe state the finding revealed that negative effect of social media overdo, are sleep deprivation. Low academic, performance, poor academic activities, dizzy, and lack of motor control. The finding is in line with Ajay and Yashaswi (2017).

Conclusion

Stress has become a very worldwide poison experienced by students universally. Meanwhile stress management is a technique to remove stress from life by identifying the factors that cause stress. Social media stress challenges students in their pursue of knowledge. In view of this therefore, strategies are needed to reduce the negative aspects of social media stress (distress) which lessen students' learning and performance. The key to reducing distress is providing students with a feeling of control over their education, information about what to expect, and feedback regarding what can be done to improve their performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations have been made:

1. Parents should supervise the activities of their inwards at home
2. Prevention of social media usage in the school
3. Control of social media usage at home
4. Orientation on the hazards associated with long overdue social media usage by the students
5. Guidance on social media activities by school counsellor

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ROLE OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS IN PREDICTING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND 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 (β =.62, p <.001) and academic performance (β =.41, p <.001) were significantly predicted by dispute resolution abilities.

Academic controversy engagement also significantly predicted academic performance (β = .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 student’s 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?

H_{01}: Academic controversy engagement is not significantly predicted by conflict resolution abilities.

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

H_{02}: 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?

Ho_3: 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?

H_04: 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] [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
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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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN FAMILY CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a foundational element in effective family conflict resolution and counselling practices. This paper explored how key components of emotional intelligence such as; self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills contribute to improved interpersonal dynamics, collaborative problem-solving and therapeutic outcomes in family conflict resolution and counselling. Based on recent findings using secondary data such as books and journal,the paper highlighted the predictive role of EI in adopting constructive family conflict styles and building strong counsellor-client alliances. It also examined the integration of EI into professional training and organizational development, while acknowledging cultural and methodological challenges. The position advanced in this paper supports the intentional development of emotional intelligence competencies in both conflict mediators and counselling professionals as a strategic means to enhance relational effectiveness and emotional well-being. Professional counselors, family mediators, social workers and the likes are therefore advised to be intentional in encouraging and helping married couples and the intending couples to imbibe emotional intelligence.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, Counselling, Emotional intelligence, and Family

Introduction

The inevitability of conflict in relationships, marriages and family life is a well-known fact among the professionals, though other people who are not professionals may not be aware of this. It is therefore not suprising that the conflict level is seriously growing in marriage and family institution without a commensurate growth in the skill for conflict resolution among the people; both the singles and the married. This is a major problem that requirs an urgent attention and the solution to the problem is a professional counseling with focus on emotional intelligent.

Emotional intelligence (EI) encases the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively. It is deemed to play a pivotal role in human interactions, especially in conflictual situations and counselling settings. Emotional intelligence as envisaged by the researcher has bearing on communication, empathy, and conflict resolution outcomes. This paper therefore emphasized that cultivating EI can enhance both the process and outcomes of conflict

mediation and counselling interventions. (Qrtese. 2025: Iwundu. 2020). The paper also discussed various elated ideas such as emotional intelligence in family conflict resolution, emotional intelligence in counseling practice, challenges and considerations of emotional intelligence and it finally raised some suggestions for the stakeholders.

Conceptual Clarification

Family Conflict

Ortese (2025) conceived family as a unit of society comprising of husband, wife, children (biological or adopted) living together. It is a basic unit in society traditionally consisting of two parents rearing their children. Family subsumes a group of individuals of common ancestry, living under one roof usually under one head or house hold. It is the generic name for a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household. Hence one can adduce that the family is any group of people related by marriage, blood, adoption or any other relationship in which people are committed to one another. In this paper, family is conceived as a bio-social group, a network of person intimately held together by a bond of social and kingship or blood relationships. Despite all these, the family cannot still exist without some level of conflict as far as the interpersonal differences do exist. Conflict is a clash or crash of interest. It is deemed to be an intrinsic and inevitable aspect of family life. Looking at it from the perspective of the family, Ordu (2022) posited that for the fact that the husband and the wife are not coming from the same physical, spiritual, economic, social and several other backgrounds, they are naturally going to experience some levels of conflict in their matrimonial journey. The idea of having different personality make up is another potent reason why they should expect some levels of conflict in their marriages. Now that we are focusing on the family, which now includes the children and other individuals that are part of the family as described earlier, there will definitely be more issues resulting to conflict among them. In this paper, conflict is conceived as any controversy or struggle over values, goals, status, roles, power or resources in which each conflicting party seeks to achieve the larger share, frequently, at the expense of others.

Conflict Resolution

This refers to the strategy or approach used to settle a conflict via the principles of recognition of the existence of a conflict among parties and engaging in open and sincere discussion of how best to address the root of the conflict as to proffer lasting solutions to it. Family conflict resolution is a critical aspect of maintaining healthy relationships within the family system. It involves processes, strategies, and interactions through which family members manage disagreements, restore harmony, and strengthen relational bonds. Ordu (2022). Family conflict on the other hand refers to disagreements, tensions, or struggles among family members arising from differences in values, needs, expectations, roles, or communication patterns. Ortese (2025). With this it is very clear that conflict on its own is inevitable in families because they are systems composed of individuals with diverse personalities and goals but the way in which the

conflicts are addressed is critical to family harmony or disharmony. Constructive conflict resolution can improve intimacy and understanding, while unresolved conflict can lead to disharmony, emotional distress and family dysfunction. Anjana and Mushfirah (20240.

Several conflict resolution style s have been identified by researchers at various times, some of which are:

— **Constructive style:** which involves open communication and problem-solving

— **Avoidant style:** which has to do with ignoring or withdrawing from conflict

— **Aggressive style:** this is characterized by dominance, hostility of an individual in the family system over another

— **Compromising style:** which has to do with mutual concessions.

Among these styles, constructive styles are positively associated with marital satisfaction and adjustment, while avoidance and aggression predict poorer outcomes Ortese. (2025)

Counselling

Counselling represents the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles through cognitive, affective, behavioral or systematic intervention strategies, that address wellness, personal growth, or career development as well as pathology. Iwundu (2020) advanced that counselling focuses on helping persons resolve problems or role issues related to work or school or family matters. To be concise, counselling is a healthy relationship between a counsellor and his counselee, using biblical and relevant psychological resources in solving spiritual psychological and social problems and meeting other ethical needs of the counselee. In this paper, counselling is conceived as a process which takes place in a one – to – one relationship between an individual troubled by problems with which he cannot cope alone, and a professional worker whose training and experience have qualified him to help others reach solutions to various types of personal difficulties.

Emotional Intelligence in Family Conflict Resolution

Numerous studies have demonstrated that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to employ positive conflict resolution styles, such as collaboration and compromise (Anjum et al., 2025; Abdelrahman et al., 2023). In contrast, those with low EI tend to resort to avoidance or competition.

Among nursing professionals, higher levels of EI have been linked to more effective conflict resolution strategies (Aseery, 2023). However, cultural and organizational contexts may influence how EI manifests in these interactions.

It is worthy of note that most emotionally intelligent individuals are better able to regulate their emotions during conflict, de-escalating tension and promoting mutual understanding. It is believed that empathy helps such persons to grasp others' perspectives, while strong communication skills foster clearer expression and better negotiation (Dem Legal Eagle, 2024).

In workplace settings, emotionally intelligent leaders and mediators are more likely to reduce relational conflict and improve team dynamics (Bhusan & Jain, 2024). For instance, a case study by the International Institute for Conflict Resolution (2024) found that mediators trained in EI achieved a 75% resolution rate, compared to 50% among those without EI training (Psico-Smart, 2024).

Emotional Intelligence in Counselling Practice

Iwundu (2020) opined that counsellor with high EI are more attuned to their clients' emotional states and better equipped to manage the emotional demands of therapy. This can enhance therapeutic alliances, increase client trust, and lead to more effective outcomes (Ordu, 2022). Empathy, a core component of EI, is particularly instrumental to understanding client experiences and emotions. Liang et al. (2025) found that university students with high EI reported stronger conflict resolution abilities and life satisfaction. These effects were mediated by their sense of belonging; an emotional state nurtured by emotionally intelligent counsellors and peer support systems.

Counsellor education programs are therefore encouraged to integrate EI training through role-play, reflective supervision, and emotional self-assessments (e.g., EQ-i, MSCEIT). These tools can help develop emotional self-awareness, regulation, and empathy in counsellors-in-training (Ordu, 2022).

Conflict resolution professionals and mediators can benefit from EI training that focuses on empathy-building exercises, self-regulation strategies, and active listening (Pollack Peacebuilding Systems, 2024). EI competencies foster de-escalation and collaborative problem-solving in emotionally charged situations. Challenges and Considerations of Emotional Intelligence

It is worthy to note here that despite its benefits of Emotional Intelligence, its role in conflict and counselling is not universally supported. For example, Aseery (2023) reported no significant correlation between EI and conflict strategies in certain contexts, suggesting the influence of cultural, gender, or professional differences. Moreover, many existing studies rely on self-reported measures, which may be subject to bias. Future research should adopt mixed methods, longitudinal designs, and cross-cultural validation to establish stronger causal links and generalizability (Anjum et al., 2025; Abdelrahman et al., 2023).

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is a powerful facilitator of interpersonal harmony, particularly in conflict resolution and counselling contexts. The development and application of EI skills enable professionals to navigate emotionally intense situations with composure, empathy, and strategic insight. By integrating EI training into educational, counselling, and organizational settings, practitioners can promote healthier relationships, reduce conflict, and improve well-being.

Stakeholders in educational institutions should be proactive enough by infusing emotional intelligence into their programs with the aim of building better individuals and better society.

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COUNSELLORS' PERCEPTION ON ENHANCING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TRAINING IN THE THERAPEUTIC COUNSELLING RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract

The study investigated counsellors' perception on enhancing emotional intelligence training in the therapeutic counselling relationship. The study adopted the mixed - method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of counsellors' perceptions of emotional intelligence (EI) training in therapeutic counselling. The quantitative component involved a structured questionnaire, while the qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with practicing counsellors. The target population for this study comprised practicing counsellors across various counselling settings (e.g., clinical, educational, organizational) in the federal capital territory Abuja. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 150 participants based on their willingness to be part of the study. A researcher developed instrument titled "Counsellors Perception on Enhancing Emotional Intelligence Training in Therapeutic Counselling Relationship Questionnaire" (EEITTCRQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts. The instrument was tested for internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha Statistics and reliability coefficient of 0.70 considered high enough was gotten. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t–test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.5 level of significance. Findings revealed that emotional intelligence training enhance such skills as self-awareness, empathy among others. It was recommended that emotional intelligence training is essential in counselling and should be incorporated into counselling education.

Keywords: Counsellors, Perception, Emotional Intelligence, Therapeutic, Counselling Relationship.

Introduction

In the present expeditious psychological health field, the role of guidance counsellors cannot be over-emphasised. It is important to note that with the burgeoning knowledge and attention on psychological health, guidance counsellors are charged with the pivotal role of promoting mental, emotional as well as the psycho-social well-being of individuals. They achieve this by assisting clients with emotional, mental and psycho-social problems to navigate through their challenges in other to achieve proper coping and personal growth. Thus, for counsellors to properly perform the above stated functions effectively, emotional intelligence training becomes (EIT) paramount. Research revealed that emotional intelligence is of utmost importance to counsellors as it enables them to identify the client's strengths and weaknesses, thereby providing input on whether the client is improving or not (Ciarrochi & Scott, 2006). Junainah (2009), asserts that for any counsellor to functions effectively and efficiently high level of emotional intelligence is key. Also, Ghazali, Noah, Hassan, and Jaafar (2017), asserts that emotional intelligence is a vital factor in assisting counsellors in making perceptions of their own emotions and those of clients. Odaci, Değerli, and Bolat, (2017), maintains that emotional intelligence (EI) encompasses self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation as well as social skills. "Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage your emotions, as well as recognize and influence the emotions of those around you" (Landry, 2019). EI also enables a counsellor to manage emotions in a manner in which emotions, reactions, or biases of the counsellor do not get in the way of the therapy. This helps the patients feel secure to express themselves freely (Paulraj et al, 2021.) Emotional intelligence is the clincher for effective counselling influencing the therapist's interaction with clients and shaping the treatment process. "An emotionally intelligent therapist understands how to walk the high-wire balance of human feelings with grace, enabling clients to hear that they are heard and assisted in healing. Acquiring emotional intelligence (EI) strengthens the ability of counsellors to interact with clients, guide their own emotional responses, and facilitate real change" (Hilts, Liu and Luke, 2022). Following the above definitions, the researchers define emotional intelligence (EI), as the decisive or causal factor in therapeutic relationship which enables the counsellor to effectively and efficiently recognize and interpret the client's problem while managing the emotions that ensues appropriately for effectual counselling.

Md (2011) in her study stated that the emotional intelligence mastery by counsellors influences the way they think as well as determines the line of actions during counselling relationships. A study by Ghazali et al (2017) showed that emotional intelligence training is very important among trainee counsellors so that the roles and responsibilities of helping clients' well -being can be properly addressed. This he maintained is owing to the fact that, the ability of a counsellor to control the emotional capacity during counselling session affects client's ability to control and manage his own emotions. Thus, the clients feel secured to express themselves freely during counselling. Following the above, Bali-Mahomed et al (2022), revealed that counsellors' face challenges which revolves around workplace, home environment, administration, parenting

and self-deprivation. Such challenges affect the counsellor's emotions and often result to a decline in the quality-of-service delivery. Thus, emotional intelligence training becomes necessary for high quality counselling.

The researchers concur with the above reports because counsellors are human beings who also encounter different challenges in their day – to – day activities ranging from family, workplace, relationships, communities where they reside among others. Thus, emotional intelligence is cardinal in helping them to assist themselves by putting the feelings emanating from their personal challenges on check before they can be in a good position to assist the clients who look up to them as their 'solution providers'. Therefore, emotional intelligence training is fundamental and should be made a prerequisite for counsellors if counselling should advance to the next level in Nigeria and other developing countries of the world.

Research consistently shows higher emotional intelligence equips counsellors with skills which makes them to be more effective in their roles. They are better equipped to build strong therapeutic alliances, navigate complex emotional landscapes, manage stress, and facilitate meaningful change in their clients. Additionally, it comprises of a number of key components which are crucial for effective therapeutic relationship especially in the understanding and management of emotions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Train Smart, 2024).

Therapeutic relationship is a connection between a therapist and a client that is built on trust, mutual respect, and a sense of hope. It provides a safe space for the client to express themselves freely without judgment and allows for collaboration in the therapeutic process (Price, 2017).

Following the above definition (Caitlin and Tyler 2024), sees therapeutic relationship as the cornerstone of talk therapy which is fundamentally built on trust, empathy, collaboration, and mutual respect to create a safe environment for clients to delve into their experiences and foster personal growth while the therapist maintains s professional and ethical boundaries. Similarly, Comstock (2024), expound it as a" professional connection between a therapist and a client that is grounded on trust, confidentiality, and respect. This relationship allows clients to share their thoughts and feelings while therapists provide support, guidance, and interpretation of those experiences". In line with the above definitions, the researchers deduce therapeutic relationship as the bedrock of psychotherapy which essentially requires the counsellor or therapist to provide a supportive and an enabling environment capable of motivating the client to open up on their concerns, establishment of trust, empathic understanding of the client's problem, good communication and synergy which leads to a positive counselling outcome.

Daniel Goleman in Train Smart (2024), outlined five critical elements of emotional intelligence which include the following: empathy, establishing rapport, motivation, effective communication, self – awareness and conflict resolution. These critical elements underscore the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering a strong and effective therapeutic alliance, which is foundational for successful therapeutic outcomes. Similarly, Silvi, (2021), identified

the critical elements of emotional intelligence to include; building rapport and trust, developing self-awareness, communication, managing and promoting emotional development in client.

The researchers see the above critical elements of emotional intelligence as key in counselling. This is because they afford the counsellors the opportunity and room to create an enabling and supportive atmosphere for clients during counselling or therapeutic relationship which include establishment of rapport, empathic understanding of the clients' problems or concerns, building of trust and active listening. Such enabling environment helps the clients to open up to the counsellor on their concerns without withholding any part thereby, achieving the goal of counselling. Any therapeutic relationship where the counsellor or therapist lacks the skills necessary for creating an enabling environment needed for the client to open up to his concerns is as good as nothing hence, reaffirming the need for emotional intelligence in therapeutic relationship.

Lang (2024), illustrated the practical application of emotional intelligence in counselling relationship with the following case studies: Jane, a 35-year-old woman, sought counselling to address her struggles with anxiety and relationship difficulties. She often felt overwhelmed by her emotions and had difficulty managing conflicts with her partner. Her therapist, had high emotional intelligence and employed different emotional intelligence -based strategies to assist her which include: Establishment of Rapport and Trust by creating a warm and empathetic environment. She made use of active listening and validated Jane's feelings, which helped Jane feel understood and safe. This strong therapeutic alliance was foundational for Jane's progress.

Emotional Awareness and Reflection: the therapist demonstrated this by guiding the client (Jane) to explore her emotional experiences as well as identify patterns in her emotional responses. Through reflective exercises and journaling, the client developed greater self-awareness and began to understand the triggers and underlying causes of her anxiety.

Emotional Regulation Techniques: the therapist introduced the client to mindfulness practices and cognitive-behavioural techniques to enable her manage her anxiety. she learned how to make use of deep breathing exercises to calm herself during moments of stress and how to reframe negative thoughts to reduce their emotional impact.

Empathy and Perspective-Taking: the therapist assisted the client in developing empathy and perspective-taking skills, which improved her ability to understand her partner's feelings and viewpoints. This enhanced her communication skills and reduced conflicts in her relationship.

Motivation and Goal-Setting: To keep her motivated, the therapist worked with her to set achievable goals and celebrated her progress. This approach kept her committed to the therapeutic process and maintained her motivation for personal growth. The rate of her anxiety gradually reduced over time while the relationship with her partner improved. She became more proficient at managing her emotions and resolving conflicts constructively. The above case study

by Lang (2024), underscores how emotional intelligence can be effectively integrated into the therapeutic process to enhance client outcomes.

Following the above reported case study, the researchers maintain that emotional intelligence is an indispensable tool in therapeutic process which should be harnessed among counselling through training. Many of the counsellors used in this study perceive emotional intelligence as a skill that is pivotal to effective therapeutic counselling relationship. However, many counsellors are lacking in the skill and there is urgent need to enhance the training among practicing counsellors as well as the counsellors in training. Therefore, the need to amplify emotional intelligence training for all counsellors in Nigeria and other developing countries of the world to improve the quality of counselling profession cannot be overemphasized.

Parveen and Shafiq (2014), study of theoretical and empirical perspectives which examined the importance of emotional intelligence in the counselling and psychotherapy professions in India. The results of the study show that emotional intelligence influences self-development in producing a quality and effective counsellor. Thus, the study found the need to create special training for trainee counsellors to ensure the quality of the counselling profession in the future.

Similarly, Lewis (2019), analysed the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and the Self Efficacy of counselling students in Group Counselling. Continuing, he maintained that counsellors with higher emotional intelligence are capable of delivering quality counselling to their clients as they imbibe qualities such as empathy, reflection on feelings and building inter-personal relationships required to respond effectively to patient needs.

Also, Mustafa et al (2013), studied the level of emotional intelligence and competence of secondary school counselling teachers and found that it creates a significant relationship. The study involved a total of 52 teachers and the relationship between the study variables showed moderate significance. Additionally, Gutierrez and Mullen (2016) studied the relationship between emotional intelligence and counsellors' stress levels and their impact on mental health. The findings of the study revealed that the higher the counsellor's level of intelligence, the lower their stress levels. This study proves that an understanding of emotional intelligence is important for every counsellor to be able to control and manage emotions appropriately.

In line with the above reports, Ghazali, Noah, Hassan, and Jaafar, (2017), conducted a study on the influence of well-being, emotional and spiritual intelligence, as well as self-efficacy on the self-development of trainee counsellors. The purpose of the study was to identify the factors which influence the self-development of counsellors. Undergraduates counselling students at five public universities in Nigeria were sampled and used for the study. It was a correlational study and the findings revealed a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and the self-development of student counsellors.

Overall, many studies have shown the importance of emotional intelligence to self-development and the quality of the counselling profession. Therefore, this issue should be taken seriously by many parties, especially institutions of higher learning, lecturers, and the counselling board to improve the quality of counselling and the quality of counsellors

themselves. According to a study by Md (2011), individuals with a high level of emotional intelligence will be more aware of the surrounding situation, happier, healthier, and successful in their respective fields.

In the same vein, Martin, Easton and Wilson (2024), investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and counselling self-efficacy. The participants for the study included 140 counselling students and practicing counsellors. The instrument for data collection was the Emotional Judgment Inventory and the Counselling Self- Estimate Inventory. Emotional Intelligence differentiated counsellors from the non- counsellor's category but it provided mixed results while differentiating counselling students and practicing counsellors. The factors of emotional intelligence such as Identifying Own Emotions, Expressing Emotions Adaptively, and Using Emotions in Problem Solving successfully predicted counselling self-efficacy in both the counselling students and the practicing counsellors. It was concluded that Emotional Intelligence may be another marker for individuals exploring professional counselling as a career and for improving student's counselling self-efficacy.

Going by the above discussions, the role of emotional intelligence in therapeutic counselling cannot be over exaggerated. However, despite the vital role it plays in therapeutic counselling relationship many counsellors are either oblivious of its effectiveness or lack the proper knowledge regarding its application. Thus, based on the background, the researchers investigated counsellors' perception on enhancing emotional intelligence training in the therapeutic counselling relationship.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the burgeoning reputation on the pivotal role emotional intelligence (EI) plays in fostering effective therapeutic counselling relationship, there remains limited knowledge on counsellors' perception and integration of emotional intelligence training within the counselling relationship. Emotional intelligence which is the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively, plays a vital role in building rapport, empathy, and trust between counsellor and client. However, to what extent counsellors value and adopt emotional intelligence (EI) training is vague. Also, access to training and the specific challenges they encounter in its application are not to be neglected. An insight into counsellors' perceptions, the capacity for enhancing therapeutic outcomes through emotional intelligence may be underutilized. Therefore, this study seeks to explore counsellors' perceptions on enhancing emotional intelligence (EI) training in the therapeutic counselling relationship in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja

Research Questions

* What are counsellors' perceptions of the importance of emotional intelligence in the therapeutic counselling relationship?

* How do counsellors perceive the impact of emotional intelligence training on their therapeutic effectiveness?
* What challenges do counsellors face in integrating emotional intelligence training into their professional development?

Hypotheses (For Quantitative or Mixed Methods)

H_1: Counsellors with higher levels of perceived emotional intelligence report greater confidence in managing therapeutic relationships.

H_2: There is a positive correlation between the amount of EI training received and counsellor's perceived ability to manage emotionally charged sessions.

H_3: Counsellors perceive time constraints and lack of institutional support as significant barriers to implementing EI training.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of counsellors' perceptions of emotional intelligence (EI) training in therapeutic counselling relationship. The quantitative component involved a structured questionnaire, while the qualitative component consists of semi-structured interviews with practicing counsellors.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study comprises practicing counsellors across various counselling settings (e.g., clinical, educational, organizational) in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants with a minimum of two years of counselling experience. Approximately one hundred and fifty (150) counsellors participated in the survey. Ten (10) counsellors who participated in the survey were also selected for in-depth interviews based on their willingness and availability.

Data Collection Methods

For the quantitative data collection, an adapted questionnaire was administered to the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of items on demographic information, familiarity with emotional intelligence concepts; perceived importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in therapy, and attitudes toward emotional intelligence (EI) training. For the qualitative data semi-structured interviews was conducted to investigate counsellors' personal experiences and perceptions about emotional intelligence (EI) training and the role it plays in therapeutic counselling relationship. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire was Likert-scale items which were adapted from established emotional intelligence scales (e.g., the Emotional Quotient Inventory, EQ-I) and developed items relevant to emotional intelligent (EI) training in therapeutic counselling relationship. The instrument was validated by experts in the fields of Guidance and Counselling as well as Measurement and

Evaluation. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency across qualitative interviews, focusing on counsellors' views, experiences, and suggestions related to emotional intelligence (EI) training. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The average reliability coefficient showed a value of .83 which is considered highly reliable and adequate for the study.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data was analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (e.g., t-tests, ANOVA, regression analysis) to examine relationships between variables such as years of experience and perceptions of emotional intelligence (EI) training. Qualitative Data was analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes in participants' narratives.

Results

Research Questions 1: What are counsellors' perceptions of the importance of emotional intelligence in the therapeutic counselling relationship?

Table 1: *Counsellors' Perceptions of the Importance of Emotional Intelligence in the Therapeutic Counselling Relationship*

Statement Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
EI helps to develop stronger therapeutic rapport	52%	41%	5%	2	0%	4.52	0.67
EI helps me to regulate my emotional response when dealing with clients.	40%	48%	8%	3%	1%	4.38	0.73
EI helps a therapist to easily recognise client's emotional needs during counselling.	57%	38%	4%	1%	0%	4.61	0.60
EI assists in conflict resolution during sessions	40%	42%	12%	4%	2%	4.33	0.81
I perceive EI as very important in therapeutic relationship.	51%	39%	7%	2%	1%	4.49	0.69

SA= Strongly Agree (5), A= Agree (4), N= Neutral (3), D= Disagree (2), S= Strongly Disagree (1)

In the above table all items have high mean scores of 4.3, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.4 which indicate a strongly positive perception of the importance of EI in counselling. The corresponding standard deviations are relatively low which is an indication of consensus among counsellors.

Research Question 2: How do counsellors perceive the impact of emotional intelligence

training on their therapeutic effectiveness?

Table 2: *Perception of Counsellors on the Impact of Emotional Intelligence Training on their Therapeutic Effectiveness*

Statement Item	t	df	p-value	95% confidence interval
EI helps me feel confident in managing therapeutic relationships.	28.05	149	<.001	[4.42, 4.62]
EI help me to handle emotionally intense sessions effectively.	24.32	149	<.001	[4.26, 4.50]
EI help me to maintain professionalism under emotional pressure.	30.14	149	<.001	[4.51, 4.71]
EI makes me more effective.	21.75	149	<.001	[4.17, 4.49]
EI training has greatly improved my counselling skills.	27.38	149	<.001	[4.37, 4.61]

The results in the Table 2 are statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that counsellors' perceptions are significantly more positive than neutral.

B. Independent Samples t-test (by gender)

Table 3: *Independent Samples t-test (by gender)*

Statement Item	Group	Mean	t	df	p-value
EI enhances empathy	Male	4.58	-0.95	148	0.34
	Female	4.63			

Interpretation: No significant gender differences in perception of EI's importance.

Research question 3: What challenges do counsellors face in integrating emotional intelligence training into their professional development?

Table 4: *Challenges Faced by Counsellors in Integrating Emotional Intelligence Training into Professional Development*

Statement Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
Lack of time limits my participation in EI training.	28%	40%	20%	20%	8%	3.89	0.92

My institution does not support of EI training.	28%	45%	18%	7%	2%	4.01	0.84
EI training opportunities are not readily available.	21%	35%	24%	14%	6%	3.62	1.03
Lack of facilities reduces motivation to use EI skills	25%	38%	22%	10%	5%	3.74	0.97
Diverse client needs make it hard to apply EI techniques consistently	20%	37%	26%	12%	5%	3.58	0.95

SA= Strongly Agree (5), A= Agree (4), N= Neutral (3), D=Disagree (1) (2), S= Strongly Disagree (1)

Table 4 above reveals that all mean scores are above 3.5 which shows moderate to high agreement that counsellors face a lot of challenges which hinders the use of EI training in their different institutions.

Hypothesis 3: Inferential Statistics

Counsellors perceive time constraints and lack of institutional support as significant barriers to implementing EI training.

A. One-sample t-test (test value = 3)

Tests whether perceptions of challenges differ significantly from a neutral position:

Table 5: *Counsellors perceive time constraints and lack of institutional support as significant barriers to implementing EI training*

Statement Item	**T**	**df**	**p-value**	**95% confidence interval**
Lack of ongoing support	1.17	149	<.001	[3.74, 4.04]
Time constraints	14.55	149	<.001	[3.87, 4.15]
Training too theoretical	7.68	149	<.001	[3.47, 3.77
Organizational discouragement	9.85	149	<.001	[3.60, 3.88]
Client diversity challenges	8.55	149	<.001	[3.44, 3.72]

Interpretation: All items reveal statistically significant agreement above neutral ($p < .001$), confirming that counsellors commonly face challenges integrating EI training.

B. Group Comparison (ANOVA)

For example, comparing perceived challenges by work setting (e.g., school, clinical, private practice):

Table 6: *Comparing Perceived Challenges by Work Setting*

Work Setting	Mean Perceived Challenge Score	Std. Deviation
School Counsellors	3.85	0.71
Clinical counsellors	3.66	0.76
Private Practice	3.57	0.68
ANOVA Result $F(2, 14) = 3.92$, $p = 0.022$		

Interpretation: There is a statistically significant difference among groups. School counsellors reported more integration challenges, possibly due to systemic or administrative constraints. All challenge areas are statistically significant ($p < .001$) with mean scores above the neutral midpoint.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one on the importance of Emotional intelligence in counselling is in line with Martin, Easton and Wilson (2024), which investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and counselling self-efficacy and concluded that Emotional Intelligence may be another marker for individuals exploring professional counselling as a career and for improving student's counselling self-efficacy. Also, Parveen and Shafiq (2014) study of theoretical and empirical perspectives which examined the importance of emotional intelligence in the counselling and psychotherapy professions found the need to create special training for trainee counsellors to ensure the quality of the counselling profession in the future.

The findings of research question 2 is supported by the empirical study by Abdul Gafar Alafara Adio and Hameed Olalekan Bolaji (2023) which examined counsellors' perception and attitude toward e-counselling in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study found that counsellors recognized the benefits of emotionally driven communication in counselling. Also, that they exhibited positive attitudes toward approaches which enhance interaction and emotional connection. Supporting the above finding Glory Iyobosasere Imhabekhai (2025), investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence, therapeutic self-efficacy, and conflict resolution effectiveness among university counsellors in Edo State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that counsellors with higher emotional intelligence demonstrated better conflict resolution skills,

improved interpersonal relationships and higher therapeutic self-efficacy.

The findings of research question 3 is supported by the study carried out by Ogunsola & Adeyemo, (2020), which revealed that while emotional intelligence is essential for effective counselling, multiple barriers hinder its practical application among Nigerian counsellors. In line with the above, Asemota, Edinoh, and Ejike (2025) examined the problems facing counselling centres in Nigerian universities and identified lack of institutional support as a major barrier to effective counselling practice and application of emotional intelligence. The study revealed that institutional limitations directly affect counsellors' ability to apply emotional intelligence which requires time, space, and supportive environments to be effectively practiced, overworked counsellors cannot engage deeply in empathy, emotional regulation, and client-centred interaction. Additionally, that lack of training reduces the development of emotional awareness and interpersonal skills among counsellors.

Conclusion

Counsellors overwhelmingly value emotional intelligence as central to therapeutic relationships. Empathy, rapport, conflict resolution, and professional competence are key areas where emotional intelligence is perceived as impactful. There is no significant difference across gender, indicating shared perspectives Counsellors report notable challenges in applying emotional intelligence training, including time constraints, lack of support, organizational barriers, and complex client needs. School-based counsellors perceive greater difficulty than others.

Counselling Implications

* Integration of Emotional Intelligence into Counsellor Training Programs: Counsellors perceive emotional intelligence (EI) as pivotal to therapeutic efficacy. Curriculum planners and counselling association of Nigeria (CASSON) should ensure that emotional intelligence (IE) is entrenched into the foundational and advanced counselling curricula. Core components such as self-awareness, rapport, empathy, emotional regulation, and social skills, should be covered in the modules.
* CASSON to Advocate for Emotional Intelligence Development: Lack of organizational support was identified as a barrier. It is very important for Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) to recognize emotional intelligence (EI) as a core professional competency and advocate for supportive environments for counsellors who work in different institutions to fully acquire the knowledge. This includes making provisions for emotional intelligence training, promoting emotionally quotient leadership among counsellors, and encapsulating emotional intelligence EI goals in performance evaluation frameworks.
* Contextualized and Experiential Training Approaches: Counsellors expressed challenges in applying overly theoretical emotional intelligence (EI) training. Thus, there is need to prioritize experiential methods in training as they mirror the real-world demands of therapeutic relationships. Such experiential methods include; role-playing, emotion-focused supervision, case simulations, and peer feedback.

* On-going Professional Development and Supervision: Based on the counsellors' perceptions on the relevance of emotional intelligence (EI) in therapeutic counselling relationship, there should be a consistent training programme rather than a one-time event. Emotional Intelligence workshops, reflective practice groups, and supervision sessions should be enhanced to promote learning.
* Tailoring EI Strategies to Diverse Client Populations: Counsellors observed and reported challenges involved in the application of emotional intelligence (EI) skills athwart disparate settings. Training should incorporate ethnographic sensitive emotional intelligent (EI) exercises, assisting counsellors to learn empathy and expression in culturally diverse, trauma-informed, and neurodiverse counselling settings.

Recommendations

The study recommended the following:

* Incorporate Emotional Intelligence into Core Counselling programme: Counselling curriculum should incorporate emotional intelligence training as a major course for both undergraduate and postgraduate counselling students. This would help them to be properly equipped with the knowledge and skills of emotional intelligence early in the profession and make positive impact in therapeutic relationships.
* Strengthen Institutional Support and Resources: Organizations should make emotional intelligence training a priority thus, map out time, financial resources and incentives for it. Also, institutions should integrate it into their performance appraisals, team development strategies, and workplace wellbeing programs.
* Provide in – service training on Emotional Intelligence: In – service training on emotional intelligence should be provided by Counselling agencies, private practices, and professional bodies from time to time in the form of workshops, seminars and symposiums to aid professional development. Tools such as case-based learning, reflective exercises, and emotional skills assessments should be used to make it interactive and context - specific.
* Professional counsellor to Advocate for Policy Recognition of EI in Counselling Standards: Professional counsellor should advocate for should recognition and inclusion of emotional intelligence as a competency area in counselling education, licensure, and ethical codes by professional bodies and accrediting agencies. Doing so would help to ensure its sustained relevance in both training and practice.
* Conduct Further Research on EI Training Effectiveness: More empirical studies in the area of emotional intelligence should be encouraged to evaluate the long – term impact it has on counsellor effectiveness and client outcomes.

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ASSESSMENT OF COUNSELLING STRATEGIES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OWERRI EDUCATIONAL ZONE

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Abstract

The study investigated Counselling Strategies for Conflict Resolution in Public Secondary Schools in Owerri Educational Zone. Based on the purpose of the study three research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised all the three thousand six hundred and thirteen (3,613) secondary school teachers in the sixty-five (65) government owned secondary schools in Owerri Education Zone 1 of Imo State. The sample was made up of 300 teachers. This is made up of 100 teachers from girls' school, 100 teachers from boys' school and 100 teachers from co-educational schools. Simple random sampling (balloting without replacement) was used. The instruments used for data collection was titled School Counselling Strategies for Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (SCSCRQ). The SCSCRQ was validated experts. The reliability co-efficient(r) of 0.88 was obtained using Cronbach alpha method. Data collected were analyzed using Mean, standard deviation for the research questions. The result showed that there are effective Counselling Strategies for Conflict Resolution in Public Secondary Schools despite its causes and consequences in Owerri Educational Zone. It was recommended that teachers and School counsellors should provide and monitor the under reporting of hate, crime and discriminating behaviours in schools.

Keywords: Assessment, Counselling Strategies and Conflict Resolution

Introduction

The role of education in bringing about human development cannot be over-emphasized. This is because education is a tool with which people, using the human ability to respond to, and interact with the environment, pass on from generation to generation those aspects of their culture and values which they consider to be worthwhile. Education embraces all processes by which a person acquires knowledge and skills to live well in his society. It remains an

undisputable fact that no society or nation can rise above its educational level. Uchendu (2013), defined education as a social process designed to induct the rising generation into the membership of their society.

In Nigeria, the education sector is divided into Basic Education, secondary education, and tertiary education. Secondary education is the education children receive after Basic Education and before the tertiary stage. Secondary education spans from Upper Basic Education (Junior secondary to senior secondary school). The broad goals of secondary education are to prepare the child for useful living within society and for higher education. Consequently, the objectives of secondary education are; to provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology, and commerce at sub-professional grades; foster national unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity; raise a generation of people who can think for themselves; respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labor; appreciate those values specified under broad national goals; and live as good citizens and provides technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development, (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

Summarily, the place of secondary education in national development cannot be overemphasized. Mostly because education in general and secondary education, in particular, fosters the worth and development of the recipients for each recipient's sake and for the general development of society. The success of secondary education should, therefore, be of concern to all and sundry. Lawal (2017) posited that one of the challenges of secondary education in Nigeria is to manage effectively all conflicts arising in the system.

Conflict is a serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one. In an attempt to further clarify what conflict is all about, Nezera (2017) described it as synonymous to clash, incompatibility, inconsistency, incongruous, opposition, be at variance, vary, odds, diverge, differ, disagree, contrast, collide, contradictory, contrary, opposing, antithetical, discrepant, contrasting divergent, impugn-ant and disagreeing.

Conflicts in effect involve a struggle or quarrel usually between individuals or groups in the process of competing for a reward. It could, therefore, be regarded as a form of disagreement in an establishment between two individuals or groups who have cause to interact formally or informally. Karl, (2016) perceive that conflict may arise from cultural and societal differences in schools. Conflict is a natural aspect of human interaction that arises from opposing interests, values, or viewpoints among individuals or groups.

In the context of educational settings, conflict can manifest between students, educators, parents, administrators, or other stakeholders, impacting relationships, decision-making processes, and overall school climate. Viraponge in Joy and Amaka (2015) defined conflict in school as disagreement, dispute or clash of interests between individuals or groups within the school community, including students, teachers, administrators and parents. In the opinion of Ihuarulam (2015), conflict is defined as an individual's or group's perception of an

incompatibility between their aspirations or values and those of another individual or group within the same organization. Conflict arises from differences between two people or a group. It occurs as a result of disagreed value, beliefs, motivation, ideas or desires.

In public secondary schools, conflicts may arise due to a myriad of factors, such as academic competition, resource allocation, discipline issues, communication breakdowns. Conflict in secondary schools especially in Nigeria has become a major concern to all stakeholders in education. Students' unrest, revolts and violence are regular features of our secondary schools today. Conflict in secondary schools hinders productivity, lower morale and stimulates inappropriate behaviours among students (Namara, 2007). According to Umaru & Halima (2018)there are different types of conflicts in organizational settings as follows;

Intrapersonal Conflict: These occur within a person and that one can experience, with respect to the number of resources one has by hearing internal voices that disagree. To buttress this assertion Orlich and Callhan (2001) explained in this type that individual tries to reconcile conflict within his/her own value structure. Similarly, Hart(2002)observed that it may not only take a toll on one's physical body but it often occupies one's thoughts and causes a great deal of emotion.

Interpersonal Conflict: This type of conflict occurs between two or more people (Meck, Heit, & Page, 2005). It is also referring to clashes that involves two or more individuals, who perceive each other as being in opposition to preferred outcomes (goals) and or attitudes, values or behaviours. While Nelson-Jones (2019) sees it as a situation in which one or both individuals in a relationship are experiencing difficulty in working or living with each other. This type of conflict usually occurs due to differences or incompatibilities, needs, goals or styles clashes.

Intra group Conflict: This emerges between people who identify themselves as belonging to the same group. It is a clash among some or all of groups members, which often affects the group progress and effectiveness. In a school situation an intergroup conflict occurs within members of a class, where students sit in close proximity and interact with each other.

Intergroup Conflict: This emerges between two or more group of people. It is highly intense and costly to the group involved (Witmet & Hackerin Umaru & Halima, 2018). This occurs between two or more schools. According to Anteliffer (2020), it happens within organization at three levels. These are vertical, horizontal and line staff conflicts. Vertical Conflict is clashes between levels in an organization. This occurs when superiors try to control subordinates too tightly as subordinates resist the control for instance class captain or group captain in the classroom/school.

Horizontal conflict: is clashes between groups of employers at the same hierarchical level in an organization. In a school situation horizontal conflict will occur, if one department desires a longer proportion of scarce resources at the expenses of another department.

Line-staff conflict: is a clash over authority relationships. As Jenning and Wattan in Umaru and

Halima (2018) expressed it occurs from different organizational roles of line and staff.

Conflict in secondary schools can arise from various factors. Also, there are different events that lead to conflicts in secondary schools. The situation or circumstance in which people find themselves, the personality of the individuals, the urge or desire for power, and the resources may lead to different types of conflicts to exists in secondary schools in Nigeria. Some of the causes are; lack of proper preparation by teachers, lack of good mastery of subject matter, students' disruptive behaviour, competition, bullying and harassment, cultural and social differences, inadequate school materials, poor parental attitude, Lack of respects, poor teacher-students' relationship. And poor parent- teacher relationship.

Conflicts in schools can have severe consequences for students, teachers and overall learning environment. Here are some potentials consequences: Retardation of school development, social dislocation, decreased academic performance, increased absenteeism, decreased motivation, increased stress and anxiety, decreased self -esteem, Difficulty forming relationships, increased aggression, decreased respect for authority, increased discipline problems, decreased school climate, increased teacher turnover And Decreased community Engagement. School conflict bring about violent, which often leads to destruction of lives and properties because of the use of deadly weapon making school not friendly for learning to take place. Generally secondary school conflicts lead to human suffering, disruption of normal activities such as educational development, positive human progress and restriction of freedom, thereby making school difficult. By understanding these consequences, schools and educators can make take proactive steps to prevent and manage conflicts, creating a more positive and supportive leading environments. Conflict in schools need to be prevented and managed for students' progress in education. This should be done through conflict resolution.

Conflict resolutions are important to schools and classroom teachers for effective and efficient teaching and learning to take place (Mayanchi, 2014). Conflict resolution is the process of resolving disputes or conflicts between two students or groups. It involves finding a mutually acceptable solution that meets the needs and interests of all parties involved. By prioritizing conflict resolution in secondary schools, educators can create a supportive, inclusive and productive learning environments that benefits students, teachers and the broader community Conflicts resolution is crucial in secondary schools. Therefore, there is need for conflict resolutions through Counselling strategies in our secondary schools to produces conducive learning atmosphere.

Counselling in the school system cannot be overemphasized. Counselling services have always played a leading role in terms of student's development and improvement. According to Modo; Sanni; Uwah and Mogbo (2013) counselling promotes the effectiveness of the educational system for goals attainment and guiding learners through the learning process. Okobiah and Okorodudu (2006) highlighted that Counselling is encompassed by activities of relevant services and also processes of helping students within and outside the school, to achieve

their full potentialities in their emotional, moral, social, academic and vocational developments. Furthermore, Nwachuku (2019) summarizes the definition of counselling as a systematic and organized educational helping services, professionally given by a professionally trained counsellor or therapists to a learner of any age, within or outside the school walls at appropriate level. The essence is to assist him understand himself, situation and environment, discover his interests, potentialities and opportunities in life and learn how best to effectively utilize his assets as well as minimize his weaknesses, to live a maximum productive life. Orhungur (2009) defines counselling as it involves some person or persons called “counsellors" being hired by another person or persons called “clients”, to help the clients solve some sort of personal or social problems. Gysters (2016) views counselling as an in-depth interaction between two or few individuals with the intent of assisting the client to better understand himself in relationship to his or her present and further problems. The interaction that takes place between the client and the counsellor is so intense and of high quality that the end product is a change in behaviour due to the learning process that had taken place during interaction. Gysters (2016) further explained that “counselling deals with effective realm, which involves feelings, emotions, attitudes and not simple ideas.

According to Aloa (2019), counselling is a helping relationship between the counsellor and the client. The functions of the counsellor in the helping relationship are to provide the facilitative and action conditions necessary for change in the client’s mode of thinking, feeling and behaviour. UNESCO (2000), defined counselling as a learning-oriented process which usually occurs in the literature relationship with the aim of helping the person learn to put such understanding to effective use for self and society. However, with proper counselling support, students experiencing difficulties in learning can build their self-efficacy they need to succeed in their life (Owuor, Gori & Kimani, 2017).

There are different Counselling strategies for conflict resolution in secondary schools. Strategies according to Smith (2016), refer to techniques, approaches, methods, and interventions adopted to solve problems. King (2016), added that a strategy is a plan of action intended to accomplish a specific goal. Research evidences such as King (2016), Lawal (2017), and Nezera (2017) have recommended counseling strategies for managing conflict in secondary schools. In specific term, Nezera (2017), recommended three counseling strategies that could be used to manage conflicts in secondary schools effectively. They are, Allow the Client to Explore (ACE Strategy), Using Silences in the Relationship (USR Strategy), and Paraphrasing Strategy. Nezera (2017) explained the strategies as follows; the Allow the Client to Explore (ACE Strategy) allows the client to explore his or her hidden world and new aspects in his or her behaviour, recognizing social and mental experiences. This can occur during the treatment process as well as the development of insight. The aim to facilitate clients to progress in the exploration process has been greatly based on the concept that through connecting with vital healthy cores and by changing feelings, thought and behaviour in an individual way, the client can progress in the healing process and to fulfil his or her human potential.

In Using Silences in the Relationship (USR Strategy), the counselor provides unconditional support, which has been regarded as one aspect of an intimate relationship. Silences have been considered as non-verbal reactions that express different meanings such as empathy and understanding, confusion and misunderstanding. Using silences in the relationship allows both the counsellor and the client to get closer, to share feelings and thoughts, or in a different way, to be aware of distances and gaps that may occur in the process.

Paraphrasing Strategy is an influential reaction that contributes greatly to the process' progress. This reaction encourages additional thoughts and new expressions and aids the client in examining conflicts. Using paraphrasing during counseling also assists the counselor to clarify and brighten the client's expressions.

Some other Counselling strategies:

1. Group Therapy Counselling geared towards helping students understand and appreciate good and healthy human relationship should be adapted to the secondary school teachers and students.
2. Counselling services should organize interaction sessions with parents to enlighten the parents on the school rules and regulation, conducts and programmes. So as to cooperate with the teachers and school authorities for smooth running of the school activities and ensure conflict free atmosphere in secondary schools.
3. Counsellors should organize seminar/workshop for students on what constitutes violence and its consequences. A catch them young approach to prevention of the menace of conflict should be embraced by extending enlightenment programmes to the secondary school students through Counselling interaction.
4. Orientation services to create awareness for adjustment in the school environment. So that they do and do not of the school and activities should be explain and discuss with the students. The school offences and punishment will be highlighted to the students.
5. Active listening: Active listening is a powerful communication technique that involves fully concentration on and comprehending the message being conveyed by the other person. it requires the listener to be fully present and engaged in the conservation, avoiding distractions and mental preparation of their response.
6. Communication Skills: It refers to the ability to convey information, ideas, thoughts, and feelings effectively and efficiently through various forms of communication, such as verbal, non-verbal, written and visual.
7. Empathy and Validation: Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. It involves putting oneself in someone else's shoe and imagining how they feel. Empathy is not the same as sympathy, which is feeling sorry for someone without fully understanding their emotions while validation is the process of acknowledging and accepting another person's emotions, thoughts and experiences as valid

8. Information services keeps guidance and Counselling services alive in the school system because it involves making available to the student's information needed to take educational, vocational, personal and social decision, which will enhance students' development and progress in the school should be provided by student's counsellors.

Researchers like Umaru and Halima (2015), counselling strategies for conflict resolution in schools: a tool for education and development in Nigeria beyond 2020. The study prescribed that counsellors should provide strategies for conflict resolution through multidisciplinary approach and techniques for educational development.

Kilag, et al. (2024) examines administrators' conflict management strategies, highlighting their significance in organizational dynamics. Studies delve into the role of administrators in addressing conflicts among staff, stakeholders, and within organizational structures. Research explores various conflict management approaches employed by administrators, including mediation, negotiation, and collaboration, and assesses their effectiveness in resolving disputes and promoting organizational harmony. Additionally, studies investigate the impact of administrators' leadership styles, communication skills, and emotional intelligence on conflict resolution outcomes.

Effective conflict management by administrators fosters a positive work environment, enhances productivity, and cultivates trust and respect among organizational members. Understanding administrators' conflict management strategies is crucial for promoting organizational effectiveness and employee well-being.

Therefore, this study assessed counseling strategies for conflict resolution in public secondary Schools in Imo State

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to assess counselling strategies for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Imo State. specifically, it sought to:

i. find out the causes ofconflicts in public secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone.
ii. find out the consequences of conflicts in secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone
iii. find out counselling strategies for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone

Research Questions

1. What are the causes of conflicts in secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone.
2. What are the consequences of conflicts in secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone.
3. What are the counselling strategies for conflict resolutions in secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive survey research design. This is because the design involves eliciting responses on the opinions of the participants. According to Nworgu (2023), this type of research design involves a well-detailed critical examination of a situation to find what it is and how it is. This makes the research design suitable for the study. The population of the study comprised all the three thousand six hundred and thirteen (3,613) secondary school teachers in the sixty-five (65) government owned secondary schools in Owerri Education Zone 1 of Imo State. Out of these schools, seven (7) were Girl's schools, five (5) were Boy's and fifty-three (53) were co-educational schools. The sample was made up of 300 teachers drawn from six-five (65) secondary schools in the study area. This is made up of 100 teachers from girls' school, 100 teachers from boys' school and 100 teachers from co-educational schools. Simple random sampling (balloting without replacement) was used to select 5 local government areas in Owerri Education Zone 1. Also, stratified random sampling was used to select school type from each of the selected Local Governments Area (boys', girls' and co-educational schools). Researchers structured Questionnaire entitled School Counselling Strategies for Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (SCSCRQ) was used for data collection. The instrument had two sections, namely, A and B. Section A contained the bio-data of the participants, while, section B is made up of the objectives of the study. The SCSCRQ was validated by two experts in measurement and evaluation and one expert in Educational Guidance and Counselling department from Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education respectively. The Instrument was estimated for pilot testing using Cronbach Alpha method. The reliability co-efficient of 0.88 was obtained. Arising from the high co-efficient level, the instrument was considered reliable for use in the study. Descriptive statistics such as mean was obtained to the answer research questions.

Research Question One: What are the causes of conflicts inpublic secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone.

Table 1: *Mean and Standard deviation on causes of conflicts in public secondary schools*.

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Lack of proper preparation by teachers.	3.00	1.0	Accepted
2	Lack of good mastery of subject matter.	3.01	1.3	Accepted
3	Students' disruptive behaviour.	2.96	0.9	Accepted
4	Inadequate school materials.	3.00	1.0	Accepted
5	Poor parental attitude.	3.23	1.7	Accepted
6	Lack of respects.	3.02	1.3	Accepted
7	Poor teacher- students' relationship.	3.05	1.3	Accepted
8	Poor parent- teacher relationship.	3.00	1.0	Accepted
9	Bulling and harassment	2.96	0.9	Accepted
10	Cultural and socio-economic differences	3.00	1.0	Accepted

Result in Table 1 shows that all items scored above 2.50. This implies that Lack of proper preparation by teachers, Lack of good mastery of subject matter, Students' disruptive behaviour, Inadequate school materials, Poor parental attitude, Lack of respects, Poor teacher- students' relationship, Poor parent- teacher relationship, Bulling and harassment and Cultural and socio-economic differences are the causes of conflicts in public secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone.

Research Question Two: What are the consequences of conflicts in Public Secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone.

Table 2: *Mean and Standard Deviation on consequences of conflicts in public Secondary schools*

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
11	Retardation of Development	3.00	1.1	Accepted
12	Social Dislocation	3.10	1.2	Accepted
13	Destruction:	3.20	1.4	Accepted
14	Decreased academic performance	2.90	1.0	Accepted
15	Increased absenteeism	3.00	1.1	Accepted
16	Dropout rate	3.10	1.2	Accepted
17	School property damage	3.00	1.0	Accepted
18	Increase injuries and violence	3.23	1.7	Accepted
19	Decreased morale	3.02	1.3	Accepted

Result in Table 2 indicated that all the items scored above 2.50. This implies that retardation of development, Social Dislocation, destruction. decreased academic performance, increased absenteeism, dropout rate, school property damage, increase injuries and violence and decreased morale are the consequences of conflicts in public secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone.

Research Question Three: To find out counselling strategies for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone.

Table 3: *Mean and standard deviation on counselling strategies for conflict resolution in secondary schools*

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
20	Group Therapy Counselling	3.0	1.1	Accepted
21	Counsellors should organize seminar/workshop	3.1	1.2	Accepted
22	Orientation services to create awareness for adjustment in the school environment.	3.2	1.4	Accepted
23	Information services	3.2	1.4	Accepted
24	Active listening	3.0	1.1	Accepted
25	Empathy and validation	3.1	1.2	Accepted
26	Problem-solving	3.1	1.2	Accepted
27	Communication skills	3.0	1.1	Accepted

Result in Table 3 indicated that all the items scored above 2.50. This implies that Group therapy counselling counsellors should organize seminar/workshop, Orientation services to create awareness for adjustment in the school environment. Information services, Active listening, Empathy and validation, Problem-solving and Communication skills are the counselling strategies for conflict resolution in secondary schools.

Discussion of Findings

Causes of conflicts in public secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone.

Results indicated that Lack of proper preparation by teachers, Lack of good mastery of subject matter, Students' disruptive behaviour, Inadequate school materials, Poor parental attitude, Lack of respects, Poor teacher- students' relationship, Poor parent- teacher relationship, Bulling and harassment and Cultural and socio-economic differences are the causes of conflicts in public secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone. This result is in line with the findings of Namara (2007),Umaru and Halima (2015) Conflict in secondary schools hinders productivity, lower morale and stimulates inappropriate behaviours among students.

Consequences of conflicts in Public Secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone.

Results showed that retardation of development, Social Dislocation, destruction. decreased academic performance, increased absenteeism, dropout rate, school property damage, increase injuries and violence and Decreased morale are the consequences of conflicts in public secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone. This result is in accord with the finding of Gerard (2013) negative consequences influenced the educational system.

Counselling strategies for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Owerri Educational Zone.

Result indicated that Group therapy counselling counsellors should organize seminar/workshop, Orientation services to create awareness for adjustment in the school environment. Information services, Active listening, Empathy and validation, Problem-solving and Communication skills are the counselling strategies for conflict resolution in secondary schools. The finding is in line with King (2016), Lawal (2017) and Nezera (2017) have recommended counseling strategies for managing conflict in secondary schools. In specific term, Nezera (2017), recommended three counseling strategies that could be used to manage conflicts in secondary schools effectively. They are, Allow the Client to Explore (ACE Strategy), Using Silences in the Relationship (USR Strategy), and Paraphrasing Strategy. Nezera (2017), explained the strategies as follows; the Allow the Client to Explore (ACE Strategy) allows the client to explore his or her hidden world and new aspects in his or her behaviour, recognizing social and mental experiences. This can occur during the treatment process as well as the development of insight. The aim to facilitate clients to progress in the exploration process has been greatly based on the concept that through connecting with vital healthy cores and by changing feelings, thought and behaviour in an individual way, the client can progress in the healing process and to fulfill his or her human potential. In Using Silences in the Relationship (USR Strategy), the counsellor provides unconditional support, which has been regarded as one aspect of an intimate relationship. Silences have been considered as non-verbal reactions that express different meanings such as empathy and understanding, confusion and misunderstanding. Using silences in the relationship allows both the counselor and the client to get closer, to share feelings and thoughts, or in a different way, to be aware of distances and gaps that may occur in the process. Paraphrasing Strategy is an influential reaction that contributes greatly to the process' progress. This reaction encourages additional thoughts and new expressions and aids the client in examining conflicts. Using paraphrasing during counselling also assists the counsellor to clarify and brighten the client's expressions.

Conclusion

The study concluded that there are effective Counselling Strategies for Conflict Resolution in Public Secondary Schools despite its causes and consequences in Owerri Educational Zone.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made;

1. School counsellors should provide and monitor the under reporting of hate, crime and discriminating behaviours.
2. School counsellors should establish a formal social contract for desirable behaviours to students,
3. School authority and counsellors should regularly organize interactive forum for parents, students and teachers to enable them gain adequate information and encourage healthy well-being in the school.

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WORK ENVIRONMENT PREFERENCE AND WORK MOTIVATIONS AMONG JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SABON-GARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between Work Environment Preference and Work Motivation among JSS3 students in Sabon-gari local government area. The objective was to find out the relationship between work environment preference and work motivations among JSS 3 students in Sabon-gari local government area, Nigeria. The sample of this study comprised of three hundred and eighty two (382) students of public secondary school. The research design used was correlational method. Work Environment Preference Scale (WEPS) (1999) and Work Motivations Scale were the research instruments used for data collection. In selecting the sample of the study, Cluster sampling technique was used to select (15) schools. The sample was drawn from the selected fifteen public secondary schools in Sabon-gari local government area of Kaduna State. Stratified sampling is also used in selecting a representative sample. The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach alpha coefficient. The data collected from respondents for this study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistic such as mean and standard deviation. While the null hypotheses were tested using inferential statistic such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) was used to test the null hypotheses raised in the study. Findings of the study revealed that the main objective of the calculated P value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 and correlational index level is at 0.512 at degree of freedom of 351. This shows that work environment preference has positive correlation with work motivations in the study area, The higher the students level of work environment preference, the higher their work motivations and vice versa Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that significant positive relationship exist between work environment preference and work motivationsamong teachers in secondary schools in sabon-gari local government area of kaduna State. It was recommended that Educational counsellors, psychologist and measurement evaluator should organized seminars, workshops, conferences and symposium to sensitize, teachers, parents, and curriculum planners on the importance of Work environment Preference and Work Motivations among students of Secondary School.

Keywords: Environment, motivations, Preference, Work.

Introduction

motivation is concerned with why people behave in a certain way. The basic underlying question is why do people do what they do? An important objective of the study of motivation is accounting for purposiveness of behaviour. The term 'motivation' is derived from the Latin word *'movere'* which means 'to move'. Taken literally, motivation is the process of arousing movement but the term ordinarily applies to the arousal of one kind of movement behaviour. However, the study of motivation is not restricted to the process of evoking behaviour, but it also includes an analysis of the conditions which sustain activity and which regulate its patterning. It is also concerned with why people choose a particular course of action in preference to others, and why they continue with a chosen action, often over a long period, and in the face of difficulties and problems. Work motivation of students refers to the psychological processes that influence the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of goal-directed academic behaviors. It involves both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that drive students to complete their tasks, engage in learning, and persist through challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Given the increasing complexity of academic life and the growing emphasis on student autonomy, understanding what motivates students to work is essential for improving educational outcomes and student well-being.

Vroom (1964) defines it as "a process governing choice made by persons among alternative forms of voluntary activity". Campbell and Pritchard (1976) suggest that "motivation has to do with a set of independent/ dependent variable relationships that explain the direction, amplitude, and persistence of an individual's behaviour, holding constant the effects of aptitude, skill, and

understanding of the task, and the constraints operating in the environment". Kanfer (1990) describes motivation as "a set of psychological processes involved with the arousal, direction, intensity, and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal directed".

All definitions appear to have four common denominators which may be said to characterize the phenomenon of motivation. That is, when we discuss motivation, we are primarily concerned with:

i. **Activation of behavior;** It has to do with the drive or energy behind our actions and is demonstrated by the arousal of goal-directed behaviour.
ii. **Direction of behavior;** It is concerned with the paths people choose toward meeting their goals and is seen by the regulation of behavior toward specific goals.
iii. **Persistence of behavior;** It has to do with continued efforts in the achievement of goals often in the face of obstacles and is demonstrated by sustained activity over a period of time.

iv. **Intensity of behaviour** – It is concerned with the extent of effort put in to achieve a goal and is seen in the concentration and vigor that goes into pursuing the goal.

A definition of work motivation that covers these denominators is presented by Katzell and Thompson (1990) who defines it as a "broad construct pertaining to the conditions and processes that account for arousal, direction, magnitude, and maintenance of effort in a person's job.

While, Work environment preference refers to an individual's favored type of physical, social, or organizational setting in which they perform tasks or engage in professional activities. It encompasses factors such as location (remote, hybrid, on-site), physical layout (open-plan, private office), noise levels, social interaction, flexibility, and organizational culture (Beauregard et al., 2019). Mattoo (2013) is of the view that work environment preference affects students' performance due to the fact that many students do not understand the intellectual demands needed to be met for a particular course of study that will pave away to certain career. Hellmann (2014) the problem associated with student's career awareness, work information, school subjects choice, and requirement involve several factors amongst which are: Schools curriculum, environmental factors, interest, value, intellectual abilities of the students. Student's decision-making on work environment preference stage is undoubtedly a critical period, because there is no clear blue print available to students and making a wrong work environment preference can make or spoil one's happiness in life. It is therefore highly important to equip students with appropriate skills to help them make reasonable and satisfying choices.

Theoretical Frameworks of Student Motivation

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), posits that motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic, and is regulated by the fulfillment of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are satisfied, students exhibit autonomous motivation, which is linked to higher academic engagement, persistence, and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Expectancy-Value Theory Expectancy-Value Theory, developed by Eccles and Wigfield (2002), explains that students' motivation is influenced by their expectation of success and the value they place on the task. High levels of expectancy and task value predict greater effort and achievement-related behaviors. This theory is particularly useful for understanding how personal beliefs and perceptions impact motivation.

Achievement Goal Theory Achievement Goal Theory focuses on the purposes students pursue in achievement contexts. Mastery goals (focused on learning and improvement) are associated with adaptive motivational patterns, while performance goals (focused on demonstrating ability) may lead to anxiety and avoidance behaviors (Elliot & McGregor, 2001).

Types of Student Motivation

i. **Intrinsic Motivation;** Intrinsic motivation occurs when students engage in academic activities for their inherent satisfaction, such as curiosity or enjoyment (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Research shows that intrinsically motivated students are more likely to retain knowledge and demonstrate creativity (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

ii. **Extrinsic Motivation;** Extrinsic motivation involves engaging in tasks for external rewards or to avoid punishment. While effective in the short term, it may not support long-term learning unless internalized through identified regulation (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999).

A motivation represents a lack of intent or purpose in task engagement. It often results from repeated failure, low perceived competence, or lack of value placed on academic tasks (Vallerand et al., 1992).

Factors Influencing Work Motivation Among Students

Personal Factors Individual traits such as self-efficacy, resilience, and goal orientation significantly affect student motivation. Students with higher self-efficacy are more confident in their abilities and more motivated to persist through challenges (Bandura, 1997).

Environmental Factors Classroom climate, teacher behavior, parental support, and peer relationships play a crucial role. Autonomy-supportive teaching practices, for instance, are positively correlated with higher motivation levels (Reeve, 2006).

Technological and Societal Influences Digital learning tools, online platforms, and AI-assisted education have created new avenues for motivating students. However, overreliance on extrinsic digital incentives can lead to reduced intrinsic motivation if not well managed (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). Impact of Work Motivation on Student Outcomes Motivated students tend to achieve better academic results, experience lower levels of anxiety, and demonstrate stronger engagement. Autonomous motivation, in particular, is associated with deep learning strategies, greater persistence, and enhanced psychological well-being (Vansteenkiste et al., 2005).

Strategies to Enhance Student Motivation

Promoting Autonomy: Giving students choices in their learning process fosters a sense of ownership and personal relevance (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Support Competence Offer constructive feedback, set achievable goals, and celebrate progress to help students feel capable and effective (Schunk et al., 2008).

Foster Relatedness: Build a supportive classroom community where students feel connected to peers and teachers. Group work, mentoring, and peer support programs can enhance relatedness (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

Use Technology: Wisely Incorporate gamified learning elements, interactive platforms, and AI tools in ways that align with educational objectives and student interests (Hamari et al., 2014).

Challenges in Sustaining Student Motivation Challenges such as academic pressure, lack of relevance in curriculum, mental health issues, and socio-economic barriers can undermine motivation. Addressing these requires systemic support, mental health services, and inclusive teaching strategies (Martin, 2008).

Dimensions of Work Environment Preferences

Physical Setting: This includes lighting, furniture ergonomics, ventilation, temperature, and spatial arrangements. Comfortable, well-designed spaces are strongly preferred, especially among students and young professionals who associate environment with productivity and well-being (Saha et al., 2024).

Work Modality (Location): Modern preferences increasingly revolve around remote, hybrid, or in-office setups. A recent study revealed that students and new graduates prefer hybrid environments that balance flexibility and social interaction (Gray, 2024; Prospects, 2024).

Psychosocial Environment: Factors such as autonomy, inclusivity, recognition, stress levels, and team dynamics play a central role. Gen Z, in particular, values a flexible, empathetic, and purpose-driven culture (Washington Post, 2025; BestColleges, 2024).

Technological Infrastructure: Especially post-pandemic, the ability to work efficiently using digital tools, stable internet, and collaborative software influences preferences significantly (EDUCAUSE, 2020).

Student Context For students, especially those transitioning into internships or employment, work environment preference reflects their values and expectations of the modern workplace. They seek environments that support work-life balance, mental health, and meaningful engagement, rather than simply traditional job security or high pay (Best Colleges, 2024; Axios, 2024). Understanding these preferences allows universities, employers, and policy-makers to design inclusive, responsive environments that enhance motivation, satisfaction, and productivity. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between Work environment Preference and Work Motivation among J.S.S 3 students in Sabon-Gari Local Government Area in Kaduna State.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to determine:

1. The relationship between Work Environment Preference and Work Motivation among J.S.S. 3 Students in Sabon-Gari local Government Area in Kaduna State

Research Question

The following research question was raised.

1. What is the relationship between Work Environment Preference and Work Motivation among J.S.S 3 Students in Sabon-Gari Local Government Area in Kaduna State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between work environment preference and work motivation among J.S.S 3 students in Sabon-Gari local government area in Kaduna State

Methodology

The design adopted for this study is a correlational design. A correlational method seeks to ascertain relationships between two or more variables. Simply put, does an increase or decrease in one variable correspond to an increase or decrease in another variable. A correlational research design investigates relationship between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them (Tan, 2014). The design is adopted due to the fact that, the study determined the 'Relationship between work environment preference and work motivation among J.S.S 3 students in sabon-gari local government area in Kaduna State, Nigeria'.

The population of this study comprised of all JSS3 Students of public secondary schools in sabon-gari local government area. in Sabon-Gari local government area has seventy nine (79) public senior secondary schools. The total population of the students in SS2 comprised of sixty one thousand five hundred and sixty five (61,565) students (Department of Planning, Research and Statistics, Sabon-Gari local government area. Ministry in Sabon-Gari local government area, 2022). The sample of this study comprised of three hundred and eighty two (382) students of public secondary school in JSS3. In selecting the sample of the study, Clister sampling technique was used to select (15) schools from which the sample were obtained. This is done, because the schools have similar characteristics. Stratified sampling was also used in selecting a representative sample, while random sampling technique was used in selecting the students.

In order to determine the sample size of the study, multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted because of the relative largeness of the study area. This is done with the belief that differences in environment will influence the students' preferences.

To determine the actual sample size of the study, Research Advisor Table (2006) for determining sample size of a given population was adopted, which stated that for the population of sixty one thousand five hundred and sixty five (61565) the appropriate sample size should be approximately three hundred and eighty two (382).

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used data collection in this research are questionnaires tagged: 'Work Motivation Scale (WMS) and Work Environment Preference Scale. (WEPS) (1999) developed by Kolo.

Work Environment Preference Scale (WEPS): This questionnaire was design to determine the magnitude of environment preference scale among JSS3 students in Niger State. Section A: consist of items tapping respondents' demographic variables such as; School, name, class, age, sex and Job preference and Marital status. Section: B consist of thirty (30) items of work

environment preference on top of the paper with four (4) Likert scale; 0- Not important, 1- Somewhat important, 2- Important and Very important.

Work Motivation Scale (WMS): This questionnaire was design to determine the magnitude of School Subject Choice Battery among JSS3 students in Sabon-Gari local government area.. Section A consists of several items tapping respondents' demographic variables, such as Name, class, age, sex and future career. Section B The following section is for students to indicate the subjects that the students are offering among the listed subjects. Also to evaluate students' general assessment of their involvement in education, and it's had thirty seven (37) items school subjects, with five (5) Likert scale: 1- No interest, 2- low interest, 3- average interest 4- high interest and 5- very high interest. While section C; Involved students choice of school subjects, certain reason or factors influenced the students decision, which had twenty nine (29) items school subjects combination influenced, with Yes or No column and five (5) Likert scale: 5- very influential, 4- influential, 3- average influential, 2- just influential and 1- not influential.

The questionnaires were designed on a Likert scale, made up of different options, ranging as follows:

(i) Very much, Much, Averagely, Little, Very little and not at all.

(ii) No interest, low interest, Average interest, high interest and very high interest.

(iii) Very influential, influential, Average influential, Just influential and Not influential.

Each questionnaire was divided into two sections: A and B. Section A include the demographic data of respondents while section B will consist of Likert-type questionnaire grouped into parts

Result

Hypotheses: There is no significant relationship between work environment preference and Work Motivation among Junior Secondary School 3 Students in Sabon-Gari local Government Area of Kaduna State

Table 1:*Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r) statistics on relationship between work environment preference and Work Motivation*

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	r	P
Work environment preference	353	38.9377	34.91827			
				351	0.529*	0.000
Work Motivation	353	30.7479	23.63564			

*****Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, p < 0.05***

Table 1 presents the calculated p value of 0.000 which is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance, and the correlation index level is at 0.529 at df 351. This shows that the work environment preference has positive correlation with the Work Motivation. The higher the

students level of Work Motivation, the higher their view on the work environment preference, and vice versa Hence, the null hypotheses which states that There is no significant relationship between work environment preference and Work Motivation among junior secondary school students in Sabon-Gari local Government Area is rejected.

Summary of Findings

Significant positive relationship exists between work environment preference and Work Motivation among Junior Secondary School 3 Students in Sabon-Gari local Government Area of Kaduna State. The higher the students level of Work Motivation, the higher their view on the work environment preference and vice versa ($r= 0.529$ $p= 0.000$).

Discussion of Findings

The result showed that there is significant relationship between work environment preference and Work Motivation among Junior Secondary School 3 Students in Sabon-Gari local Government Area of Kaduna State. This shows that the Work Motivation has positive correlation with the work environment preference of junior Secondary School. This was in line with the findings of Sonja and Janet (2014) conducted a study on career awareness and Work Motivation in senior secondary school students: have provided insights into the range of influences on such choices This project aims to identify the impact of school policies and practices on students as well as other influences which affect individual Work Motivation and career decisions. It. This was also in line with the findings of Boti *et al*. (2020) conducted a study on Work Motivations and occupational choices for proper career development. Therefore the paper highlighted on the nature and complexity of new school curriculum in terms of contents and organization. Challenges faced by secondary school students in choosing career, conditions and or challenges faced by guidance and counseling service in Nigerian secondary schools were equally identified. This was also in line with the findings of Parsons's (1909) the students are in work motivation best suited to their abilities they perform best, and their productivity is highest. Trait-factor counseling approaches assume that Work Motivation may be facilitated, and career outcomes optimized through a fairly straightforward process of matching a student's most relevant work-relevant characteristics abilities, interests and values with information regarding job activities, demands, rewards, and availability

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that positive significant relationship existed between work environment preference and Work Motivation among junior secondary school students in Sabon-Gari local Government Area of Kaduna State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

i. School teachers or school counselors, school masters and mistress should create career awareness to students through proper work environment preference in order to meet their Work Motivation

ii. Parents and guardians should sit with their children to properly guide them on work environment preference that are congruent to student's interest, ability toward working environment preference.

iii. The school teachers, counselors, school masteres and mistress should create awareness on different working environment and their requirement that will motivate the students.

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