

Original Article

COUNSELLORS' ADOPTION OF INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The study aimed at determining the counsellors' adoption of intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State. Two research questions guided the study. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance. The study adopted a Census survey research design. The population for the study consisted of 113 counsellors (45 males and 68 females). There was no sampling because the population was manageable. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts; two from Guidance and Counselling Department and one expert in measurement and Evaluation from the Department of Mathematics and Computer Education, (Measurement and Evaluation Unit) all from Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). An overall reliability co-efficient of 0.71 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha statistics. A total of 105 copies out of 113 copies of the instrument correctly filled and returned were used for the study. The return rate of the instrument distributed was 92.9 percent. Data collected were analyzed using mean with standard deviation for answering the research questions and t-test for testing the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Results from the findings showed that counsellors did not adopt administrative and moral intervention techniques in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State. It was recommended among others that seminars/workshops should be organized for counsellors to acquaint them with administrative and moral intervention techniques. This will enhance counsellors' productivity and students' academic performance.

Keywords: Counsellor, Intervention Techniques, Conflicts, Resolution.

Introduction

There is no organization which does not experience conflict at some time or another as part of their daily interactions. According to Ezebuoro (2018), conflict is natural and an inevitable part of people working together, sharing diverse thoughts, concerns,

perspective and goals. Conflict is a disagreement and misunderstanding between two parties concerning issues. Chukwunta (2014) stated that conflict is a major disagreement that generates antagonism and opposition in the relationships between person, groups and organization. Conflict exists where there

is divergent or different ideas to an issue under consideration (Bacal, 2014). This means, therefore, that in conflict there must be a group or party, not a single individual. In the context of this study, conflict connotes a situation where there are two or more students whose interest, clash or goals appear to be incompatible. Students who are in conflict are termed to be quarreling, disunited, struggling and fighting over something. Conflict often results because of miscommunication among students with regard to their needs, ideas, beliefs, goals, or values. An understanding of what conflict is and why it occurs among students is central to being able to apply appropriate intervention techniques (Bacal, 2014). There seem to be prevalence of conflicts in secondary schools in Enugu State. For instance, one of the reported cases of breakdown in teaching and learning at Trans-Ekulu Girl's Secondary School, arising from misunderstanding among the students as a result of some students uncontrollable sexual desire (Uwakwe, 2020). Students cannot engage in any developmental thinking in an environment characterized by conflict. It, therefore, implies that they will be denied of the capacity to develop new ideas, initiatives and innovations which might consequently result to continuous poor performance of students in both internal and external examinations (Nnamdi, 2016). Hence, the assistance of guidance counsellors will go a long way in reducing its prevalence.

A school guidance counsellor is an educator who works in secondary school to provide academic, career, university education readiness and personal/social competencies to all students (Shehu, 2014). Shehu further stated that school guidance counsellor is committed to providing quality educational services to enhance the education opportunities for every young person within primary, secondary and special schools. According to Ezebuoro (2014), some of the guidance counsellors

in secondary schools today are also counsellors who have been assigned to advise students on how to make informed choices about their future in relation to employment, education and training. Shehu equally added that these guidance counsellors are also saddled with the responsibility of counselling both the teachers and students on how to avoid conflict. Ezebuoro identified some intervention techniques that could be adopted by school counsellors for effective conflict resolution. These techniques include; administrative intervention techniques and moral intervention techniques. The researcher is worried because if intervention techniques are not adopted for conflict resolution in schools, chaos and indiscipline among both teachers and students will be prevalent in secondary schools in Enugu State. This will adversely affect both teaching and learning and by extension, students' performance in both internal and external examinations. This worry is the motivating factor that prompted the researchers to investigate counsellors' perception of intervention techniques adopted for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State.

As an administrative intervention technique for resolution of conflict in secondary schools, counsellors can address behaviours that students manifest to avoid or escape a difficult academic task by teaching the students to use better acceptable escape behaviours (Greenhalgh, 2019). Example is asking for help, which must be available once the students ask for it. As a way of administrative intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools, counsellors provide clearly defined classroom rules, the purpose of which are explained to students for which the students find them meaningful and authentic or relevant (Iravo, 2021). On the contrary Enyiazu (2015) noted that guidance counsellors in secondary schools seemed to have failed in discharging their duties because of the perceived inability of school principals to involve guidance counsellors in the administration of secondary schools. Oguzie (2014) noted that counsellors communicate clearly expectations, rules, procedures and sanctions to students as intervention

techniques to tackle conflict in the class room activities. The best rule counsellors propound for students are those stated in positive terms of what the students are supposed to do, rather than what students are not supposed to do. Thus, this rule reminds the students to know exactly what is expected of them and what to do. This highlights the purpose of rules and engages students in a collaborative discussion of class rule they will follow.

School counsellors teach students perspective taking, self-control and social behaviour such as sharing as a way of moral intervention techniques for resolving conflict, (Greenhalgh, 2019). However, there is general agreement that counsellor effective and mature moral skills must have some capacity control of students' behaviour. Counsellors teach students self-discipline, along with empathy which is the two building blocks of character. Counsellors equally teach the students the ability to carry out their moral vision which is one of the four central ingredients in their cognitive developmental model of moral maturity, which is parallel to moral will for conflict resolution in secondary schools (White, 2019). There are male and female counsellors. According to Mukolume (2017), gender refers to the socially culturally constructed characteristics and roles which are ascribed to males and females in any society. Gender is a major factor that influences teachers' knowledge and expertise. This study includes the opinions of male and female counsellors in public secondary schools in Enugu State. However, the existence of conflict in the school when neglected can result to chaos, breakdown of law and order and decline in standard of education. The need for counsellors to partake in conflict resolution in secondary schools cannot be over stressed. Therefore, the need arose to carry out an empirical study on counsellors' adoption of intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State. This constituted the gap this study filled.

Statement of the Problem

The researcher over the years as teachers, systemically noticed conflict among students and

such conflicts when unresolved affect the development of the school. Unresolved conflict precipitates to continual right, squabble and acrimony, among management, counsellors and students in the school. The researcher also observed that conflict among students worsened because of lack of intervention techniques in resolving conflicts. This ugly situation seems to have contributed to continuous poor academic performance of the students in both internal and external examinations. This study is focused on administrative intervention techniques and moral intervention techniques. However, the school management seems to play a major role in conflict resolution in schools. At times the role that counsellors play in conflict resolution may not be quite recognized. Counsellors by virtue of their relationship with students and positions in schools should fully participate in resolution of conflicts. This necessitated the need for the study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine counsellors' adoption of intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State. Specifically the study sought to:

- Ascertain counsellors' adoption of administrative intervention techniques for conflicts resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State.
- Determine counsellors' adoption of moral intervention techniques for conflicts resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- ❖ What administrative intervention techniques do counsellors adopt in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State?
- ❖ What moral intervention techniques do counsellors adopt in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State?

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female counsellors on the administrative intervention techniques they adopt in

resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State.

2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female counsellors on the moral intervention techniques they adopt in resolving conflict among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Method

Census survey research design was adopted for this study. According to Idoko (2011) census survey research design is one which data is collected from every member of the target population. It is a design of statistical enumeration where all member of the population are studied. The census survey research design is therefore considered most appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to collect the original data and describe their condition as they exist in their natural setting. It provide a complete data of all the population under study and gives higher degree of accuracy of the data. The study fits into the above explanation of survey research because it tried to gather opinion through questionnaire from counsellors on intervention techniques adopted for conflict resolution in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Based on this assertion, this design was considered most appropriate for this study. The area of the study was Enugu State. Enugu State is one of the five states in South-East, Nigeria; with seventeen (17) local government areas. The state has six Education Zones namely; Agbani, Awgu, Enugu, Nsukka, Obollo-Afor and Udi Zone. The population for the study consist of all the 113 (45 males and 68 females) counsellors currently serving in all the 295 public secondary schools in Enugu State as at the time of this study. Due to the relatively manageable size of the population of counsellors, the entire population of 113 respondents was involved in the study. Therefore, there was no sampling.

A questionnaire developed by the researcher titled 'Counsellors' Adoption of Intervention Techniques for Conflict Resolution (CAITCR) was used for data collection. The questionnaire has two sections, A and B. Section A has 2 items that elicited information on the respondents' bio-data while section B has 2

clusters. Cluster 1 has 13 items on administrative intervention techniques while Cluster 2 has 6 items on moral intervention techniques. The questionnaire has a four point response scale with response option of; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with assigned values of 4, 3, 2 and 1. The instrument was validated by three experts; two from Guidance and Counselling Department and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation unit of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Education, all from Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, the researcher used Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate to analyze data collected at coefficient of .80, for cluster 1 and .78 for cluster 2. The researcher went ahead to ascertain the coefficient of the entire instrument and it stood at .71, this, the researcher considered high enough and so used the instrument to collect the data for the study. The researcher administered 113 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents with the help of six research assistants who were briefed in a one day consultative meeting on the administration and retrieval of the copies of the instrument. The respondents were given time to fill the instrument because of the nature of their jobs and appointment was booked for collection on a date agreed upon by the respondents and the researcher. 105 copies out of 113 of the administered questionnaire were retrieved, thus representing 92.9 percent return rate. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation and t-test statistic. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistic at .05 significance level. The response options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) were weighted as 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. A criterion mean of 2.50 was established by dividing the sum of the weights with 4.

Any mean with 2.50 and above was regarded as 'agree' while any mean below 2.50 was regarded as 'disagree'. Similarly, when the calculated t-value was equal to or greater than the critical value, the

null hypotheses were rejected but when the calculated t-value was less than the critical value, the null hypotheses were not rejected. These served as criterion for making inferences for the data collected to enable the researcher provide answers for the research questions raised and hypotheses formulated that guided the study.

Results

Research Question 1

What administrative intervention techniques do counsellors adopt in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 2: Mean with Standard Deviation of the Respondents on Administrative Intervention Techniques Adopted in Resolving Conflicts among secondary school students.

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

The result presented in Table 1 revealed that the grand mean of 2.31 with standard deviation of 0.99. This indicated that counsellors do not use administrative intervention techniques in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State. The standard deviation of the items also indicted that the respondents have consensus opinion on the issue.

Research Question 2

What moral intervention techniques do counsellors adopt in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 2: Mean with Standard Deviation of the Respondents in Moral Intervention Techniques Adopted in Resolving Conflict by counsellors

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

The result presented in Table 2 showed that counsellors do not apply moral intervention techniques in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State. This is evident by the grand mean of 2.27 which is below the criterion mean of 2.50. The overall standard deviation score of 0.97 indicated that the respondents were consistent in their opinions.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female counsellors on the administrative intervention techniques they adopt while resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Table 3: t-test comparison of the Respondents on the Adoption of Administrative Intervention Techniques in Resolving Conflicts

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

Data presented in t-test analysis in Table 3 revealed that t-calculated value of 1.15 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at .05 significance and at 103 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that male and female counsellors had uniform opinions on the adoption of administrative intervention techniques in resolving conflict among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female counsellors on the moral intervention techniques they adopt in resolving conflict among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of Mean Responses of the Respondents on the Adoption of Moral Intervention Techniques

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

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The t-test analysis in Table 4 showed that the calculated t-value of .79 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at .05 level of significance and at 103 degree of freedom. This implies that male and female counsellors had uniform opinions on the adoption of moral intervention techniques in resolving conflict among secondary school students in Enugu State. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of the study are discussed below according to the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

The result from research question one showed that the respondents were generally of the view that counsellors do not adopt administrative intervention techniques in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State. The finding is in line with Ezebuio (2018), who reported that the application of administrative intervention techniques by guidance counsellors in resolving conflicts in secondary schools in Umuahia South local government area has been below expectation. Ezebuio further attributed the poor adoption of administrative intervention techniques by guidance counsellors on principals' inability to involve guidance counsellors in the administration process. This is in conformity with Enyiazu (2015), who noted that guidance counsellors in secondary schools seemed to have failed in discharging their duties because of the perceived inability of school principals to involve guidance counsellors in the administration of secondary schools. Therefore, secondary school principals should see participation of counsellors in the administrative process as one of the most important administrative technique of conflict resolution in schools. This is because involving counsellors in the administrative process

will enhance their competence, creativity and commitment in the adoption of administrative intervention techniques in resolving conflicts among secondary school students. The study further revealed that male and female counsellors had uniform opinions on the adoption of administrative techniques in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State. This is conformity with Ezebuio (2018), who reported that guidance counsellors' level of adoption of administrative intervention strategies in resolving conflict among students does not depend on gender.

Results of the analysis of research question two revealed that counsellors do not apply moral intervention techniques in resolving conflicts in secondary schools in Enugu State. This finding is in consonance with Oguzie (2014) who attributed continuous violence, fights, fracas, misunderstanding, demonstration and riot among secondary school students in Nigeria to poor application of moral intervention techniques by teachers and guidance counsellors. This calls for a critical review of the moral intervention techniques adopted by counsellors in counselling students so as to reduce conflicts and improve their performance in our school system. Also, counsellors should learn to adopt moral intervention techniques in counselling students to improve their academic performance and moral decadence as such moves will serve as vehicle for self-realization. The results of the analysis of hypothesis two revealed that male and female counsellors did not significantly differ in their opinions on the adoption of moral intervention techniques in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State. This is supported by Oguzie (2014) who reported that male and female guidance counsellors had similar views on the extent

of application of moral strategies in conflict resolution in secondary schools.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn. It can be concluded that counsellors did not adopt administrative intervention techniques and moral intervention techniques in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State. It is also concluded that male and female counsellors did not differ significantly in their opinions on the adoption of administrative and moral intervention techniques in resolving conflict among secondary school students in Enugu State.

However, if intervention techniques such as administrative and moral intervention techniques are not adopted for conflict resolution in schools, chaos and indiscipline among both teachers and students will be prevalent in secondary schools in Enugu State. This will adversely affect both teaching and learning and by extension, students' performance in both internal and external examinations. Therefore, counselors should adopt these intervention techniques as it will certainly position the school in order to effectively achieve its core mandate of knowledge dissemination and societal transformation.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the findings of this study and conclusions drawn, the researcher proffers the following recommendations.

1. Seminars/workshops should be organized by government and ministry of education for counsellors to acquaint them with administrative and moral intervention techniques. This will enhance counselling productivity and students' academic performance.
2. Government and educational administrators should ensure that only qualified counsellors are employed in every school in the state. This will

improve the quality of secondary education as well as reduction of moral decadence among students.

3. The government should provide good physical conditions, enough resources, needed staff, equipment and other necessary facilities to schools to avoid conflict cropping from such inadequacies.

4. For peaceful learning environment and better academic performance of students in secondary schools, every school should have a functional guidance and counselling unit with the services of professional counsellors as the heads.

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