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COUNSELLING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: A REVIEW OF BEHAVIOURAL INTERVENTIONS TARGETING VIOLENCE, ADDICTION, MENTAL HEALTH, AND VALUE REORIENTATION AMONG YOUTHS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This systematic review explored the role of counselling in addressing behavioural issues among Nigerian youth population in Anambra State, focusing on interventions targeting violence, addiction, mental health disorders, and value reorientation. A comprehensive search of academic databases identified relevant peer-reviewed studies published between 2014 and 2025. The review synthesizes findings from interventions such as Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT), Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), and socio-cognitive skills training, highlighting their effectiveness in fostering attitudinal reformation and psychosocial adjustment. Key themes identified include the positive impact of counselling on reducing maladaptive behaviours, promoting psychological well-being, and enhancing academic performance. However, gaps in the literature, such as the lack of longitudinal studies, underrepresentation of rural and out-of-school youth populations, and insufficient mixed-methods research, were also noted. The review highlights the need for context-sensitive counselling frameworks, the integration of counselling services into school curricula and youth development programmes, and capacity-building for counsellors to address emerging behavioural challenges. Furthermore, it calls for policy reforms that embed counselling as a core strategy for youth empowerment and national development. The findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on youth counselling in Nigeria and suggest directions for future research and practice in this field.

Keywords: Counselling, behavioural interventions, addiction, mental health, violence, value reorientation.

Introduction

Youth populations across Nigeria are increasingly confronted with multifaceted psychosocial, academic, and moral challenges that threaten not only their personal development but also the stability of the society at large. These challenges, which often arise from a combination of systemic neglect, socio-economic inequality, poor parenting practices, cultural disorientation, and peer pressure, manifest in several troubling behaviours including electoral and sexual violence, substance abuse, mental health disorders, academic dishonesty, prostitution, and disengagement from positive societal values. For instance, electoral violence has become a growing concern among Nigerian youths, especially as many young people are mobilized as political thugs during elections. A study by Ezema et al. (2025) revealed that the application of Rational Emotive Behavioural Education (REBE) was effective in reducing tendencies toward electoral violence among youths, indicating that cognitive behavioural interventions can play a crucial role in reorienting youth perspectives toward peace and civic responsibility.

Similarly, the problem of sexual violence, particularly against young women in tertiary institutions, remains pervasive. Obumse and Thompson (2021) found high rates of sexual violence among female undergraduates in Anambra State, with many survivors experiencing trauma, shame, and stigma. These findings highlight the urgent need for counselling-based trauma recovery and empowerment programs that address both the psychological aftermath and the social context of sexual violence. Substance abuse and prostitution are also prevalent, often rooted in broken family systems, peer influence, and low self-esteem. In a study by Okudo, et al. (2024), it was discovered that attachment styles. whether secure, avoidant, or anxious, significantly influenced students' likelihood of engaging in substance use and transactional sex. This highlights the importance of counselling interventions that are informed by developmental and attachment theories to support at-risk youth.

Mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, and emotional instability are increasingly prevalent among Nigerian youth. Obumse et al. (2022) highlighted how pervasive myths and stigmatizing beliefs about mental illness often discourage young people from seeking psychological support, thereby reinforcing cycles of emotional distress and social maladjustment. Similarly, Chigbu, et al. (2023) emphasized the value of therapeutic interventions by demonstrating the efficacy of cognitive restructuring techniques in enhancing emotional adjustment among vulnerable populations. Moreover, Nnadi, et al. (2020) provided evidence for the effectiveness of assertiveness training in reducing social withdrawal among adolescents, further illustrating the critical role of psychosocial interventions in youth mental health. Complementing these findings, Nwosu et al. (2022) showed that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a practical tool in overcoming addiction-related barriers, particularly in addressing tobacco use among undergraduates, thereby reinforcing the relevance of structured therapeutic approaches in tackling both mental health and substance abuse concerns.

Academic dishonesty and burnout are further symptoms of psychological distress and misaligned values among students. According to Obumse, et al. (2023), emotional intelligence and study skills were strong predictors of academic dishonesty, suggesting that

students lacking coping strategies are more likely to engage in unethical academic practices. Another study by Obumse, et al. (2023) applied Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) to reduce burnout symptoms in university students, showing how structured counselling can enhance academic resilience and reduce maladaptive coping.

Moreover, value disorientation and the erosion of traditional cultural norms are increasingly evident among Nigerian youth, largely influenced by modern media and inadequate moral guidance. Okudo, et al. (2023) examined the role of social media and Nollywood in shaping the psychosocial adjustment of students, while Okudo and Obumse (2023) linked declining family well-being to the broader impact of bad governance on the quality of life among Igbo families. These findings suggest that counselling must go beyond symptom management to also promote value reorientation and critical media literacy.

In response to these escalating youth-related challenges, several scholars have emphasized the need for robust, context-sensitive, and value-driven counselling practices. Egenti and Obumse (2021) advocated for guidance and counselling for value reorientation and national development, while Obumse and Nwokedi (2014) promoted peace and security education as a foundational component of youth counselling strategies. Taken together, these studies establish counselling not just as a remedial tool but as a transformative mechanism for addressing youth behavioural problems and instigating broader social change. Effective counselling interventions can help young Nigerians cultivate self-awareness, emotional intelligence, moral values, and civic consciousness, qualities essential for personal well-being and national progress.

Thematic/Conceptual Framework

This section is organized around key themes that structure the review. Each theme presents an integrated discussion of research findings, counselling approaches, and theoretical orientations:

Counselling and Youth Violence Prevention

In recent years, there has been a noticeable surge in research focusing on counselling-based interventions aimed at promoting attitudinal reformation and psychosocial adjustment among Nigerian youths. This growing body of work reflects a collective academic effort to understand and address the behavioural and emotional challenges plaguing young people across various social and educational contexts in Nigeria. For instance, Ezema et al. (2025) demonstrated the efficacy of Rational Emotive Behavioural Education (REBE) in significantly reducing tendencies toward electoral violence among youths. Their study emphasised the power of cognitive restructuring in reshaping negative thought patterns and reducing politically motivated aggression, an increasingly pressing concern in Nigeria's democratic process. The intervention helped participants revaluate irrational beliefs, manage anger, and develop non-violent conflict resolution skills, suggesting that REBE can serve as a preventive strategy against youth involvement in electoral crimes.

Similarly, Obumse and Thompson (2021) shed light on the alarming prevalence of sexual violence among female undergraduates in Anambra State. Their findings revealed not only the magnitude of the problem but also the associated psychological trauma experienced by victims, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress. The study emphasized the vital role of counselling in trauma recovery, particularly in helping survivors navigate emotional distress, reclaim personal agency, and rebuild a sense of safety and identity. Counselling, as they noted, is not only remedial but also empowering, serving as a pathway to healing and long-term psychosocial adjustment. Furthermore, Okudo, et al. (2024) explored how different attachment styles among university students were linked to behavioural issues such as substance abuse and sexual promiscuity. Their study found that avoidant and anxious attachment styles correlated with higher incidences of risky behaviours, thereby highlighting the importance of early counselling interventions that address deep-seated relational and emotional insecurities.

In terms of addressing mental health and behavioural disorders, Obumse, et al. (2022) examined the impact of stigmatizing myths and beliefs about mental illness among undergraduates. They reported that such negative perceptions significantly hindered help-seeking behaviour. Counselling interventions, especially those grounded in cognitive-behavioural frameworks, were recommended as effective strategies to correct these misconceptions and encourage psychological help-seeking and emotional openness. Similarly, Nwosu et al. (2022) utilized Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to address tobacco addiction among undergraduates and found that the intervention effectively increased participants' self-control, motivation for behaviour change, and awareness of the consequences of substance use. Their work supports the broader applicability of behavioural counselling strategies in modifying health-compromising habits among Nigerian youth.

In the academic context, Obumse (2019) investigated how emotional intelligence and study habits predicted academic dishonesty. Their findings pointed to a lack of self-regulation and effective coping skills as key drivers of unethical academic behaviours. This further positions counselling as essential in equipping students with positive coping mechanisms and personal integrity frameworks that support academic success. Also worthy of note is the study by Obumse, et al. (2023). using Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) to address academic burnout among undergraduates, where participants reported improved emotional regulation, reduced academic stress, and greater academic engagement post-intervention. These results reinforce the versatility of REBT in promoting both psychological wellness and educational productivity. Additionally, Okudo and Obumse (2023) explored how systemic governance failures affect family and youth well-being, showing that bad governance contributes to moral decay, poor youth development outcomes, and social disillusionment. Their findings suggest that beyond individual counselling, there is a need for national value reorientation strategies integrated within counselling frameworks to counteract the socio-political dysfunctions affecting youth psychology. Egenti and Obumse (2021) went further to strongly advocated for guidance and counselling for value reorientation and national transformation. They emphasized that sustainable behavioural change among youths requires more than reactive approaches, it demands proactive, culturally informed, and

developmentally appropriate interventions that foster moral consciousness and social responsibility.

Addiction, Maladaptive Behaviour, and Emotional Development

Addiction and other maladaptive behaviours; such as substance abuse, prostitution, and academic dishonesty, have consistently been linked to deeper emotional, psychological, and developmental challenges among Nigerian youth. These behaviours often serve as coping mechanisms or compensatory responses to unresolved intrapersonal and relational issues. For example, Okudo et al. (2024) conducted a study among university students in Enugu State and found that insecure attachment styles, particularly avoidant and anxious types, were significantly associated with substance addiction and engagement in prostitution. Their findings highlighted that individuals with these attachment patterns often resort to self-destructive behaviours to compensate for emotional voids or to seek validation. This highlights the need for personalized, attachment-informed counselling interventions that address core emotional needs, foster relational security, and encourage healthier behavioural choices.

In a related context, Obumse et al. (2023) examined how parenting styles and self-efficacy influence academic performance and behavioural tendencies among secondary school students. Their results indicated that students raised under authoritative and supportive parenting styles were more likely to develop high self-efficacy, which in turn enhanced academic achievement and reduced involvement in dishonest practices such as examination malpractice and plagiarism. On the other hand, those exposed to neglectful or authoritarian parenting styles displayed lower motivation and increased susceptibility to risky behaviours. Similarly, Nnadi, et al.(2020) demonstrated the effectiveness of assertiveness training in reducing social withdrawal among adolescents, highlighting the importance of building social-emotional competencies. Complementing this, Chigbu, et al. (2023) confirmed that cognitive restructuring techniques significantly improve emotional adjustment, particularly among vulnerable populations.

Together, these studies highlight the central role of emotional development, self-efficacy, and family dynamics in shaping youth behaviour. Interventions that enable students to reflect on early relational patterns, enhance self-worth, and strengthen self-regulation skills are more likely to foster lasting behavioural transformation. Moreover, these findings affirm that maladaptive behaviours among youth are not merely disciplinary concerns but are symptomatic of underlying psychological struggles that demand empathetic, evidence-based counselling approaches. Integrative strategies, such as family counselling, self-efficacy training, and emotionally focused therapy, could therefore offer meaningful solutions to these complex challenges.

Mental Health Interventions among Nigerian Youths

Mental health is an increasingly critical area in Nigeria's public health discourse, especially among youth populations facing academic, social, and economic stressors. In recent years, counselling-based interventions have emerged as powerful tools for promoting emotional resilience, help-seeking behaviour, and cognitive restructuring among young people battling mental health challenges. For instance, Obumse, et al. (2022) documented the prevalence of stigmatization and misbeliefs surrounding mental illness among Nigerian youths. Their study found that many young people harbor cultural misconceptions about mental health, often associating it with spiritual attacks or moral failure, which significantly discourages them from seeking professional help. This aligns with the work of Nwosu et al. (2022), who employed Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to assist university students in overcoming psychological and cognitive barriers to quitting tobacco smoking. The CBT intervention not only helped the students develop coping mechanisms but also led to notable improvements in mental health outcomes, such as reduced anxiety and increased motivation to maintain behavioural change.

Further supporting the effectiveness of counselling, Aneke et al. (2023) conducted a randomized controlled study that showed the efficacy of structured counselling in reducing depressive symptoms in children with atypical behaviours. Their results highlighted the importance of early psychological support, particularly in the form of structured interventions that target maladaptive thoughts and enhance emotional regulation. Moreover, Nwanna, et al. (2020) explored the impact of economic distress arising from the COVID-19 pandemic on undergraduate students in Anambra State. Their study revealed that financial strain was strongly associated with the development of anxiety symptoms, further emphasizing the need for counselling strategies that integrate socio-economic stress management into mental health interventions.

In terms of mental health in occupational and marital contexts, Azuji et al. (2025) investigated how body image perceptions relate to marital adjustment levels, demonstrating that psychological well-being and self-concept significantly impact relational stability. Similarly, Nnonyelu, et al. (2024) found that social orientation and decision-making competence were predictors of work stress among business educators, reinforcing the necessity for counselling interventions that target occupational mental health and personal development. Additionally, Anagbogu, et al. (2020) evaluated the effectiveness of socio-cognitive skills training on aggressive behaviour in adolescents, revealing that such interventions can reduce hostile behaviours and improve emotional control, thus contributing positively to the overall mental health of young people. Collectively, these studies highlight the transformative potential of counselling interventions in mental health promotion across diverse contexts—academic, social, occupational, and familial. Whether through CBT, emotional regulation strategies, or psychoeducation, counselling has proven effective in equipping Nigerian youth with the tools to overcome mental health challenges, develop healthier coping strategies, and achieve greater psychological stability.

Academic Dishonesty, Burnout, and Educational Adjustment

Academic burnout has become a pervasive issue among Nigerian students, particularly in tertiary institutions where the pressure to perform is intensified by limited resources, societal expectations, and individual psychological challenges. Burnout is often characterized by emotional exhaustion, reduced academic interest, and a sense of ineffectiveness, which can have profound consequences on students' academic trajectories and mental health. In this context, Obumse, et al. (2023) conducted a study utilizing Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) to address symptoms of academic burnout among students. Their findings demonstrated that REBT, with its emphasis on challenging irrational beliefs and promoting adaptive thinking, led to significant improvements in both academic engagement and psychological well-being. By helping students reframe negative perceptions about academic demands and enhancing their coping mechanisms, the intervention contributed to reduced emotional fatigue and improved focus.

Furthermore, in another study, Obumse et al. (2023) explored the predictive roles of emotional intelligence and study skills in relation to academic dishonesty. They found that students with low emotional intelligence and ineffective study habits were more likely to engage in unethical academic behaviours such as cheating and plagiarism. These findings suggest that such lapses are not merely moral failings but are often symptoms of deeper emotional and cognitive deficiencies, including poor stress management, low self-regulation, and inadequate time management skills. Together, these studies highlight the critical role of counselling interventions, particularly those grounded in behavioural and cognitive frameworks, in addressing academic burnout and misconduct. Interventions that cultivate emotional intelligence, promote rational thinking, and develop effective study skills not only enhance students' academic outcomes but also contribute to ethical behaviour and mental health resilience. This reinforces the broader argument that promoting psychosocial competencies is essential for holistic educational success in Nigeria.

Value Reorientation and National Development

In response to the growing behavioural, psychological, and moral crises affecting Nigerian youths, researchers have emphasized the urgent need to reposition counselling as a strategic tool for long-term social transformation. Egenti and Obumse (2021) stressed that guidance and counselling frameworks in Nigeria must move beyond addressing short-term behavioural issues to encompass value orientation and national development. According to them, effective counselling should serve as a moral compass, instilling in young people a strong sense of civic duty, ethical consciousness, and responsibility towards national growth. Similarly, Obumse and Nwokedi (2014) highlighted the importance of integrating peace and security education into counselling practices as a proactive approach to cultivating a culture of nonviolence, tolerance, and mutual respect among Nigerian youths. By fostering conflict resolution skills and promoting peaceful coexistence, such interventions address not only immediate acts of aggression but also the deeper social conditions that foster violence and unrest.

Reinforcing these arguments, studies such as Anagbogu, et al. (2020) have demonstrated the impact of socio-cognitive skills training on reducing aggressive behaviours among secondary school adolescents, suggesting that targeted behavioural interventions can significantly improve interpersonal relationships and emotional regulation. These findings support the broader claim that counselling has the potential to shape character and foster emotional maturity. Moreover, in the context of the changing socio-economic landscape, Nnonyelu, et al, (2024) explored how social orientation and decision-making competence predict work stress among business educators. Their findings showed the importance of teaching adaptive behavioural skills that can be transferred into both academic and professional domains, further validating the need for holistic counselling programs that prepare youths for ethical leadership and responsible adulthood.

On a related note, Nwanna, et al. (2020) documented the psychological impact of economic distress during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the rise in anxiety symptoms among undergraduate students. This study highlights the broader vulnerabilities of Nigerian youths in the face of structural crises, and the need for responsive counselling models that not only offer emotional support but also cultivate resilience and value-based decision-making. Although not focused on youths, the work of Azuji et al. (2025) on body image perceptions and marital adjustment among married persons further emphasizes the relationship between self-concept and emotional wellness, a psychological dynamic that begins during adolescence and highlights the enduring need for early and sustained behavioural interventions. Taken together, these studies suggest that counselling for social change in Nigeria must be multi-dimensional, addressing not only mental health and behavioural correction but also value reorientation, peacebuilding, and national consciousness. It is through such comprehensive frameworks that counselling can effectively contribute to sustainable national development.

Despite the growing body of evidence, the effectiveness of counselling as a tool for large-scale social transformation remains underutilized and fragmented. Many programmes operate in silos, focusing on isolated symptoms rather than addressing the root causes of youth behavioural problems. Moreover, there is limited integration of psychological theories, empirical findings, and indigenous cultural practices in the design and implementation of these interventions. Therefore, this study seeks to conduct an integrative review of behavioural interventions employed through counselling frameworks to address key youth issues, violence, addiction, mental health, and value reorientation, in Nigeria. By analyzing existing empirical studies, identifying best practices, and exploring gaps in the literature, this review aims to provide a robust theoretical and practical foundation for counselling as an instrument of social change. The ultimate goal is to strengthen youth development efforts and promote a more peaceful, mentally healthy, and morally upright society.

Search Strategy

For this review, the following steps were used to ensure a comprehensive search:

1. **Databases Used**:
    - Google Scholar: A widely accessible database with a vast collection of academic articles from various disciplines, including psychology and education.
    - AJOL (African Journals Online): A specialized database offering access to a variety of research focused on Africa, which is vital for capturing studies focused on Nigerian youths.
    - ResearchGate: A repository for academic publications, often containing studies that are freely available from researchers and practitioners in the field.
    - Other Relevant Databases: Depending on availability, additional databases such as JSTOR, PubMed, and ScienceDirect were consulted for more comprehensive search coverage.
2. **Keywords**: The search was carried out using a combination of key terms related to the focus of the review. These included:
    - Primary Keywords: *counselling, youth, Anambra State, Nigeria.*
    - Secondary Keywords: *behavioural interventions, addiction, mental health, violence, value orientation, academic burnout, aggression, substance abuse, substance addiction, mental health disorders, peer pressure* These keywords were used to ensure that relevant studies on behavioural interventions, their effects, and the focus on Nigerian youth populations in Anambra State, were captured.
3. **Search Strategy Execution**: Boolean operators (AND, OR) were employed to combine keywords and refine results. For example:
    - ("Counselling" AND "Youth" AND “Anambra State” AND "Nigeria")
    - ("Violence" OR "Substance Abuse" OR "Mental Health") AND "Counselling" AND “Anambra State” AND "Nigeria" The search covered studies from both Nigerian and international journals to ensure that relevant research with Nigerian populations in Anambra State or contextual relevance was included.

Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria define the specific characteristics of the studies that were considered eligible for the review. This ensures that the review focuses on relevant research that provides meaningful insights into counselling interventions for Nigerian youths. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. Peer-Reviewed Studies: Only studies published in peer-reviewed journals or academic platforms were included to ensure the quality and reliability of the evidence.
2. Publication Timeframe (2014-2025): Studies published between 2014 and 2025 were included to ensure that the review focuses on the most current and relevant literature.

This time frame also reflects contemporary trends in counselling practices and the changing dynamics of youth-related behavioural issues in Nigeria.

3. Focus on Nigerian Youth Populations in Anambra State: The review was limited to studies that focused specifically on Nigerian youth populations, whether in schools, universities, or communities. This ensures that the findings are relevant to the specific socio-cultural and environmental context of Anambra State, Nigeria.
4. Studies Involving Counselling Interventions: Studies that assessed or used counselling interventions were prioritized. This includes research on individual or group counselling, psychotherapy, skills-based training, and therapeutic interventions aimed at addressing issues like violence, addiction, mental health, or behavioural maladjustment among youth.

Exclusion Criteria

Exclusion criteria were set to narrow the review to the most relevant studies, ensuring that the results are focused on the specified research objectives. Studies that did not meet the following criteria were excluded:

1. Non-Behavioural Interventions: Studies that focused on non-behavioural interventions, such as pharmacological treatments, health interventions without a counselling component, or physical rehabilitation, were excluded. The emphasis of this review is on behavioural and psychosocial interventions.
2. Adult-Only Populations: Studies that involved adult populations (45 years and older) were excluded unless they included a significant portion of youth participants or the findings had clear relevance to youth issues.
3. Studies without Counselling Components: Any studies that did not focus on counselling, therapeutic interventions, or psychological support mechanisms were excluded, even if they were related to youth or behavioural issues. This review specifically aims to examine counselling as a tool for social change.

Data Extraction

Once the relevant studies were identified based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the next step was to extract key data from these studies. This was done systematically to ensure consistency and reliability:

1. Key Findings: The central results of each study, particularly in relation to the effectiveness of the counselling interventions, were summarized. This includes any statistical data, qualitative findings, and conclusions drawn by the authors.
2. Intervention Types: The types of counselling interventions employed in each study were identified. This includes specific therapies such as Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT), Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), group counselling, psychoeducation, and other psychological approaches.

3. Target Behaviours: The behavioural issues addressed by the interventions were noted. This includes problems like substance abuse, academic dishonesty, aggression, mental health disorders, and violence.
4. Outcomes: The outcomes of the interventions were carefully documented, noting any significant improvements, setbacks, or areas for further development as indicated by the study's findings.
5. Thematic Categorization: The extracted data was categorized thematically based on the key issues being addressed, such as addiction, violence, mental health, or value reorientation. This helps to identify trends, patterns, and gaps in the literature.

Analytical Approach

The data extracted from the studies was then analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach. Studies were grouped based on key themes and analyzing them to identify commonalities, differences, and trends:

1. Thematic Synthesis: These themes include interventions for violence prevention, addiction management, mental health support, academic adjustment, and value reorientation. Each theme was analyzed for its effectiveness, the specific counselling techniques used, and the context in which it was applied.
2. Research Gaps: The synthesis also highlighted gaps in the literature, such as under-researched areas or methodological limitations. This analysis helped to identify areas where further research is needed to improve counselling interventions for Nigerian youths.
3. Interpretation of Findings: Based on the synthesized data, the findings were interpreted to draw conclusions about the overall effectiveness of counselling interventions in fostering social change among Nigerian youth. This included examining the cultural relevance, scalability, and sustainability of these interventions.

Discussion

In this section, we critically interpreted the findings from the reviewed studies, synthesizing the evidence across the identified themes.

Effectiveness of Counselling Interventions

Across the reviewed literature, counselling interventions, particularly those rooted in cognitive and behavioural frameworks such as Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT), Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Rational Emotive Behavioural Education (REBE), and socio-cognitive skills training, demonstrated significant efficacy in promoting positive behavioural and psychological outcomes among Nigerian youths.

Several studies confirmed the transformative power of cognitive restructuring. For instance, Ezema et al. (2025) found that REBE effectively reduced electoral violence tendencies

among youths by reshaping irrational beliefs and enhancing political tolerance. Similarly, Obumse, et al. (2023) reported that REBT significantly alleviated academic burnout, boosting both psychological well-being and student engagement.

Interventions targeting addiction and maladaptive behaviours also yielded promising outcomes. Okudo, at al. (2024) discovered that insecure attachment styles correlated with higher instances of substance abuse and prostitution, suggesting the need for attachment-informed therapeutic strategies. Counselling also played a pivotal role in addressing sexual violence, with Obumse and Thompson (2021) emphasizing its therapeutic value in supporting trauma recovery among survivors.

Mental health-focused interventions were equally impactful. CBT-based programmes, such as those implemented by Nwosu et al. (2022), provided university students with effective tools to overcome tobacco addiction and manage related mental health challenges. Additionally, Aneke et al. (2023) found randomized counselling to significantly reduce depressive symptoms in children with atypical behaviours, while Obumse, Okudo, and Obikeze (2022) exposed the psychological barriers created by stigma and misinformation about mental illness, reinforcing the importance of psychoeducation. Socio-cognitive training, as demonstrated by Anagbogu, et al. (2020), was also found to significantly reduce aggression among adolescents by promoting better interpersonal skills and emotional regulation. Furthermore, group counselling and peer support mechanisms were consistently found to be effective in fostering social cohesion and reducing feelings of isolation, especially among at-risk youth. The reviewed studies further highlighted the broader societal role of counselling in value reorientation and national development. Egenti and Obumse (2021) advocated for the revitalization of counselling frameworks to instill civic responsibility, while Obumse and Nwokedi (2014) highlighted peace education as essential to fostering nonviolence and mutual respect.

Research Gaps

Despite the promising findings, several gaps in the literature hinder a comprehensive understanding of the long-term effectiveness and broader applicability of counselling interventions for Nigerian youths.

1. Underrepresentation of Rural and Out-of-School Youth Populations: There is a significant underrepresentation of rural youth and out-of-school populations in the literature. These groups face unique challenges that differ from those of urban or school-attending youth, such as higher exposure to poverty, limited access to healthcare, and societal exclusion. Future studies should prioritize these often-neglected groups to ensure interventions are inclusive and effective across the entire spectrum of youth.
2. Lack of Mixed-Methods Studies: Few studies employed mixed-methods approaches, which combine both quantitative outcomes (such as changes in behavioural metrics) and qualitative insights (such as youth experiences and perceptions). Mixed-methods

studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of counselling interventions, including the circumstantial factors that contribute to success or failure.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this review have important implications for the practice of counselling in Nigeria, particularly in how interventions are designed and delivered:

Counselling interventions must be tailored to the cultural, social, and economic realities of Nigerian youth. This includes addressing local values, traditions, and community norms when designing counselling programs. For example, strategies that work in urban areas might need modification when implemented in rural settings, where family dynamics and socio-economic conditions differ.

To reach a wider audience, counselling services should be integrated into the educational system and youth development programs. This could involve incorporating mental health and life skills education into the school curriculum, ensuring that all students have access to these vital services. Additionally, extracurricular activities such as peer counselling and support groups can enhance the effectiveness of these programs.

As behavioural trends among youth continue to evolve, such as the rise in cybercrime and internet addiction, there is a growing need for continuous professional development for counsellors. Training programmes should be implemented to equip counsellors with the skills needed to address emerging challenges. This may include enhancing their ability to provide support for digital addiction, online bullying, and the psychological effects of social media use.

Implications for Policy

The findings from the reviewed studies also point to the need for policy reforms aimed at integrating counselling more comprehensively into national youth development strategies:

Policymakers should advocate for the embedding of counselling services as a core strategy for youth empowerment and value reorientation. This would involve institutionalizing counselling within schools, universities, and community settings as part of the national youth development agenda. National policies should promote the importance of mental health and behavioural support, aligning with global best practices and addressing local youth challenges.

To ensure that all youth have access to high-quality counselling services, there is a need for the expansion of counselling infrastructure in both educational and community settings. This could involve establishing counselling centers in rural areas, training more qualified counsellors, and ensuring that resources are distributed equitably across different regions.

Investment in the physical infrastructure for counselling services will help ensure that interventions reach underserved and marginalized youth populations.

Conclusion

This review highlights the critical role of counselling in addressing the behavioural challenges faced by Nigerian youth, such as substance abuse, violence, mental health disorders, and academic dishonesty. The effectiveness of interventions such as REBT, CBT, and socio-cognitive training has been demonstrated, but research gaps, particularly the need for longitudinal studies and better representation of rural youth, highlight areas for future investigation. The review also emphasizes the need for culturally responsive counselling frameworks and better integration of counselling services into educational and youth development programs. Policy reforms advocating for the inclusion of counselling in national youth strategies and the expansion of infrastructure are necessary to promote long-term social change and development among Nigerian youth.

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