

Strengthening Resilience in Times of Crises: The Role of School-Based Psycho-spiritual Counselling among Senior Secondary School Students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the perceived role of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling in strengthening emotional resilience, social resilience and overall resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. The population comprised Senior Secondary II (SS II) students in public secondary schools across Jos North and Jos South Local Government Areas. A sample of 394 students was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured instrument titled Psycho-Spiritual Counselling and Resilience Questionnaire (PSCRQ). The instrument was validated by experts in Guidance and Counselling, Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation, while reliability testing yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions, while chi-square statistics were used to test hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that school-based psycho-spiritual counselling has a significant perceived role in strengthening emotional resilience, social resilience and overall resilience among senior secondary school students. The study concluded that psycho-spiritual counselling is an effective approach for promoting resilience among students. It was recommended that psycho-spiritual counselling be integrated into school counselling programmes to enhance students' ability to cope with crisis situations.

Keywords: psycho-spiritual counselling, resilience, secondary school students, coping, Jos Metropolis

Introduction

Resilience has become a central issue in understanding how secondary school students cope with life challenges, particularly in unstable environments. At this stage, students are expected to develop emotional stability, social competence and effective stress management skills, which are essential for academic success and overall personal development. However, exposure to difficult and unpredictable situations can weaken their ability to adapt, making resilience a critical necessity.

Globally, there is growing concern about the impact of conflict, insecurity and economic hardship on young people's wellbeing. The United Nations Children's Fund reports that nearly one in five children lives in conflict-affected areas, exposing them to emotional distress and disrupted learning (UNICEF, 2021). In such contexts, resilience serves as a protective factor that enables individuals to maintain psychological stability despite adversity (Masten, 2014). Consequently, educational systems are increasingly emphasizing interventions that promote both academic and emotional development.

In Africa, the challenge is more pronounced due to widespread socio-political instability and economic hardship. Many young people face multiple stressors, including poverty and limited access to psychosocial support (African Development Bank, 2020). In Nigeria, these conditions are intensified by insecurity and economic pressures, with over 40% of households experiencing multidimensional poverty (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Although guidance and counselling services exist, they largely focus on academic and career issues, leaving gaps in resilience-building (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021).

In Plateau State, particularly Jos Metropolis, recurring communal tensions further affect students' emotional wellbeing, often resulting in anxiety and social withdrawal (Ogunwale & Adebayo, 2019). While schools provide some level of stability, structured systems for promoting resilience remain limited. School-based psycho-spiritual counselling offers a holistic approach by integrating psychological support with values, meaning and purpose (Pargament, 2011). However, empirical evidence on its role in strengthening resilience among students in Jos Metropolis is limited. This study therefore examines its contribution in addressing this gap.

Statement of the problem

The ability of secondary school students in Jos Metropolis of Plateau State to cope effectively with stress and adversity has become a growing concern. In recent years, educators and counsellors have observed increasing difficulties among students in managing emotional pressure, adapting to challenges and maintaining stability in their academic and social lives. Experiences such as anxiety, fear, social withdrawal and poor concentration are becoming more evident within the school environment. These challenges are not isolated, but are linked to the broader context of recurring social tension and instability in the area. Exposure to such conditions, whether direct or indirect, can weaken students' emotional balance and social functioning. When resilience is low, students often struggle with academic demands, interpersonal relationships and personal challenges. This may manifest in reduced classroom participation, poor concentration, emotional instability and withdrawal from school activities. Over time, these difficulties can negatively affect both academic performance and overall psychosocial development.

Ideally, a resilient student should be able to adapt positively to stress, recover from setbacks and maintain purpose despite challenges. However, observations in many secondary schools in Jos Metropolis indicate that a significant number of students have not developed these adaptive capacities, raising concerns about the effectiveness of existing school support systems. Although guidance and counselling services exist, they tend to focus more on academic and career issues, with limited attention to building students' inner strength and coping capacity. Other interventions, such as peer education and life skills programmes, may not adequately address deeper emotional and value-based needs. Psycho-spiritual counselling, which integrates psychological support with meaning and purpose, offers a promising approach to strengthening resilience. However, there is limited empirical evidence on its effectiveness among secondary school students in Jos Metropolis. This study therefore seeks to examine its role in enhancing students' resilience in this context.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to examine the perceived role of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling in strengthening resilience among secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the perceived role of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling in enhancing emotional resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State.

2. Determine the perceived role of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling in promoting social resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State.

3. Assess the overall perceived role of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling in strengthening resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State.

Research questions

1. What is the perceived role of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling in enhancing emotional resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State?

2. What is the perceived role of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling in promoting social resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State?

3. What is the overall perceived role of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling in strengthening resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State?

Hypotheses

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

Ho1: There is no significant perceived role of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling in enhancing emotional resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State.

Ho2: There is no significant perceived role of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling in promoting social resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State.

Ho3: There is no significant perceived role of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling in strengthening overall resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State.

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to examine the perceived role of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling in strengthening resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the collection of data from respondents at a single point in time without manipulation of variables. Through this approach, information was obtained regarding students' perceptions of the role of school-based psycho-spiritual

counselling in enhancing emotional resilience, promoting social resilience and strengthening overall resilience.

The population of the study comprised 683 Senior Secondary School II (SS II) students drawn from 42 public secondary schools in Jos Metropolis, consisting of 319 students from 22 schools in Jos North Local Government Area and 364 students from 20 schools in Jos South Local Government Area. The population consisted of 329 male students and 354 female students. A sample size of 394 students was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. A multistage sampling technique was employed for the study. Stratified sampling technique was first used to categorize respondents according to Local Government Area, school and gender to ensure adequate representation of the various subgroups within the population. Thereafter, simple random sampling technique was used to proportionately select respondents from each stratum. The sample comprised 183 students from Jos North Local Government Area and 211 students from Jos South Local Government Area.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Psycho-Spiritual Counselling and Resilience Questionnaire (PSCRQ). The instrument consisted of three main sections. Section A elicited demographic information of respondents, while Sections B and C contained items measuring psycho-spiritual counselling and students' resilience respectively. The resilience construct was operationalized in terms of emotional resilience, social resilience and overall resilience. The instrument contained 45 items structured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4), where higher scores indicated higher levels of perceived psycho-spiritual counselling and stronger resilience among students.

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Guidance and Counselling, Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. A pilot study was conducted and the reliability test yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86, indicating high internal consistency. Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaire, with ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality and voluntary participation strictly observed. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while chi-square statistics were used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of results

Research question 1: What is the perceived influence of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling on emotional resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on emotional resilience

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Helps me remain calm during stressful situations	3.42	0.77	Accepted
2	Helps me recover quickly from emotional distress	3.39	0.80	Accepted
3	Improves my ability to handle academic pressure	3.33	0.82	Accepted
4	Strengthens my emotional control during crises	3.35	0.79	Accepted
5	Reduces feelings of anxiety and fear	3.21	0.86	Accepted

Grand Mean = 3.34

The results show that all items scored above the benchmark, indicating that students perceive school-based psycho-spiritual counselling as having a strong positive influence on their emotional resilience.

Ho1: There is no significant influence of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling on emotional resilience.

Table 2: Chi-square analysis on emotional resilience

Response	O	E	(O-E) ² /E
Agree	254	197	16.62
Disagree	140	197	15.42

$\chi^2_{cal} = 32.04$; $\chi^2_{crit} = 3.84$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$

Since $\chi^2_{cal} (32.04) > \chi^2_{crit} (3.84)$, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant perceived influence of psycho-spiritual counselling on emotional resilience.

Research question 2: What is the perceived influence of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling on social resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on social resilience

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Helps me build positive relationships	3.40	0.79	Accepted
2	Improves my cooperation with others	3.45	0.76	Accepted
3	Helps me resolve conflicts peacefully	3.34	0.82	Accepted
4	Encourages empathy toward others	3.49	0.73	Accepted
5	Reduces misunderstanding among peers	3.28	0.84	Accepted

Grand Mean = 3.39

The results indicate that students perceive psycho-spiritual counselling as positively influencing their social resilience.

Ho2: There is no significant influence of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling on social resilience.

Table 4: Chi-square analysis on social resilience

Response Category	O	E	(O-E) ² /E
Agree	266	197	26.72
Disagree	128	197	25.66
Total	394	394	52.38

$\chi^2_{cal} = 52.38$, $\chi^2_{crit} = 3.84$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$

Since the calculated chi-square value (52.38) is greater than the critical value (3.84), the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that school-based psycho-spiritual counselling has a significant perceived influence on the social resilience of senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis.

Research question 3: What is the perceived influence of school-based psycho-spiritual counselling on overall resilience among senior secondary school students?

Table 5: Overall resilience

Domain	Mean	SD	Decision
Emotional resilience	3.34	0.81	High
Social resilience	3.39	0.79	High
Overall mean	3.37	0.80	High Influence

The results show that psycho-spiritual counselling is perceived to have a strong overall influence on students' resilience.

Ho3: There is no significant influence of psycho-spiritual counselling on overall resilience.

Table 6: Chi-Square on overall resilience)

Response Category	O	E	(O-E) ² /E
Agree	270	197	28.24
Disagree	124	197	28.22
Total	394	394	56.46

$$\chi^2_{\text{cal}} = 56.46, \chi^2_{\text{crit}} = 3.84, df = 1, p < 0.05$$

Since the calculated chi-square value (56.46) is greater than the critical value (3.84), the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that school-based psycho-spiritual counselling has a significant perceived influence on the overall resilience of senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of the study revealed that school-based psycho-spiritual counselling significantly enhances emotional resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis. This suggests that students who receive psycho-spiritual counselling are better able to regulate their emotions, manage stress and recover from emotional difficulties. This finding supports the position that resilience is strengthened when individuals are exposed to supportive psychological and meaning-focused interventions, particularly in crisis-prone environments (Masten, 2014).

The study also found that psycho-spiritual counselling significantly influences social resilience among students. This implies that counselling which integrates psychological support with spiritual and value-based guidance helps students develop positive relationships, empathy and cooperation with others. This finding is consistent with the view that social competence and adaptive interpersonal skills are strengthened through supportive learning environments and value-oriented counselling approaches (Bandura, 1977).

Furthermore, the findings revealed that psycho-spiritual counselling significantly contributes to overall resilience among senior secondary school students. This indicates that when psychological and spiritual dimensions are integrated in counselling, students are better equipped to cope with adversity, maintain emotional stability and sustain positive functioning in challenging situations. This finding aligns with the understanding that resilience is a dynamic process supported by internal strengths and external protective

factors such as guidance, meaning-making and supportive relationships (Pargament, 2011).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that school-based psycho-spiritual counselling plays a significant role in strengthening emotional resilience, social resilience and overall resilience among senior secondary school students in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State. The study demonstrates that psycho-spiritual counselling provides students with emotional support, social competence and coping strategies necessary to manage crises and academic stress effectively. Therefore, psycho-spiritual counselling is an important intervention for promoting resilience and positive adjustment among students in secondary schools, particularly in environments exposed to social and environmental challenges.

Recommendations

1. School administrators should integrate psycho-spiritual counselling into existing guidance and counselling programmes to enhance students' resilience and overall wellbeing.
2. Trained school counsellors should adopt structured psycho-spiritual counselling approaches that combine psychological support with spiritual and value-based guidance to improve students' emotional and social resilience.
3. Educational authorities should organize regular training, workshops and seminars for counsellors to strengthen their capacity in delivering effective psycho-spiritual counselling services.
4. Schools should strengthen counselling units by providing adequate facilities, institutional support and monitoring systems to ensure effective implementation of psycho-spiritual counselling programmes.

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