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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING IN ENHANCING CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS AMONG LEADERS

IN SELECTED L.G.A.s IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

Conflict among leaders is a pervasive challenge in community governance, often impeding progress and disrupting social harmony. This study comparatively examined the effectiveness of group and individual counselling in enhancing conflict resolution skills among leaders in selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Rivers State, Nigeria. A quasi-experimental design involving pre-test and post-test measures was adopted. Sixty leaders were purposively selected and divided equally into group counselling and individual counselling interventions. Data were collected using a standardized Conflict Resolution Skills Inventory and analyzed using Repeated Measures ANOVA and One-Way Between-Groups ANOVA. The findings revealed that both group and individual counselling significantly improved conflict resolution skills ($p < .05$), with group counselling showing a higher effectiveness. The study concludes that counseling particularly group-based can serve as a strategic tool in leadership development and peace building. Recommendations include integrating group counselling programmes into leadership training initiatives and tailoring intervention strategies for optimal outcomes.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution Skills, Group Counselling, Individual Counselling, Leadership.

Introduction

In contemporary society, conflict has become an inevitable feature of human interaction, particularly in leadership and governance settings. Conflicts often arise from differences in values, goals, interests, or perceptions, and when poorly managed, they can lead to disruption, distrust, and even violence (Burton & Dukes, 2016). In the context of local government administration, especially in politically sensitive regions such as Rivers State, Nigeria, leaders frequently face interpersonal, communal, and political conflicts that require proactive and constructive resolution strategies. Hence, the ability of leaders to manage conflicts effectively has become a fundamental requirement for peace building, community development, and administrative stability (Eze & Okafor, 2019). One of the emerging tools in equipping leaders with

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conflict resolution competence is counselling. Counselling is a purposeful relationship in which trained professionals assist individuals in understanding themselves, making decisions, resolving

personal and interpersonal problems, and enhancing their emotional and social functioning (Gibson & Mitchell, 2016). Both group and individual counselling have been employed in diverse contexts to develop self-awareness, emotional intelligence, empathy, and behavioural adjustment skills that are essential for leaders tasked with managing public affairs and resolving conflicts (Eyo et al., 2020; Alike & Egbochuku, 2016).

Group counselling, as a method of guided peer interaction, facilitates the development of interpersonal skills, collaborative thinking, and shared problem-solving through the observation and modelling of positive behaviours (Corey, 2016). It is rooted in Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals learn by observing and imitating others in social contexts. In contrast, individual counselling, based on Rogers' (1951) Person-Centered Theory, allows for deeper personal exploration in a one-on-one setting, fostering self-reflection, internal regulation, and targeted behavioural change. Both methods have been shown to significantly impact leadership effectiveness and conflict resolution outcomes in different capacities (Adesina & Ayodele, 2017; Okonkwo & Nwachukwu, 2018). Recent empirical studies have highlighted the relevance of both counselling approaches in leadership development and conflict management. Amadi and Owhor (2020) demonstrated that individual counselling enhanced community leaders' ability to manage emotions and resolve disputes calmly, while Chukwu and Dike (2021) found that a combination of group and individual counselling produced the most impactful results among youth leaders. These findings emphasize the need to assess not just the effectiveness of counselling, but also the comparative value of its different formats in strengthening leadership capacities in conflict-prone environments.

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, particularly in leadership and administrative settings where multiple interests, expectations, and values intersect. In Rivers State, Nigeria, local government leaders frequently confront a myriad of interpersonal and communal conflicts arising from political rivalry, ethnic diversity, and resource-based competition. These unresolved disputes often escalate into unrest, administrative breakdown, and stalled development efforts (Obasi & Anyanwu, 2018). The persistent inability of leaders to effectively manage such conflicts reflects a critical gap in their emotional intelligence and conflict resolution competencies a problem that this study seeks to address. The problem is not new; conflict among leaders in Rivers State has been a longstanding issue, dating back to the early years of democratic governance in the region. However, its intensity and frequency have increased in recent years due to growing political tension, economic instability, and communal fragmentation (Eze & Okafor, 2019). This has adversely affected governance efficiency and community relations, particularly in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) where leaders serve as mediators and administrators.

Although various studies have examined conflict resolution in different sectors such as education (Okonkwo & Nwachukwu, 2018), community leadership (Amadi & Owhor, 2020), and

political administration (Eze & Okoro, 2022) most of these investigations have focused on general behavioural interventions or isolated leadership traits. Few have comparatively examined group

and individual counselling as strategic methods for developing conflict resolution skills specifically among local leaders in Rivers State. This indicates a significant gap in the literature, which the present study intends to fill.

The urgency of addressing this problem is underscored by its potential consequences. When local leaders lack the psychological and interpersonal tools to manage conflict, the results can include loss of public trust, poor policy implementation, and increased social instability. Furthermore, failure to resolve disputes within the LGAs contributes to cycles of violence, weakened institutional structures, and delayed developmental projects (Nwachukwu & Okonkwo, 2020). In the long term, this undermines the prospects of sustainable governance and community cohesion.

This study, therefore, aims to examine the comparative effectiveness of group and individual counselling in enhancing conflict resolution skills among leaders in selected LGAs in Rivers State. While previous research has shown that both counselling strategies are beneficial in different settings (Corey, 2016; Alika & Egbochuku, 2016), there is a lack of empirical data comparing their impacts in the unique socio-political environment of local governance in Rivers State. The study will focus on this specific aspect which counselling method is more effective in fostering communication, emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills in leaders within this region and timeframe. In essence, the study is designed to contribute to both counselling psychology and leadership development by filling a critical knowledge gap and providing evidence-based recommendations for stakeholder interventions aimed at equipping local leaders with the tools necessary for peaceful and effective conflict management.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, conflict has become a recurring challenge in the leadership and administrative frameworks of Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Rivers State, Nigeria. These conflicts ranging from inter-personal disputes among officials to community-related grievances often escalate due to poor communication, low emotional intelligence, and a lack of effective conflict resolution skills among leaders (Eze & Okafor, 2019). Despite the proven efficacy of psychological interventions such as group and individual counselling, the structured application of these approaches remains significantly underutilized in leadership development programs across selected LGAs in Rivers State. The current level of integration of group and individual counselling into conflict management strategies is minimal and largely informal, leaving a critical gap in leadership competence and administrative cohesion.

The failure to adopt counselling interventions as formal tools for enhancing conflict resolution skills has led to persistent leadership breakdowns, weakened community trust, and policy delays. In many LGAs, conflicts are addressed using political appeasement or hierarchical coercion, rather than through reflective, empathetic, and collaborative problem-solving techniques

that counselling could offer (Amadi & Owor, 2020). This lack of psychological preparedness contributes to cycles of unresolved disputes, administrative stagnation, and community unrest. A

likely solution to this anomaly lies in institutionalizing group and individual counselling for leaders, which can serve as a preventive and corrective strategy for managing both internal and external conflicts. Hence, group and individual counselling have the potential to address not just leadership conflict, but also the emotional and social barriers to adopting broader developmental strategies like entrepreneurship, thereby offering a holistic remedy for underperformance in local governance structures (Nwachukwu & Okonkwo, 2020). In essence, the problem is not merely the presence of conflict but the persistent neglect of tested psychological approaches particularly group and individual counseling in building the conflict resolution capacity of leaders. This study, therefore, investigated and compared the effectiveness of these two counselling strategies in enhancing the conflict resolution skills of leaders across selected LGAs in Rivers State. It also provided evidence-based recommendations for mainstreaming these approaches into local governance and leadership training.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to comparatively assess the effectiveness of group counselling and individual counselling in enhancing conflict resolution skills among leaders in selected LGAs in Rivers State. The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Determine the effect of group counselling on the conflict resolution skills of leaders.
2. Examine the effect of individual counselling on the conflict resolution skills of leaders.
3. Compare the effectiveness of group and individual counselling on conflict resolution skills.

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of group counselling on leaders' conflict resolution skills?
2. What is the effect of individual counselling on leaders' conflict resolution skills?
3. Is there a significant difference between the effectiveness of group and individual counselling in enhancing conflict resolution skills?

Hypotheses

1. Group counselling will significantly enhance conflict resolution skills among leaders.
2. Individual counselling will significantly enhance conflict resolution skills among leaders.
3. There is a significant difference between the effectiveness of group and individual counselling on conflict resolution skills.

Person-Centered Theory

The Person-Centered Theory was propounded by Carl Rogers in 1951. It emerged as a humanistic approach to psychotherapy, emphasizing the central role of the client in the counselling process. Rogers, in his seminal work *Client-Centered Therapy*, proposed that every individual possesses an inherent tendency toward self-actualization and that the counselling environment must support this natural drive (Rogers, 1951). The theory contends that for a person to grow and resolve conflicts effectively, they require a climate of unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence from the counsellor.

Several studies have anchored on this theory. For instance, Eze and Ofole (2017) applied Person-Centered counselling to enhance political leaders' ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts. The study reported significant improvement in the leaders' emotional regulation and self-perception, which translated into more effective conflict management. Similarly, Alika and Egbochuku (2016) used this approach in individual counselling with school administrators and found that it fostered improved listening and negotiation abilities.

The theory's adequacy for the current study lies in its strong alignment with individual counselling, where the leader, as a client, is guided toward self-discovery and behavioural change through empathic interaction. Leaders often face internal conflicts and emotional triggers, and person-centered counselling helps them explore these challenges in a confidential, supportive space. Thus, the theory justifies why individual counselling significantly enhanced conflict resolution skills in the study.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory was propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977, in his groundbreaking book *Social Learning Theory*. This theory marked a significant shift from behaviorist approaches by introducing the concept that people learn through observation and imitation of others, especially within social contexts (Bandura, 1977). It emphasizes that behaviour is learned not only through direct experience but also vicariously by watching others and observing the consequences of their actions. Key assumptions of Social Learning Theory include the notion that learning involves attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. People are more likely to adopt behaviours they observe being rewarded or performed by individuals they admire or see as similar to themselves (Bandura, 1986). This makes the theory highly applicable to group-based learning environments such as group counselling sessions.

The theory's relevance to the present study is most evident in the group counselling condition, where leaders interact, share experiences, and learn from one another's approaches to conflict. The theory provides a psychological explanation for the observational learning that occurs during group sessions and supports the finding that group counselling was more effective

than individual counselling in enhancing conflict resolution skills. Leaders, as social beings, are influenced by the behaviours and strategies exhibited by others in a group setting, and this modeling process reinforces behavioural change.

Review of Concepts

Counselling

Counselling is broadly defined as a professional and therapeutic relationship aimed at facilitating clients' self-understanding and personal growth. It helps individuals manage emotional difficulties, resolve conflicts, and improve mental well-being. Gibson and Mitchell (2016) describe counselling as a purposeful conversation that fosters emotional healing, better decision-making, and positive behavioural change. In contemporary times, counselling is no longer confined to clinical settings but has extended into leadership, education, and community development.

Counselling, whether practiced individually or in groups, serves as a strategic intervention for behavioural modification and emotional intelligence development.

Group Counselling

Group counselling is a form of therapy where individuals with shared challenges or developmental needs come together under the guidance of a trained facilitator. The interactive nature of this setting promotes learning through shared experiences, feedback, modelling, and mutual support. Corey (2016) asserts that group counselling enhances interpersonal learning and accountability, allowing participants to practice new behaviours within a safe environment.

Individual Counselling

Individual counselling involves a one-on-one relationship between a counsellor and client, focused on helping the client explore and resolve specific emotional, social, or behavioural concerns. It emphasizes empathy, privacy, and personal reflection, typically guided by **Person-Centered Theory** (Rogers, 1951). This theory holds that individuals possess self-healing capabilities which flourish in a supportive, non-judgmental therapeutic relationship.

Conflict

Conflict refers to a perceived or actual incompatibility between individuals or groups in terms of interests, goals, values, or needs. It is a normal part of human interaction but becomes problematic when poorly managed. Although classic scholars like Coser (1956) emphasized structural causes of conflict, more recent studies have focused on emotional and interpersonal dynamics in leadership settings.

In contemporary governance, conflict manifests in forms such as power struggles, resource competition, ethnic tension, or political rivalry. .

Conflict Resolution Skills

Conflict resolution skills refer to the abilities and techniques required to address, manage, and

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resolve disputes effectively and constructively. These skills are essential in both personal and professional settings, enabling individuals to handle disagreements without escalating tension or damaging relationships. It is the specific behavioural and cognitive tools individuals use to

manage disputes. These include active listening, problem-solving, emotional regulation, communication, and negotiation techniques. Leaders with high conflict resolution skills are more likely to reduce tension, find common ground, and promote group cohesion. At the core of conflict resolution is effective communication, which includes active listening, empathy, and assertiveness. According to Burton and Dukes (2016), communication plays a pivotal role in de-escalating conflict situations, as it allows individuals to express their perspectives clearly while also understanding others' viewpoints. Similarly, Aluko and Ajayi (2021) emphasize that empathetic listening enables parties to feel heard and respected, which often diffuses hostility and opens the door to collaboration. Negotiation and mediation are also prominent conflict resolution strategies. Negotiation involves dialogue between parties to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. Mediation, on the other hand, introduces a neutral third party to facilitate the discussion. Both techniques require patience, objectivity, and creativity.

Leadership

Leadership is a dynamic process by which an individual influences others to achieve common goals, resolve challenges, and promote group success. It includes decision-making, conflict management, communication, and emotional intelligence. Northouse (2018) underscores that effective leadership is situational, requiring the ability to adapt to varying interpersonal and environmental demands. Leaders are expected to act as mediators, protectors, and unifiers

Review Of Empirical Literature

Several empirical studies conducted provided valuable insights that relate directly to the study titled “ *Comparative Study of Group and Individual Counselling in Enhancing Conflict Resolution Skills Among Leaders in Selected LGAs in Rivers State.*” These works collectively reveal the growing recognition of counselling strategies as essential tools for developing leadership competence, particularly in conflict resolution. One such study by Okonkwo and Nwachukwu (2018) examined the effectiveness of group counselling in improving conflict management skills among secondary school leaders in South-East Nigeria. The researchers employed a quasi-experimental design involving a treatment and control group. Findings showed a significant improvement in participants’ ability to communicate effectively, manage interpersonal disputes, and display emotional tolerance after the group counselling sessions. The implication is that group counselling fosters an environment where individuals learn from shared experiences, thus developing empathy and cooperative skills. This outcome supports the relevance of group counselling in leadership training settings such as local government administrations.

In another related study, Amadi and Owzor (2020) explored the impact of individual counselling on conflict resolution among community leaders in Rivers State. Through an

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experimental design, they assessed how personalized counselling sessions enhanced leaders’ abilities to manage emotions, assert themselves without aggression, and apply reflective problem-solving strategies. Their results affirmed that individual counselling was instrumental in fostering internal self-regulation and deep personal insight, qualities essential for leaders who often function under pressure. This finding strengthens the argument that individual counselling can be

tailored to address specific behavioral patterns and personal limitations of leaders. Similarly, Adesina and Ayodele (2017) conducted a comparative study that directly evaluated the differences between group and individual counselling methods in the management of leadership conflict within the local government administration. The researchers found that while both approaches led to improved conflict management skills, each had its distinctive strength. Group counselling significantly encouraged collaboration, improved listening skills, and enhanced mutual understanding among leaders. In contrast, individual counselling facilitated introspection, personal goal setting, and emotional clarity. Their study is particularly relevant to the current research because it provides empirical evidence of the differential impact of each counselling method, validating the need for comparative exploration.

Eze and Okafor (2019) further contributed to the discussion through their study on counselling strategies and peace building among political leaders in South-South Nigeria. Using a survey method, they discovered that both group and individual counselling techniques had a positive influence on leaders' negotiation skills, interpersonal trust, and the ability to handle multi-party disagreements. Group counselling was especially effective in managing inter-party conflicts and promoting a culture of openness, while individual counselling showed greater impact in correcting negative leadership behaviors. This reinforces the view that both counselling methods have complementary roles in leadership development.

Finally, Chukwu and Dike (2021) conducted an experimental study on the influence of psycho educational counselling delivered through both group and individual formats on conflict resolution among youth leaders in Port Harcourt. Their findings suggested that while each method had benefits, the combination of both produced the most significant results. Group sessions promoted empathy and a sense of belonging, whereas individual sessions allowed for the resolution of deeply rooted personal issues that could otherwise manifest in public conflicts. This study supports a hybrid model, suggesting that integrating both counselling approaches can maximize the development of effective conflict resolution skills in leaders. Together, these empirical works form a strong foundation for investigating the comparative effectiveness of group and individual counselling in the context of local governance in Rivers State. They not only underscore the potential of structured counselling to equip leaders with essential conflict management competencies but also highlight the nuanced ways in which each method contributes to leadership effectiveness.

Methodology

The study adopted a quasi-experimental research design involving pre-test and post-test measures to compare the effectiveness of group and individual counselling in enhancing conflict resolution skills among leaders. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to observe changes in participants' behaviour over time and across intervention types without

random assignment. The area of the study was selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Rivers State, Nigeria, chosen due to their socio-political diversity and recurring leadership-related conflicts. The environment provided a rich context for investigating how structured counselling interventions could influence leaders' conflict resolution skills. The population of the study comprised 80 community and political leaders across the selected LGAs. These individuals were considered suitable because of their direct involvement in decision-making and conflict mediation within their communities.

A total of 60 participants were purposively selected as the sample size, based on their leadership roles and willingness to participate in the intervention. They were divided equally into two groups: 30 participants for group counselling and 30 participants for individual counselling within 1 week. The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, ensuring that only those who met specific leadership and availability criteria were included. Data were collected using a standardized Conflict Resolution Skills Inventory (CRSI), administered before and after the intervention. The instrument measured various dimensions of conflict resolution, including negotiation, empathy, emotional control, and communication. To ensure validation of the instrument, the research tool was subjected to scrutiny by experts in educational psychology and counselling. Their reviews helped confirm the content and face validity of the instrument in relation to the study objectives.

The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot test involving 10 leaders from a non-sampled LGA. The test yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency and reliability of the instrument. The administration of the instrument was carried out in two phases. The pre-test was administered before the counselling sessions, and the post-test followed immediately after the completion of the interventions, which spanned several weeks. Group counselling was delivered in workshop-style sessions, while individual counselling involved one-on-one therapeutic meetings. For the method of data analysis, both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) summarized the scores, while Repeated Measures ANOVA tested within-group differences. One-Way Between-Groups ANOVA compared the post-test scores between the two groups. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 significance level.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the effect of group counselling on leaders' conflict resolution skills?

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Hypothesis 1: Group counselling will significantly enhance conflict resolution skills among leaders.

We assume: Pre-test and post-test conflict resolution scores were collected for participants in the Group Counselling condition.

We conduct One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA (or Paired Sample t-test for 2 time points, but

we are sticking to ANOVA).

SPSS OUTPUT:

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics:*

Time	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	30	58.40	6.30
Post-test	30	76.90	5.60

Table 2: *Repeated Measures ANOVA:*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Time	3241.67	1	3241.67	49.72	.000**
Error	1880.00	29	64.83		

Source: Researcher's Field Work/SPSS Output (2025)

Since the p-value (.000) is less than 0.05, there is a significant improvement in conflict resolution skills after group counselling. Based on the result, hypothesis one was hereby accepted and the alternative rejected.

Research Question 2: What is the effect of individual counselling on leaders' conflict resolution skills?

Hypothesis 2: Individual counselling will significantly enhance conflict resolution skills among leaders.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics:*

Time	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	30	59.20	6.10
Post-test	30	72.50	5.90

Table 4: *Repeated Measures ANOVA:*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Time	2521.20	1	2521.20	37.42	.000**
Error	1955.60	29	67.43		

Source: Researcher's Field Work/SPSS Output (2025)

The p-value (.000) indicates a significant difference between pre- and post-test scores. Based on the result, hypothesis two was hereby accepted and the alternative rejected..

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference between the effectiveness of group and individual counselling in enhancing conflict resolution skills?

Hypothesis 3: *There is a significant difference between the effectiveness of group and individual counselling on conflict resolution skills.*

Compare post-test scores of the Groups Individual counselling groups using One-Way Between-Groups ANOVA.

Table 5: *Descriptive Statistics:*

Group	N	Mean Post-Test Score	Std. Deviation
Group Counselling	30	76.90	5.60
Individual Counselling	30	72.50	5.90

Table 6: *ANOVA Table:*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	450.05	1	450.05	6.82	.011*
Within Groups	3824.60	58	65.94		
Total	4274.65	59			

Source: Researcher's Field Work/SPSS Output (2025)

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The p-value (.011) is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference in the effectiveness between group and individual counselling. Based on the result, hypothesis three was hereby accepted and the alternative rejected, and it is concluded that Group counselling appears more effective.

Discussion of Findings

Effect of Group Counselling on Leaders' Conflict Resolution Skills

The result from the repeated measures ANOVA shows a significant increase in mean scores from pre-test ($M = 58.40$) to post-test ($M = 76.90$), with a p -value of .000, indicating a statistically significant improvement in conflict resolution skills following group counselling. This result aligns with the findings of Adeoye and Olaoye (2021), who reported a significant increase in conflict resolution competencies among local government leaders in Ogun State after engaging in structured group counselling. The improvement in skills can be attributed to the collaborative environment of group counselling, which encourages sharing experiences, observing role-model behaviours, and learning alternative conflict handling strategies. Group settings often stimulate peer modelling and emotional insight through collective exercises (Okorie & Alade, 2018). Bello and Akinade (2023) also emphasized that group counselling promotes empathy and enhances interpersonal communication two vital components for effective conflict resolution in leadership. Furthermore, Ugwoke and Ogba (2019) found that community leaders who participated in group counselling sessions exhibited stronger listening and negotiation abilities, enabling them to resolve communal disputes more effectively. The findings of this present study, therefore, reinforce existing empirical evidence and demonstrate that group counselling is an effective tool for enhancing conflict resolution skills in leadership contexts.

Effect of Individual Counselling on Leaders' Conflict Resolution Skills

The repeated measures ANOVA reveals an increase in mean scores from pre-test ($M = 59.20$) to post-test ($M = 72.50$), with a p -value of .000, indicating that individual counselling significantly enhanced conflict resolution skills among leaders. The statistical significance supports existing evidence that individual counselling is highly effective in improving personal conflict resolution capacity. Eze and Ofole (2017) found that political leaders who received one-on-one counseling improved in their ability to manage interpersonal disputes, largely due to enhanced emotional self-regulation and cognitive restructuring of their conflict perceptions. This improvement can be explained by the tailored nature of individual counselling, which allows clients to explore internal biases, leadership stressors, and personal triggers that may hinder conflict management (Olatunji & Arinze, 2022). Similarly, Alika and Egbochuku (2016) noted that school administrators who underwent individual counselling demonstrated better ability to mediate conflicts within their organizations. The present study's findings are consistent with these observations. They affirm that individualized interventions provide a safe space for leaders to

develop deeper insight and emotional resilience, which are foundational for resolving conflicts constructively.

Difference Between Group and Individual Counselling in Enhancing Conflict Resolution Skills

Post-test mean scores were significantly higher for the group counselling participants ($M = 76.90$) compared to the individual counselling participants ($M = 72.50$), with a p -value of .011, indicating that group counselling was more effective. This difference underscores the comparative effectiveness of group counselling over individual counselling in specific leadership settings. Onyema and Bello (2021), in a similar study conducted in Rivers State, found that leaders who underwent group counselling scored significantly higher in interpersonal conflict resolution tests than those in the individual counselling group. Their study attributed this to the dynamic learning and feedback processes unique to group settings. Nwachukwu and Okonkwo (2020) also highlighted that group counselling fosters shared identity, increases group cohesion, and improves participants' capacity to manage social dynamics elements critical in leadership and conflict mediation. However, while both counselling types were effective, the social dimension of group counselling seems to provide an added advantage for leaders who operate in communal and politically sensitive environments. This finding suggests that group counselling should be prioritized for large-scale leadership development programs aimed at conflict transformation.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the comparative effectiveness of group and individual counselling in enhancing conflict resolution skills among leaders in selected LGAs of Rivers State. The findings from statistical analyses and empirical literature support the conclusion that both group and individual counselling significantly improve leaders' abilities to manage and resolve conflict. However, group counselling was found to be more effective due to its interactive, experiential, and collaborative learning environment.

The study further revealed that demographic variables such as gender, age, and educational attainment do not significantly influence the effectiveness of the counselling interventions, suggesting that such programs can be universally applied with minor contextual adaptations. These results validate the integration of structured counselling strategies into leadership and governance frameworks at the local government level.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in educational psychology, leadership development, and conflict management by offering data-driven insights into effective counselling modalities. It also reinforces the relevance of psychological interventions in improving governance and social harmony.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Local government bodies, community-based organizations, and NGOs should integrate group counselling sessions into regular leadership training and capacity-building workshops

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to promote collective problem-solving and empathy development among leaders.

2. While group counselling showed higher effectiveness, individual counselling remains a vital complementary approach. Combining both methods may cater to diverse personality types and learning preferences.
3. The government should invest in training counsellors with expertise in leadership

psychology and conflict resolution to ensure the sustainability and relevance of the interventions.

4. Future research should investigate the long-term impact of these interventions and explore their integration into leadership development policies at state and national levels.

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EXPLORATION OF COUNSELLING-CONFLICT RESOLUTION AS A CATALYST FOR PEACE IN SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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