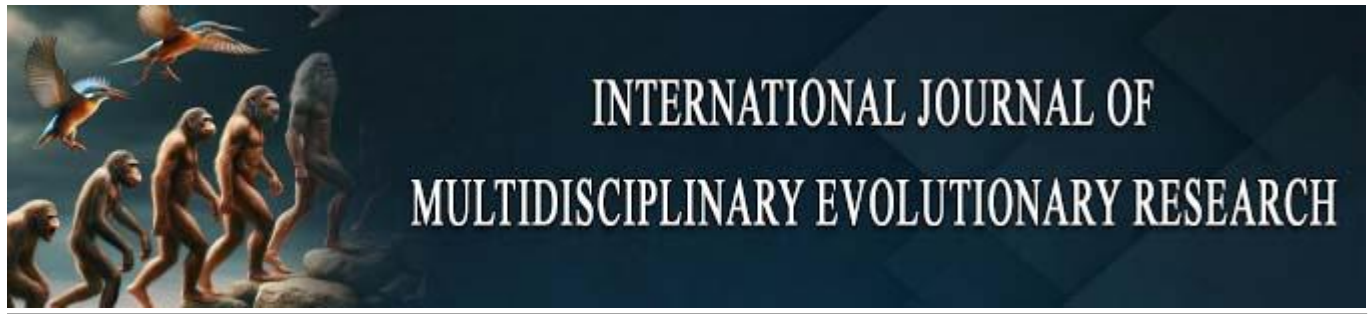




Influence of Counseling in Enhancing Self-Esteem among in-School Adolescents in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by emotional, physical, and social changes that significantly impact self-esteem. This study investigated the influence of counseling in enhancing self-esteem among in-school adolescents in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was employed with 240 in-school adolescents selected through multistage sampling technique from both junior and senior secondary schools. Data were collected using a validated self-esteem questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentages) and inferential statistics (t-test and ANOVA). The results revealed that counseling programs significantly enhanced adolescents' self-esteem by helping them believe in their abilities to fulfill goals (mean = 3.55), believe they deserve the best in life (mean = 3.48), and develop high academic standards without fear (mean = 3.42). No significant differences were found based on gender, religion, age, or school type, but a significant difference was observed based on class level ($t = 2.00, p < 0.05$). The findings underscore the importance of counseling interventions in secondary schools to promote positive self-esteem development among adolescents. The study recommends that school administrators should strengthen guidance and counseling programs, employ qualified counselors, and ensure regular counseling sessions for all students.

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Keywords: Counseling, Self-esteem, Adolescents, In-school, Guidance programs, Secondary education

1. Introduction

Adolescence represents a transitional developmental stage marked by profound emotional, physical, and social transformations. These changes often present numerous life challenges including poor academic performance, anti-social behavior, substance abuse, and mental health issues if adolescents cannot adequately cope and adjust to the changes (Adegoke, 2012; Weiten, 2007) ^[1, 16]. During this critical period, adolescents develop dynamic self-esteem that fluctuates based on their perceptions in different situations. Self-esteem, defined as a student's overall evaluation of himself or herself, including feelings of general happiness and satisfaction (Harter, 1997) ^[9], plays a crucial role in adolescent development and well-being. The Nigerian government, through the National Policy on Education (1998), recognized the importance of guidance and counseling in addressing the apparent ignorance of young people about career prospects and personality maladjustment among students. The policy mandates the appointment of career officers and counselors in post-primary institutions and emphasizes the integration of guidance and counseling in teacher education programs. Despite this policy framework, there remains a need to empirically examine the effectiveness of counseling interventions in enhancing adolescent self-esteem. Low self-esteem among adolescents has been associated with various negative outcomes including depression, anxiety, social isolation, and academic underachievement (Sowislo & Orth, 2012; Lim, Saulsman & Nathan, 2005) ^[14, 10]. Conversely, high self-esteem correlates with academic achievement, social responsibility, and overall life satisfaction (Marsh, Byrne & Yeung,

1999; Redenbach, 1991) [11, 12]. Counseling interventions, particularly those employing cognitive-behavioral techniques, individual counseling, and group therapy, have shown promise in enhancing adolescent self-esteem (Emler, 2001; Zahedeh, Bahram & Khadije, 2013) [5, 17].

This study investigated the influence of counseling in enhancing self-esteem among in-school adolescents in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined how counseling programs affect adolescent self-esteem and whether demographic variables (gender, religion, age, class level, and school type) moderate these effects.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Erikson's psychosocial development theory, particularly the identity versus role confusion stage (ages 12-18). Erikson (1956) [6] posited that adolescents undergo identity crisis as they transition from childhood to adulthood, pondering the roles they will play in the adult world. During this stage, adolescents search for identity, and the primary danger is role confusion. The sharp decline in adolescent self-esteem has been attributed to physical changes accompanying puberty, greater self-awareness, and increased focus on peer approval (Clay *et al.*, 2005; DuBois *et al.*, 2002; Rhodes *et al.*, 2004) [2, 3, 13]. Erikson believed that identity stems from both biological and cultural backgrounds, with nurturing from parents and significant others. A child who has favorable experiences during earlier developmental stages will develop stable and positive self-concept (Eriksson, 1968). Counseling interventions during adolescence can facilitate positive identity development and enhance self-esteem by providing supportive environments for adolescents to explore their identities and develop coping strategies.

3. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the influence of counseling in enhancing self-esteem among in-school adolescents in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. The target population comprised all junior and senior secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. A multistage sampling technique was used to select 240 respondents from both public and private secondary schools.

The research instrument was a validated self-esteem questionnaire adapted from established scales and modified to assess the influence of counseling on adolescent self-esteem. The instrument consisted of two sections: Section A collected demographic information (gender, religion, age, class level, and school type), while Section B contained 20 items measuring respondents' perceptions of how counseling programs enhanced their self-esteem. The instrument used a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1).

The instrument was validated by three experts in guidance and counseling and educational psychology. Reliability was established through a pilot study involving 30 students not included in the main study, yielding a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.82. Data were analyzed using both descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, mean,

and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (independent samples t-test and Analysis of Variance). The alpha level of significance was set at 0.05.

4. Results

The data collected were analyzed and presented in this section. The presentation includes demographic characteristics of respondents, descriptive analysis of research questions, and inferential analysis of hypotheses.

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	86	35.8
Female	154	64.2
Total	240	100.0

Table 1 shows that 154 (64.2%) of the respondents were female while 86 (35.8%) were male, indicating higher female participation in the study.

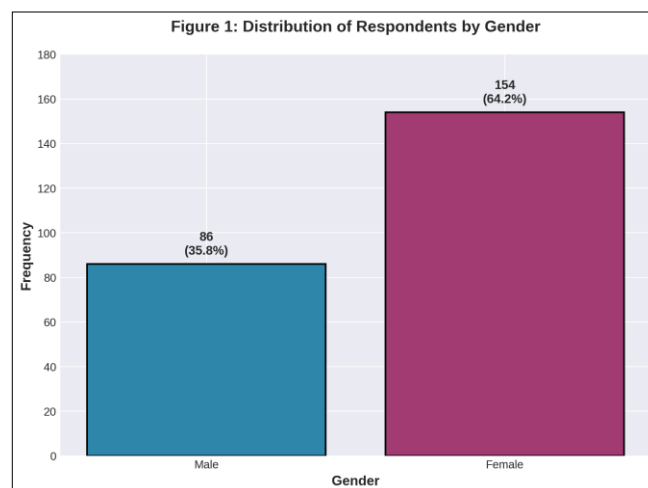


Fig 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

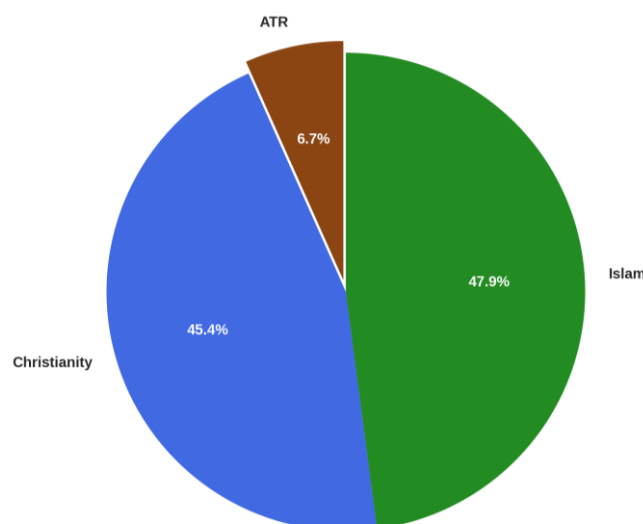


Fig 2: Distribution of Respondents by Religious Affiliation

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Religion

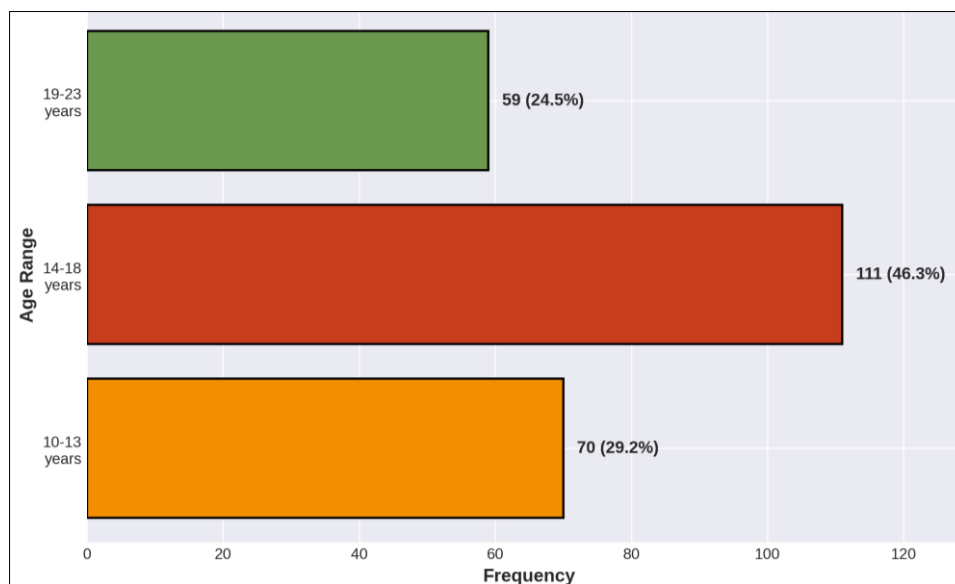
Religious Affiliation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
African Traditional Religion	16	6.7
Christianity	109	45.4
Islam	115	47.9
Total	240	100.0

Table 2 reveals that 115 (47.9%) of respondents practiced Islam, 109 (45.4%) practiced Christianity, while 16 (6.7%) practiced African Traditional Religion.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
10-13 years	70	29.2
14-18 years	111	46.3
19-23 years	59	24.5
Total	240	100.0

Table 3 shows that majority of respondents (46.3%) were between 14-18 years, followed by 29.2% in the 10-13 years range, and 24.5% in the 19-23 years range.

**Fig 3:** Distribution of Respondents by Age Range

4.2. Influence of Counseling on Self-Esteem

To address the research question on the influence of counseling on self-esteem as expressed by in-school

adolescents, mean scores and rankings were computed for all 20 items on the self-esteem scale. A mid-mean score of 2.50 was used as the criterion for determining influence.

Table 4: Top 10 Ranked Items on Counseling's Influence on Self-Esteem

Rank	Item Statement	Mean	SD
1st	Believe in my ability to fulfill my goals	3.55	0.62
2nd	Believe that I deserve the best in life	3.48	0.68
3rd	Develop high academic standard without fear	3.42	0.71
4th	Feel I have a number of good qualities	3.40	0.73
5th	Feel I can be myself around other people	3.39	0.69
6th	Believe that I deserve to be loved and respected	3.36	0.75
7th	Identify my strengths and limitations	3.30	0.77
8th	Develop the ability to make amends if I make a mistake	3.29	0.80
9th	Know that I am filled with potentials	3.28	0.76
10th	Understand myself better	3.27	0.78

Table 4 presents the top 10 ranked items measuring the influence of counseling on adolescent self-esteem. The highest-ranked item was "believe in my ability to fulfill my

goals" (Mean = 3.55), followed by "believe that I deserve the best in life" (Mean = 3.48), and "develop high academic standard without fear" (Mean = 3.42). All items had mean

scores above the mid-mean criterion of 2.50, indicating that counseling programs positively influenced various aspects of adolescent self-esteem. The standard deviations ranged from 0.62 to 0.80, suggesting relatively consistent responses across participants.

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

Five null hypotheses were tested using independent samples t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

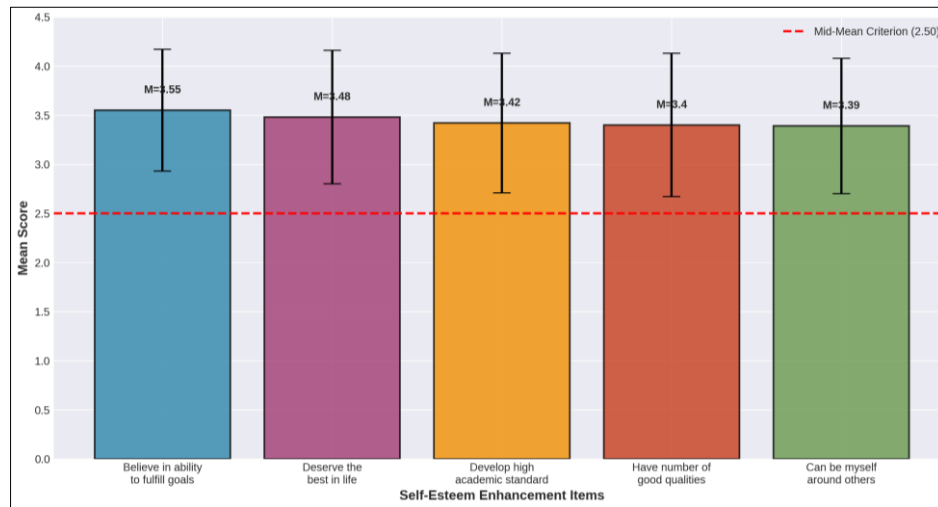


Fig 4: Top 5 Ranked Items Showing Counseling's Influence on Self-Esteem

Table 5: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Variable	Test	Calculated Value	p-value	Decision
Gender	t-test	t = 1.38	p = 0.44	Not Rejected
Religion	ANOVA	F = 1.91	p = 0.15	Not Rejected
Age	ANOVA	F = 1.31	p = 0.27	Not Rejected
Class Level	t-test	t = 2.00	p = 0.046*	Rejected
School Type	t-test	t = 0.76	p = 0.45	Not Rejected

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 5 summarizes the results of hypothesis testing. The findings revealed that gender, religion, age, and school type did not significantly moderate the influence of counseling on adolescent self-esteem ($p > 0.05$). However, class level showed a significant difference ($t = 2.00$, $p = 0.046$), with senior secondary students (Mean = 65.16, SD = 6.27)

reporting higher perceptions of counseling's influence compared to junior secondary students (Mean = 63.04, SD = 7.96). This suggests that counseling interventions may be more effective or more appreciated by older adolescents who have greater exposure to counseling services and better ability to articulate the benefits.

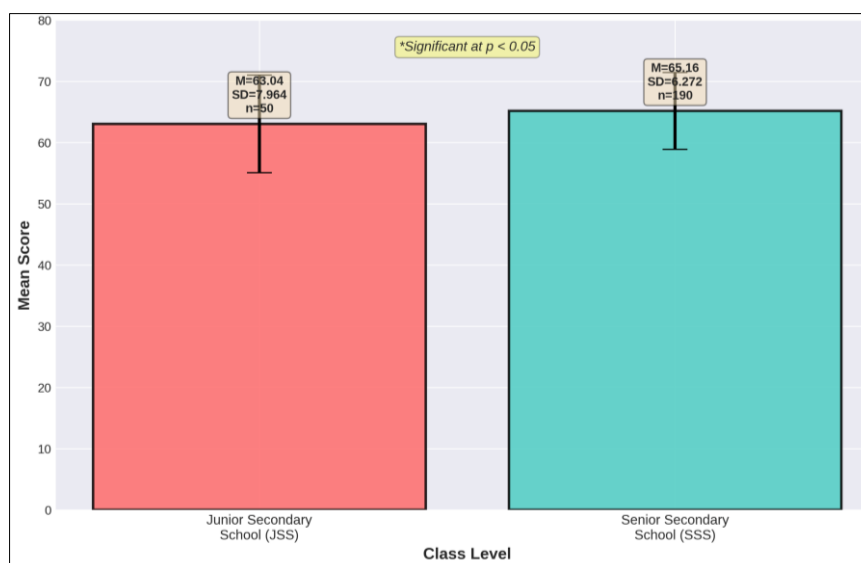


Fig 5: Comparison of Mean Scores by Class Level (JSS vs SSS)

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide empirical evidence for the positive influence of counseling in enhancing self-esteem among in-school adolescents in Ilorin metropolis. The high mean scores across all items measuring self-esteem indicate that counseling programs effectively help adolescents develop positive self-perceptions, academic confidence, and interpersonal skills.

The finding that counseling helps adolescents "believe in their ability to fulfill goals" (highest-ranked item) aligns with Bandura's self-efficacy theory and corroborates previous research showing that counseling interventions enhance adolescent self-confidence and goal-setting abilities (Redenbach, 1991) [12]. Similarly, the finding that counseling helps students "develop high academic standards without fear" supports research linking self-esteem to academic achievement (Marsh, Byrne & Yeung, 1999; Tamannaifar *et al.*, 2010) [11, 15].

The absence of significant gender differences contradicts some Western studies but aligns with Nigerian research suggesting that both male and female adolescents benefit equally from counseling interventions when such services are accessible (Ekpang & Esuabana, 2016) [4]. This finding suggests that counseling programs in Ilorin metropolis are effectively addressing the needs of both genders. The lack of religious and age differences indicates that counseling's positive influence transcends religious affiliations and age groups within the adolescent period. This universality is encouraging for program implementation across diverse school populations.

The significant difference based on class level suggests developmental and experiential factors. Senior secondary students may have greater maturity, longer exposure to counseling services, and better ability to recognize and articulate the benefits of counseling. This finding has important implications for early intervention and suggests the need for age-appropriate counseling strategies. These findings align with Erikson's psychosocial development theory, particularly the identity versus role confusion stage, emphasizing the critical role of supportive interventions during adolescence. Counseling provides the scaffolding adolescents need to navigate identity formation, develop healthy self-esteem, and prepare for adult roles.

6. Conclusion

This study conclusively demonstrates that counseling programs significantly enhance self-esteem among in-school adolescents in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. The positive influence cuts across gender, religion, age, and school type, though it is more pronounced among senior secondary students. Counseling interventions help adolescents develop goal-oriented thinking, positive self-worth, academic confidence, and healthy interpersonal relationships all critical components of healthy adolescent development.

Given the alarming rates of low self-esteem and associated problems among adolescents, the findings underscore the imperative of strengthening guidance and counseling programs in Nigerian secondary schools. Effective counseling services provide essential support for adolescent identity development, mental health, and overall well-being during this critical developmental period.

7. Recommendations

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

1. School administrators should establish and strengthen comprehensive guidance and counseling programs in all secondary schools, ensuring adequate funding, facilities, and resources.

2. State governments should employ qualified professional counselors in adequate numbers to ensure manageable counselor-student ratios and regular counseling sessions for all students.

Counseling programs should be tailored to address developmental differences between junior and senior secondary students, with age-appropriate interventions and delivery methods.

Schools should implement both individual and group counseling sessions to maximize reach and effectiveness, utilizing evidence-based approaches such as cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Parents and school management should collaborate to create supportive environments that complement counseling interventions and reinforce positive self-esteem development.

6. Further research should explore the long-term effects of counseling interventions on adolescent outcomes and identify specific counseling techniques most effective for Nigerian adolescents.

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