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Research Article

Relationship between Peace-Building Counselling and Students' Conflict Resolution Skills among Secondary School Students in Zamfara State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examined the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' conflict resolution skills among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' communication skills, negotiation skills, and tolerance and cooperation skills for conflict resolution. A correlational research design was adopted. The population comprised 161,772 public secondary school students in Zamfara State, while a sample of 384 students was selected using the Research Advisors (2006) sample size table through a multi-stage sampling procedure. Of the 384 questionnaires administered, 378 were correctly completed and used for data analysis. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled Peace-Building Counselling and Students' Conflict Resolution Skills Questionnaire (PBCSCRSQ). The instrument was validated by experts in Guidance and Counselling, Educational Psychology, and Measurement and Evaluation, while its reliability was established using Cronbach's

Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.89. Descriptive statistics comprising mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between peace-building counselling and students' communication skills ($r = .648, p < .05$), negotiation skills ($r = .623, p < .05$), and tolerance and cooperation skills ($r = .681, p < .05$). The study concluded that peace-building counselling plays a significant role in enhancing students' conflict resolution skills and promoting peaceful coexistence in secondary schools. It was recommended, among others, that school administrators should strengthen peace-building counselling programmes, while guidance counsellors should organize regular conflict resolution and peer mediation activities to improve students' communication, negotiation, tolerance, and cooperation skills.

Keywords: Communication Skills, Conflict Resolution Skills, Negotiation Skills, Peace-Building Counselling, Tolerance and Cooperation Skills.

INTRODUCTION

Peace is a fundamental requirement for sustainable development, social stability, and effective teaching and learning. Since students interact with people from diverse backgrounds, conflicts are inevitable in school environments. However, students' ability to resolve disagreements peacefully determines whether such conflicts become destructive or contribute to positive social development. Peace education has been shown to improve communication, empathy, cooperation, and conflict management skills among learners (Özel Şen, 2024). Likewise, peace-building counselling promotes dialogue, tolerance, reconciliation, emotional regulation, and non-violent problem-solving, enabling students to build healthy interpersonal relationships and demonstrate responsible social behaviour (Azeez, 2024; Kani et al., 2025). The increasing incidence of bullying, aggression, peer conflicts, and other forms of school violence has created the need for effective counselling interventions. Peace-building counselling equips students with communication, negotiation, tolerance, and cooperation skills that promote peaceful coexistence and reduce destructive behaviours (Damirchi & Bilge, 2023; Ogbonna & Aluede, 2024). Salvaña (2024) further reported that knowledge of peace education enhances conflict resolution practices among learners. Although peace education is incorporated into Civic Education and Social Studies in Nigeria, classroom instruction alone may not adequately address the emotional and behavioural dimensions of students' conflicts. Consequently, integrating peace-building counselling into school guidance and counselling programmes can strengthen students' conflict resolution competencies and encourage peaceful interactions (Ore et al., 2025).

Several empirical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of peace education and counselling interventions in enhancing students' communication, negotiation, tolerance, reconciliation, and social adjustment. For instance, Özel Şen (2024) found that peace education programmes significantly improved students' communication, empathy, and peaceful conflict resolution skills. Hassan and Gadanya (2024) reported that social skills training counselling enhanced students'

emotional control, interpersonal relationships, and social adjustment, while Ohadiugha et al. (2024) established that peace education increased students' awareness of conflict and strengthened their conflict management abilities. Similarly, Ore et al. (2025) revealed that peace education contributed significantly to the development of conflict resolution competencies, including cooperation, negotiation, and constructive problem-solving among students. Related studies also support the importance of peace-oriented interventions in promoting positive student outcomes. Ezeodo (2025) reported that Civic Education strategies such as discussion and role-playing improved students' conflict management skills. Awotunde and Onu (2025) found that peace education initiatives promoted tolerance, social cohesion, and peaceful relationships among community members. Likewise, Özel and Sümer (2025) observed that peace education programmes strengthened empathy, respect for diversity, and peaceful conflict resolution behaviours among learners. Adedigba (2025) further emphasized that the early development of conflict resolution skills improves communication, negotiation, and positive peer relationships among children.

Furthermore, Azeez (2024) established that emotional intelligence and interpersonal competencies contribute significantly to students' peace-building abilities and effective conflict management. Ogbonna and Aluede (2024) also reported that counselling practices assisted students in managing aggression, reducing school violence, and improving social interactions, while Adan (2025) concluded that peace education promotes tolerance, reconciliation, civic responsibility, and sustainable peace among young people. Despite these valuable contributions, limited empirical attention has been given to the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' conflict resolution skills among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. This gap in the literature provides the justification for the present study.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the role of schools in promoting peaceful coexistence, bullying, aggression, intimidation, and peer conflicts remain common among secondary school students, affecting interpersonal relationships and the teaching-learning process. In Zamfara State, persistent insecurity and social tensions have further increased the need for interventions that promote communication, negotiation, tolerance, cooperation, and peaceful conflict resolution. Although guidance and counselling services are available in many schools, it is unclear whether peace-building counselling is associated with students' conflict resolution skills. Previous studies have shown that peace education and counselling interventions improve communication, empathy, negotiation, tolerance, and conflict management among learners (Damirchi & Bilge, 2023; Hassan & Gadanya, 2024; Ore et al., 2025; Özel Şen, 2024). Likewise, peace education programmes have been found to promote reconciliation, social cohesion, and peaceful relationships (Adan, 2025; Awotunde & Onu, 2025; Özel & Sümer, 2025). However, most of these studies focused on peace education programmes, civic education strategies, social skills training, or tertiary

institutions, with little emphasis on peace-building counselling among secondary school students in Zamfara State. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence to guide counsellors, educators, and policymakers on the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' conflict resolution skills. This gap necessitates the present study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study assumes that peace-building counselling is related to the development of students' conflict resolution skills among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. Peace-building counselling serves as the independent variable, while students' conflict resolution skills constitute the dependent variable. Peace-building counselling involves counselling interventions that promote dialogue, empathy, mediation, emotional regulation, reconciliation, tolerance, and non-violent problem-solving. These activities are expected to help students develop positive attitudes, effective interpersonal relationships, and peaceful approaches to resolving conflicts. Students' conflict resolution skills are conceptualized through three dimensions: communication skills, which enable students to express themselves clearly and listen actively during disagreements; negotiation skills, which help students resolve conflicts through compromise and mutual understanding; and tolerance and cooperation skills, which encourage respect for differences, teamwork, and peaceful coexistence. The framework therefore assumes that effective peace-building counselling is associated with improved communication, negotiation, and tolerance and cooperation skills, thereby enhancing students' ability to resolve conflicts peacefully within the school environment.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Peacebuilding Theory developed by John Paul Lederach (1997). The theory posits that sustainable peace is achieved not merely by the absence of violence but through the deliberate development of positive relationships, dialogue, reconciliation, cooperation, and mutual understanding among individuals and groups. Lederach argued that conflicts are inevitable in every society; however, when managed constructively, they can become opportunities for positive change, relationship building, and social transformation. The theory therefore emphasizes equipping individuals with the knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills required to resolve conflicts peacefully and maintain harmonious relationships. Peacebuilding Theory further explains that lasting peace depends on transforming negative attitudes and behaviours into positive ones through continuous education, communication, mediation, and reconciliation. It recognizes the importance of developing empathy, respect for diversity, emotional regulation, cooperation, and non-violent problem-solving skills that enable individuals to address disagreements without resorting to aggression or hostility. These principles are particularly relevant within school settings, where students frequently interact

with peers from different social and cultural backgrounds and may encounter interpersonal conflicts.

The theory is appropriate for this study because peace-building counselling seeks to promote peaceful coexistence by developing students' communication, negotiation, tolerance, empathy, cooperation, and emotional regulation through counselling activities such as dialogue, mediation, reconciliation, and problem-solving. These counselling interventions are consistent with the assumptions of Peacebuilding Theory, which advocates transforming conflicts into opportunities for understanding, cooperation, and positive relationships. Therefore, the theory provides a suitable framework for explaining the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' conflict resolution skills among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' conflict resolution skills among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' communication skills for conflict resolution among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.
2. Examine the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' negotiation skills for managing conflicts among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.
3. Ascertain the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' tolerance and cooperation skills in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' communication skills for conflict resolution among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' negotiation skills for managing conflicts among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' tolerance and cooperation skills in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between peace-building counselling and students' communication skills for conflict resolution among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

2. H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between peace-building counselling and students' negotiation skills for managing conflicts among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.
3. H_{03} : There is no significant relationship between peace-building counselling and students' tolerance and cooperation skills in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational research design because it sought to examine the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' conflict resolution skills among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria, without manipulating any of the study variables. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between the independent variable (peace-building counselling) and the dependent variable (students' conflict resolution skills). The population of the study comprised 161,772 public secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. A sample size of 384 students was determined using the Research Advisors (2006) sample size table. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. First, simple random sampling was used to select the participating Local Government Areas and secondary schools. Thereafter, proportionate sampling technique was used to allocate the sample across the selected schools, while simple random sampling was used to select the respondents. At the end of the data collection process, 378 copies of the questionnaire were correctly completed, retrieved, and used for the analysis, representing a 98.4% response rate.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Peace-Building Counselling and Students' Conflict Resolution Skills Questionnaire (PBCSCRSQ). The instrument consisted of two sections. Section A obtained respondents' demographic information, while Section B contained items measuring peace-building counselling and students' conflict resolution skills, including communication skills, negotiation skills, and tolerance and cooperation skills. The questionnaire was structured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Guidance and Counselling, Educational Psychology, and Measurement and Evaluation to ensure that the items adequately measured the constructs under investigation. A pilot study was conducted using respondents outside the study area, and the reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.89, indicating that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant educational authorities and school principals before data collection. The researcher, with the assistance of trained research assistants, administered the questionnaire directly to the respondents. Ethical principles such as voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and the privacy of respondents were strictly observed throughout the study. The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and

inferential statistics. The three null hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at the 0.05 level of significance with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.

RESULTS

Hypothesis One H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between peace-building counselling and students' communication skills for conflict resolution among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Table 1:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Peace-Building Counselling and Students' Communication Skills for Conflict Resolution among Secondary School Students in Zamfara State, Nigeria

Variables	N	r - value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Peace-Building Counselling and Students Communication Skills	378	.648	.000	Significant

Table 2 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' communication skills for conflict resolution among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of $r = .648$, indicating a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. The result further showed a p-value of .000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the observed relationship is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between peace-building counselling and students' communication skills for conflict resolution, is rejected. The finding suggests that increased exposure to peace-building counselling is associated with better communication skills for resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between peace-building counselling and students' negotiation skills for managing conflicts among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Table 2:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Peace-Building Counselling and Students' Negotiation Skills for Managing Conflicts among Secondary School Students in Zamfara State, Nigeria

Variables	N	r - value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Peace-Building Counselling and Students Negotiation Skills	378	.611	.000	Significant

Table 2 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' negotiation skills for managing conflicts among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The

analysis produced a correlation coefficient of $r = .623$, indicating a moderate positive relationship between peace-building counselling and negotiation skills. The p-value of .000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between peace-building counselling and students' negotiation skills for managing conflicts is rejected. The finding indicates that students who experience effective peace-building counselling tend to demonstrate better negotiation skills when resolving conflicts.

Hypothesis Three H_{03} : There is no significant relationship between peace-building counselling and students' tolerance and cooperation skills in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Table 3:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Peace-Building Counselling and Students' Tolerance and Cooperation Skills in Resolving Conflicts among Secondary School Students in Zamfara State, Nigeria

Variables	N	r - value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Peace-Building Counselling and Students' Tolerance and Cooperation Skills	378	.681	.000	Significant

Table 3 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' tolerance and cooperation skills in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of $r = .681$, indicating a strong positive relationship between the variables. The result also showed a p-value of .000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance, demonstrating that the relationship is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between peace-building counselling and students' tolerance and cooperation skills in resolving conflicts, is rejected. This finding suggests that effective peace-building counselling is associated with higher levels of tolerance and cooperation among secondary school students, thereby enhancing their ability to resolve conflicts peacefully.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first finding revealed a significant positive relationship between peace-building counselling and students' communication skills for conflict resolution among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. This implies that students who are exposed to peace-building counselling are more likely to develop effective communication skills required for resolving conflicts peacefully. The finding agrees with Özel Şen (2024), who reported that peace education programmes significantly improved students' communication, empathy, and peaceful conflict resolution skills. It is also consistent with Hassan and Gadanya (2024), who found that counselling interventions enhanced students' interpersonal relationships and

emotional regulation, which are essential for effective communication during conflict situations. Similarly, recent studies have emphasized that counselling services and peace-building strategies enhance communication and facilitate effective conflict resolution among students in educational institutions.

The second finding indicated a significant positive relationship between peace-building counselling and students' negotiation skills for managing conflicts. This suggests that peace-building counselling equips students with the ability to negotiate, compromise, and reach mutually acceptable solutions during disagreements. The finding corroborates the report of Ore et al. (2025), who established that peace education enhances negotiation, cooperation, and constructive problem-solving among students. It also supports the findings of Ohadiugha et al. (2024), who observed that peace education strengthened students' conflict management approaches, and Adedigba (2025), who reported that conflict resolution programmes improve negotiation and positive peer relationships among learners. Furthermore, recent counselling studies have shown that dialogue, mediation, and negotiation remain effective strategies for promoting peaceful conflict resolution within educational settings.

The third finding revealed a significant positive relationship between peace-building counselling and students' tolerance and cooperation skills in resolving conflicts. This indicates that peace-building counselling contributes to the development of respect for diversity, teamwork, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence among secondary school students. The finding is in agreement with Awotunde and Onu (2025), who found that peace education initiatives promoted tolerance, social cohesion, and peaceful relationships among community members. It also supports the findings of Özel and Sümer (2025), who reported that peace education strengthened empathy, respect for diversity, and peaceful conflict resolution behaviours among learners, and Adan (2025), who concluded that peace education promotes tolerance, reconciliation, civic responsibility, and sustainable peace among young people. In the same vein, recent studies have affirmed that counselling and peace-building initiatives foster cooperation, empathy, and harmonious relationships, thereby creating a more peaceful school environment.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between peace-building counselling and students' conflict resolution skills among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that peace-building counselling has significant positive relationships with students' communication skills, negotiation skills, and tolerance and cooperation skills for conflict resolution. The results suggest that students who receive effective peace-building counselling are more likely to develop the interpersonal and social competencies required to manage conflicts peacefully. The study therefore concludes that peace-building counselling is an important component of school guidance and counselling services and should be strengthened to promote peaceful coexistence, improve students' conflict resolution skills, and create a more conducive learning environment in secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. School administrators should strengthen peace-building counselling programmes in secondary schools by providing regular counselling sessions that promote communication, dialogue, empathy, and peaceful conflict resolution among students.
2. Guidance counsellors should organize periodic workshops, seminars, and peer mediation programmes to enhance students' negotiation, emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills for effective conflict management.
3. The Zamfara State Ministry of Education should provide continuous training and professional development opportunities for school counsellors to improve their competence in delivering peace-building counselling services.
4. Teachers should collaborate closely with guidance counsellors by integrating peace-building principles such as tolerance, cooperation, respect for diversity, and non-violent communication into classroom and co-curricular activities.
5. Parents, community leaders, and other educational stakeholders should support school-based peace-building initiatives by encouraging positive interpersonal relationships, dialogue, and peaceful conflict resolution among students both at home and in the community.

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