



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### DYNAMICS OF PERSONAL-SOCIAL COUNSELLING PRACTICES ON ADOLESCENTS' SOCIETAL ADAPTATION IN FAKO DIVISION, SOUTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

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#### ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating how personal-social counselling practices influences adolescents' societal adaptation in Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon. The theoretical underpinnings of this study were informed by Carl Rogers' (1967) Person-Centered theory Albert Bandura's (1997) Social learning theory. The study employed the convergent-parallel mixed research design whereby both qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously through questionnaires and interview. A sample of 360 adolescents, 18 counsellors and 15 parents were randomly, purposively and conveniently selected from public, lay-private and confessional schools in Buea, Tiko and Limbe sub-divisions in Fako Division in the South West Region of Cameroon bringing the total number of participants to 393. A Chi Square Test was used to establish the degree to which providing personal-social counselling influences adolescents' societal adaptation. The hypothesis was tested at the significance level of 0.05. The qualitative data obtained were analyzed using the technique of content thematic analysis. The Chi Square Test revealed that with the number of participants at 360, the Chi square is value is 532.957<sup>a</sup> with a degree of freedom (df) of 304,  $p = 0.000$ , which is less than 0.05. That is  $X^2 (304, N=360) = 532.957^a$ ,  $p = 0.000$ . From the analysis above, the significance or  $p$ -value = .000 is less than predetermined  $\alpha = 0.05$  ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). Also, the calculated  $X^2$  value (532.957<sup>a</sup>) is greater than the critical table value (124.3). This implies that personal-social counselling practices have a significant influence on adolescent societal adaptation. Given that this increase is significant with a  $p$ -value of 0.000, it is evident from the study that personal-social counselling significantly influences adolescents' societal adaptation. Counsellors should organize orientation sessions with guardians and parents within communities on the importance of character education while they continue to serve as role models to these children. Parents are hereby encouraged to spend time with children and create positive relationships and rapports among the children and peers as well, while reiterating on good behaviour and moral standards.

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## INTRODUCTION

The general purpose of education is to train children for their intellectual, social, physical, civic and moral development so as to enhance the smooth integration of learners into society bearing in mind prevailing economic, socio-cultural, political and moral factors (Law No 98/004 of 14 April 1998). To this effect, the provision highlights government ardent desire for students to be adapted in their communities in particular and society at large. Students face significant challenges in adapting to daily life and the prevailing societal changes. This may be true especially with students in Fako Division many of whom are internally displaced students who have moved from one town and school to another. These challenges affect their interpersonal relationships, personalities and learning process.

**Understanding Personal-Social Counselling Practices and Adolescents' Societal Adaptation:** Throughout life, individuals may encounter problems adapting to society, and

secondary school students are particularly vulnerable due to the constant changes they experience during school transitional periods. For example, students may face problems with change in school and residence, making adaptation problematic. With such movements, a major problem they face is adapting to their environment as many may feel lost socially and emotionally within this new environments since they no longer enjoy the psychological support of their friends, parents and former teachers (Makinde, 2003). The school climate influences all aspects of student life, including adaptation, performance in school and relationships with other students, and their well-being (Daily et al., 2019). Also, school life is filled with issues that can become frustrating and most of these issues are totally out of student's control for instance change in school rules and school administration among others. Some may experience fear of isolation and rejection by peers, fear of failure, humiliation and embarrassment (Kaminer et. al, 2004). Personal-social counselling is therefore designed to help students make adjustments during such critical transition

periods and adapt to school life. Also, the new environment has rules, regulations and administrative set-up which appears to be completely different. A good personal-social guidance programme is necessary to familiarize students in their school environment and with the overall school situation. Personal-social counselling is counselling services provided to assist students to overcome many social struggles they face in their daily life (Winkel & Hastuti, 2004). This counselling service programme help students develop awareness of their school environment and acceptance of self and others, to help improve personal competence in survival and be responsible for their decisions, and to develop and maintain a good relationship with others. Personal-social counselling plays a vital role in reducing challenges faced by students as they go through school and society. Through effective personal-social counselling, students achieve self-direction necessary to make the maximum social adjustment in secondary school. When the students are properly adjusted in school, there is a tendency for them to perform well in their exams and progress in their education (Mutie & Ndambuki, 2003). Effective social guidance paves the way for the students' social adjustment, good interpersonal relationships and meaningful life during their secondary school experiences (Biswalo, 1996). Also, personal counselling help students have suitable knowledge on how to deal with personality maladjustments such as unhappiness, annoyance and anger, inability to meet needs and get aspirations into fruition.

Every individual is considered well-adjusted if he or she is able to demonstrate positive social skills, normal psychological functioning, and is able to successfully adapt and meet the demands of his immediate environment. Sumathi (2015) observed that students of secondary school age exhibit behavioural difficulties, which before now were not commonly noticeable among students. The reason for this emotional outburst causing an increase in number of students across the world to exhibit unacceptable behaviour is as a result of economic challenges, insecurity, genetics, upbringing, peer influence, lack of basic needs, social, biological, psychological problems and life experiences. In the African context, Chauke and Obadira (2019), observed that students of divorced parents in South Africa, often undergo series of challenges of adjustment as they navigate the changes brought about by their parents' divorce which cause a disruption in their daily routine, manifesting itself in the form of truancy, bullying, feeling of anger, sadness, self-esteem and inability to regulate their emotions effectively. According to Nyaegah, (2011), these students are confronted with problems ranging from withdrawal, unhappiness, anxiety, anger, and hyperactivity. Despite growing recognition of the importance of counselling in addressing students' adaptation problems, there remains a significant research gap concerning effective personal-social counselling services in addressing students' societal adaptation in Fako Division in the South West Region of Cameroon. To address this gap, this study aims to explore whether providing personal-social counselling enhances students' societal adaptation. By conducting rigorous empirical research and utilizing mixed-methods approaches, this study aimed to generate actionable insights that could inform policy and practice aimed at improving adolescents' societal adaptation. This study was also informed by the Person-centered Theory by Carl Rogers. The theory rests on the idea that humans have inherent self-actualizing tendencies and the key in building a healthy personality development lies in the necessary and sufficient conditions of personality change. The focus therefore

is to encourage the clients, who are adolescents in this situation, make use of their resources and inner values to better their concerns identified. Such encouragement can be given via personal-social counselling and the goal is to foster students' societal adaptation. The social adaptation theory by Yoesoep Edhie Rachmand was also relevant for this study as it proposes and advocates for the development of skills like self-awareness, emotional management, and communication skills among others needed for effective social adaptation. An application of this theory depends on the social support of the school counsellors through personal-social counselling.

**Review of Related Literature:** Many empirical studies have established a connection between personal-social counselling practices and adolescent societal adaptation. Nelson, (2021) who investigated the effect of group counselling in reducing anxiety in students, revealed that group counselling had significant effect on the anxiety level of college students. Anxiety has a negative effect on students' academic performance and wellbeing in general. It is pertinent for Personal social counselling interventions to be carried out among secondary students to help them become aware of themselves and the way they react to behavioural influences of their environment, and why not establish some personal meaning to their behaviour and development, and subsequently enhance effectiveness in future.

Shugaba and Ahmad (2022) found that explored personal social counselling is a tool significantly effective for managing and reducing depression among school students in Nigeria. It was found that personal social counselling as a tool significantly reduced depression among students. Ijeoma (2020) attested that depression had a significant effect on students' academic performance irrespective of their gender, leading to low performance which was accustomed to the students living under depressed conditions. Depressive tendency can actually lead to depression, if there is no intervention, which in severe cases can cause death. Timely interventions with use of personal social counselling to students having depressive symptoms could help adjust their thinking patterns, and be better equipped to pursue their academic performance. Otakpo, Wike and John-Nelson (2021), who investigated the effects of group counselling in reducing anxiety in students, revealed that group counselling had significant effect in reducing anxiety because it gave students the opportunity to solve their problems. Kennedy (2018) also noted personal social Counselling model had effects on level of college students. Anyikwa (2020) in a study on individualised counselling technique noted that personal social counselling had significant effects on truants and consequently reduced truancy, indicating that the individualised counselling technique led to significant effects on remediation of truancy among students. It will be of paramount importance to assist a child to revert from truant behaviour through counselling interventions. Personal social counselling presents a lasting solution to this educational problem for students to attain full utilization of their potentials and opportunities. Personal social counselling covers the personal, psychological and social problems of individuals. These problems are said to include intrapersonal/interpersonal relationship, family upheavals, marital incompatibility, broken homes, sexual problems, emotional instability, and fear of tomorrow, inferiority, and superiority complexes, and loss of job, unemployment, drug abuse and adult delinquencies. Denga (2001) opined that; such problems amount to

maladaptive behaviours that leads into indiscipline. A study by Kennedy (2018) on the effects of counselling on emotional state of senior secondary students in Port Harcourt, River State revealed that personal social counselling has a significant effect on anxiety, amongst other variables. Students through counselling are taught effective coping mechanisms such as mindfulness, stress management which helps them manage their level of anxiety effectively, living their daily lives without being anxious and afraid of the unknown. The scope of personal social counselling requires detailed strategies to facilitate the provision of personal social guidance services.

**Statement of the Problem:** At Adolescence, teenagers are vulnerable but highly adaptable, presenting numerous and divers opportunities by possessing skills on decision making, goal oriented, and assiduous while forming good human and supportive relationships with friends and family members and establishing their identity. They are focused with objective of pursuing education and academic achievement while working in collaboration with guidance from knowledgeable others. Successful adolescent societal adaptation is then representative of redefined relationships, shaped career paths, complete education, employability, sense of responsibility, mental stability, resilience and ability to integrate a sense of self and attain sound conclusions. However, the present dispensation portrays a challenge as adolescent societal adaptation has proven to be a near impossibility and difficult process to attain. Presently, adolescents are faced with the problems of planning their lives while deal with daily challenges faced like school bullying, peer pressure, depression, substance abuse, behavioral and emotional problems, cyber addiction, mood swings, school problems, physical changes, eating disorders and inability to form and maintain relationships. This can be accounted for by the existing trend and change of events in our communities and society at large, perpetuated by the insurgence of modernization, economic growth, social network, internet, migration, breakdown of family systems and quest for independence among others portrayed as persistent outstanding hindrances to the accomplishment the adaptational process for adolescents.

Counselling practices have been earmarked as primordial and remarkable driving force in guiding, molding and facilitating the adaptational process in adolescence, by equipping them with the relevant skills and coping strategies for behavioral and character modification among others. The need to examine the purpose of these acquired skills in examining their effectiveness in informing the adaptational process is thus raised. This study therefore seeks to explore the influence of comprehensive counselling practices and its influence on adolescent societal adaptation in Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon.

## METHODOLOGY

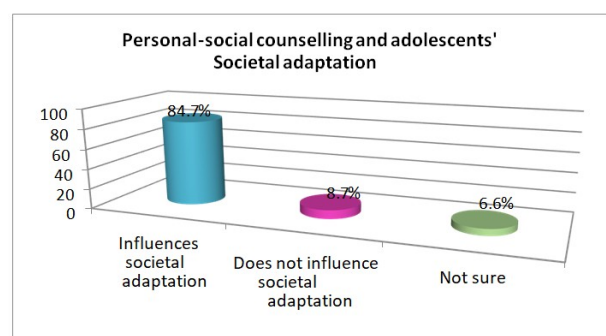
This study employed the mixed method research design, specifically, the convergent-parallel research design whereby both qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously. The sample size of the study comprised of 360 adolescents, 18 counsellors and 15 parents bringing the total number of participants to 393. These participants were purposively and conveniently selected from public, lay-private and confessional schools in Buea, Tiko and Limbe subdivisions in Fako Division in the South West Region of

Cameroon. The research instrument used to collect quantitative data was Likert scale questionnaire for students while for qualitative data, an interview guide was used for school counsellors and parents. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics where frequencies, percentages and charts were used. With respect to inferential statistics, the Chi Square Test was used to establish the degree to which providing personal-social counselling influences adolescents' societal adaptation. On the other hand, qualitative data was presented using content thematic analysis.

## FINDINGS

The findings on how personal-social counselling practices influence adolescent societal adaptation in Fako Division in the South West Region of Cameroon were as follows:

From table 1 above the influence of personal-social counselling practices on adolescent societal adaptation was also evaluated using six (6) items. Generally, the findings on the Multiple Response Set (MRS) revealed that majority (84.7%) of the respondents agreed that personal social counselling practices influence adolescent societal adaptation while some (8.7%) disagreed. For example, majority (95.0%) respondents agreed that they their parents taught them to have self-confidence and believe in myself while very few (3.3%) disagreed. Also, majority (92.5%) respondents agreed that advice from parents help them build productive relationships with others while very few (3.9%) disagreed. Likewise, majority (80.8%) agreed that personal counselling helps them keep stable relationships with peers and family members while the minority of the respondents (8.9%) disagreed. In addition, majority (93.3%) respondents agreed that advice from parents help them manage changes in their life as they grow up while a few (2.5%) disagreed. Similarly, majority (67.0%) respondents agreed that they don't get involved in fights with friends and family while a few (23.3%) disagreed. Likewise, majority (79.5%) respondents agreed that personal social counselling helps students stay away from drugs while very few (15.3%) disagreed. This information is represented on Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Respondents' opinions on the influence of personal-social counselling on adolescent societal adaptation**

As shown on figure 1 above, 84.7% of respondents indicated that personal-social counselling practices influence adolescents' societal adaptation while 8.7% of the respondents indicated that personal-social counselling practices do not influence adolescents' societal adaptation with 6.6% of the respondents not sure. To further determine how personal-social counselling practices influences adolescents' societal adaptation, school counsellors as well as parents were interviewed and results of the interview presented below.

Table 1. Respondents' opinions on the influence of personal social counselling on adolescents' societal adaptation

Items	Stretched					Collapsed	
	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Not Sure (NS)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	SA/A	D/SD
My parents taught me to have self-confidence and believe in myself	245 (68.1%)	97 (26.9%)	6 (1.7%)	5 (1.4%)	7 (1.9%)	342 (95.0%)	12 (3.3%)
Advice from parents help me build productive relationships with others	158 (43.9%)	175 (48.6%)	13 (3.6%)	6 (1.7%)	8 (2.2%)	333 (92.5%)	14 (3.9%)
Personal counselling helps me keep stable relationships with peers and family members	95 (26.4%)	196 (54.4%)	37 (10.3%)	17 (4.7%)	15 (4.2%)	291 (80.8%)	32 (8.9%)
Advice from parents help me manage changes in my life as I grow up	178 (49.4%)	158 (43.9%)	15 (4.2%)	5 (1.4%)	4 (1.1%)	336 (93.3%)	9 (2.5%)
I don't get involved in fights with friends and family	136 (37.8%)	105 (29.2%)	35 (9.7%)	35 (9.7%)	49 (13.6%)	241 (67.0%)	84 (23.3%)
Personal social counseling helps students stay away from drugs	136 (37.8%)	150 (41.7%)	37 (10.3%)	18 (5.0%)	19 (5.3%)	286 (79.5%)	37 (15.3%)
<b>Multiple Response Set (MRS)</b>	<b>948 (43.9%)</b>	<b>881 (40.8%)</b>	<b>143 (6.6%)</b>	<b>86 (4.0%)</b>	<b>102 (4.7%)</b>	<b>1829 (84.7%)</b>	<b>188 (8.7%)</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2024

As depicted in their statements, personal-social counselling helps in preparing adolescents for societal adaptation in fostering interpersonal relationships, mold positive behaviours and enhance self and personality development.

**Fosters good interpersonal relationships:** Participants reported that personal-social counselling fosters good interpersonal relationships which may serve as a support system for societal adaptation:

*"Helps them in building good and positive relationships as they grow up. It improves on adolescents' relationships with others and improves communication and inter-personal skills thus reducing conflict as they grow."* (Parents 1, 4, 5; counsellor 5, 9). Similarly, another respondent articulated: *"It helps them build strong relation with peers and family as well as other adults as they grow up."* (Parent 7).

In the same light other participants stated:

*"It enhances inter-personal skills and social interaction thus reducing conflict as they grow to maturity. It helps them build strong supportive relationships with peers and family as well as other adults as they grow up. Given that socio-personal counselling helps build good rapport among individuals which serves as strong support during adaptation."* (Parents 3, 6, 10; counsellor 7, 13).

### Mold positive behaviours

A participant opined: *"It helps in adjusting students' maladaptive behaviours. They may tend to start behaving well after so much talking on the consequences of bad behaviour. This behaviour is then transferred into adulthood and subsequently assist in societal adaptation."* (Parents 7).

Another participant added: *"Counselling students on social issues such as drug abuse help students to adopt positive behaviours as they grow up."* (Parents 4; counsellor 1, 9).

Similarly, another respondent articulated: *"Counselling students on social values and norms help children grow into responsible and well-behaved adults in the society"* (Parents 2, 8; counsellor 3, 12). Another affirmed: *"It encourages them to love their mates, avoid unhealthy competition and conflict."*

(Counsellor 6,). Similarly, another explained: *"It helps to shape the student's behaviour positively."* (Counsellor 9).

### Enhance personality development

One of the participants stated: *"Social counselling helps build self-esteem in children which are vital qualities in societal adaptation."* (Counsellor 4,). Other interviewees pointed out: *"Children's self-confidence is enhanced and this promotes resilience and forging ahead in life"* (Parents 6; counsellor 2, 3). While others supported this opinion and stated: *"Yes children are advised on the importance of self-acceptance which is an important quality in adaptation."* (Parents 3,10). Similarly, another interviewee opined: *"Social counselling gives them a sense of focus in life. Adolescents know what directions to take in life and how to react in situations they meet as they grow and interact in the society"* (Parents 2). Correspondingly, other participants added *"It helps students to be belief in themselves, be courageous and focused in life."* (Counsellor 1, 9). Likewise, another respondent added: *"It teaches them to be self-confident and not timid in the face of adversity as they grow up with these qualities."* (Counsellor 8).

Other participants stated: *"This form of counselling helps adolescents in building self-confidence and acceptance which assists them through the adjustment and adaptational process"* (Counsellor 8, 9). In the same vein, these interviewees pointed out that: *"This form of counselling leads to self-acceptance and self-esteem. Helps increase self-confidence and assertiveness during adulthood."* (Parent 4; Counsellor 8).

Table 2. Influence of personal-social counselling practices on adolescents' societal adaptation

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Sig
Chi-Square	532.957 <sup>a</sup>	304	.000
Likelihood Ratio	322.999	304	.217
Linear-by-Linear Association	70.153	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	<b>360</b>		

(Critical T<sub>xy</sub>=124.3)

**Verification of the hypothesis:** Personal-social counselling practice has no significant influence on adolescents' societal adaptation. To further determine the influence of personal-social counselling practices on adolescents' societal adaptation,

a Chi square test for independence was conducted as shown on the table 2 below. From the table above, a Chi Square Test was performed to determine whether personal social counselling practices have an influence on adolescents' societal adaptation. The findings revealed that with the number of participants at 360, the Chi square is read at 532.957<sup>a</sup> with a degree of freedom (df) of 304,  $p = 0.000$ , which is less than 0.05. That is  $X^2 (304, N=360) = 532.957^a, p = 0.000$ . From the analysis above, the significance or  $p$ -value = .000 is less than predetermined alpha = 0.05 ( $0.000 < .05$ ). Also, the calculated  $X^2$  value (532.957<sup>a</sup>) is greater than the critical table value (124.3). This thus confirms the hypothesis that personal-social counselling practices have a significant influence on adolescent societal adaptation. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative which states that personal-social counselling practices has a significant influence on societal adaptation was accepted.

## DISCUSSION

The findings arrived at from this study indicates that personal-social counselling has a significant influence on adolescents' societal adaptation in Fako Division in the South West Region of Cameroon. Personal-social counselling fosters good interpersonal relationships which may serve as a support system for social adaptation. The finding is in line with Winkel and Sri Hastuti (2004) who argue that personal-social counselling is out to help students understand and respect themselves and others, acquire effective interpersonal skills, understand safety and survival skills and be able to contribute in the community. It helps adolescents develop awareness and acceptance of self and others; improve personal competences and develop and maintain good relationships with others.

The implication here is that by providing counselling to students on topics such as character education, self-awareness, assertiveness and social skills training can foster students' societal adaptation. Personal-social counselling helps in building good and positive relationships, improve communication and inter-personal skills while reducing conflict as they grow. It improves on adolescents' relationships with others and helps them build strong relation with peers and family as well as other adults as they grow up. Likewise, the finding is also in synergy with Goleman (2009) who emphasized that the use of effective personal social counselling and character education programmes in schools improve on students' personal social competencies and reduce juvenile delinquency. This finding is supported by a previous finding by Goleman (2009) on the importance of emotional and social intelligence for success in school. Result showed a causal relationship between the variables of character education (CE) and personal social counselling (GC) to the social personal competence (SPC). Results proved that the effect of personal social counselling has a very large effect with respect to achieving a more student competency. These findings are also in congruence with Carl Rogers' person-centered theory. This theory holds that humans have inherent self-actualizing tendencies and the key in building a healthy personality development lies in the necessary and sufficient conditions of personality change. The focus therefore is to encourage the client, who are adolescents in this situation, make use of their resources and inner values to better their concerns identified. This theory holds that three core conditions are necessary during counselling for adolescents to

adapt in society. These conditions include the counsellors' show of empathy, unconditional positive regard and warmth to the client.

## RECOMMENDATION

Findings reveal personal social counselling practices influences adolescents' societal adaptation in secondary schools in Fako Division. Thus, it is recommended that counsellors organize orientation sessions with guardians and parents within communities on the importance of character education while they continue to serve as role models to these children. Parents are hereby encouraged to spend time with children and create positive relationships and rapports among the children and peers as well, while reiterating on good behavior and moral standards.

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