

Cultural Nuances of Childhood Adversity: Implications for Culturally Sensitive Counselling Programmes in Nigeria

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Abstract

Childhood adversity significantly impacts the psychological and emotional development of children. Cultural differences in Nigeria profoundly affect the perception and management of these difficulties. This paper offers a comprehensive analysis of the cultural complexities related to childhood adversity in Nigeria, emphasising the enhancement of culturally sensitive therapy strategies. The essential elements of culturally sensitive practice, such as comprehension of traditional practices and incorporation of community support structures, are examined. This article emphasises the necessity for customised counselling methods that recognise and integrate Nigeria's distinct cultural contexts to improve the mental health and well-being of children. Recommendations for further study and practical initiatives for providing culturally sensitive counselling services in Nigeria are presented.

Keywords: *childhood adversity, cultural competence, counselling, Nigeria, mental health.*

Introduction

Childhood adversity, which refers to various stressful or traumatic experiences during childhood, is now widely acknowledged as a crucial component that significantly impacts long-term mental health and overall well-being. These detrimental experiences can encompass physical and emotional mistreatment, neglect, dysfunction within the household, and many types of social violence (Downey & Crummy, 2022, Bhutta, Bhavnani, Betancourt, Tomlinson & Patel, 2023). In Nigeria, a country characterised by extensive cultural diversity and intricate socio-economic dynamics, the influence of early trauma is deep and has multiple aspects. Nigeria's culturally varied environment, encompassing more than 250 ethnic groups and a multitude of languages, poses distinctive difficulties and prospects for comprehending and tackling juvenile adversity. Cultural environment plays a key role in shaping the

perception, experience, and management of childhood adversity. This highlights the need for counselling and intervention programmes that are sensitive to cultural differences (Ofonedu, Turner, Franklin & Breland-Noble, 2023, Akinrogunde, 2023). Childhood adversity encompasses a range of detrimental or distressing situations that take place throughout the crucial developmental period of a child's life. These experiences can be roughly classified as abuse (physical, emotional, sexual), neglect (physical, emotional), and household dysfunction (such as substance misuse, marital violence, mental illness within the family, and parental separation) (Kalmakis & Chandler, 2014). Childhood adversity can impede typical development and has been associated with various adverse consequences, such as mental health disorders, chronic illnesses, and social challenges in adulthood. In Nigeria, children may face additional challenges due to variables such as poverty, communal conflicts, and cultural customs, which can further worsen their experiences of adversity (Akinwale & Aroyewun, 2023).

Nigeria is widely recognised for its abundant cultural diversity, which encompasses a wide range of ethnic groups, languages, religions, and traditions. The three predominant ethnic groups in Nigeria are the Hausa-Fulani in the northern region, the Yoruba in the southwestern region, and the Igbo in the southeastern region. However, Nigeria is also home to several more ethnic groups, each characterised by unique cultural traditions and social standards (Omotosho, Ihekuna & Fakoya, 2020 & Iguodala-Cole, 2024). This variation has an impact on several parts of life, such as the form of families, the techniques of raising children, and the networks of support within communities. Gaining insight into the cultural intricacies in Nigeria is essential for the development of efficacious counselling programmes, as cultural beliefs and values have a vital role in shaping the experience and resolution of adversity (Oluwadele, Adediran & Sunkanmi, 2023). For example, certain cultures may consider specific methods of punishment as acceptable, yet in other cultures; the extended family and community have a crucial role in providing support to children during difficult times.

This discourse focuses on the cultural intricacies of childhood adversity in Nigeria and analyse their consequences for the development of culturally responsive counselling programmes. This article seeks to offer a thorough comprehension of how cultural influences impact childhood adversity and the efficacy of counselling solutions by combining existing theoretical viewpoints and empirical investigations. Furthermore, the paper aims to emphasize the significance of incorporating cultural competency into counselling procedures in order to effectively address the distinct requirements of children who have faced adversity in Nigeria. It also aims to enhance the ongoing discussion on culturally sensitive mental

health treatment and provide valuable insights for the creation of more efficient and contextually appropriate counselling programmes.

Conceptual Framework

This framework is the cornerstone for comprehending the complex relationship between culture and childhood adversity, as well as the significance of culturally sensitive counselling in effectively addressing these challenges. A comprehensive framework for comprehending the manner in which various environmental systems interact to influence a child's development is provided by ecological systems theory, which was proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner. This theory underscores the significance of exploring a variety of levels of influence, ranging from the microsystem of immediate family and school environments to the macrosystem of broader societal and cultural contexts (Härkönen, 2001). The collective impact of factors at various levels, including family dynamics, community support, and cultural norms, on a child's experience and coping mechanisms is underscored by the application of this theory to childhood adversity in Nigeria (Akinrogunde, 2023).

Cultural psychology investigates the influence of cultural contexts on psychological processes and behaviour. The perception and management of adversity in Nigeria are substantially influenced by cultural beliefs and practices, which is why this perspective is essential for comprehending childhood adversity. Cultural psychology assists in the clarification of the manner in which Nigerian children interpret and respond to adverse experiences, which are influenced by culturally embedded values and norms, such as the emphasis on communal support and resilience.

Trauma theory emphasises the influence of traumatic experiences on an individual's mental health and development. It examines the ways in which trauma can disrupt normal psychological functioning and result in a variety of disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Yule & Smith, 2015). In contrast, resilience theory investigates the factors that allow individuals to adapt and flourish in the face of adversity. Protective factors, including positive coping strategies, strong social support networks, and cultural or religious beliefs, frequently promote resilience (Echezarraga, Las Hayas, López de Arroyabe & Jones, 2024). In the Nigerian context, resilience theory emphasises the importance of traditional healing practices, communal solidarity, and extended families in assisting children in overcoming adversity (Ajayi, Maria & Mavole, 2019).

Empirical Results from Prior Research

Empirical studies offer valuable insights into the prevalence, impact, and coping mechanisms associated with childhood adversity in Nigeria. Research has demonstrated that Nigerian children are subjected to a high incidence of a variety of adversities, such as neglect, physical and emotional maltreatment, and exposure to violence (Oladeji *et al.*, 2010 & Ajayi *et al.*, 2019). These adverse experiences are associated with a variety of adverse consequences, including academic challenges, substance abuse, anxiety, and melancholy. A more profound comprehension of the manner in which children and their families confront adversity is provided by ethnographic research and case studies in Nigeria. For instance, research has documented the resilience of children who, despite facing substantial challenges, exhibit exceptional coping skills and favourable developmental outcomes. The critical role of cultural practices and community support in fostering resilience is frequently underscored in these studies (Omotosho *et al.*, 2020 & Nweze, 2023).

Traditional community structures and practices are essential in rural areas for providing assistance to children who are experiencing adversity. For example, communal child-rearing practices, which involve the care of children by extended family members and community elders, have the potential to alleviate the effects of adversity. Moreover, the potential to address the mental health requirements of children who have been impacted by adversity has been demonstrated through the integration of traditional healing practices with modern psychological interventions (Nwoke, 2013 & Ofonedu *et al.*, 2023).

Literature Gaps

Despite the expanding corpus of research on childhood adversity, there are still numerous gaps, particularly in the context of Nigeria and other African countries. Numerous existing studies are restricted in scope and frequently fail to adequately represent the intricacies of cultural influences on childhood adversity. There is a requirement for more thorough and culturally specific research that takes into account the diverse cultural practices and socio-economic conditions that are prevalent in Nigeria. The long-term effects of culturally specific adversities, such as child marriage and ritualistic practices, on mental health and development are not adequately addressed.

Furthermore, there is a dearth of research on effective culturally sensitive counselling interventions that are specifically designed for the Nigerian context. In order to comprehend the long-term consequences of childhood adversity and the effectiveness of different intervention strategies over time, additional longitudinal studies are required.

Requirement for Culturally Specific Research

It is imperative to conduct culturally specific research in order to create counselling programmes that are both contextually relevant and effective. Mental health professionals will be able to develop interventions that are both culturally sensitive and effective by comprehending the distinctive cultural dynamics that influence childhood adversity in Nigeria. This encompasses the examination of indigenous coping mechanisms, traditional support systems, and the influence of cultural and religious beliefs on responses to adversity (Lasebikan, 2016, Akinwale & Aroyewun, 2023). In summary, although substantial strides have been achieved in comprehending childhood adversity, there is an urgent requirement for more culturally informed and nuanced research in Nigeria. Not only will the effectiveness of counselling programmes be improved, but the global understanding of how cultural contexts affect the experience and management of childhood adversity will also be enhanced by addressing these gaps.

Theoretical Analysis

The experiences and perceptions of childhood adversity are substantially influenced by the cultural landscape of Nigeria, which is characterised by its extensive diversity in ethnic groups, languages, and traditions. It is imperative to comprehend the cultural subtleties in order to create counselling programmes and interventions that are specifically designed for the Nigerian context. In Nigeria, children are exposed to a variety of adversities that are influenced by cultural practices and socio-economic conditions. Physical abuse continues to be prevalent and is frequently defended as a necessary disciplinary measure. Brutal physical discipline and beatings are prevalent in the homes and institutions of a significant number of Nigerian children, who are subjected to corporal punishment. Emotional abuse, which encompasses psychological manipulation, threats, and verbal assaults, is also prevalent and frequently goes unnoticed as a result of cultural norms that minimise its importance (Jimoh, Muhammed-Idris & Aliyu, 2021, Nweze, 2023, Okpara & Okoro, 2024).

Poverty and socio-economic instability exacerbate neglect, which is another critical form of adversity. Numerous children are denied access to fundamental necessities, including adequate nutrition, healthcare, and education. Children are employed in agriculture, street vending, and other informal sectors to provide for their families in rural areas, where child labour is a significant concern. The safety and well-being of Nigerian children, particularly females, are at significant risk due to sexual abuse, which includes child marriage and exploitation (Togunde & Carter, 2008, Okpara & Okoro, 2024).

The Influence of Cultural Beliefs and Practices on the Experiences of Children

In Nigeria, the experience and interpretation of childhood adversity are significantly influenced by cultural beliefs and practices. For example, corporal punishment is culturally embedded and frequently perceived as a critical instrument for the development of respect and discipline. This belief system has the potential to normalise physical abuse, which can make it difficult to identify and mitigate its detrimental consequences (Last, 2000, Aluede *et al.*, 2012, Bassey, 2016, Fakunmoju, 2024).

Childhood experiences are also significantly influenced by gender roles and expectations. In numerous Nigerian cultures, females are frequently subjected to more stringent regulations and higher expectations in terms of their behaviour, education, and household responsibilities (Ifemeje & Ogugua, 2012). This can result in gender-specific adversities, including early marriage, domestic servitude, and restricted access to education. Furthermore, Nigerian culture is fundamentally characterised by communal living and the extended family system. Although these systems can establish robust support networks, they can also foster specific adversities. For instance, children may be relocated to reside with extended family members who may not always offer a nurturing environment. Additionally, children may not receive the psychological support they require due to cultural stigmas surrounding mental health, which are frequently misunderstood or stigmatised.

The psychological repercussions of childhood adversity are extensive and multidimensional, affecting a child's overall development and well-being. Behavioural problems, anxiety, melancholy, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can be the result of adverse experiences, including neglect, abuse, and exposure to violence. The disruption of neurodevelopment by the chronic stress that is associated with sustained adversity can result in cognitive impairments and dysfunctional emotional regulation (Kalmakis & Chandler, 2014, Yule & Smith, 2015, Stillerman, 2019).

Children who suffer from adversity frequently demonstrate symptoms such as emotional detachment, hypervigilance, and challenges in establishing secure attachments. These psychological effects may endure into maturity, thereby perpetuating a cycle of dysfunction and trauma. The psychological repercussions of childhood adversity can be particularly severe in the Nigerian context, where access to mental health services is restricted and cultural stigmas are prevalent (Nelson, Scott, Bhutta, Harris, Danese & Samara, 2020, Nweze, 2023). The extended family and community support systems in Nigeria are essential for the development of resilience and the mitigation of adverse effects, despite the substantial obstacles presented by childhood adversity (Osaiyuwu, 2024). A safety net is frequently

established for children who are confronted with adversity by the extended family system, which encompasses grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. This network can provide emotional support, financial assistance, and caregiving, thereby mitigating the adverse effects of adversity (Ente, Gian, Nelmda, Ricafort & Basmayor, 2024).

Community support is also essential, as communal practices and social cohesion foster a sense of stability and belonging. Traditional leaders, religious institutions, and local organisations are actively involved in the support of children and families in numerous Nigerian communities. These communal structures can provide protective factors that increase resilience, such as mentorship, communal activities, and collective problem-solving (Collins & Arthur, 2010, Bassey, 2016, Ajayi *et al.*, 2019). Traditional cultural rituals and therapeutic practices are also essential components of the coping strategies of numerous Nigerian communities (Nzeh, Okoro & Ohaka, 2023). These practices, which may encompass spiritual guidance, herbal treatments, and prayer, offer alternative methods for addressing psychological distress and fostering rehabilitation.

Diverse theoretical frameworks provide a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which culture affects the experience and consequences of childhood adversity. Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory underscores the numerous levels of influence that a child's development is subject to, ranging from immediate familial environments to broader societal and cultural contexts. This theory emphasises the interplay between cultural norms, socio-economic conditions, and community structures in the shaping of formative experiences and responses to adversity (Härkönen, 2001, Navarro & Tudge, 2023).

Cultural psychology delves deeper into the ways in which cultural contexts affect psychological processes and behaviour. This viewpoint is especially pertinent in the context of Nigeria, where the interpretation and management of adversity by children are substantially influenced by cultural beliefs and practices. Cultural psychology offers a framework for analysing the influence of cultural values, including communalism and reverence for authority, on the resilience and experiences of children.

Trauma and resilience theories provide complementary insights into the factors that facilitate recovery and adaptation, as well as the effects of adverse experiences. Trauma theory emphasises the psychological consequences of traumatic experiences and the emergence of mental health disorders (Downey & Crummy, 2022). Conversely, resilience theory investigates the protective factors and coping mechanisms that enable individuals to flourish in the face of adversity (Buse *et al.*, 2013, Echezarraga *et al.*, 2024). Resilience theory in

Nigeria emphasises the significance of cultural practices, community cohesion, and extended family support in the development of resilience (Ekezie, 2022, Fawole & Blair, 2022).).

Integrating Insights from Diverse Theoretical Frameworks

A thorough comprehension of the cultural subtleties of childhood adversity in Nigeria is achieved by incorporating insights from ecological systems theory, cultural psychology, and trauma and resilience theories. The interconnectedness of various levels of influence is emphasised by ecological systems theory, which serves to contextualise childhood adversity within the broader socio-cultural environment. Cultural psychology provides a perspective on the ways in which cultural beliefs and practices influence the perception and management of adversity. The potential for recovery and growth is underscored by trauma and resilience theories, which emphasise the dynamic interplay between protective factors and adverse experiences.

Through the integration of these theoretical perspectives, it is possible to establish a comprehensive strategy for addressing childhood adversity in Nigeria. This method acknowledges the significance of cultural competence in counselling and intervention programmes, underscoring the necessity of customising strategies to the distinctive cultural context of Nigerian children. It also emphasises the importance of traditional practices and community-based support systems in the development of mental health and resilience.

Contributions to Existing Counselling Theories Implications for Counselling Theory

The examination of childhood adversity in the Nigerian context makes substantial contributions to current counselling theories by underscoring the significance of cultural context in the comprehension and resolution of psychological issues. The complexity of experiences in culturally diverse settings may not be entirely captured by traditional counselling theories, which are frequently developed in Western contexts. These theories can be further developed to encompass cultural variables, thereby facilitating a more sophisticated comprehension of childhood adversity, by integrating insights from Nigeria.

The results underscore the importance of incorporating cultural competence into fundamental counselling theories, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, family systems theory, and person-centered therapy. This integration guarantees that therapeutic interventions are both effective and culturally relevant. For example, family systems therapy can be improved by

integrating communal dynamics into therapeutic practices by comprehending the role of extended family and community support in Nigeria.

New Perspectives on Culturally Sensitive Counselling

The study emphasises the necessity of culturally sensitive counselling approaches that incorporate and respect the cultural contexts of clients into the therapeutic process. This entails acknowledging the cultural beliefs and practices that influence the experiences and responses of clients to adversity. Culturally sensitive counselling not only recognises these factors but also actively integrates them into the intervention strategies.

For instance, in Nigeria, the cultural acceptance of corporal punishment as a disciplinary tool requires a nuanced approach in counselling that addresses the harms of physical abuse without alienating clients by overtly condemning culturally embedded practices. Instead, counsellors can collaborate with families to investigate alternative disciplinary strategies that are consistent with cultural values and prioritise the child's welfare.

Practical Consequences for Counselling Programmes

It is imperative to integrate cultural sensitivity into the design of effective counselling programmes in Nigeria at every stage. This necessitates a comprehensive comprehension of the cultural norms, values, and practices of the local community. In order to guarantee that programmes are culturally appropriate and resonate with the intended audience, they should be developed in conjunction with local communities. This participatory approach has the potential to improve the efficacy and acceptability of counselling interventions. Traditional support systems and healing practices should also be incorporated into programmes (Ajayi *et al.*, 2019, Nzeh *et al.*, 2023). For instance, the integration of community leaders, religious figures, and traditional healers into counselling programmes can serve as a bridge between contemporary psychological practices and traditional methods, thereby promoting a more comprehensive approach to mental health. The success of culturally sensitive counselling programmes is contingent upon the training of counsellors in cultural competence (Ofonedu *et al.*, 2023). Education on the specific cultural, social, and economic factors that influence adolescent adversity in Nigeria should be included in this training. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the milieu in which their clients reside, counsellors should acquire knowledge of local customs, belief systems, and traditional practices (Bassey, 2016). Furthermore, the training should prioritise the acquisition of essential skills for effective cross-cultural communication, including flexibility, empathy, and empathy. Counsellors should be prepared to modify their therapeutic strategies to accommodate the distinctive requirements of clients from a variety of cultural contexts. This encompasses the acquisition

of the ability to negotiate cultural disparities in attitudes towards mental health, discipline, and family dynamics. **Strategies for Effective Counselling in Culturally Diverse Environments**

A multifaceted approach that encompasses adaptability, respect for cultural differences, and the establishment of trust is necessary for effective counselling in diverse cultural settings. Counsellors should implement intervention strategies and assessment instruments that are culturally appropriate. Additionally, they should be amenable to integrating traditional practices and beliefs into the counselling process when it is deemed appropriate. It is essential to establish a secure and inclusive environment in which customers feel valued and comprehended. This entails being aware of cultural taboos and ensuring that counselling sessions are conducted in a manner that is consistent with the client's cultural expectations. For example, in certain Nigerian cultures, it may be more acceptable to discuss intimate issues in a group setting with family members present than in one-on-one sessions.

Limitations of Current Research on Childhood Adversity in Nigeria

Although the current corpus of research on childhood adversity in Nigeria is expanding, it is constrained by a number of constraints that constrain its depth and breadth of comprehension. The scarcity of large-scale, longitudinal studies that monitor the long-term effects of childhood adversity on mental health and development is a significant limitation. The majority of studies are cross-sectional, offering only a brief overview of the issues without documenting the changes and advancements that occur over time. Another constraint is the dependence on qualitative data, which, although it is abundant in detail, may not possess the generalizability that quantitative studies provide. The applicability of qualitative research findings to the broader Nigerian context may be restricted by the emphasis on tiny, specific populations. Furthermore, the diverse cultural and socio-economic landscapes of Nigeria's various regions may not be adequately addressed in many studies, resulting in an incomplete comprehension of the ways in which childhood adversity is manifested and managed in different settings.

Additionally, there is a substantial void in the body of research that combines contemporary psychological theories with indigenous knowledge systems and practices. Traditional coping mechanisms and the influence of cultural and religious practices on the development of resilience in children who are confronted with adversity are frequently disregarded in the existing literature.

Theoretical Approach's Limitations

The theoretical approach to comprehending childhood adversity in Nigeria is not without its constraints. Although theories such as ecological systems theory, cultural psychology, and trauma and resilience frameworks offer valuable insights, they may not completely capture the unique and intricate interplay of factors that are specific to the Nigerian context. For example, ecological systems theory provides a comprehensive framework; however, it may not adequately convey the fluidity and dynamism of cultural practices and social norms in Nigeria. Cultural psychology offers a more profound comprehension of cultural influences; however, it may not always be in perfect harmony with existing Western-centric psychological models. The culturally specific resilience strategies employed in Nigerian communities may not be entirely encapsulated by trauma and resilience theories, which emphasise the impact of adversity and the factors that promote recovery.

Additionally, theoretical models frequently necessitate modification in order to be applicable in various cultural contexts. The integration of these theories with local realities is a complex process that is not always straightforward, and the models may require significant modification to be truly effective.

In conclusion, the investigation of childhood adversity in Nigeria demonstrates the significant influence of cultural, social, and economic factors on the psychological well-being and experiences of children. This discussion emphasises the significance of culturally sensitive counselling approaches by incorporating insights from a variety of theoretical perspectives, such as ecological systems theory, cultural psychology, and trauma and resilience theories. Future research should endeavour to address the current voids in the field by conducting comprehensive, longitudinal studies that encompass a variety of regions and populations within Nigeria. In order to offer a comprehensive comprehension of the long-term consequences of childhood adversity, such studies should incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Furthermore, it is imperative to integrate traditional practices and indigenous knowledge systems into modern psychological frameworks to guarantee that counselling programmes are both culturally relevant and effective.

In practice, the development of culturally sensitive counselling programmes necessitates the integration of traditional support systems and collaboration with local communities. It is imperative to provide counsellors with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the

intricate cultural landscape of Nigeria by providing them with cultural competence training. Mental health professionals can more effectively address the needs of Nigerian children, thereby fostering their resilience and well-being in the face of adversity, by implementing these strategies.

Possible Subjects for Additional Research

Given the cultural intricacies and the diverse experiences of Nigerian children, the necessity for additional research on childhood adversity in Nigeria is clear. In order to improve comprehension and inform the creation of culturally sensitive, effective counselling interventions, it is necessary to conduct further investigation in several areas.

The Influence of Specific Cultural Practices on Childhood Adversity

The investigation of particular cultural practices and their influence on childhood adversity is a critical area for future research. This entails comprehensive ethnographic studies that examine the ways in which traditional practices, beliefs, and societal norms either exacerbate or alleviate childhood adversity. For instance, the practice of child fostering, which involves placing children with relatives, can have both positive and negative consequences, contingent upon the circumstances and the quality of the care provided. Identifying protective factors and potential hazards associated with such practices can be facilitated by comprehending the nuances of these practices.

Furthermore, research should investigate the influence of cultural rituals and rites of passage on the resilience and coping mechanisms of children. These cultural practices frequently contribute to the socialisation process and can offer valuable insights into community-based resilience strategies. Culturally pertinent counselling approaches can be informed by an examination of the impact of these practices on children's responses to adversity and their overall development.

Conclusion

Childhood adversity remains a significant public health and psychosocial concern in Nigeria, with far-reaching consequences for children's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and social

development. As highlighted throughout this manuscript, the experiences of adversity among Nigerian children are shaped not only by individual and family circumstances but also by deeply embedded cultural beliefs, traditional child-rearing practices, socio-economic conditions, and community structures. While some cultural practices and communal systems provide important protective factors that foster resilience, others may inadvertently normalize harmful experiences such as corporal punishment, child labour, neglect, and gender-based inequalities. Consequently, understanding childhood adversity in Nigeria requires a culturally grounded perspective that acknowledges both the strengths and challenges inherent within the country's diverse cultural contexts.

The review demonstrates that culturally sensitive counselling programmes are essential for effectively addressing the psychological consequences of childhood adversity. Integrating ecological systems theory, cultural psychology, and trauma and resilience theories provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how multiple environmental, cultural, and psychological factors interact to influence children's experiences and recovery. Such an integrated approach enables counsellors to design interventions that are respectful of indigenous values while promoting evidence-based mental health practices. Equally important is the recognition of the protective roles played by extended family networks, community solidarity, religious institutions, and traditional healing practices, all of which can complement modern psychological interventions when appropriately incorporated into counselling services. Despite increasing scholarly attention to childhood adversity in Nigeria, important research gaps remain. There is a need for more culturally specific, longitudinal, and multidisciplinary studies that capture the diversity of childhood experiences across Nigeria's numerous ethnic and socio-cultural groups. Furthermore, strengthening counsellor training in cultural competence, promoting collaboration with community stakeholders, and integrating indigenous knowledge with contemporary counselling approaches will enhance the effectiveness, accessibility, and acceptability of mental health services for vulnerable children.

Ultimately, improving the psychological well-being of Nigerian children requires coordinated efforts from mental health professionals, educators, policymakers, families, traditional institutions, religious organizations, and communities. By developing culturally responsive counselling programmes that acknowledge local realities while adhering to global best

practices, Nigeria can better protect children from the enduring effects of adversity, strengthen resilience, and promote healthier developmental outcomes for future generations.

Recommendations

- **Conduct a thorough ethnographic investigation:** Ethnographic research should be conducted across a variety of Nigerian communities in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse cultural practices and their impact on adolescent adversity. Traditional practices, beliefs, and social norms that influence children's experiences and coping mechanisms should be documented in this research. The formulation of more effective, culturally sensitive counselling interventions can be informed by such detailed cultural insights.
- **Conduct Longitudinal Studies** - In order to monitor the long-term consequences of childhood adversity and the efficacy of culturally sensitive counselling programmes, longitudinal studies should be implemented. Researchers can accumulate valuable data regarding the long-term effects of these interventions on academic performance, mental health, and social relationships by monitoring children for extended periods. This method will offer substantial evidence regarding the advantages and prospective areas for enhancement in culturally tailored counselling.
- **Develop Culturally Specific Counselling Training** - Comprehensive modules on cultural competence should be incorporated into counsellor training programmes, with a particular emphasis on the cultural contexts of Nigeria. Training should encompass effective cross-cultural communication strategies, traditional healing practices, and local customs. This will provide counsellors with the requisite abilities to offer culturally pertinent and sensitive support to children who are facing adversity.
- **Combining Traditional and Modern Healing Practices** - Counselling programmes should integrate traditional support systems and healing practices with modern psychological interventions. Providing a holistic approach to mental health care that respects and utilises cultural strengths, collaborating with community leaders, religious figures, and traditional healers can bridge the divide between conventional and contemporary methods.
- **Strengthen and support community-based support systems** that provide care and resilience-building for children confronting adversity. This encompasses the improvement of the care network's involvement of local organisations, community groups, and extended families. Counselling programmes can establish robust support structures that

alleviate the consequences of childhood adversity by promoting community unity and utilising local resources.

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