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**PROSPECTIVE VISION OF SCHOOL COUNSELLING: ADDRESSING  
CONTEMPORARY BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS IN SCHOOLS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the growing behavioural and emotional issues confronting students in the Nigerian educational system including bullying, digital addiction, aggressive behaviours, and social anxiety all impacting academic engagement and student development. These issues are related to other significant implications, including poor academic performance, social withdrawal and future mental health issues, and are intensified and magnified by socio-economic and family-related issues embedded in the educational system. In response, this study considers a holistic, multi-levelled school counselling model presumably in response to these behavioural challenges through a trauma-informed care model, building resilience and being culturally responsive to interventions. The study employs a systematic literature review founded on most up-to-date peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents and institutional reports creating a nuanced framework that will be applicable within the Nigerian context. The results of the study highlight the necessity for school counsellors to move away from the traditional discipline, roles and transition to a proactive mental health approach which includes emotional intelligence, and confidence resolution, and furthermore digital literacy. The innovation in the model suggests early intervention with active collaboration between the school counselors, and teachers, and parents while paying more attention to digital wellbeing. The recommendations include training school counselors to be more effective in their practice, encouraging the use of social-emotional learning (SEL) programmes, and to advocate for policy improvements for mental health services and support. This article offers both theoretical contributors and practical support to promote develop effective mental health services in the schools within limited resources and culturally diverse contexts.*

**Keywords:** school counselling, emotional wellbeing, trauma-informed care, resilience, digital addiction

## **INTRODUCTION**

Students in education systems in various locations are facing more behavioural and emotional problems that limit academic learning and personal wellbeing. Behaviours such as anxiety, depression, aggression, peer conflict, and digital addiction have become more noticeable in recent years, partly as a result of technology, changing patterns of family living, and social stressors. These behaviours interfere with classroom learning, and they often contribute to school dropouts, poor self-worth and maladaptive coping strategies. Research has found that emotional and behavioural disorders make significant predictions about poor academic engagement and poor adjustment later on (Twenge et al., 2019). The urgency of the problem in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially Nigeria, is compounded by the lack of structured school-based services capable of addressing psychosocial problems. Evidence suggests that constrained government funding and poorly defined policy frameworks impact the ability to respond effectively, making many students invisible (Okeke & Dlamini, 2021). If these issues are left unattended, the behaviours will develop into chronic psychological distress, criminality, and lower educational achievement, ultimately undermining broader national development goals.

The underlying principle of this study is that schools are currently the most ideal context for promoting academic and social development, although schools are ill-prepared to cope with increasing psychosocial difficulties. Schools may provide a context in which teachers may notice behavioural difficulties, but teachers do not have the professional preparation to execute the therapeutic intervention. Teachers default to disciplinary action as a response to problematic behaviour (Aluede and Egbochuku, 2019). School counsellors have them better positioned to intervene; however, they may be faced with a heavy caseload (20 students or more), very few professional development opportunities, and institutional support (Egbochuku, 2020). Typically, many students navigate schooling with little or no psychological support or input, which can expose students to academic underperformance, and long-term maladjustment. Research shows that adolescent behavioural and emotional problems may result in social exclusion, substance use, and adult mental health disorders (World Health Organization, 2021). All of these facts indicate an urgent need to develop a holistic counselling framework model that can do better to enhance and utilize the support systems that are available within schools.

The aim of this research is to propose a counselling model based on the reality of school systems in developing contexts. The model is aimed at addressing students' behavioural and emotional difficulties from a multi-tiered structure with universal, targeted and individualized support. It has key features of trauma-informed care, building resilience, digital literacy, and being culture-sensitive so that supports can be responsive and sustainable. The model also includes collaboration from school counsellors, teachers, families, and policymakers, because student wellbeing cannot occur in a vacuum. The ongoing development of a counsellor's professional competence is equally significant as they must receive the appropriate training to add both a psychological and technological toolbox to meet the needs of twenty-first century learners (Alanko, 2023). It is the intention of the model to integrate these core practices into the student's integrated school environment to motivate adaptive coping strategies, create supportive peer relationships and develop academic participation, thereby improving individual learning and the overall school atmosphere.

The literature in this area points towards potential understanding of the nature of student challenges and intervention options. For example, excessive use of digital technologies has been shown to lead to greater dependence and inattentiveness in academic settings, sleep disturbance, and the eventual decline in sleeping patterns, and consequently a lack of focus on academics (Twenge et al., 2019; Przybylski and Weinstein, 2017). Peer victimisation and bullying paired with peer bullying were related to anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal (Hinduja and Patchin, 2018). Additionally, family dysfunction and the lack of parental support was of negative behaviours and negative adjustment for children/adolescents (Behere, 2017). Exposure to traumatic events has consistently shown possible damage to emotional regulation and learning accomplishment while increasing the chances for the child to experience behavioural problems (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2020). However, well-structured, psychological and resilience-focused interventions, which could promote strategies for coping, and persistence in academics were useful (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, and Yehuda, 2014). Also, establishing multi-tiered systems of support is a great way to emulate and work towards the support of various students everyday (Alanko, 2023). Unfortunately, most of the literature that exists is located within Western paradigms, which do not reflect the inherent socio-cultural and infrastructural realities of African Schools, thus limiting their relevance directly.

This study is unique in that it combines the best international practice and mediated to the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, namely Nigeria. Previous studies predominately focus on one aspect, such as bullying or trauma or digital use; this study provides a model of holistic, school-wide counselling encompassing a variety of aspects of student wellbeing. The strategies take into account our resource poor contexts acknowledging the available evidence, while also noting the specific cultural and situational implications that are not recognised in the existing literature. Additionally, this study offers a bridge between theory and practice by presenting a framework that is adaptable, sustainable and responsive to emerging needs in schools. In this regard, it provides a contribution towards the scholarly literature of counselling practices and a realtime tool for education stakeholders to develop their own school-based mental health services in developing nations.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study presents an updated and holistic model of school counselling that deals directly with the behavioural and mental health issues students' face. It also discusses how counsellors can shift from a traditional role to become a mental health advocate and behaviour interventionist. The study outlines specific goals as follows:

1. Examine the evolving role of school counsellors, transitioning from disciplinary and academic guidance to proactive mental health support.
2. Identify and analyse key behavioural and emotional challenges students face, such as bullying, digital addiction, and anxiety, and their impact on learning.
3. To explore the socio-emotional and environmental factors behind the behavioural challenges students experience, specifically family dynamics, socio-economic status, and cultural tendency.
4. To present a holistic school counselling model including early intervention, trauma-informed care and multi-tiered support that determinatively engages stakeholders.

5. To examine the model's utilitarian nature in various educational situations, especially within developing regions of the world

## **METHOD**

A literature review was used for this study as a counselling model to cater to school-based student behaviour and emotional needs was created. The purpose of the study was to create a framework that can incorporate international best practice within the context of the education systems found in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa. Peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents and institutional reports pertaining to trauma, resilience, digital wellbeing, bullying, and multi-tiered counselling interventions was searched. There was a limitation placed on the literature to include those from 2014 to 2024 to ensure timeliness and relevance. The data were sourced from recognised large databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, ERIC, Google Scholar, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, and relevant governmental sources. The literature search was structured by keywords such as "school counselling model", "student behavioural problems", "multi-tiered systems of support", "trauma-informed practice", and "student resilience."

This data collection process included a systematic screening process where titles and abstracts were examined to exclude inappropriate studies and then assessed full texts. Thematic synthesis was used as analysis method, initial coding of selected studies was based on emerging themes: trauma and emotional regulation; resilience and coping; digital literacy; peer relationships; and systems-based support. The themes were then merged to identify areas for improvement and potential for innovation. A synthesis which ultimately contributed to the development of an online conceptual counselling model that is academically rigorous yet practically plausible was put together; the model bridges a gap between international evidence and the context-specific psychosocial realities of schools in Nigeria.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the result of the study, discussion, and the finding. The result of the study provides the data of the study. The discussion section analyzes, compares, contrasts the data with the relevant result of the other studies. The finding section serves novelty in the form of generalization, concept, theory, formulation, principle, and postulate. The discussion result and findings of the study need to be strengthened by an illustration in the form of table or figure (graphic, diagram, chart, photo, example).  
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### **A. The Evolving Role of School Counsellors**

#### **Old Role vs. New Role**

Previously, school counsellors were mostly involved in keeping students in line and enforcing rules. Their role was predominantly reactive to student behavioural issues with consequence measures such as detention or suspension. The role was entirely focused on behaviour expectation and seldom related to student emotional or mental health. They served as a standard bearer for institutional rules, focusing primarily on action taken after the rule had been broken. So, there was minimal to no engagement with students regarding their emotional development or personal concerns (Aluede &

Egbochuku, 2019). Counsellors have made a significant evolution in responding to students' needs emotionally, proactively incorporating conflict resolution into counselling, mental health support, and understanding of student situations. Counsellors can now act as advocates for student mental well-being, creating safe and nurturing places for students that promote academic and personal growth. Counsellors contribute in all ways to student mental health challenges, enabling students to meet adversity with resiliency (Southwick et al., 2014). This evolution in schooling has emerged from the understanding of how critical emotional intelligence and a resilient supportive environment are to student life, well-being, success, and the ability to thrive in school. Their roles today are responsible for the health of the culture in schools, helping ensure that students feel safe and capable of achieving success and growth in a happy, safe place (Okeke & Dlamini, 2021).

### **What Skills Do Counsellors Need Now?**

In today's world, the skill set needed by school counsellors is far more varied and more complex than ever before. One of the significant skill areas needed is the ability to support children emotionally who may be struggling with anxiety, depression, or stress (Behere, 2017). Counsellors need to be empathetic listeners and support students with coping strategies related to emotional issues. It is essential for counsellors to have active listening skills and to have emotional intelligence so they can build trust and an open line of communication between teacher and student. Additionally, counsellors must have the tools and emotional ability to work with students experiencing emotional difficulties and to support them in becoming more emotionally intelligent (World Health Organization, 2021). Another skill needed for school counsellors is an understanding of conflict resolution. While many students do not resolve their conflicts, and are being bullied or facing peer pressure, everyone should have the opportunity to engage in healthy dialogue (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018). This requires careful mediation on the part of the counsellor, and the development of strategies so students have the opportunity to express themselves and find a resolution through constructive means. Furthermore, school counsellors are frequently expected to work collaboratively with teachers, parents, and outside professionals, to take a holistic approach to student care. Similarly, as negative issues related to cyberspace and digital addiction become more and more prevalent, counsellors are expected to have an understanding of how technology affects students' mental health and how to help them work through problems (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017; Twenge et al., 2019). It is important for counsellors not only to have an understanding of traditional psychological issues, but also to be cognisant of modern-day pressures.

### **How Should Counsellors Be Trained?**

Counsellor training must be all-encompassing, with an emphasis on emotional intelligence and the ability to create trusting relationships with students. Counsellor training should place an emphasis on active listening and empathically engaging with students' needs in order to meet their emotional demands (Egbochuku, 2020). Counsellors also require training on many of the psychological issues students may be struggling with, such as anxiety, depression, and trauma. They need to know the early signs of these issues, when to intervene, and how to provide the correct support systems (NCTSN, 2020). Additionally, understanding and recognising the cultural and socio-economic factors that affect

a student's expression of behaviours and emotions is essential (Okeke & Dlamini, 2021). Ongoing professional development is also critical, as it is important for counsellors to stay current regarding emerging issues such as social media effects, cyberbullying, and the negative influences of excessive screen time (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017). Counsellors must keep up when it comes to issues impacting students as these issues are constantly evolving. Trauma-informed care should be a large part of training so support can be provided for those students who are experiencing traumatic experiences resulting from abuse and loss. Trauma-informed practice enables the counsellor to better understand the impact of ongoing trauma on behaviour and the ability to regulate emotional expression (Southwick et al., 2014). This ongoing opportunity for learning supports school counsellors and others working with students, enabling them to provide the most effective responses to the ever-changing needs of learners.

#### **B. Key Behavioural and Emotional Challenges Student Face**

Some types of behavioural problems in today school are:

**Bullying:** Bullying is an ongoing issue in schools, and the emergence of cyberbullying has transformed bullying. As with traditional bullying, including physical and verbal bullying, bullying has evolved. Students use technology to bully each other online through various platforms and apps, and many times they do it anonymously. Cyberbullying can cause greater harm than traditional bullying because it extends beyond the school day into their personal lives and is harder for adults to track. Victims of bullying are exposed to emotional harms such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts, making it imperative for schools to address this form of harm and offer kids who are targets of bullying supports (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018).

**Tech Addiction:** Tech addiction has become a growing concern, as students are spending more time on digital devices and in many cases, excessive time. This tech addiction not only adversely affects their academic performance, but also interferes with social interactions and in many cases mental health. When students exceed the recommended 2 hours of screen time, they demonstrate difficulty with concentration, procrastination, and withdrawing from face-to-face interactions. In many cases, students' excessive screen time is related to poor sleep, which will aggravate anxiety and depression. Schools must aid students in establishing some balance between entertainment, learning, and socializing, in order to accomplish healthy daily lives and academic outcomes (Alanko, 2023).

**Aggression and Violence:** Aggression and violence have become more serious in schools, with students engaging in more severe verbal and physical aggressions. By definition aggression or violence arises from trauma, having been exposed to violence, or not receiving adequate mental health treatment. If not curtailed, aggression can lead to being bullied, fighting, and in extreme cases violence such as school shootings. Schools need to implement conflict resolution and anger management to deal with the root cause of aggression and create more positive learning environment (Hoge et al., 2020).

**Social Withdrawal and Anxiety:** Social withdrawal and anxiety are becoming increasing common. Students struggle interacting with their peers or do not wish to engage in school activities, due to a fear of being judged or rejected. This happens more often than not with a school absence,

academic consequences, social and emotional consequences long after. The academic performance can also create anxiety on students and between semesters or terms these students lose traction, and begin to socially withdraw even further. These students require a supportive environment that encourages them to address their anxiety and return to school engagement (Kearney, 2008).

**Classroom Disruption:** Classroom disruption is among the more common behaviours that interrupt the learning process, the most frequent types include: talking out of turn, refusing to participate or engaging in aggressive and/or inappropriate behaviour. These behaviours typically stem from children seeking unmet emotional needs, frustration and/or other non-disclosed issues (i.e., ADHD and/or learning disability). Disruptive behaviours can frequently escalate and could have a negative impact upon classroom climate. Students who struggle with disruption require targeted help to learn how to manage their behaviours and get back engaged with their learning, while allowing the rest of the class to be successful in a productive classroom climate (Wilson & Lipsey, 2018).

### **C. Socio-Emotional and Environmental Factors behind Behavioural Challenges Students Face**

Behavioural problems can have significant effects on students that could be easily recognised as well as lasting effects on students' academic, emotional and social development. The most significant effects include:

**Academic Problems:** One of the challenge is disruptive behaviours and emotional problems (anxiety, depression, aggression) which typically result in academic problems. Students that report distractions when working with new learning material or when trying to learn due to emotional issues may not be able to engage in most classroom tasks or complete their school or homework tasks. Another issue is involvement in bullying (as the victim or the aggressor) also portending academic problems. The cognitive stress from bullying can cause disengagement in academic work as the learners' cognitive energy shifts from learning materials to managing the psychological stress associated in bullying activities which limits classroom learning and is a barrier to the ability to concentrate on their school work or homework tasks. The behaviour can take them away from educational opportunities and limit their overall academic learning achievements. Over time, students experiencing academic problems may experience increased academic problems, increased absenteeism, and decreased academic performance, and in some cases drop-out.

#### **Social and Emotional Development:**

1. Social Isolation due to Anxiety and Withdrawal: Behavioural issues create obstacles for students to engage in positive social relationships. Students with anxious or withdrawn behaviours may find it difficult to make friends and participate in socialised activities. This can lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and alienation.
2. Impact of Aggressive behaviours on peer relationships: On the other hand, students can also secure rejection from peers for aggressive or violent behaviours, which leads to difficulties in establishing healthy relationships with peers or adults. These students can also experience increasing levels of isolation, which only aggravate behavioural issues.
3. Emotional Difficulties and impacts on interpersonal skills: A student's emotional difficulties or variations in anxiety, depression, and anger can prevent it from learning or practicing interpersonal



skills (e.g., empathy, communication skills, conflict resolution). Interpersonal skills will be an important area in which positive friendships and relationships both at school, as well as later in life develop.

4. Long-lasting impacts of behavioural difficulties in students on students' self-esteem, wellbeing. Behaviour can have long-term effects on students' self-esteem, mental health, and wellbeing. Emotional wellbeing can transfer into adulthood, and emotional difficulties may affect academic - and career success (Abdelaziz & Abu-Snieneh, 2022).

#### **Environmental Factors**

Student behavioural issues do not exist in a vacuum, as there are several external influences that impact a student's understanding of emotions and mental well-being. Some of these influences include:

**Family Dynamics:** Family dynamics can impact a student's behaviour either positively or negatively. The most at-risk students for behaviour problems in school, are students who have familial dynamics that involve abuse, neglect or stressors. Students with dysfunctional familial dynamics or with familial dynamics of separation, often present difficulties in managing /regulating their emotional states, which often presents behaviours such as hostile or positive aggression, or withdraws/disengages from others. The emotional pain that a school-age child can endure when family members are struggling along with educational events can in itself be a thick barrier to their academic success or to their social initiation. Students who are emotionally neglected or experience emotional instability at home usually have a more challenging time focusing, making friends or regulating their emotions (Evans & De France, 2022).

**Impact of Social Media:** Using social media will create new elements of behaviours to the students. The expectation to maintain an online character and the comparisons made to others contributes toward anxiety, lack of self-worth, and emotional distress. Having many social media accounts could cause students to strive toward unrealistic representations of beauty or success that contribute to feelings of inadequacy and social anxiety. Cyberbullying extends into the students' privacy and can cause emotional or psychological distress. With access to harmful content, desensitisation towards violence can occur and resulting in unhealthy patterns of behaviour (Knauf & Eschenbeck, 2025).

**Cultural and Community Impacts:** Cultural expectations and norms often influence student behaviours. In collectivist cultures where harmony is value, students may struggle with communication, or assertiveness, and often engage in social withdrawal or show passive behaviours. In communities where the rate of violence, poverty, or unrest is generally high students are often exposed to stress and trauma. As with many emotional impacts, students often react aggressively or experientially with anxiety depending on their situations. Schools must approach all students in a culturally responsive manner in order to be supportive to them (Rahmania, 2024).



#### **D. The Comprehensive School Counselling Model**

The world of school counselling can be viewed as continually evolving, which requires a systematic, data driven approach. The Comprehensive School Counselling Model is one course of action that employs the use of prevention, early detection, and providing responsive intervention by using a three-tiered model. This model is an opportunity to breakout from a one size fits all programme, and instead facilitate a layered, holistic solution that works with the needs of each individual student. The emphasis of this model is on early intervention, while using data to track students' wellbeing and providing responses to their needs in timely manner.

**Tier 1: Universal Outcomes for Everyone:** Tier 1 is the universal level of support. It is an environment that meets all of our students' needs, rules, definitions, and actions related to wellbeing and is the foundation on which all of our future support layers will rest. The goal of the universal level to prevent problems before they start through awareness and maintaining a positive environment that includes everyone and nobody feels left out. Tier 1 is, school-wide, anti-bullying campaigns, social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons, peer mentorships, and life skills lessons where students learn life behaviours such as empathy, regulating feelings, and coping with conflict to foster healthy relationships. There is evidence to suggest that when we positively shape emotional climate in schools, all students experience positive effects on their level of behaviours. The plan is to maximise support at the universal level to eliminate the potential for escalation for students who may have ongoing challenges.

**Tier 2: Support for Students Who Need Extra Help:** Tier 2 provides targeted support for students who need additional resources to address specific challenges, such as anxiety, minor behavioural problems, or social difficulties. It offers more tailored interventions, including small group sessions where students work together on issues like stress management, social skills, or conflict resolution. Tier 2 may also involve individual counselling, giving one-on-one attention to help students navigate personal issues. These interventions are brief and focused, ensuring students receive timely assistance without waiting for more intensive support.

**Tier 3: Intensive Support for At-Risk Students:** Tier 3 is the most serious and urgent level of support. Support at this level includes students that have severe behavioural, emotional and/or psychological challenges. Most students will require intense, one to one support or intervention at this level, and would be at-risk for academic failure or be in some sign of mental health crisis. The interventions are so deeply individualised through trauma-informed counselling or therapy and are made in referrals to external specialists. All interventions are necessary to lay the groundwork for students who are in urgent need to create bridges of support for those we can clearly see are struggling - and it reduces the likelihood that a student with severe needs would slide through the cracks.

#### **Key Principles in School Counselling for Behavioural Problems**

Some of the key principles in school counselling for behavioural issues are the following:

**Early intervention:** Early intervention is an important way to address behaviour problems before they begin to escalate. The earlier we can recognise the signs of anxiety, aggression, or withdrawal, the sooner we can provide appropriate support to help prevent the behaviours from becoming cemented. Early

intervention encourages students to learn coping mechanisms, develop resilience, and supports the idea of belonging -- all of which can support students to be more successful in the long run. Early intervention reduces the likelihood of students reaching a point of alienation and affective breakdown. By addressing issues as they arise, the potential for emotional maturity to occur is present both now and in the future, which can lead to more successful academic and, more generally, personal outcomes.

**Trauma-Informed Care:** Trauma-informed care is also an important part of working with students who have experienced abuse, loss, or neglect. Counsellors must understand how much students' past experiences of trauma influence their reactions to situations, their interactions with others, and their behaviour. This approach aims to create a space where students feel safe, supported, respected, valued, and listened to. Trauma-informed care includes empathetic listening, and avoiding being re-traumatised, if possible, and implementing interventions that encourage all students self-regulation emotion-inclusive. Creating a trauma-approach allows schools to create an environment where there is a greater likelihood of successfully addressing behaviour, to promote healing.

**Cultural Sensitivity:** Cultural sensitivity is essential to understand how students' backgrounds may inform their behaviours and understandings. Counsellors are expected to catalogue cultural influences on communication, values, family structures, and accept these regardless of their individual preferences or values. If a student understands that their cultural situation is understood (and valued) by the counsellor, the opportunity to build trust with the student increases and interventions will be tailored to their cultural milieu. Interventions which support one student may not support the next perfectly; therefore, counselling support based upon cultural recognition and awareness will only make counselling more individualised. It is significant that when cultural differences are recognised the change effort is more likely to be successful and the student and counsellor relationship will be enhanced.

**Collaboration with Teachers and Parents:** For a complete support system for students, counselling is only part of a holistic relationship of support involving the student, teachers, parents, and students. Collaboration with teachers provides insight into how the student is functioning in their classroom. Collaboration with parents allows a greater understanding of the behaviours of the student at home. Together, this provides context for the student such that any type of intervention can be consistent or relevant. Continued communication between outdoor and indoor behaviour is necessary to have equality of understanding or expectations in terms of behavioural or emotional management. Working collaboratively contributes to a regional proceeding towards collective work with a student which, from a theoretical point of view, can provide insight into outdoor values associated with school and how the introduction of a school organisation hopefully changes the student. This strategy hopefully provides support for the student at school and at home, thus leading to optimal outcomes.

**Building Resilience and Emotional Strength:** One of the primary goals of school counselling is to foster resilience, which is often described as the ability to bounce back from setbacks and challenge. Resilience (resiliency) enables students to cope with challenges, stressors in their life, and ultimately, grow and make better choices regarding their behaviours. When a student has developed the skill of resilience, they have the ability and emotional skills to manage life's ups and downs - coping mechanisms, emotional regulation strategies, and stress management skills. Resilience can not only be taught, but it can also be

learned and cultivated. It is critical that we develop student's sense of self-efficacy in order for each student to learn to manage setbacks, as well as when it is okay to ask for help. Resilient students become more able to deal with future challenges and are less likely to develop behavioural problems.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this report supports the notion that the behavioural and emotional issues of students in schools can be tackled, only through a comprehensive multi-tiered counselling model that is culturally responsive and context specific. By disentangling some of the research literature, it has been demonstrated that it is possible to amalgamate trauma-informed care, resilience-informed care, digital literacy, and transformative collaborative practice into accredited counselling practice at the school level in Nigeria, which is suffering from policy deficiencies and resource limitations. In lots of ways, this report speaks boldly to education stakeholders to reconceptualise schools not only as sites of learning, but also as sites where the psychological growth and wellbeing for the whole person matters. To capitalise on this, policy stakeholders must commit to enhancing and embedding school counselling through policy and fiscal policies, the counsellor in school must adopt a more preventive, trauma-informed and tech driven approach, and parents and teachers must combine to actively promote and reinforce positive behaviours and coping mechanisms. The proposed model has offered both a theoretical perspective and framework for practical hybrid intervention approaches delivered to optimise students' academic participation, social acceptance, and ultimately, enhance their longer-term wellbeing within the realities of the Nigerian experience by drawing on global best practices.

## **Recommendations**

Recommendations for improving school counselling programmes are:

**Providing All-encompassing Training for Counsellors in Schools:** Schools provide comprehensive training for counsellors to address the many needs of students. Training involves: emotional intelligence; trauma informed care; and cultural awareness. Counsellors are also trained to address issues about online addiction (digital devices) as well as cyber-bullying. Professionals also participate in continuing education to understand best practices and prevailing issues.

**Focusing on Prevention and Early Intervention:** Schools are using proactive screening to identify behavioural and emotional issues before students become in crisis. A step-up counselling model allows schools to support and identify students "at risk" before the behavioural or emotional problem escalates. Universal supports ensure students receive emotional well-being supports such as, social emotional learning (SEL) programmes and anti-bullying initiatives. Developing and creating prevention strategies positively impacts student resilience.

**Enhancing Collaboration among Counsellors, Teachers, and Parents:** School counsellors learn from and communicate with teachers and parents, such as communicating the behaviours they are witnessing in their students. Educator awareness in recognising behaviour changes and parent knowledge in terms of world outside the school environment becomes a multi-faceted team approach to providing the student with support.

**Enhancing intensive Student Access to Intensive Support Services:** Schools are enhancing access to, tailored support to better serve students facing mental health difficulties. Services such as one-on-one therapy/counselling or small group sessions, and referrals to external professionals are now available. School partnerships with local mental health providers allows specialised care to become available and helps promote individualised support for student needs.

**Advocating for Policy Change to Expand Mental Health Services:** Many schools have partnered with organisations to advocate for policies that prioritise mental health services and funding by the government. These policies will ensure that trained professionals are available at schools to help meet the demand for student mental health support. Policymakers are recognizing that student well-being is an important part of the educational experience. Therefore, advocacy to strengthen school counselling programmes, will be helpful.

**Promoting Digital Literacy and Building Resilience in Safe Online Practices:** Through school counselling programmes now integrating digital literacy education into the curriculum, students will workplace ready skills for responsible online practices. To counteract the impact that technology can have on mental health, students will be provided messaging and coping strategies to manage issues surrounding digital addiction and related to technology such as cyberbullying. This extended knowledge can help mitigate negative impacts on a student's mental health. To build student well-being, we must promote safe online practices.

**Creating Safe and Inclusive School Environments:** Schools are building safe and inclusive environments with minimal tolerance for any student's feelings of unacceptance or harm. Empathy, respect, and the acceptance of diversity facilitates the ability of any student to feel valued and respected at school. Part of the efforts and approaches to school counselling includes prevention, education, and intervention in situations associated with bullying, exclusion, and discrimination. These efforts contribute to an environment where students can also experience academic and social growth.

**Leveraging Data to Improve Support Systems:** Schools are using purposeful and data-informed approaches to discern the effectiveness of their various counselling programmes. Tracking and using data about student progress, and mental health trends allows us to refine our strategies. Regular data analysis allows school-based counsellors the ability to proactively identify and respond to any issues that emerge, while also ensuring the support systems access to students can evolve as their needs change.

**Fostering Student Resilience and Emotional Growth:** School counselling programming aims to develop the students' resilience and assist with their development of emotional coping strategies. Students learn to manage how to cope with difficult periods, stress, setbacks, and people-related challenges that they encounter. These programming efforts aim to support their ability to move towards healthier coping strategies for managing challenges emotionally. Ultimately, these efforts aim to provide students with the tools to cope with and move on from an emotional challenge in both their schooling and personal lives.

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