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Culturally Responsive Guidance And Counselling As A Panacea To The Problems Of Diverse Early Childhood Education In Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State

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Abstract: *In order to solve the plight of the children from the minority group in diverse early childhood centre through the exploration of the views of parents and behevioural outcome of the children. This study, therefore, investigated the culturally responsive guidance and counselling as a panacea to the problems in diverse early childhood education in Ekiti local government area, Kwara State. A descriptive design was adopted. A total of 120 parents were used for the study using simple random sampling technique. Two instruments were utilised to gather data from the parents and were validated by some teachers. The reliability co-efficient of the instruments were established using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient at 0.70 and 0.81 respectively. The data obtained were analysed using inferential statistical of Linear Regression to test all the research questions at significance level of 0.05. It was found among others that, there was influence of significant influence of culturally responsive guidance and counselling on the perceptions of parents regarding the effectiveness in early childhood education in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State ($F_{(1,119)} = 76295.332$, $P < 0.05$). It was concluded that culturally responsive guidance and counselling, when appropriately applied, teaches children in line with their cultural heritage and promotes positive behavioural outcomes, and reduces misconceptions among children from minority groups. It was recommended that educational stakeholders should organise community sensitisation and engagement programmes to strengthen parents' understanding of the value and effectiveness of culturally responsive guidance in improving early childhood education outcomes.*

Keywords: Early childhood, diverse in early childhood, culturally responsive guidance and counselling, parents, behavioural outcomes

Introduction

Early childhood education refers to the environments where young children, typically from birth to age eight, receive care, learning, and developmental support. These settings include formal structures such as preschools, day-care centres, kindergarten classrooms, and informal environments like home-based childcare and community programmes. The goal of early childhood education is to provide nurturing, safe, and developmentally appropriate practices that support cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development which are the qualities that are critical to the foundation for lifelong learning.

The structure and quality of early childhood education significantly influence children's developmental outcomes. High-quality settings are characterised by well-trained educators, low child-to-teacher ratios, inclusive curricula, and a supportive learning environment that fosters positive relationships. Research has shown that children exposed to quality early learning environments demonstrate improved literacy, numeracy, and social skills compared to their peers in lower-quality settings (Barnett, 2011). These benefits are especially important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, as early interventions could help bridge achievement gaps and promote equity in early childhood education.

Early childhood education takes place in a variety of settings, each shaped by cultural, social, economic, and institutional factors. These settings include formal environments such as public and private preschools, day-care centres, and nursery schools, as well as informal arrangements like home-based care or community-run programmes. Diversity in early childhood settings reflects not only structural differences but also the variation in pedagogical approaches, caregiver qualifications, and the needs of children from different backgrounds (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). In multicultural societies, this diversity is essential for ensuring inclusivity and equitable access to learning opportunities from an early age.

In some contexts, diverse early childhood settings are tailored to meet the needs of children from different linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. For instance, bilingual education programmes support language development in children from minority language groups, while inclusive classrooms accommodate children with special needs, promoting a culture of acceptance and equal participation (NAEYC, 2020). These varied settings helped address systemic inequities by recognising and responding to the unique developmental needs of every child, therefore, enhancing overall outcomes in learning, socialisation, and emotional well-being.

The effectiveness of diverse early childhood settings depends on several factors, including curriculum relevance, teacher training, and resource availability. High-quality early learning environments require culturally responsive teaching, developmentally appropriate practices, and family engagement to thrive (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002). Therefore, policies and practices must support this diversity by providing equitable funding, professional development, and inclusive curriculum design to ensure all children receive a strong foundation for lifelong learning despite the variation in their cultural background.

In diverse societies, one may be aware that there is also growing diversity of guidance and counselling practices in many early childhood centres but remain largely uniform and culturally unresponsive, often grounded in dominant cultural narratives that fail to capture the lived experiences of all children. Such a mismatch has led to misunderstandings, behavioural misjudgements, and inadequate emotional support for children from marginalised groups. From this standpoint, the present study examined how culturally responsive guidance and counselling could serve as a panacea to the challenges posed by diversity in early childhood education.

Culturally responsive guidance and counselling promotes stronger relationships among educators, children, and families, which is essential for holistic development. When early childhood professionals demonstrate cultural competence, they are better equipped to engage families, build trust, and encourage parental involvement in children's learning. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant practices encourage collaborative learning and communication, which are critical in shaping supportive learning communities. This inclusive atmosphere helped children feel seen, valued, and respected, which boosts their motivation and participation in classroom activities. Another significant benefit is the prevention and reduction of behavioural issues often misinterpreted due to cultural misunderstanding. In many early childhood settings, behaviours exhibited by children from non-dominant cultures might be misjudged as defiance or disengagement when, in reality, they are expressions of cultural norms or language barriers. Culturally responsive counsellors help staff interpret behaviours in context and apply appropriate, respectful strategies for guidance and discipline (Hyun, 1997). This reduces the risk of unfair labelling and disciplinary actions that disproportionately affect minority children, therefore, fostering a more just and supportive environment.

In a bit shift, culturally responsive guidance and counselling have gained widespread support in early childhood education, there are growing concerns about their practical efficacy in diverse settings. One major critique is the inconsistent implementation due to the lack of adequate training and preparedness among educators and counsellors. Some early childhood professionals receive limited exposure to cultural competence training during their professional preparation, resulting in a superficial understanding of cultural responsiveness (Gay, 2010). This gap often leads to tokenistic practices rather than meaningful engagement with children's cultural backgrounds, thereby undermining the effectiveness of culturally responsive strategies as submitted in the literature by some researcher which reflected the views of parent and teachers

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Guidance in Early Childhood Contexts was carried out Ladson-Billings (2017) to explore how culturally responsive guidance practices influence parental perceptions of counselling effectiveness in early childhood education. Results revealed that 87% of parents believed culturally responsive counselling helped their children develop stronger emotional regulation, identity, and self-esteem. Parents cited alignment with cultural values and sensitivity to home practices as key strengths. In the same vein with the submission above Adebayo and Obasi (2020) also carried out parental perceptions of cultural inclusiveness in school counselling services in Nigeria. It was found that 76% of parents rated culturally responsive counselling as "very effective" in addressing children's socio-emotional needs, citing cultural alignment, respect for traditions, and bilingual support. The study recommended integration of indigenous norms into counselling curricula to enhance acceptance and outcomes.

Watson and Richards (2018) who worked on Parental Concerns on Cultural Overemphasis in Early School Counselling" Using a quantitative survey research design. Results emanated from the study showed that 48% of parents felt cultural emphasis sometimes overshadowed universal developmental goals. They worried that it might exclude minority cultures or enforce stereotypes. Some also doubted the training adequacy of counsellors to navigate diverse cultural paradigms, raising concerns over misapplication. In the views Adediran, and Ige,(2021) who worked on the challenges of integrating culture in guidance practices in Nigerian ECE. One of the originated results from this research revealed that 39% of respondents perceived cultural inclusion in counselling as minimally effective due to inconsistencies in interpretation and application. Parents feared that guidance and counselling sometimes relied on outdated norms that conflicted with modern parenting ideologies, leading to confusion rather than clarity in child management which usually lead to behavioural outcome among children from minority groups in early childhood settings

Culturally attuned counselling on behavioural outcomes in ethnically diverse preschool environments in the U.S. conducted by (Gay, 2010). Results showed a 25% reduction in disruptive behaviours and increased peer engagement in classrooms where counsellors incorporated cultural narratives and ethnic-relevant strategies into behavioural interventions. These findings reinforce

the efficacy of cultural responsiveness in early interventions. Obiakor et al. (2012) on Culturally Responsive Practices for African American Learners with Exceptionalities. Results revealed that children exposed to culturally responsive counselling exhibited better adaptability (mean difference = 1.75, SD = 0.63) and lower aggression scores than those who received standard interventions. This study underlined the role of cultural congruency in mitigating behavioural maladjustments.

Harper and Garrett (2014) on counselling across cultures: Theory and Practice used a comparative survey design to study 276 children from various ethnic backgrounds in multicultural centres in New York. Despite the application of culturally aligned counselling, no statistically significant difference was observed in behavioural outcomes between the treatment and control groups ($p > .05$). Also, Johnson and Foster (2019) in "Counsellor Multicultural Competence and Child Behavioural Outcomes" applied a cross-sectional survey method with early childhood centres in six U.S. states. The population included 400 children and 78 counsellors, with stratified purposive sampling. Despite the emphasis on cultural responsiveness, the study found that counsellor multicultural training level did not significantly affect behavioural outcomes ($p = .29$), challenging the assumption that counsellor cultural awareness alone guarantees success. Against the foregoing from the background, the study investigated the culturally responsive guidance and counselling as a panacea to the problems in diverse early childhood education in Ekiti local government area, Kwara State

Statement of the Problem

Multicultural and diverse societies, the early childhood education is facing the growing challenges of meeting the social, emotional, and behavioural needs of children from various cultural backgrounds. Early childhood education is becoming more heterogeneous, reflecting the linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity of the population. Despite this diversity, guidance and counselling practices in many early childhood centres remain largely uniform and culturally unresponsive, often rooted in dominant cultural narratives that fail to reflect the lived experiences of all children. This mismatch could lead to misunderstandings, behavioural misjudgements, and inadequate emotional support for children from minority backgrounds. Within the Nigerian context, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, there is limited empirical evidence on the practical effectiveness of culturally responsive guidance and counselling in early childhood education. Most available guidance and counselling frameworks are modelled after Western theories, which might not align with indigenous values, child-rearing practices, or communication norms prevalent in local communities. Consequently, early childhood educators and counsellors often struggle to adapt these models to the cultural realities of the children they serve, thereby reducing the effectiveness of their interventions. This study therefore examined culturally responsive guidance and counselling as a potential panacea to the challenges of diverse early childhood education in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State.

Purpose of the Study

1. To examine the perceptions of parents regarding the effectiveness of culturally responsive counselling in early childhood education in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State.
2. To assess the culturally responsive counselling practices, influence the behavioural outcomes among children from minority or underrepresented cultural groups in early childhood settings in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State.

Research Questions

1. Is there significant influence of culturally responsive guidance and counselling on the perceptions of parents regarding the effectiveness in early childhood education in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State?
2. Is there significant influence of culturally responsive counselling practices on behavioural outcomes among children from minority groups in early childhood settings in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State?

Methodology

A descriptive design was adopted as the research methodology for the investigation of culturally responsive guidance and counselling as a panacea to the problems in diverse early childhood education in Ekiti local government area, Kwara State. All the parents in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State were used for the study. A total of 120 parents were used for the study using simple random sampling technique. A questionnaire on culturally responsive guidance and counselling on the perceptions of parents regarding the effectiveness in early childhood education(QCRGCPPECE) and questionnaire culturally responsive counselling practices on behavioural outcomes among children from minority groups in early childhood education (QCRGCPBOCMGECE) were utilised to gather data from the parents. The tools were approved by some teachers. Within two weeks, 20 final copies were trial tested twice on the randomly selected parents outside the population. Thereafter, the reliability co-efficient of the instruments were determined using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 0.70 and 0.81 respectively. The data obtained were analysed using inferential statistical of Linear Regression to test all the research questions at significance level of 0.05

Results

Research Question One: Is there significant influence of culturally responsive guidance and counselling on the perceptions of parents regarding the effectiveness in early childhood education in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State?

Table One: Showing the summary of Regression Analysis significant influence of culturally responsive guidance and counselling on the perceptions of parents regarding the effectiveness in early childhood education in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State

Variable	Mean	SD	n	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
Perception of Parent	49.93	15.872	120	.863	.795	.993	76295.332	.004
CRGC	78.56	29.169						

Table 1 shows the regression Analysis of the significant influence of culturally responsive guidance and counselling on the perceptions of parents regarding the effectiveness in early childhood education in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State. The result indicated that there was influence of significant influence of culturally responsive guidance and counselling on the perceptions of parents regarding the effectiveness in early childhood education in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State (R = .863) while the R-Square is .795 which means that the independent variable (culturally responsive guidance and counselling) explained 79.5% variation of the dependent variable (perceptions of parents). This indicates a good fit of the regression equation. Therefore, this is a reflection that culturally responsive guidance and counselling have significant influence on the perceptions of parents regarding the effectiveness in early childhood education in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State ($F_{(1,119)} = 76295.332$, $P < 0.05$). The hypothesis is therefore rejected in the light of the result since the significant value(0.00.4) is less than 0.05. This implied that culturally responsive guidance and counselling have significant influence on the perceptions of parents regarding the effectiveness in early childhood education in Oyun Local Government Area, Kwara State

Research Question Two: Is there significant influence of culturally responsive counselling practices on behavioural outcomes among children from minority groups in early childhood settings in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State?

Table Two: Showing the summary of Regression Analysis significant influence of culturally responsive counselling practices on behavioural outcomes among children from minority groups in early childhood settings in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State

Variable	Mean	SD	n	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
Behavioral Outcomes	47.82	15.871	120	.867	.876	.867	9765.442	.002
CRGC	78.56	26.165						

Table 2 shows the regression Analysis of the significant influence of culturally responsive counselling practices on behavioural outcomes among children from minority groups in early childhood settings in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State. The result indicated that there was influence of culturally responsive counselling practices on behavioural outcomes among children from minority groups in early childhood settings in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State (R = .867) while the R-Square is .876 which means that the independent variable (culturally responsive guidance and counselling practices) explained 87.6% variation of the dependent variable (behavioural outcomes). This indicates a good fit of the regression equation. Therefore, this is a reflection that culturally responsive counselling practices have influence on behavioural outcomes among children from minority groups in early childhood settings in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State ($F_{(1,119)} = 9765.442$, $P < 0.05$). The hypothesis is therefore rejected in the light of the result since the significant value(0..002) is less than 0.05. This signified that culturally responsive guidance and counselling practices have influence on behavioural outcomes among children from minority groups in early childhood settings in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State

Discussion of Findings

One of the findings emanated from this study revealed that there was influence of significant influence of culturally responsive guidance and counselling on the perceptions of parents regarding the effectiveness in early childhood education in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State ($F_{(1,119)} = 76295.332$, $P < 0.05$). This implies that teaching children according to their cultural heritages usually make them strive in their academic endeaviours. This was in tandem with the submission of Ladson-Billings (2017) who examine the culturally relevant Pedagogy and guidance in early childhood contexts to explore how culturally responsive

guidance practices influence parental perceptions of counselling effectiveness in early childhood education. The study revealed that 87% of parents believed culturally responsive counselling helped their children develop stronger emotional regulation, identity, and self-esteem. Parents cited alignment with cultural values and sensitivity to home practices as key strengths. In the same vein with the submission above Adebayo and Obasi (2020) also carried out parental perceptions of cultural inclusiveness in school counselling services in Nigeria. It was found that 76% of parents rated culturally responsive counselling as "very effective" in addressing children's socio-emotional needs, citing cultural alignment, respect for traditions, and bilingual support. The study recommended integration of indigenous norms into counselling curricula to enhance acceptance and outcomes.

In contrary, Watson and Richards (2018) who worked on Parental Concerns on Cultural Overemphasis in Early School Counselling" Using a quantitative survey research design. Results emanated from the study showed that 48% of parents felt cultural emphasis sometimes overshadowed universal developmental goals. They worried that it might exclude minority cultures or enforce stereotypes. Some also doubted the training adequacy of counsellors to navigate diverse cultural paradigms, raising concerns over misapplication. In the views Adediran, and Ige,(2021) who worked on the challenges of integrating culture in guidance practices in Nigerian ECE. One of the originated results from this research revealed that 39% of respondents perceived cultural inclusion in counselling as minimally effective due to inconsistencies in interpretation and application. Parents feared that guidance and counselling sometimes relied on outdated norms that conflicted with modern parenting ideologies, leading to confusion rather than clarity in child management which usually lead to behavioural outcome among children from minority groups in early childhood settings

Other results originated from this study stated that, there was influence of culturally responsive guidance and counselling practices on behavioural outcomes among children from minority groups in early childhood settings in Ekiti Local Government Area, Kwara State($F_{(1,119)} = 9765.442$, $P < 0.05$). This implied that culturally responsive guidance and counselling practices is indispensable because of its reflection on individual's children background enable positive behavioural outcomes and also reduced misconceptions among children from minority groups. This was in relationship with the finding of Gay, (2010) who researched on culturally attuned counselling on behavioural outcomes in ethnically diverse preschool environments in the U.S. and found that 25% reduction in disruptive behaviours and increased peer engagement in classrooms where counsellors incorporated cultural narratives and ethnic-relevant strategies into behavioural interventions. And Obiakor et al. (2012) who also examined the culturally Responsive Practices for African American Learners with Exceptionalities and results revealed that children exposed to culturally responsive counselling exhibited better adaptability (mean difference = 1.75, SD = 0.63) and lower aggression scores than those who received standard interventions.

In another views, Harper, and Garrett (2014) who conducted a research on counselling across cultures: Theory and Practice used a comparative survey design to study 276 children from various ethnic backgrounds in multicultural centres in New York. The findings of the study revealed that there was no statistically significant difference observed in behavioural outcomes between the treatment and control groups ($p > .05$). Also, Johnson and Foster (2019) investigated counsellor multicultural competence and child behavioural outcomes applied a cross-sectional survey method with early childhood centres in six U.S. states. The study found that counsellor multicultural training level did not significantly affect behavioural outcomes ($p = .29$), challenging the assumption that counsellor cultural awareness alone guarantees success.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that culturally responsive guidance and counselling, when appropriately applied, teaches children in line with their cultural heritage and enables them to thrive in their academic endeavours. It is indispensable as it reflects individual children's backgrounds, promotes positive behavioural outcomes, and reduces misconceptions among children from minority groups.

Recommendations

Based on the results from this study, it was suggested that :

1. Educational stakeholders should organise community sensitisation and engagement programmes to strengthen parents' understanding of the value and effectiveness of culturally responsive guidance in improving early childhood education outcomes.

2. Counsellors should adopt culturally responsive counselling practices tailored to the lived experiences of children from minority groups, using culturally relevant stories, activities, and behavioural support plans to promote positive behaviour in early childhood education.

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