

**COUNSELING STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN WHO SUFFERS FROM
EMOTIONAL CHILD ABUSE: A CASE STUDY OF TEENAGERS IN UYO
METROPOLIS**

By

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the counseling strategies for children who suffer from emotional child abuse: a case study of teenagers in Uyo Metropolis. Emotional child abuse is a pervasive but often invisible form of maltreatment that negatively affects the psychological, emotional, and social development of children and adolescents. In Uyo Metropolis, teenagers exposed to emotional abuse face challenges such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and difficulty forming healthy interpersonal relationships. This study examines counseling strategies that can assist teenagers in coping with emotional trauma resulting from abuse. Utilizing a case study approach, the research explores the concepts of counseling, emotional child abuse, and evidence-based interventions suitable for affected adolescents. The study highlights the effectiveness of counseling approaches such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), person-centered counseling, and group counseling in promoting emotional healing, resilience, and self-confidence. Findings indicate that structured counseling interventions, combined with supportive family and community involvement, significantly mitigate the negative effects of emotional abuse and enhance teenagers' overall well-being. In conclusion, emotional child abuse remains a serious social and psychological problem that can significantly affect the emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social development of adolescents. Although it may not produce visible physical injuries, its impact can be profound, leading to low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, poor academic performance, emotional instability, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships. One of the recommendations made was the implementation of professional counseling services in schools, early identification of emotional abuse, awareness programs for parents and caregivers, and collaborative efforts among stakeholders to safeguard the emotional health of adolescents.

KEYWORDS: Counseling, Counseling Strategies, Emotional Child Abuse, Adolescents, Trauma, Uyo Metropolis.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most prevalent, yet least acknowledged, types of child abuse that affects kids and teenagers worldwide is emotional abuse. Emotional abuse can have serious and long-lasting psychological effects, but unlike physical abuse, it frequently leaves no outward scars. Emotional child abuse includes persistent criticism, rejection, humiliation, threats, intimidation, neglect of emotional needs, and other behaviours that undermine a child's self-worth and emotional development (UNICEF, 2021; WHO, 2022). Emotionally abused teenagers often suffer from low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, social disengagement, poor academic achievement, and trouble establishing positive relationships with others.

Adolescents who have experienced emotional abuse have been shown to benefit from a variety of treatment techniques. These include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Trauma-

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Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), person-centered counseling, and group counseling. Such approaches help adolescents challenge negative thought patterns, process traumatic experiences, develop resilience, and improve emotional functioning (Lenz & Murphy & Joseph, 2022). Effective counseling therapies also offer a secure and encouraging setting where adolescents can openly express their feelings and get the support they need for normal development and adjustment.

Adolescence is a crucial time for social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Teens need parents, caregivers, instructors, and significant others to support, accept, encourage, and guide them at this stage. Emotional maltreatment during this stage of development can have a detrimental impact on future life outcomes, emotional stability, and personality formation. Research has shown that prolonged exposure to emotional abuse can result in emotional dysregulation, behavioral problems, and long-term mental health difficulties (McTavish Gonzalez, Santesso, MacGregor, Wathen, & MacMillan, 2022; Haslam et al., 2023). Emotional abuse can happen in households, schools, and other social settings in many areas, including Uyo Metropolis, frequently without proper acknowledgment or assistance.

Counseling plays a vital role in addressing the psychological and emotional consequences of child abuse. Counseling is a professional helping relationship that enables individuals to understand themselves, overcome personal challenges, and make informed decisions while promoting psychological well-being and personal growth (Brown et al., 2020). Through professional guidance, emotional support, and evidence-based therapeutic interventions, counseling helps victims understand their experiences, develop healthy coping mechanisms, rebuild self-confidence, and improve their overall well-being (Seligman, 2021; Gladding, 2022).

Thus, utilizing teenagers in Uyo Metropolis as a case study, this study focuses on counseling techniques for kids who experience emotional abuse. The study aims to investigate the idea of counseling, emotional child abuse, and counseling techniques that can help impacted adolescents deal with trauma, regain psychological health, and foster positive growth. The results of this study are anticipated to add to the expanding corpus of information on child safety and offer useful suggestions for parents, educators, counselors, and legislators in dealing with emotional child abuse among teenagers.

CONCEPT OF COUNSELING

Counseling is a collaborative "talk therapy" where a trained professional helps individuals explore emotions, overcome challenges, and make positive, self-determined decisions. It provides a confidential, non-judgmental space to gain new perspectives, manage mental health, and improve overall psychological well-being. According to Brown, Lent, Telander, & Tramayne (2020), counseling is a professional helping relationship that enables individuals to understand themselves, overcome personal challenges, and make informed decisions. Communication, direction, and emotional support are all part of the process, which aims to foster psychological health, personal development, and successful situational adaptation.

Seligman (2021) describes counseling as a collaborative process between a trained counselor and a client designed to facilitate problem solving, self-awareness, and behavioral change. Through organized interaction and expert assistance, counseling helps people create

coping mechanisms, enhance their ability to make decisions, and accomplish their personal, academic, and professional objectives.

As noted by Gladding (2022), counseling is a developmental and preventive service that assists individuals in managing emotional, social, academic, and vocational concerns. The idea focuses on creating a private, secure space where clients can explore their emotions, recognize obstacles, and come up with solutions that improve their general functioning and quality of life.

CONCEPT OF COUNSELING STRATEGIES

Counseling strategies refer to the planned techniques, methods, and approaches employed by counselors to assist individuals in understanding their problems, developing coping mechanisms, making informed decisions, and improving their overall psychological well-being. These strategies are fundamental to the counseling process because they facilitate effective communication, problem-solving, behavioral change, and personal growth. Counseling strategies are applied across various settings, including schools, healthcare institutions, workplaces, rehabilitation centers, and community organizations, to address emotional, social, academic, and career-related concerns.

One widely recognized counseling strategy is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which focuses on identifying and modifying negative thought patterns and maladaptive behaviors. According to Hofmann and Hayes (2021), CBT-based strategies help individuals develop healthier ways of thinking and responding to life challenges, thereby reducing psychological distress and improving emotional regulation. Through structured interventions, clients learn to challenge irrational beliefs and replace them with more perspectives that are constructive.

Another important counseling strategy is person-centered counseling, which emphasizes empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness in the counselor-client relationship. As noted by Murphy and Joseph (2022), person-centered approaches create a supportive environment where clients feel valued, respected, and understood. This atmosphere encourages self-exploration and promotes personal growth, enabling individuals to discover their strengths and capacities for problem solving.

CONCEPT OF CHILD ABUSE

Any action or inaction on the part of a parent, caregiver, or other adult that causes actual or potential harm to a child's physical, emotional, or psychological well-being is considered child abuse. It encompasses neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and physical abuse, all of which impede a child's rights and appropriate development. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), child abuse is a major global public health issue that affects millions of children and leads to long-term negative outcomes in health and behavior.

The deliberate use of force that results in a child's physical harm, anguish, or suffering is considered physical abuse. Hitting, beating, shaking, burning, and any other severe punishment are examples. Behaviors that harm a child's self-esteem and emotional stability, such as insults, rejection, threats, humiliation, or persistent criticism, are referred to as emotional or psychological abuse. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2021)

notes that emotional abuse, though often invisible, can seriously affect a child's mental health and social development.

A kid's development is severely impacted by child abuse, which can lead to physical harm, psychological distress, subpar academic achievement, and trouble establishing positive connections. Long-term issues including despair, anxiety, low self-esteem, and violent conduct can also result from it. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC, 2022) emphasizes that preventing child abuse requires strong legal protection, awareness campaigns, and supportive family and community systems to safeguard children's well-being.

CONCEPT OF EMOTIONAL CHILD ABUSE

A pattern of actions by parents, guardians, or other responsible adults that adversely impact a child's emotional growth, sense of self-worth, and psychological health is referred to as emotional child abuse. Emotional abuse, in contrast to physical abuse, does not entail physical pain; rather, it encompasses behaviors like ongoing criticism, rejection, humiliation, intimidation, threats, disregard for emotional needs, and exposure to ongoing animosity. In households, schools, institutions, and other settings where kids interact with adults, emotional child abuse can take place. Emotional abuse can have significant and long-lasting repercussions on a child's mental, emotional, and social development, even though its effects are frequently less obvious than those of physical abuse.

As noted by Spinazzola (2021), emotional abuse is one of the most prevalent yet underrecognized forms of child maltreatment. Children who are subjected to verbal abuse, rejection, or emotional neglect on a regular basis may feel fearful, insecure, and unworthy. These encounters may impede a child's normal emotional growth and have a detrimental effect on their capacity to build stable interpersonal relationships. Over time, victims may have sadness, anxiety problems, low self-esteem, and trouble interacting with others.

Furthermore, emotional child abuse has been linked to adverse mental health outcomes across the lifespan. As noted by Haslam (2023), individuals who experienced emotional abuse during childhood are at a higher risk of developing psychological disorders, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse problems, and suicidal behaviors. Personal connections, professional functioning, and general quality of life are frequently impacted by the long-lasting emotional scars left by such abuse.

DIFFERENT COUNSELING STRATEGIES AND THEIR ROLES IN MITIGATING EMOTIONAL TRAUMA BY TEENAGERS WHO SUFFER FROM EMOTIONAL CHILD ABUSE

Adolescents who experience emotional child abuse—which includes actions like rejection, humiliation, intimidation, seclusion, and constant criticism—may suffer serious psychological repercussions. Emotionally abused teenagers are more likely to suffer from despair, anxiety, low self-esteem, emotional dysregulation, signs of post-traumatic stress disorder, and interpersonal relationship problems. In order to help impacted youth absorb traumatic events, learn coping mechanisms, and restore their mental health, counseling treatments are essential. It has been demonstrated that a number of counseling techniques are useful in reducing the emotional trauma brought on by emotional child abuse.

➤ **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is one of the most used methods. Teens who have experienced abuse are assisted by CBT in recognizing and combating harmful mental patterns. Adolescents learn healthier ways to understand situations, control their emotions, and cultivate good self-perceptions through behavioral strategies and cognitive restructuring. Research indicates that CBT is effective in reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and trauma-related distress among abused adolescents (Lenz & Hollenbaugh, 2022).

➤ **Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT),**

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), which is intended especially for kids and teenagers who have gone through traumatic experiences, is another crucial tactic. TF-CBT helps young people process traumatic memories, lessen emotional discomfort, and improve coping skills by combining cognitive-behavioral techniques with trauma-sensitive therapies. Studies have demonstrated its effectiveness in improving emotional functioning and reducing post-traumatic stress symptoms among youth exposed to abuse and neglect (Cary & McMillen, 2021).

➤ **Person-Centered Counseling**

Teens who have experienced emotional abuse might benefit greatly from person-centered counseling, which was founded on the ideas of empathy, authenticity, and unconditional positive regard. This method offers a secure and accepting setting where teenagers can freely share their emotions and life experiences. Person-centered counseling assists teenagers in regaining their self-esteem and confidence by promoting emotional development and self-acceptance.

➤ **Group Counseling**

Group counseling also provides chances for social interaction and peer support. Teens who take part in therapeutic groups frequently come to the realization that they are not alone in their experiences, which can lessen feelings of humiliation and loneliness. Group settings also promote the development of communication skills, emotional resilience, and positive coping strategies (Mannarino, 2021).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study further revealed that counseling plays a significant role in helping emotionally abused teenagers recover from traumatic experiences and rebuild their emotional well-being. Counseling approaches such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), Person-Centered Counseling, and Group Counseling were identified as effective strategies for addressing the emotional and psychological consequences of abuse. These approaches assist adolescents in developing positive self-concepts, enhancing resilience, improving coping skills, and fostering healthy social relationships. Effective counseling interventions, combined with supportive family, school, and community environments, can significantly reduce the negative effects of emotional child abuse and promote the healthy development of adolescents. Consequently, there is a need for

increased awareness, early identification, and professional intervention to safeguard the emotional health and future well-being of teenagers in Uyo Metropolis and beyond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Professional counseling services should be established and strengthened in secondary schools to provide timely psychological support for emotionally abused adolescents.
- Parents and caregivers should be educated through seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns on the harmful effects of emotional abuse and the importance of positive parenting practices.
- School counselors should be trained regularly on modern therapeutic approaches such as CBT and TF-CBT for effective management of emotional trauma among students.
- Teachers should be encouraged to identify and report signs of emotional abuse among students to appropriate authorities and counseling units.

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