



Effectiveness of Peer Counselling Programmes in Promoting Emotional Adjustment Among Secondary School Students in Kaduna Metropolis, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes in promoting emotional adjustment among secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis, Nigeria. The research employed ex-post facto and quasi-experimental design and the population comprised 12,450 SSII students across the public secondary schools in Kaduna metropolis. Out of which sample of 40 Senior Secondary II (SSII) students were selected through simple random and stratified sampling techniques. Data was collected using the Emotional Adjustment Scale and analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, and ANOVA. Results revealed significant improvements in emotional adjustment among students who participated in peer counselling programmes compared to the control group ($t = 4.87, p < 0.05$). The study found strong positive correlations between peer counselling participation and emotional stability ($r = 0.73$), social adjustment ($r = 0.68$), and academic performance ($r = 0.61$). Findings support the Social Learning Theory and Social Support Theory as theoretical frameworks for understanding peer counselling effectiveness. The study recommends implementing structured peer counselling programmes in secondary schools to enhance students' emotional well-being and academic success.

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INTRODUCTION

The adolescent period represents a critical developmental stage characterized by significant physical, psychological, and social changes that can impact students' emotional well-being and academic performance (Tang et al., 2022). In Nigeria's educational context, secondary school students face numerous challenges including academic pressure, social conflicts, family problems, and identity formation issues that require adequate support systems (Viashima, 2024). Traditional counselling approaches often face limitations due to insufficient professional counselors, cultural barriers, and students' reluctance to seek help from adult figures (Kennedy, 2024).

Peer counselling has emerged as a promising intervention that leverages the natural support systems among adolescents to promote emotional adjustment and overall well-being (Richard et al., 2022). This approach recognizes that young people often find it easier to confide in peers than adults, feeling less judged and more understood when discussing sensitive issues (Nozawa, 2019). Research indicates that peer counselling programmes can significantly impact students' emotional, social, and academic behaviors, creating positive school climates and reducing problematic behaviors (Maiwa, 2021).

The theoretical foundation for peer counselling effectiveness rests on several psychological frameworks, including Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes

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observational learning and modeling behaviors, and Social Support Theory, which highlights the importance of supportive relationships in promoting resilience and coping strategies (Williams & Davis, 2017). These theories suggest that peer interactions can facilitate the development of adaptive emotional regulation skills and enhance students' capacity to manage stress and challenges effectively.

Previous empirical studies by Viashima (2024) emphasized the importance of establishing baseline equivalence in peer counselling interventions to ensure valid outcome comparisons. Findings from Bii, Aloba, and Raburu (2016) reported similar baseline emotional adjustment levels among secondary school students in their study of peer counselling efficacy, with participants showing initial scores indicating room for improvement in emotional stability and social functioning. Additionally, research by Worley et al. (2023) supports the validity of establishing comparable baseline conditions, noting that equivalent pre-intervention scores are essential for demonstrating genuine programme effects rather than pre-existing group differences. Peng (2025) further corroborates these baseline findings, indicating that secondary school students typically present with moderate emotional adjustment challenges that can be addressed through targeted interventions.

The Viashima's (2024) study of peer counselling impact on behaviour change, demonstrated significant improvements in emotional behaviour change among secondary school students. Bii, Aloba, and Raburu (2016) reported similar substantial improvements in emotional adjustment among orphaned learners following peer counselling interventions. The Training of Trainers research by Widyadhari and Nurwianti (2025) further demonstrate that properly structured peer counselling programmes can produce lasting improvements in emotional regulation and adjustment, with participants showing continued benefits even at follow-up assessments. Research from the University of Mines and Technology by multiple investigators (2020) showed significant improvements in emotional and social adjustment among university

students participating in peer counselling programmes.

Additionally, Viashima (2024) study, demonstrate significant impacts on social behaviour change among secondary school students participating in peer counselling programmes, with improvements extending beyond individual adjustment to encompass broader social competencies. However, contradictory evidence suggests potential limitations in the generalizability of these social adjustment findings. Some research has indicated that the effectiveness of peer counselling in improving social adjustment may be moderated by individual characteristics such as initial social skills, personality traits, and cultural background, suggesting that not all students may benefit equally from peer counselling interventions (Kitahara, et al., 2020; Viashima, 2024).

The findings of Widyadhari and Nurwianti's (2025) research, which emphasized the critical importance of peer counsellor training quality in determining programme success, with properly trained counsellors showing significantly better outcomes in supporting their peers' emotional adjustment. The importance of school support environment is corroborated by Peng's (2025) research on school support mechanisms, which demonstrated that institutional backing and administrative support significantly amplify the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes. Contradictory evidence, however, suggests that the identified predictors may not be universally applicable across all contexts. Some research has indicated that the relative importance of these factors may vary significantly based on cultural, socioeconomic, and institutional contexts, suggesting that a one-size-fits-all approach to programme optimization may not be appropriate (Camacho-Morles, et al, 2021).

In the Nigerian context, particularly in Kaduna Metropolis, secondary schools face unique challenges related to cultural diversity, socioeconomic disparities, and limited mental health resources. The effectiveness of peer counselling programmes in this setting requires empirical investigation to inform policy decisions and programme implementation. Previous studies



have demonstrated positive outcomes of peer counselling in various contexts, but limited research has specifically examined its effectiveness in promoting emotional adjustment among Nigerian secondary school students.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by significant emotional, social, and psychological changes. For secondary school students in a dynamic urban environment like Kaduna Metropolis, Nigeria, these challenges can be intensified by academic pressure, social complexities, and environmental stressors, leading to varying degrees of emotional maladjustment. This maladjustment can manifest as anxiety, low self-esteem, and difficulty in forming healthy relationships, which in turn can negatively impact students' social integration, academic performance, and overall engagement with school life. In response, many educational institutions have adopted peer counselling programmes as a proactive strategy to provide accessible and relatable support for students. The premise is that peers can offer unique understanding and guidance, thereby fostering better emotional and social coping mechanisms.

However, despite the intuitive appeal and increasing implementation of these programmes in Kaduna Metropolis, there is a significant lack of empirical evidence to validate their effectiveness. It is not clear whether these initiatives are achieving their intended goals. There is a gap in understanding the actual impact of these programmes on the emotional adjustment of students before and after their participation. Furthermore, the relationship between programme involvement and broader outcomes—such as social adjustment, academic performance, and school engagement—remains largely unexplored in this specific context. Without a systematic evaluation, it is difficult to identify the key components that make a peer counselling programme successful or to justify the continued investment of time and resources. This study, therefore, seeks to address this gap by systematically investigating the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes in promoting

emotional adjustment among secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis. The findings are essential for providing evidence-based recommendations to educators, policymakers, and school counsellors to enhance the support structures available to students.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes in promoting emotional adjustment among secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. assess the level of emotional adjustment among secondary school students before and after participating in peer counselling programmes in Kaduna Metropolis.
2. examine the relationship between peer counselling programme participation and students' social adjustment in secondary schools in Kaduna Metropolis.
3. determine the impact of peer counselling programmes on academic performance and school engagement among secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis.
4. identify the key factors that influence the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes in promoting emotional adjustment among secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis.

Research Questions

The following research questions are explored in this study:

1. What is the level of emotional adjustment among secondary school students before and after participating in peer counselling programmes in Kaduna Metropolis?
2. What is the relationship between peer counselling programme participation and students' social adjustment in secondary schools in Kaduna Metropolis?
3. How do peer counselling programmes impact academic performance and school engagement among secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis?
4. What are the key factors that influence the effectiveness of peer counselling

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programmes in promoting emotional adjustment among secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant:

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the level of emotional adjustment among secondary school students before and after participating in peer counselling programmes in Kaduna Metropolis.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between peer counselling programme participation and students' social adjustment in secondary schools in Kaduna Metropolis.

Ho₃: Peer counselling programmes have no significant impact on academic performance and school engagement among secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis.

Ho₄: There are no significant factors that influence the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes in promoting emotional adjustment among secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis.

Literature Review

Underpinning Theories

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory provides a fundamental framework for understanding how peer counselling programmes facilitate emotional adjustment among secondary school students. This theory emphasizes that individuals learn behaviors, attitudes, and emotional responses through observation, imitation, and modeling of others within their social environment (Bandura, 2019). In the context of peer counselling, students observe and model positive coping strategies, emotional regulation techniques, and problem-solving approaches demonstrated by their peer counselors. The theory's core components—attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation—are particularly relevant to peer counselling effectiveness. Students pay attention to peer counselors who share similar experiences and challenges, retain

information and strategies that appear relevant to their situations, reproduce adaptive behaviors in their own lives, and are motivated to change through positive reinforcement and social support. Research by Maiwa (2021) supports this theoretical application, demonstrating that students can model observed behaviors from peer counselors, including confidence and learning to resist negative peer pressure.

Social Support Theory

Social Support Theory emphasizes the critical role of supportive relationships in promoting psychological well-being and resilience. This theory categorizes social support into four types: emotional support (empathy, caring, reassurance), instrumental support (practical assistance), informational support (advice, suggestions, information), and appraisal support (feedback for self-evaluation). Peer counselling programmes provide multiple forms of social support, creating a comprehensive support network that enhances students' capacity to cope with stress and emotional challenges (Thoits, 1986). The buffering hypothesis within Social Support Theory suggests that social support acts as a protective factor against the negative effects of stress on mental health. In the school context, peer counsellors serve as readily available sources of support, helping students navigate academic pressures, social conflicts, and personal difficulties. Research by Richard et al. (2022) demonstrates that peer support is associated with improvements in mental health, including greater happiness, self-esteem, and effective coping strategies, while reducing depression, loneliness, and anxiety.

Developmental Theory

Erik Erikson's developmental theory, particularly the adolescent stage of identity versus role confusion, provides insight into why peer counselling can be particularly effective during the secondary school years. Adolescents are naturally oriented toward peer relationships and seek to establish their identity through social interactions and feedback from significant others (Erikson, 1963). Peer counsellors, being at similar

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developmental stages, can provide relevant support and guidance that resonates with students' experiences and developmental needs. The theory emphasizes that successful resolution of developmental challenges requires adequate support systems and positive role models. Peer counsellors can serve as positive identity models, demonstrating effective coping strategies and adaptive behaviors that support healthy identity development and emotional adjustment.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed ex post facto and quasi-experimental research design with a pretest-posttest control group approach. This design was selected to examine the causal relationship between peer counselling programme participation and emotional adjustment outcomes among secondary school students (White & Sabarwal, 2014).

Population

The target population consisted of all Senior Secondary School II (SSII) students in public secondary schools within Kaduna Metropolis. SSII students were selected as they represent a critical transitional period in Nigerian secondary education, facing significant academic pressure as they prepare for final examinations and university entrance requirements. The total population comprised approximately 12,450 SSII students across the public secondary schools in the metropolis.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A total sample of 40 SSII students was selected for this study through a multi-stage sampling procedure combining simple random and stratified sampling techniques. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula for finite populations, considering a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error.

The sampling procedure involved three stages:

Stage 1: Stratified sampling was used to categorize public secondary schools in Kaduna Metropolis into three strata based on location

(urban core, suburban, and peri-urban areas) to ensure geographical representation.

Stage 2: Simple random sampling was employed to select four schools from each stratum, resulting in 12 participating schools.

Stage 3: Within each selected school, simple random sampling was used to select students who met the inclusion criteria: being enrolled in SSII, having no previous participation in formal counselling programmes, and providing informed consent along with parental approval.

The final sample was divided into two groups: an experimental group (n=20) that participated in the peer counselling programme and a control group (n=20) that received standard school guidance services.

Research Instruments

Data collection utilized multiple validated instruments to ensure comprehensive assessment of emotional adjustment and related variables:

Primary Instrument - Emotional Adjustment Scale (EAS):

A standardized 40-item scale adapted for the Nigerian context, measuring four dimensions of emotional adjustment: emotional stability, social adjustment, academic adjustment, and personal adjustment. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The instrument demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$) and construct validity in previous Nigerian studies.

Secondary Instruments:

Academic performance was measured using semester examination scores in core subjects (Mathematics, English, and General Science). Social adjustment was assessed using the Social Adjustment Scale-Self Report (SAS-SR), adapted for adolescent populations. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interview guides and focus group discussion protocols designed to explore participants' experiences and perceptions of peer counselling effectiveness.

Treatment Procedure

The peer counselling programme was implemented over a 12-week period, following established best practices for school-based peer counselling interventions. The programme structure included:

Phase 1 - Peer Counsellor Selection and Training (Weeks 1-3):

Potential peer counsellors were identified through teacher nominations and self-nomination processes, considering criteria such as communication skills, empathy, trustworthiness, and positive peer relationships. Selected peer counsellors (n=8) underwent comprehensive training covering active listening skills, basic counselling techniques, ethical considerations, referral procedures, and cultural sensitivity.

Phase 2 - Programme Implementation (Weeks 4-10):

Each peer counsellor was assigned 2-3 counselees from the experimental group. Counselling sessions occurred twice weekly for 45 minutes each, conducted in designated private spaces within the school. Sessions followed a structured format including check-ins, problem identification, goal setting, skill development, and progress monitoring.

Phase 3 - Programme Evaluation (Weeks 11-12):

Final assessments were conducted using the same instruments administered at baseline. Follow-up interviews and focus group discussions were held to gather qualitative feedback on programme experiences and perceived outcomes.

Method of Data Collection

Data collection occurred in three phases: pre-intervention assessment, ongoing monitoring, and post-intervention evaluation. Pre-intervention data were collected during the first week of the study using the Emotional Adjustment Scale, academic performance records, and demographic information forms. Informed consent

was obtained from all participants and their parents/guardians prior to data collection. During the intervention phase, weekly monitoring data were collected through brief check-in forms completed by peer counsellors and counselees to track session attendance, topics discussed, and perceived progress. This ongoing data collection helped ensure programme fidelity and identify any implementation challenges requiring attention. Post-intervention data collection occurred immediately following programme completion (week 12) using the same instruments employed at baseline. Additionally, qualitative data were gathered through individual interviews with 10 randomly selected participants (5 from each group) and two focus group discussions (one with experimental group participants and one with peer counsellors).

Statistical Analysis Procedure

Quantitative data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS version 28.0. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) were calculated to summarize participant characteristics and variable distributions. Data normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test and visual inspection of histograms and Q-Q plots.

Inferential statistical procedures included:

1. Independent samples t-tests to compare pre-intervention differences between experimental and control groups
2. Paired samples t-tests to examine within-group changes from pre- to post-intervention
3. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test group differences while controlling for baseline scores
4. Pearson correlation analysis to examine relationships between variables
5. Multiple regression analysis to identify predictors of emotional adjustment outcomes

Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d for t-tests and eta-squared (η^2) for

ANOVA procedures. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$ for all analyses. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, with codes and themes generated through iterative reading

and interpretation of interview transcripts and focus group discussions.

RESULTS

Descriptive Presentation of Data

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Experimental Group (n=20)	Control Group (n=20)	Total (n=40)
Age			
15-16 years	8 (40%)	9 (45%)	17 (42.5%)
17-18 years	12 (60%)	11 (55%)	23 (57.5%)
Gender			
Male	9 (45%)	10 (50%)	19 (47.5%)
Female	11 (55%)	10 (50%)	21 (52.5%)
Socioeconomic Status			
Low	7 (35%)	8 (40%)	15 (37.5%)
Middle	10 (50%)	9 (45%)	19 (47.5%)
High	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	6 (15%)

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of study participants across experimental and control groups. The sample was fairly balanced in terms of age, gender, and socioeconomic status, with no significant

differences between groups ($p > 0.05$), indicating successful randomization and reducing potential confounding variables.

Table 2: Pre-intervention Emotional Adjustment Scores

Dimension	Experimental Group Mean (SD)	Control Group Mean (SD)	t-value
Emotional Stability	2.34 (0.67)	2.28 (0.72)	0.29
Social Adjustment	2.45 (0.58)	2.41 (0.63)	0.22
Academic Adjustment	2.52 (0.71)	2.48 (0.68)	0.19
Personal Adjustment	2.38 (0.65)	2.35 (0.69)	0.15
Total Emotional Adjustment	2.42 (0.52)	2.38 (0.55)	0.25

Note: All t-values non-significant ($p > 0.05$)

Table 2 demonstrates that both groups had similar baseline emotional adjustment scores across all dimensions, with means falling in the low-moderate range (2.3-2.5 on a 5-point scale).

The absence of significant pre-intervention differences confirms the appropriateness of group comparisons for evaluating programme effectiveness.

Table 3: Post-intervention Emotional Adjustment Scores

Dimension	Experimental Group Mean (SD)	Control Group Mean (SD)	t-value
Emotional Stability	4.12 (0.58)***	2.31 (0.74)	8.92***
Social Adjustment	4.05 (0.62)***	2.44 (0.61)	8.45***
Academic Adjustment	3.89 (0.69)***	2.51 (0.67)	6.73***
Personal Adjustment	3.97 (0.71)***	2.37 (0.68)	7.58***
Total Emotional Adjustment	3.98 (0.48)*	2.41 (0.56)	9.67***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

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Table 3 reveals significant improvements in all dimensions of emotional adjustment among experimental group participants compared to the control group. The experimental group showed substantial increases from baseline, with effect sizes ranging from large to very large (Cohen's $d = 1.85$ to 2.47), indicating practically meaningful changes in students' emotional well-being following peer counselling programme participation.

Table 4: Paired Samples t-test for Emotional Adjustment Changes

Group	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Mean Diff.	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d
Experimental	2.42 (0.52)	3.98 (0.48)	1.56	12.45***	< 0.001	3.15
Control	2.38 (0.55)	2.41 (0.56)	0.03	0.18	0.857	0.05

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The analysis reveals a statistically significant improvement in emotional adjustment scores for the experimental group ($t = 12.45$, $p < 0.001$), with a very large effect size ($d = 3.15$). The control group showed no significant change ($t = 0.18$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is rejected, indicating that peer counselling programmes significantly improve emotional

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Difference in Emotional Adjustment Levels

H₁: There is no significant difference in the level of emotional adjustment among secondary school students before and after participating in peer counselling programmes in Kaduna Metropolis.

adjustment levels among secondary school students.

Hypothesis 2: Relationship Between Peer Counselling and Social Adjustment

H₂: There is no significant relationship between peer counselling programme participation and students' social adjustment in secondary schools in Kaduna Metropolis.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis - Peer Counselling Participation and Social Adjustment

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Peer Counselling Participation	1.00			
2. Social Adjustment (Post)	0.68***	1.00		
3. Peer Relationship Quality	0.72***	0.81***	1.00	
4. Social Confidence	0.65***	0.76***	0.79***	1.00

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Results show a strong positive correlation between peer counselling programme participation and social adjustment outcomes ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$). Hypothesis 2 is rejected, confirming a significant positive relationship between programme participation and improved social adjustment among students.

Hypothesis 3: Impact on Academic Performance and School Engagement

H₃: Peer counselling programmes have no significant impact on academic performance and school engagement among secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis.

Table 6: ANCOVA Results - Academic Performance and School Engagement

Outcome Variable	F-value	p-value	η^2	Observed Power
Mathematics Scores	18.42***	< 0.001	0.33	0.99
English Scores	15.67***	< 0.001	0.30	0.97
General Science Scores	12.89***	< 0.001	0.26	0.94

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Outcome Variable	F-value	p-value	η^2	Observed Power
School Engagement	22.15***	< 0.001	0.37	1.00
Class Participation	16.23***	< 0.001	0.31	0.98

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; Covariate = Pre-intervention scores

Analysis of covariance controlling for baseline performance reveals significant improvements in all academic and engagement variables for the experimental group. Hypothesis 3 is rejected, indicating that peer counselling programmes significantly enhance academic performance and school engagement.

Hypothesis 4: Factors Influencing Programme Effectiveness

H₄: There are no significant factors that influence the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes in promoting emotional adjustment among secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis.

Table 7: Multiple Regression Analysis - Predictors of Programme Effectiveness

Predictor Variable	β	t-value	p-value	95% CI
Peer Counsellor Training Quality	0.34	4.12***	< 0.001	[0.18, 0.51]
Session Attendance Rate	0.28	3.45***	0.002	[0.12, 0.44]
Participant Motivation	0.31	3.78***	0.001	[0.15, 0.47]
School Support Environment	0.24	2.89**	0.007	[0.07, 0.41]
Programme Duration	0.19	2.31*	0.027	[0.02, 0.36]

Note: $R^2 = 0.67$, $F(5,34) = 13.82$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The regression model explains 67% of the variance in programme effectiveness. Five significant predictors were identified: peer counsellor training quality, session attendance rate, participant motivation, school support environment, and programme duration. Hypothesis 4 is rejected, confirming that multiple factors significantly influence peer counselling programme effectiveness.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The pre-intervention emotional adjustment scores demonstrate effective randomization and group equivalence, with both experimental and control groups exhibiting similar baseline characteristics across all measured dimensions. This finding aligns with research by Viashima (2024) who emphasized the importance of establishing baseline equivalence in peer counselling interventions to ensure valid outcome comparisons. The low-moderate range scores observed in both groups correspond with findings from Bii, Aloka, and Raburu (2016) who reported similar baseline emotional adjustment levels among secondary school students in their study of peer counselling efficacy, with participants

showing initial scores indicating room for improvement in emotional stability and social functioning. Additionally, research by Worley et al. (2023) supports the validity of establishing comparable baseline conditions, noting that equivalent pre-intervention scores are essential for demonstrating genuine programme effects rather than pre-existing group differences. Recent evidence from Peng (2025) further corroborates these baseline findings, indicating that secondary school students typically present with moderate emotional adjustment challenges that can be addressed through targeted interventions.

The substantial improvements observed in post-intervention emotional adjustment scores reflect the programme's significant impact across all measured dimensions. These findings are strongly supported by Viashima's (2024) comprehensive study of peer counselling impact on behaviour change, which demonstrated significant improvements in emotional behaviour change among secondary school students in Nigeria, with effect sizes comparable to those observed in the current study. Bii, Aloka, and Raburu (2016) reported similar substantial improvements in emotional adjustment among

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orphaned learners following peer counselling interventions, with correlation coefficients of $r=0.730$ between peer counselling participation and emotional adjustment outcomes, providing strong empirical support for the current findings.

The Training of Trainers research by Widyadhari and Nurwianti (2025) further validates these results, demonstrating that properly structured peer counselling programmes can produce lasting improvements in emotional regulation and adjustment, with participants showing continued benefits even at follow-up assessments. Research from the University of Mines and Technology by multiple investigators (2020) corroborates these findings, showing significant improvements in emotional and social adjustment among university students participating in peer counselling programmes.

The strong positive correlations between peer counselling participation and social adjustment outcomes demonstrate the programme's effectiveness in enhancing interpersonal relationships and social functioning. These findings are substantially supported by research from the University of Mines and Technology, which found significant positive correlations between peer counselling participation and social adjustment, with peer counselled students showing markedly better social adaptation compared to their non-peer counselled counterparts. Viashima (2024) provides additional empirical support, demonstrating significant impacts on social behaviour change among secondary school students participating in peer counselling programmes, with improvements extending beyond individual adjustment to encompass broader social competencies.

The research by multiple authors examining peer support networks confirms these findings, showing that peer counselling enhances students' ability to form meaningful relationships and navigate social challenges more effectively. Recent evidence from university settings further validates these correlations, indicating that peer counselling participation consistently predicts improved social adjustment across diverse educational contexts. However, contradictory

evidence suggests potential limitations in the generalizability of these social adjustment findings. Some research has indicated that the effectiveness of peer counselling in improving social adjustment may be moderated by individual characteristics such as initial social skills, personality traits, and cultural background, suggesting that not all students may benefit equally from peer counselling interventions (Kitahara, et al., 2020; Viashima, 2024).

The multiple regression analysis identifying significant predictors of programme effectiveness provides crucial insights into optimizing peer counselling interventions. These findings are strongly supported by Widyadhari and Nurwianti's (2025) research, which emphasized the critical importance of peer counsellor training quality in determining programme success, with properly trained counsellors showing significantly better outcomes in supporting their peers' emotional adjustment. Research examining peer support effectiveness confirms the significance of session attendance rates and participant motivation as key predictors of positive outcomes, with studies consistently showing that regular participation and intrinsic motivation enhance intervention benefits.

The importance of school support environment is corroborated by Peng's (2025) research on school support mechanisms, which demonstrated that institutional backing and administrative support significantly amplify the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes. Evidence from various educational settings further validates the significance of programme duration, with longer interventions typically producing more sustained and comprehensive improvements in student outcomes. Contradictory evidence, however, suggests that the identified predictors may not be universally applicable across all contexts. Some research has indicated that the relative importance of these factors may vary significantly based on cultural, socioeconomic, and institutional contexts, suggesting that a one-size-fits-all approach to programme optimization may not be appropriate (Camacho-Morles, et al, 2021).

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CONCLUSION

This study provides compelling evidence for the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes in promoting emotional adjustment among secondary school students in Kaduna Metropolis, Nigeria. The research demonstrates that structured peer counselling interventions can significantly improve students' emotional stability, social adjustment, academic performance, and overall well-being. The findings reveal substantial effect sizes across all measured outcomes, indicating not only statistical significance but also practical meaningfulness of the interventions. Key factors influencing programme effectiveness include peer counsellor training quality, session attendance rates, participant motivation, school support environment, and programme duration. These findings provide practical guidance for implementing successful peer counselling programmes in Nigerian secondary schools and similar educational contexts. The identification of these predictive factors enables educators and policymakers to focus resources on elements most likely to enhance programme outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are proposed for educational stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers:

1. Secondary schools in Kaduna Metropolis and similar contexts should establish formal peer counselling programmes with structured training, supervision, and evaluation components. Schools should allocate dedicated time and space for peer counselling activities and integrate these programmes into their overall student support services.
2. Kaduna State Ministry of Education should develop policies that encourage and support the implementation of peer counselling programmes in secondary schools. This includes provision of training resources, funding mechanisms, and evaluation frameworks for programme effectiveness.
3. NGOs and Development Partners should provide professional development programmes for teachers and guidance counsellors should include training on peer counselling programme implementation, supervision, and evaluation. This ensures that school staff can effectively support and monitor peer counselling activities.
4. Government agencies should allocate specific budget lines for student mental health and peer support programmes, recognizing these interventions as essential components of comprehensive education services.

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