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Trauma-Informed Counselling: Supporting Students Impacted by Adverse Experiences

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Abstract		Original Research Article

This study investigates the Impact of trauma-Informed counselling on students who have experienced adverse events. Trauma-informed counselling is an approach that acknowledges the profound effects of trauma on an individual's life and aims to give healing and resilience through support, understanding, and empathy. This research explores the implication of trauma-informed counselling in schools and its effectiveness in mitigating the negative outcomes associated with trauma exposure, such as poor academic performances, social withdrawal, and mental health issues. Descriptive was used. The sample of the study was 200 secondary schools in Rivers state selected through stratified random sampling techniques. A self-structure questionnaire titled: Trauma-Informed Counselling, supporting student's impact by Adverse Experience (TICSSIAE). The findings suggest that implementing trauma-informed counselling will significantly improve student's emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall school engagement. Respondent reported increased feelings of safety, trust, and connection with their school environment. The study also highlighted the importance of trauma-informed counselling in educational settings and provides valuable insights into effective strategies for supporting students impacted by adverse experiences. The findings emphasize the need for continued investment in trauma-informed counselling programs and increased collaboration between educators, mental health professionals, and governments to create safe and nurturing learning environments for all students.

Keywords: Trauma-Informed Counselling, Adverse Experience, Students, Schools, Emotional Well-Being, Academic Performance, School Engagement

INTRODUCTION

The incessant of trauma among students in our schools today is a significant concern in educational settings, as research demonstrates a strong correlation between exposure to traumatic events and negative outcomes such as poor academic performance, mental health issues, and social withdrawal (Felitti. 2019). Students may sometime experience intrusive thoughts or flashbacks that prevent them from paying attention in class, studying, or focusing during timed assignment. In response to this growing issue, trauma-informed counselling has emerged as a promising approach to addressing the needs of students impacted by adverse experiences (Elliott & Malcoun, 2021). This approach recognizes the profound effects of trauma on an individual's life and aims to promote healing and resilience through support, understanding, and empathy (Malcoun, 2021).

The study examines the implementation and effectiveness of trauma-informed counselling in schools, with focus on understanding how these approaches can mitigate the negative outcomes associated with trauma exposure of students. The research adopts a descriptive survey with students, teachers, and counsellors in two hundred secondary schools in Rivers state which assumed to have trauma-informed counselling programs. The research findings provide more information on the importance of trauma counselling in educational settings and provide valuable insights into effective strategies for supporting students at all levels impacted by adverse experiences.

As trauma-informed counselling continues to bring positive results in schools and other settings, it is vital to evaluate its effectiveness and identify best practices for implementation. This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on trauma-informed counselling and highlights the need for

continued investment in programs that support the emotional well-being and academic success of students at all level affected by trauma.

1.1 Statement of Problem:

The experience of trauma among students is a serious concern in educational settings due to its profound impact on various aspects of their lives, including academic performance, social interactions, and mental health (Felitti et. At., 2019). Trauma-informed counselling has emerged as a promising approach to addressing the needs of students impacted by adverse experiences, yet there is a need for more research to evaluate its effectiveness and identify best practices for implementation in schools settings (Craig,2016).

The existing body of literature on trauma-informed counselling highlights its possible benefits in promoting healing and resilience among students affected by trauma (Downwy & McDonough, 2021). However, there is still limited research exploring the implementation and outcomes of trauma-informed counselling specifically within school settings. This research seeks to address this gap in the literature by investigating the impact of trauma-informed counselling on students at all level emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall school engagement.

Furthermore, the study aims to contribute to the development of best practices for implementing trauma-informed counselling in schools by examining the experiences of students, teachers, and counsellors who have participated in school programs. Through a descriptive survey, the researcher seeks to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of trauma-informed counselling in supporting students impacted by adverse experiences, and ultimately inform policy and practice related to mental health and trauma support in educational settings.

1.2 Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research work is to examine the implementation and effectiveness of trauma-informed counselling in supporting students impacted by adverse experiences within school settings. Specifically, the study aims to address the following:

1. Evaluate the impact of trauma-informed counselling on students' emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall school engagement.
2. Investigate the experiences and perspective of students, teachers, and counsellors who have participated in trauma-informed counselling programs in schools.
3. Identify best practices and potential areas of improvement in the implementation of trauma-informed counselling in schools

4. Contribute to the existing body of knowledge on trauma-informed counselling in educational settings and inform policy and practice related to mental health and trauma support for students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of trauma on students' lives has been well documented, with research highlighting its detrimental effects on academic performance, mental health, and social interactions (Felitti et al., 2019); Jimenez et at., 2016). In response to the growing concern, trauma-informed counselling has emerged as a promising approach to addressing the needs of students affected by adverse experiences (Craig, 2016). This approach acknowledge the significant impact of trauma on an invidual's life and aims to promote healing and resilience through support, understanding, and empathy (Downey & McDonough,2021).

Trauma-informed counselling has been shown to have a positive impact on various outcomes for students, including emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall school engagement (Elliott & Malcoun, 2021; Wolpow et al.,2019). A key aspect of this approach is the creation of safe and supportive envirnments that foster trust and connection between students and the management of the school. (Brunzell et al., 2021). Furthermore, trauma-informed counselling emphasizes the importance of providing students with resourse and coping strategies to manage the effects of trauma on their daily lives (Kataoka et al.,2018).

Despite the potential health benefits of trauma-informed counselling, there still a need for more research exploring its implementation and effectiveness specifically within school settings (Craig, 2016). This study contributed to the exiting body knowledge on trauma-informed counselling by examining the students that are impacted by adverse experiences and go further to contribute to the development of policies that better support students impacted by adverse experience.

EMPIRICAL REVIEWS

Several empirical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of trauma-informed counselling in supporting students impacted by adverse experiences. For instance, Elliot and Maclcoun (2021) conducted a study examining the impact of a trauma-informed counselling program on the emotional well-being and academic performance of students in a large urban school district. The results showed significant improvements in student's emotional well-being and academic outcomes after participating in the program.

In another study, Wolpow et al. (2019) investigated the effects of multi-tiered trauma-informed intervention in schools on students exposed to adverse childhood experiences. The findings indicated that the intervention was associated with

improvements in students' mental health, social-emotional skills, and academic performance.

A systematic review by Downey and McDonough (2021) explored the implementation and effectiveness of trauma-informed care in schools. The study synthesized findings from various studies and concluded that trauma-informed approaches can lead to positive outcomes for students, such as reduced disciplinary referrals, improved academic performance, and enhanced emotional well-being.

Furthermore, a study by Kataoka et al.(2018) examined the longitudinal impact of a trauma-informed school-based intervention on students's mental health services use and academic performance. The results demonstrated that the intervention led to decreased mental health service use and improved academic outcomes among students with behavioural health needs.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the effects of trauma-informed counselling on students emotional well-being, academic performance, and school engagement.
2. To what extent do students, teachers, and counsellors perceive the implementation and effectiveness of trauma-informed counselling programs in schools?
3. To what extent does best practices and challenges associated with implementing trauma-informed counselling in school settings.
4. To what extent does the finding of this study inform policy and practice to better support students impacted by adverse experience in educational environment?

HYPOTHESES

1. **Hypotheses 1:** There is no significant influence of trauma-informed counselling will have a positive effect on student's emotional well-being, academic performance, and school engagement.
2. **Hypotheses 2.** There is no significant influence of Students, teachers, and counsellors reporting positive perceptions of trauma-informed counselling programs in schools.
3. **Hypotheses** 3.There is no significant influence of best practices for implementing trauma-informed counselling in schools settings.
4. **Hypotheses 4.** There is no significant influence of finding of this study inform policy and practice to better support students impacted by adverse experience in educational environment?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey design aimed at investigating the Impact of trauma-Informed counselling on students who have experienced adverse events among secondary schools in Rivers state. The population of the study comprises of all students, tecahers, and counsellors in the selected schools. A stratified random sampling technique was employed in the study. The technique helped to ensure that all the variables of the study are well presented. The instrument was validated by experts in the measurements and evaluation in the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling. They ascertained the content and face validity of the instrument. .The researcher personally administered the instrument to the randomly sampled participants. The fill copies were collected on the spot. A mean score was used to answer the research questions while an independent t-test was used to test the four hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question One:

What are the effects of trauma-informed counselling on students emotional well-being, academic performance, and school engagement.

Table 1: Effects of trauma-informed counselling on students emotional well-being, academic performance, and school engagement.

S/N	S/N Effects of trauma-informed counselling	N	mean	SD	2.5	Decision
1	Reduction in symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder	200	2.65	0.90	2.5	Agree
2	Improved self-esteem and overall mental health	200	2.64	0.89	2.5	Agree
3	Improved academic achievement	200	2.06	1.21	2.5	Agree
4	Increase school attendance and reduced truancy rates.	200	2.60	0.9	2.5	Agree
5	Increase participation in extracurricular activities and positive social interactions	200	2.69	0.90	2.5	Agree

Table 1. Shows that reduction in symptom of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (mean= 2.65), Improved self-esteem and overall mental health; (mean = 2.64), Improved academic achievement (mean= 2.06), Increase school attendance and reduced truancy rates. (mean =2.60) and Increase participation in extracurricular activities and positive social interactions (mean = 2.69) are the effects of trauma-informed counselling in the study area in the order of magnitude.

Research Question Two:

Table 2: To what extent do the students, teachers, and counsellors perceive the implementation and effectiveness of trauma-informed counselling programs in schools?

Variables	N	Means	STD
Students	100	29.7	6.66
Teachers, Counselors	100	47.0	5.05
Total	**200**	**38.4**	**5.86**

From the table 2 above, there is a tendency for students to perceive the implementation and effectiveness of trauma-informs counselling programme more than teachers and counsellors. This is because the mean score and standards deviation of teachers and counsellors are 47.0 and 5,05 respectively, slightly above that of students mean and deviation 29.7 and 6.66. However, we cannot conclude whether this mean difference is significant or not, hence we need to subject it to an independent t-test under research hypotheses two.

Research Question Three:

Table 3: To what extent does best practices and challenges associated with implementing trauma-informed counselling in school settings.

Variables	N	Means	STD
Students	100	49.0	2.7
Teachers, counselors	100	21.5	8.6
Total	200	35.25	5.6

Table 3 above shows that students have a higher tendency to experiences best practices and challenges associated with implementing trauma-informed counselling in school settings as shows in their mean and standard deviation scores 49.0 and 2.7 than those of the teachers and counsellors as shown means and standard deviation score 21.5 and 8.6 respectively. However, we need to subject it to independent t-test to establish it significance.

Research Question Four:

Table 4: To what extent does the finding of this study inform policy and practice to better support students impacted by adverse experience in educational environment?

Variables	N	Means	STD
Students	100	28.5	8.60
Teachers, counselors	100	46.0	3.05
Total	200	34.5	5.75

From the table four above, the tendency for teachers and counsellors to experience the policy is higher than that of the students. This is because the mean score and standard deviation of the teachers and counsellors are 46.0 and 3.05 respectively, slightly above that of the students which the means is 28.5 and 8.60. However, we cannot conclude whether there means different is significant or not, hence we need to subject it to an independent t-test under research hypotheses four.

Hypotheses One:

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant influence of trauma-informed counselling will have a positive effect on student's emotional well-being, academic performance, and school engagement.

Table 5: Independent t-test Analyses of the trauma-informed counselling as a positive effect on student's emotional well-being, academic performance, and school engagement.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	Standard Error	t.cal	t.crit	Level of significance
Students	131	0.6	9.10	1.98	0.03	0.02	1.96	0.05
Teachers, counselors	69	0.35	4.90					

Table five above shows that the calculated t-test of 0.02 is less than the critical t-test of 1.96 at a 0.05 level of significance. This leads to the retention of the null hypotheses and the rejection of alternatives. This means that both students and teachers and counsellors were influenced by the same influence by trauma-informed counselling positively on emotional well-being, academic performance, and school engagement.

Hypotheses Two:

There is no significant influence of Students, teachers, and counsellors reporting positive perceptions of trauma-informed counselling programs in schools.

Table 6: Independent t-test Analysis of the Students, teachers, and counsellors reporting positive perceptions of trauma-informed counselling programs in schools.

variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	STD Error	t.cal	t.crit	Level of significance
Students	110	0.55	7.61	198	0.035	0.15	1.96	0.05
Teachers, Counselors	90	0.45	6.39					

Table 6 shows that the calculated t-value of 0.15 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at a 0.05 level of significance. This leads to the retention of the null hypothesis and the rejection alternative. This means that students, teachers and counsellors were influenced by reporting positive perceptions of trauma-informed counselling programs in schools.

Hypotheses Three:

Hypotheses 3.There is no significant influence of best practices for implementing trauma-informed counselling in schools settings.

Table 7: Independent t-test Analysis of the influence of best practices for implementing trauma-informed counselling in schools settings

variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	Standard Error	t.cal	t.crit	Level of significance
Students	86	0.30	6.1	1.98	0.13	0.14	1.96	0.05
Teachers and counselors	114	0.57	8.10					

Table 7 shows that the calculated t.value of 0.14 is less than critical t.value 1.96 at a 0.05 level of significance. This leads to the retention of the null hypothesis and the rejection of alternative. This means that both the students, teachers and counsellors were influence of influence of best practices for implementing trauma-informed counselling in schools settings.

Hypotheses Four:

There is no significant influence of finding of this study inform policy and practice to better support students impacted by adverse experience in educational environment?

Table 8: Independent t-test Analysis of the influence of finding of this study inform policy and practice to better support students impacted by adverse experience in educational environment

Variable	N	Means	SD	Df	Standard Error	t.cal	t.crit	Level of significance
Student	28	0.14	1.99	1.98	0.054	0.72	1.96	0.05
Teacher, Counselor	172	0.86	12.21					

Table 8 shows that the calculated t-value of 0.72 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at a 0.05 level of significance. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis and accept alternative. This means that both students, teachers and counsellors were influenced of finding of this study inform policy and practice to better support students impacted by adverse experience in educational environment

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Integrating the quantitative and qualitative findingds, it is evident that trauma-informed counselling can lead to significant improvements in students' emotional well-being, academic performance, and school engagement. Participants' perceptions aligned with these outcomes, highlighting the importance of creating safe environments, promoting coping skills and resilience, and investing in profession development and collaboration among stakeholders.

Table 1 shows that interpersonal relationship with students (mean = 2.65), interpersonal relationship between students, teachers and counsellors (mean = 2.64). This findings is in agreement with Brunzell and Liljedahl (2021) assertion that the major source of trauma-informed counselling be directly attributed to the students and school environment. Through survey and interview response, students most commonly refer to teachers and environment as being responsible for most of their traumas.

The findings is also in agreement with Craig (2016) statement that trauma-informed counselling come from various aspects of life including developmental and social changes, financial and accommodation problems, academic demands, and other schools challenges. The research question findinds is also consistence with Derogatis (2001) explanation that poor interpersonal relationship with students can provoke trauma.

The finding of the hypothesis one shows that there is no significant difference in the source of trauma between students, teachers and councillors in the study area. This implies that students were not influence more by the source of trauma than teachers and counsellors. This findings is in agreement with Downey and McDonough (2021) who explained that students and teachers experienced the same level of trauma.

The finding of hypothesis two reveals that there is no significance difference in the source of trauma-informed counselling among students, teachers and cousellors in the study area. The finding further shows that students were more influence by the source of trauma than the teachers and counsellors. The reason for this finding could be that students in the study area are subjected to the same school environment. The finding of hypothesis three shows there is no significant difference in the sources of trauma between students, teachers and councellors in the study area. The finding shows that students are not influenced more by the sources of trauma than teachers and couselors. This finding is consistent with Elliot and Malcoun (2021), that students do not exhibit a higher level of trauma than teachers and counsellors, implying that student status is not a predictor of trauma-inform counselling.

The finding of hypothesis four shows that there is no significant difference in the source of trauma between experience and inexperience of teacher and counsellors in the study area. The finding shows that inexperienced teachers are not more influenced by source of trauma than students. The finding is inconsistent with Felitti et at., (2019) which found that teachers experience trauma more than student.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding, this research highlights the effectiveness of trauma-informed counselling in promoting healing and success for students for impacted by trauma and emphasizes the need for continued investment in trauma-informed approaches to education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendation were made:

1. **Implement Trauma-Informed Counselling;**
   Schools should integrate trauma-informed counselling into their support services, ensuring their counsellors are trained in evidence-based trauma-informed practice
2. **Collaborate with Stakeholders:**
   Schools managements and government should collaborate to promote trauma-informed practices and create supportive learning environment.
3. **Invest in School-Based Mental Health Services**

Government and school management should allocate resources to provide accessible and culturally responsive mental health support for students impacted by trauma.
4. **Conduct Further Research:**
   Future studies should continue to investigate the effectiveness of trauma-informed counselling in diverse school settings and explore additional factors that influence students.

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