

COUNSELLING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES PREDICTING PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AMONG MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN COMMUNITY

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Abstract

The study explored counselling and conflict resolution strategies in predicting peaceful co-existence among members of University of Benin community using ex-post facto research design. One research question and two null hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study consists of 51,991 staff and students from 18 selected sections of the University community. A sample of 1,440 persons from the University community representing approximately 3% of the population was drawn for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select four per unit. From each of the four units, 20 staff and students per unit were drawn. This made a total of 80 participants. Hence, (20 participants x 4 units) per the 18 sections as sample for the study. The data collected were analyzed with mean (X), standard deviation (SD). The hypotheses were tested using simple linear regression and multiple linear regression. The results revealed among others that counselling in conflict resolution strategies is acknowledged and being used in University of Benin Community with the majority of the students; there is relationship of counselling on conflict resolution strategies among members of University of Benin Community ($.69 \geq R^2 \leq .69$). The study concluded that the use of counselling and conflict resolution strategies among students is notably high. The study recommended among others that the University invest in expanding and equipping its counselling units with skilled professionals to support students and staff in managing conflicts constructively. This will strengthen the counselling services.

Keywords: Counselling, Conflicts, Collaboration, Withdrawal/avoidance, Forcing, Smoothing

Introduction

Throughout history, conflict has been an inevitable part of human interaction, occurring in various spheres such as personal relationships, workplaces, educational institutions, and communities (Faude & Fuß, 2020). Conflicts are a normal part of daily life. Yet, conflict is often viewed negatively, as it can lead to disagreements, stress, social chaos, and violence. Moreover, the absence of conflict is commonly considered the most significant indicator of a good relationship (Hartoyo, et al., 2020).

In modern society, where diverse cultures, ideologies, and interests intersect, conflicts have become more complex and pervasive (Ikpenwa, 2024). However, conflict also has positive aspects: it helps individuals understand themselves, enhances their awareness of others' characteristics, reveals relationship problems that need to be addressed, and encourages change. It can also increase energy and motivation for problem-solving, make life more interesting, and help identify small problems that may be perceived as major issues (Iravo, 2021). Conflict as a concept can help explain many aspects of social life such as social disagreement, conflicts of interests, fights between individuals, groups or organizations (Muh, et al., 2022). In political terms, conflict can refer to wars or revolutions that may involve the use of force. Without proper social arrangements or resolutions, conflicts in social settings can lead to stress or tension among stakeholders (Nur & Susanto, 2020). When interpersonal conflicts occur, their effects often extend beyond the two individuals involved, negatively impacting many associates, individuals, and relationships (Pitafi, et al., 2020). Sometimes, the effect can be humorous, bearing in mind that interpersonal relationships refer to the affiliations, connections, or social associations between two or more people (Uwakwe, 2020). Wasino, et al., 2021) avowed that counseling and conflict resolution strategies play a crucial role in mitigating disputes and fostering peaceful coexistence. Ikpenwa (2024) acknowledged that effective counseling and conflict resolution mechanisms are essential for maintaining harmony and ensuring constructive engagement in society.

Statement of the Problem

In today's fast paced world, conflict is a fact of life as stated, and as such is not necessarily a bad issue. In fact, a relationship with frequent conflicts may be healthier than one with no observable conflict (Hartoyo, et.al 2020). Conflicts occur at all levels of interaction, at work, among friends, with families, between relationship and among partners. When conflict occurs, the relationship may be weakened or strengthened. However, conflict can be a critical event in the course of a relationship. Conflicts arise due to various factors, including political differences, cultural misunderstandings, economic disparities, workplace disputes, and mental health issues. Whenever two or more people interact, there is potential for disagreement to occur; especially where the association is related to work or if the association is social. Conflicts are unavoidable when any group that works together comprises differing personalities with different forms of ideology. Thus, conflict may be avoided, talked out, negotiated, arbitrated, adjudicated, resolved by legislation, by political action or by violent (Wasino, et al.2021). The failure to address these conflicts effectively can lead to prolonged disputes, violence, emotional distress, and decreased productivity. Traditional methods of conflict resolution are often inadequate in addressing the dynamic nature of modern conflicts, necessitating the adoption of innovative counselling techniques and mediation strategies (Nur, et. al., 2020). Managing people over whom you have no real power is a challenge particularly in professional service firms like guidance and counselling. This study explores counselling and conflict resolution strategies in predicting peaceful co-existence among members of the University of Benin community.

Review of Related Literature

Conflict is a disagreement or clash between individuals or groups due to differences in opinions, values, goals, needs, or interests. It can occur in various settings, including personal relationships, academic environments, workplaces, or communities. Conflict is a natural part of human interaction but, if not managed properly, can lead to tension, misunderstanding, or even violence.

Resolution:

Resolution refers to the process of finding a peaceful and constructive solution to a conflict or problem. In the context of interpersonal or group conflicts, resolution involves negotiation, compromise, or the use of specific strategies (like collaboration, avoidance, or mediation) to settle disagreements and restore harmony.

Counselling:

Counselling is a professional, therapeutic process in which a trained counsellor helps individuals, groups, or communities explore and understand their problems, emotions, or behaviors, and develop effective coping strategies. In the context of conflict, counselling can help parties express their concerns, manage emotions, improve communication, and work toward conflict resolution.

Major Causes of Conflict

- i. *Opposing interests*: In modern, complex societies, what we perceive as opposing interests are often at the core of most conflicts (Usman, et al., 2025). We confront these situations many times a day. The modern organization introduces an entirely new set of potential conflict triggers in addition to those already present, such as competition over scarce resources, time constraints, ambiguity over responsibility and authority, differences in perceptions, work styles, attitudes, communication problems, individual differences, and increasing interdependence as boundaries between individuals and groups become more imprecise (Ikpenwa, 2024).
- ii. Other factors include reward systems since we work in environments with complex and often contradictory incentive structures and differentiation, which refers to the division of labour. Differentiation, as the foundation of any organization, causes individuals and groups to perceive situations differently and pursue different goals.
- iii. *Equity vs. Equality*: A continuous tension exists between equity the belief that rewards should correspond to individual contributions and equality the belief that everyone should receive the same or similar outcomes

Counselling Conflict Resolutions Principles and Approaches

There are underlying counselling principles and approaches that underscore all successful conflict resolution. Ogo, et al., (2024) argued that both parties must view their conflict as a problem to be solved mutually so that both parties have the feeling of winning or at least finding a solution which is acceptable to both. Each person must participate actively in the resolution and make an effort and commitment to find answers which are as fair as possible to both. One may get so caught up with our own immediate interests that we damage our relationship (Wake 2023). If we disregard or minimize the other person's perspective, use fear and power to win, or insist on always getting our own way, the other person may feel hurt, and the relationship can be damaged. In line with Pitafi, et al. (2020), problems with others may result from

ineffective conflict resolution approaches. They identified three primary interpersonal problem-solving styles in adolescents: passive, aggressive, and assertive. Furthermore, theorists have proposed that individuals respond to conflict based on a two-dimensional framework concern for one's own outcomes and concern for the outcomes of the other party.

Basic Counselling and Psychological Strategies for Effective Conflict Resolution

Conflict is constructive when the differences are resolved in outcomes favourable to group cohesiveness, organizational innovation, increased performance and productivity. Muh, et. al. (2022), defined conflict as incompatible preference ordering between individuals or situation where one party perceives that the other has frustrated or is about to frustrate his concern. According to them it is destructive when the outcomes are poor productivity, and loss of personnel and morale, with possible physical and psychological hardship. In fact, Ogo, et al. (2024) agreed that some conflicts may be necessary to achieve optimal organizational effectiveness. Organizations with too little conflict may ultimately stagnate. The question, however, is: how can we harness the positive aspects of interpersonal conflict and convert them into organizational gains?

Strategies Identified by Psychologists for Effective Conflict Resolution

- i. Counselling Collaboration:* A win-win resolution, this is a collaborative, mutual acceptable goal, with anticipated reward agreed upon by the participants. Issues are faced by participants in such a way that they can develop a resolution that are fully satisfactory to both of them (Uwakwe, 2020). The needs, desires and feelings of participants are taken into account and the concerns of both parties are expressed. Each party is involved in the search for the best resolution to the conflict in a constructive manner, for instance, an intergroup conflict, where the Personnel, Records and Admission units of the Registry in a tertiary institution are having over time sharing of the only Computer in the department. Members of Records and Personnel are accusing the Registrar of being unfair, by using his nominal power, to designate more service and browsing time to Admissions. Deputy Registrars have already been drawn into it and have made several phone calls to the Registrar, each pointing his being partial. The Registrar calls a meeting and asks each to express his perception of the problem. Each assigned to draw time table so that time sharing can be done objectively, based on the projected needs of each unit. Thus, at the next meeting all felt satisfied with the decision and the conflict was resolved.
- ii. Counselling Withdrawal/Avoidance:* A lose-lose resolution occurs when there is a lack of concern for both the relationship and the outcome. Both parties avoid addressing the issues and fail to confront the reality of the conflict, either by rationalizing or by delegating the problem to another party (Wasino, et al., 2021). The outcome is the least desirable and produces no winner while isolating both parties. The assumption in this strategy is that conflict is unnecessary and irrelevant to either party.

For instance, two medical officers want to use a particular instrument in the laboratory to study a particular disease in patients, but are afraid to confront the director in-charge of the equipment, with their plan for joint research because of his reputation as being very "territorial" they tried telling him informally, but he refuted. They decided that the situation is hopeless and that he would never listen to their suggestions. While the director feels that both staff are poor investigators and their proposal would never amount to much, so he avoids them and the project failed. Both parties now feel strong resentment toward the other and their relationship is strained.

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- iii. *Counselling Forcing*: A win-lose resolution. The concern for the outcome here is high and requires the use of authority by the forcing individual (Okoro, 2022). The user of this strategy is firm not willing to give ground, intent on pursuing his goals. When both parties use this strategy, considerable hostilities are likely, because each is trying to gain the upper hand. But during an interpersonal conflict the strategy can be used effectively, but it often builds up resentment and hostility. Only one participant or group will be happy with the outcome. For instance, an administrative officer who wants to go on leave in December, and hands his/her Head of Department his/her letter, but the head is reluctant to grant it because he/she will be left with overload of work, if the staff goes on leave. He/she decides he/she cannot let this staff go and tells him so in an authoritative manner. He/she asks the staff to postpone the leave. The administrative officer accepts but is not satisfied with the directive.
- iv. *Counselling Smoothing*: A lose win resolution. The concern for the relationship here is very high. And in order to make a good relationship, the user is willing to give a favourable outcome to his adversary, giving in to the demands of the adversary. Thus, the outcome produces a loser and a winner (Alade, 2023). But the handicap of this strategy is that it provides only temporary solution to the immediate encounter. The underlying assumption in this strategy is that agreement is impossible and that the use of power will resolve the problem. For instance, assistant lecturer is requested by his Head of Department to increase his academic time from 50% to 60%, so that the Head of Department can have lesser work load. The head being an elder professor who because of his added responsibility as the head is spending more time on administration and wants to reduce his academic time. If the assistant lecturer takes the problem of his increase in academic load to the higher authority who is afraid to challenge the HOD, because he needs the professors support in another matter or for fear of reprisal. The assistant lecturer, feeling exploited and frustrated, begins to believe that the only way to resolve this predicament is to leave the department.
- v. *Counselling Compromise*: In this strategy, there is concern for outcome as well as relationship. Both parties try to reach an agreement that would give both, some of what they want and have no effect on their relationship (Usman, et. al., 2025). This could be considered A lose-lose strategy, because both parties, none is likely to feel fully satisfied with the result, and the relationship is likely to be strained. Frequently used in resolving conflicts in labour and political negotiations, as it seeks to modify the positions of both parties by trying to find a middle ground.

The Counselling Choice of Strategy

The choice of strategy may depend on several factors. For instance, if one has authoritative power and favourable outcome is essential, one could choose a strategy from forcing or collaboration. But if one is concerned about maintaining a good relationship then collaboration or smoothing are more appropriate. But if time is not available, only smoothing and forcing strategies may be possible.

Separate people from the problem

- i. *Address the Problem, Not the Person*: Avoid the tendency to attack your opponent personally. When individuals feel personally threatened, they often become defensive, which makes addressing the actual issue more difficult. It is essential to separate the people issues from the problem itself (Lustick, 2021).
- ii. *Maintain a Rational, Goal-Oriented Mindset*: If your opponent resorts to personal attacks, do not allow yourself to be drawn into an emotional reaction. Let the other person release their

frustration without taking it personally. Instead, focus on understanding the underlying issue driving their aggression.

- iii. *Emphasize win-win solutions:* Even in what appears to be win-lose situations, there are often win-win solutions; look for an integrative solution; create additional alternatives, such as low-cost concessions that might have high value to the other person; frame options in terms of the other person's interests; look for alternatives that allow your opponent to declare victory

Find Underlying Interests

A key to successful negotiation is identifying integrative issues, which are often rooted in underlying interests. While we are typically aware of our own interests, a critical element in negotiation is developing an understanding of the other person's underlying interests and needs. With probing and exchanging information we can find the commonalities between us and minimize the differences that seem to be evident (Muh, et. al.2022).

Understanding these interests is the key to "integrative bargaining." The biggest source of failure in negotiation is the failure to see the "integrative" element of most negotiation. Too often we think a situation is win-lose when it is actually a win-win situation. This mistaken view causes us to often use the wrong strategy. Consider a situation where your boss rates you lower on a performance appraisal than you think you deserve. We often tend to see this as win-lose-either he/she gives in or I give in. There is probably a much higher chance of a successful negotiation if you can turn this to a win-win negotiation.

A key part in finding common interests is the problem identification. It is important to define the problem in a way that is mutually acceptable to both sides. This involves depersonalizing the problem so as not to raise the defensiveness of the other person (Kakembo, 2025). Thus, the student negotiating a problem with a professor is likely to be more effective by defining the problem as "I need to understand this material better" or "I don't understand this" rather than "You're not teaching the material very well."

- i. *Use an Objective Standard.* Try to have the result based on some objective standard. Make your negotiated decision based on principles and results, not emotions or pressure; try to find objective criteria that both parties can use to evaluate alternatives; don't succumb to emotional pleas, assertiveness (Harshita & Sameeksha, 2022).
- ii. *Try to Understand the other Person: Know his/her Situation.* Often, we tend to focus on our needs, our goals, and our positions. To successfully resolve conflict, it is important to focus on the other person as well. We need to understand their goals, needs, and positions, as well as their underlying interests. Additionally, we must consider the personality of the other party, determine how far we can push, and decide how open or concealed to make our own positions (Faude et al.,2020).

Acquire as much information about the other's interests and goals; what are the real needs vs. wants; what constituencies must he/she appease? What is his/her strategy? Be prepared to frame solutions in terms of the interests.

An important part of this is to recognize that people place very different values on issues than ourselves (Iravo, 2021). For example, a clean room may be much more important to you than it is to your roommate. We must understand how the other person sees reality, not just how we see reality.

If through pressure, deception or sheer aggressiveness, we push people to the point where they see themselves as likely to lose, this creates problems. The opponent will retaliate and fight back; losers often lose commitment to their bargain. Also, negotiators get reputations that can backfire. Remember that settlements which are most satisfactory and durable are the ones that address the needs of both parties.

Counselling Strategies for Effective Conflict Resolution

The key counselling strategies for resolving conflicts effectively are;

- i. Emphasizing active listening,
- ii. Empathy,
- iii. Effective communication,
- iv. Reframing conflicts,
- v. Problem-solving,
- vi. Emotional regulation,
- vii. Mutual respect.

Empirical Review of Related Studies

Ikpenwa (2024) examined the counsellors' adoption of intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State. Two research questions guided the study. two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance. The study adopted a census survey research design. The population for the study consisted of 113 counselors' (45 males and 68 females). there was no sampling because the population was manageable. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts; two from Guidance and counseling Department and one expert in measurement and Evaluation from the department of mathematics and computer, an overall reliability coefficient of .71 was obtained using cronbach Alpha statistics. A total of 105 copies out of 113 copies of the instrument correctly filled and returned were used for the study. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation for answering the research questions and t-test for testing the hypotheses. The results from the findings showed that counselors did not adopt administrative and moral intervention technique in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Enugu State .it recommended among others that seminars and workshops should be organized for counselors to acquaint them with administrative and moral intervention technique. This will enhance counsellors' productivity and students' academy performance.

Alade (2023) investigated the conflicts strategies adopted by management of secondary schools in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria. 220 secondary schools, of 680 were drawn from the states were part in the study. The conflict resolution strategy instrument (CRSI) was used in gathering data which was analyzed with the aid of simple percentage and t-test statistics. The study found that management of secondary schools used the conflict avoidance, smoothing, compromise and competitive strategies, ether frequently or once in a while in resolving conflicts in their schools. On the other hand, the forcing strategy was never used by the management. The study concluded that from all indications conflict exist all aspect of life, as long as human beings interact, conflict must occur. However, once it occurs, conflict must be resolved. That management should use the appropriate counselling strategy to resolve conflicts in their schools. The study therefore recommends that Management of secondary schools should be trained in the counselling art of conflict and conflict resolution strategies, especially in the resolving, mediation and arbitration strategies for effective outcomes or results.

Method of the Study

The study employs an ex-post facto research design, the population of this study consisted of the 51,991 persons staff and students from 18 selected sections of the university community. A

sample of 1,440 persons from the university community representing approximately 3% of the population was drawn for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select four per units. From each of the four (4) units, 20 staff and students per units was drawn. This makes a total of 80 participants. Hence, (20 participants x 4 units) per the 18 sections as sample for the study.

Four instruments were used in this study. They are instruments measuring counselling collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing, and smoothing. The scales were designed to covered major domains in counselling collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing, and smoothing. The reliability alpha domains and items on the scales are given as follows yielding to counselling collaboration ($\alpha=.89$, items 1-11), withdrawal/avoidance ($\alpha=.81$, items 12-24) forcing ($\alpha=.79$, items 25-30) and smoothing ($\alpha=0.86$, items 31-35). The 35-items on the scale had a five-point rating ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1) with a middle response of Undecided (3).

In other to ensure that the items in the instruments are valid, the content validity was performed on the instruments. The Cronbach reliability alpha technique was used to measure the internal stability or consistency of the instrument, using Cronbach Alpha reliability technique. The Cronbach reliability index was be obtained using the computer statistical package. The overall Cronbach reliability that was obtained for each instrument were .78 for collaboration, .82 for withdrawal/avoidance, .87 for forcing and .85 for smoothing.

Data collated were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages (%), mean (X) standard deviation (S.D). Specifically, percentages (%) were used to provide summary report of respondents' socio-demographics. Data collected was analyzed with mean (X), standard deviation (S.D). A mean score of 2.50 was used as the benchmark for determining extent of counselling in conflict resolution strategies. This was obtained by adding up the four-point responses on the instrument and dividing the sum of the scales (10) by the total number of responses ratings (four) to give 2.50. Hence, an overall mean of 2.50 or higher was taken as high counselling in conflict resolution strategies while any value of 2.49 or lower was taken otherwise. Hypothesis 1 was tested using the simple linear regression analysis while hypothesis 2 was tested with the multiple linear.

Results and Discussions

Research Question1: What is the extent to which counselling predict conflict resolution in peaceful co-existence among members of the University of Benin community?

In analyzing Research Question 1, the mean (X) and standard deviation (SD), and percentages were used to determine the level of counselling in conflict resolution in peaceful co-existence among members of the University of Benin community. The result is shown in Table 1. adopt as modified from Alade, 2023.

Table 1: Level of Counselling in Conflict Resolution Strategies

Score range	DQB	N	Mean (X)	S.D	Percentage (%)	Percentage ranking
	Rating					
Lecturers	1.00-1.99	185	1.78	.182	12.9	3 rd
Health Center	2.00-2.49	433	2.24	.142	30.2	2 nd
Students	2.50-3.49	778	2.88	.273	54.3	1 st
Profit ventures	3.50-4.00	36	3.59	.089	2.5	4 th
	Total	1432	2.56	.494	100.0	

From Table 1, the summary results show that 54.3% of respondents have the highest level of counselling in conflict resolution strategies, with a mean score of 2.88. 30.2% of respondents are at the medium level, moderately relying on counselling in conflict resolution strategies, with a mean score of 2.24. Additionally, 12.9% of respondents fall into the category of moderate reliance, with a mean score of 1.78. Furthermore, 2.5% of respondents report the lowest reliance on counselling in conflict resolution strategies, with a mean score of 3.59. These findings suggest that counselling in conflict resolution strategies is acknowledged and used within the University of Benin community, with the majority of students (54.3%) relying on it.

Hypothesis 1: Counselling does not significantly predict conflict resolution strategies among members of the University of Benin community in Edo State.

In testing hypothesis 1, the simple linear regression analysis was used to determine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. This further helped to determine the extent in percentage % to which the independent variable explains variations in the dependent variable. The results of the analysis are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Test, Result and Analysis: Does counselling significantly predict conflict resolution strategies among members of University of Benin Community in Edo State?

	β	Std. Error	Unstandardized	Standardized	P-val.	Remark
			Coefficients	Coefficients		
			Beta	t-value		
Model						
(Constant)	.241	.041		5.863	.000	Significant
Counselling	.920	.016		.835	57.433	.000 Significant

R= .835^a, R-square (R²) = .698 Adjusted R² = .697 F_(1,1430) = 3298.542*

- a. *Dependent Variable:* conflict resolution strategies
- b. *Predictor:* (Constant), Counselling *β-coefficient and t-value are significant (p < .05)

The data in Table 2 showed that the F-value of 3298.542 which tested for joint effect of the predictor was significant (p < .05). This indicates that counselling significantly predicts conflict resolution strategies among members of University of Benin Community in Edo State. The r-value (R) of 835 showed that the strength and direction of the predictor (counselling) with the dependent variable (conflict

resolution strategies among University of Benin Community) was strong and positively related respectively. The R^2 square and adjusted R^2 values (.698 and .697) showed that the relationship or explanatory power of counselling on conflict resolution strategies among members of University of Benin Community ($.69 \geq R^2 \leq .69$). The t-value shows that counselling individually predicts conflict resolution strategies among members of University of Benin Community ($= 57.433, \beta=.920 p < .05$).

Hypothesis 2: Counselling, collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing, and smoothing do not significantly and jointly predict conflict resolution among members of University of Benin community in Edo State.

To test hypothesis 2, the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used to determine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. This further helped to determine the extent (in percentage %) to which the independent variables explain variations in the dependent variable. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Analysis on Counselling Collaboration, Withdrawal/Avoidance, Forcing and Smoothing and Joint Prediction on Conflict Resolution among Members of University of Benin Community in Edo State

R=.976 ^a					
R-square (R^2)=.953					
Adjusted R-square=.953					
$F_{(3,1428)}=9690.330^*$					
Model ^a	Sum of square	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Regression	332.916	3	110.972		
Residual	16.354	1428	.011	9690.330*	.000 ^b
Total	349.270	1431.			

Coefficients	Unstandardized		standardized		Remark
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	
Model					
(Constant)	.092	.017		5.581	.000 Significant
Counselling collaboration	.482	.022	.437	21.759	.000 Significant
Withdrawal/Avoidance	.705	.009	.749	76.093	.000 Significant
Forcing & Smoothing	-.210	.017	-.198	-12.235	.000 Significant

a. *Dependent Variable:* conflict resolution among members of University of Benin Community

b. *Predictor:* (Constant), Counselling collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing and smoothing

* *t-value and f-value are statistically significant* ($p < .05$), indicating a strong correlation between counselling strategies and conflict resolution

The data in Table 3 showed that the F-value of 9690.330 which tested for joint effect of the predictors was significant ($p < .05$). This indicates that counselling, collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing, and smoothing significantly and jointly predict conflict resolution among members of the University of Benin community in Edo State, Nigeria. The r-value (R) of .976 showed that the strength and direction of the predictors (counselling collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing and smoothing) with the dependent variable (conflict resolution among University of Benin Community) was strong and positively related respectively. The R^2 square and adjusted R^2 values (.953 and .953) showed that the predictive or

explanatory power of counselling collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing and smoothing were moderate. The magnitude of the t-value shows the relevance, prominence, or order of importance of each of the variables. In descending order, the t-values shows that counselling collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing and smoothing has the most predictive effect on conflict resolution among University of Benin Community ($t=21.759, 76.093, -12.235 \beta=.482, 705, -.210 p<.05$). This shows that counselling collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing and smoothing significantly and jointly predict conflict resolution among University of Benin Edo State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study are discussed under the following sub-headings:

- i. The extent of counselling and conflict resolution strategies among members of University of Benin Community in Edo State
- ii. Counselling collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing and smoothing in conflict resolution among members of University of Benin Community in Edo State.

Counselling and Conflict Resolution Strategies among Members of University of Benin Community in Edo State

The result showed that counselling and conflict resolution strategies among students in University of Benin Community is high. Perhaps, the high level of counselling and conflict resolution strategies among students is due to the widely used or in higher demand among students than services like lectures, university health centres, or participants patronizing profit-driven ventures within the university community. University life exposes students to a variety of stressors such as academic pressure, social relationships, identity development, and financial concerns.

These challenges can lead to frequent interpersonal conflicts, emotional distress, anxiety, and depression. As a result, counselling becomes a needed outlet to manage emotional well-being. Conflict resolution strategies are sought to deal with peer disputes, roommate disagreements, group project tensions, or romantic issues. Unlike lectures in academic, often mandatory, and less interactive in addressing personal or relational problems. Health Center usage is typically limited to physical ailments, and many students may avoid going unless the issue is serious. Also, profit venture facilities within the campus may not have so many students patronizing it as some may choose to get their needs elsewhere or not all students can afford or prioritize the usage and less conflicts issues among them. This finding collaborates that of (Okoro 2022) who found that counselling in conflict resolution strategies among students is higher when compared with others persons within the campus. The reasons for this is that academic pressure, social relationships, financial concerns are among the challenges that lead to frequent interpersonal conflicts.

Counselling, Collaboration, Withdrawal/Avoidance, Forcing and Smoothing in Conflict Resolution among Members of University of Benin Edo State

The study reveals that counselling collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing, and smoothing strategies are significant predictors of conflict resolution among members of the University of Benin community. This implies that these strategies, when employed individually or collectively, influence how conflicts are managed and resolved within the academic environment. Counselling collaboration is a strong predictor as it involves mutual engagement and a win-win orientation, where all parties seek to understand and satisfy each other's interests. The significant role of counselling collaboration suggests that stakeholders in the University community recognize the importance of inclusive dialogues and mutual

problem-solving. Counselling interventions enhance collaboration by communication, promoting empathy, and encouraging joint decision-making.

Withdrawal/Avoidance comprise sidestepping or ignoring the conflict, often to reduce tension or delay confrontation. Its significance in this context may suggest a cultural or institutional preference for conflict de-escalation or passive resolution, especially when power dynamics are imbalanced (e.g., student-lecturer conflict). Some conflicts may be perceived as not worth the effort or too sensitive, causing individuals to withdraw rather than confront the issue directly. Although often criticized, strategic avoidance can be temporarily effective, particularly when followed by counselling or mediation support.

Forcing, a win-lose approach, involves one party asserting dominance to achieve their goals. Its predictive significance may suggest that certain members of the University community are inclined to resort to authoritarian or unilateral decisions, particularly in administrative or hierarchical disputes. While this strategy may bring immediate resolution, it could also generate residual resentment, especially if not followed by counselling or restorative practices. The findings highlight the complexity of conflict management in university settings, where power differences often exist. Smoothing, which prioritizes harmony over confrontation by accommodating the other party's concerns, reflects the value placed on maintaining relationships, especially among colleagues or within student groups. This suggests an institutional culture that sometimes favors peace over justice, where individuals may sacrifice personal interests for group cohesion. Additionally, it underscores the need for counsellors to support the development of assertiveness skills, ensuring that smoothing does not result in unresolved tension or suppressed emotions. The joint predictive power of these strategies emphasizes the multidimensional nature of conflict resolution at the University of Benin: no single strategy is effective in all situations. Instead, context, personality, and institutional dynamics shape the most appropriate approach. This reinforces the need for comprehensive counselling services that equip staff and students with flexible conflict resolution skills.

The findings align with Alade (2023), which found that the management of secondary schools used conflict avoidance, smoothing, compromise, and competitive strategies either frequently or occasionally in resolving conflicts. On the other hand, the forcing strategy was never employed by the management.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of the study reveal that the use of counselling and conflict resolution strategies among students within the University of Benin community is notably high. Among the various approaches examined, counselling collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing, and smoothing emerged as significant predictors of effective conflict resolution. This indicates that students and other community members actively engage in diverse strategies to manage and resolve interpersonal and institutional conflicts. The prominence of these strategies underscores the importance of a multi-dimensional approach to conflict management, where different techniques are applied depending on the nature of the conflict and the context. Overall, the study highlights the critical role of counselling services and conflict resolution skills in promoting harmony, mutual understanding, and stability within the University of Benin community.

Based on the conclusion that counselling and conflict resolution strategies particularly collaboration, withdrawal/avoidance, forcing, and smoothing significantly predict effective conflict resolution among members of the University of Benin community, the following recommendations are made:

1. The University should invest in expanding and equipping its counselling units with skilled professionals who can support students and staff in managing conflicts constructively as this will strengthen counselling services.

2. Emphasis should be placed on the collaborative strategy, which fosters dialogue, mutual respect, and long-term resolution, especially in academic and administrative settings.
3. Students and staff should be sensitized to seek early counselling intervention before conflicts escalate, using non-confrontational methods such as smoothing and avoidance where appropriate.
4. Regular assessment of how these strategies are used within the community can help identify gaps and inform continuous improvement in conflict resolution practices.

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