

## Chapter 8

### **Integrating Traditional Beliefs and Modern Counseling for Secondary School Students in Gusau Educational Zone, Zamfara State**

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#### **Abstract**

This study investigated the integration of traditional beliefs and modern counseling practices among secondary school students in Gusau Educational Zone, Zamfara State. Recognizing the pivotal role of cultural and traditional orientations in adolescents' psychological development, the study examined how indigenous beliefs influence counseling outcomes, assessed the effectiveness of combining these beliefs with modern counseling approaches, and identified challenges and opportunities in the integration process. A descriptive survey research design was employed, with a sample of 351 students selected through multistage sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire validated for content and reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.88$ ) and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, paired samples t-test, and one-sample t-test at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between traditional beliefs and counseling outcomes, indicating that cultural orientations enhance students' responsiveness to counseling interventions. The integration of modern counseling techniques with traditional beliefs significantly improved students' psychological well-being, demonstrating the effectiveness of culturally responsive approaches. While integration presented challenges, such as inadequate training, epistemological differences, and limited policy support, it also offered opportunities including increased community trust, accessibility, and holistic care. The study concludes that culturally integrative counseling enhances psychological outcomes and should be systematically implemented in schools. Recommendations emphasize counselor training, policy support, collaboration with traditional leaders, and provision of adequate resources to optimize culturally responsive interventions.

*Keywords:* Counseling, Cultural beliefs, Integration, Psychological well-being, Traditional practices

#### **Introduction**

The increasing complexity of adolescents' psychosocial challenges in contemporary African societies has drawn attention to the need for culturally responsive counseling approaches. In many Nigerian communities, including Gusau Educational Zone, traditional beliefs, values, and practices continue to shape young people's worldview, behavior, and

coping mechanisms. Studies have shown that traditional rituals and belief systems play a significant role in adolescents' identity formation, socialization, and psychological development, often providing meaning, belonging, and moral guidance (Ofori & Mohangi, 2024). However, modernization, urbanization, and exposure to Western-oriented counseling models have altered these traditional systems, sometimes creating conflicts between indigenous values and modern therapeutic practices. The mainstream counseling approaches in Africa often lack cultural relevance, as they are largely grounded in Western epistemologies that may not fully align with local realities.

Soori, Regmi, and Pappas (2024) highlighted that integrating traditional and modern mental health systems in West Africa enhances accessibility, acceptability, and effectiveness of psychological services, although structural and cultural barriers still exist. Similarly, Osok et al. (2024) argued that incorporating indigenous knowledge systems into counseling promotes cultural competence and holistic well-being, especially among adolescents who are deeply embedded in their sociocultural contexts. In addition, religious and spiritual beliefs central components of many African societies have been found to significantly influence counseling processes and outcomes, suggesting the need for integrative approaches that respect clients' belief systems (Lewis & Banks-Johnson, 2024).

Despite these insights, there remains limited empirical research focusing specifically on secondary school students in Northern Nigeria, where traditional beliefs strongly intersect with educational and counseling practices. This gap underscores the importance of examining how traditional beliefs can be effectively integrated with modern counseling techniques to improve students' psychological well-being and academic adjustment. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring culturally responsive counseling strategies that harmonize indigenous belief systems with contemporary therapeutic practices in Gusau Educational Zone, Zamfara State. Ofori and Mohangi (2024) found that participation in traditional rituals enhances adolescents' self-awareness, social skills, and identity development, although it may also reinforce negative stereotypes. Similarly, Wüthrich-Grossenbacher et al. (2023) demonstrated that religious and traditional beliefs are strong predictors of mental and physical health outcomes among young people, influencing their coping strategies and risk behaviors.

Nwafor (2024) revealed that supernatural beliefs often shape attitudes toward mental health and help-seeking behaviors, sometimes contributing to stigma and delayed counseling intervention. Furthermore, Azia et al. (2023) reported that religious beliefs significantly affect adherence to health interventions, indicating their strong psychological influence. Onah and Mataluwo (2025) also found that family and religious systems play a protective role in reducing adolescent risk behaviors such as substance abuse. These findings collectively suggest that traditional beliefs remain central to adolescents' psychosocial functioning and must be considered in counseling. Osok et al. (2024) found that incorporating indigenous practices into counseling enhances cultural relevance, accessibility, and holistic well-being among clients. Likewise, Soori, Regmi, and Pappas (2024) reported that integration

of traditional and modern mental health systems in West Africa improves service utilization and acceptability, despite structural barriers. Musindo et al. (2023) further highlighted that integrated psychosocial interventions for adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa produce better mental health outcomes when they address cultural and contextual factors. In a related study, Osei-Tutu and Affram (2024) found that culturally grounded counseling models rooted in religious and community practices are widely accepted and effective in Ghanaian contexts. Additionally, Nanji and Olivier (2024) emphasized that faith-based counseling systems significantly contribute to mental health service delivery in Africa, often filling gaps left by formal systems. Amenah et al. (2024) also observed that culturally sensitive approaches are essential for improving adolescent mental health services in West Africa. These studies confirm that integration enhances effectiveness and relevance of counseling services. Mkubwa et al. (2024) found that inadequate training and negative attitudes among mental health providers hinder effective service delivery in sub-Saharan Africa.

Similarly, Soori et al. (2024) identified barriers such as lack of policy support, mistrust between traditional and formal practitioners, and limited standardization of practices. Osok et al. (2024) also noted that while integration offers cultural benefits, it may face resistance due to differences in epistemology and professional practice. Nanji and Olivier (2024) highlighted risks associated with unregulated spiritual practices despite their benefits. Moreover, Ofori and Mohangi (2024) pointed out that some traditional practices may perpetuate harmful norms, posing ethical challenges. Nevertheless, opportunities such as improved community trust, culturally relevant interventions, and increased accessibility to counseling services have been widely reported. Overall, empirical evidence suggests that while integration presents notable challenges, its potential to enhance culturally responsive counseling for adolescents remains significant.

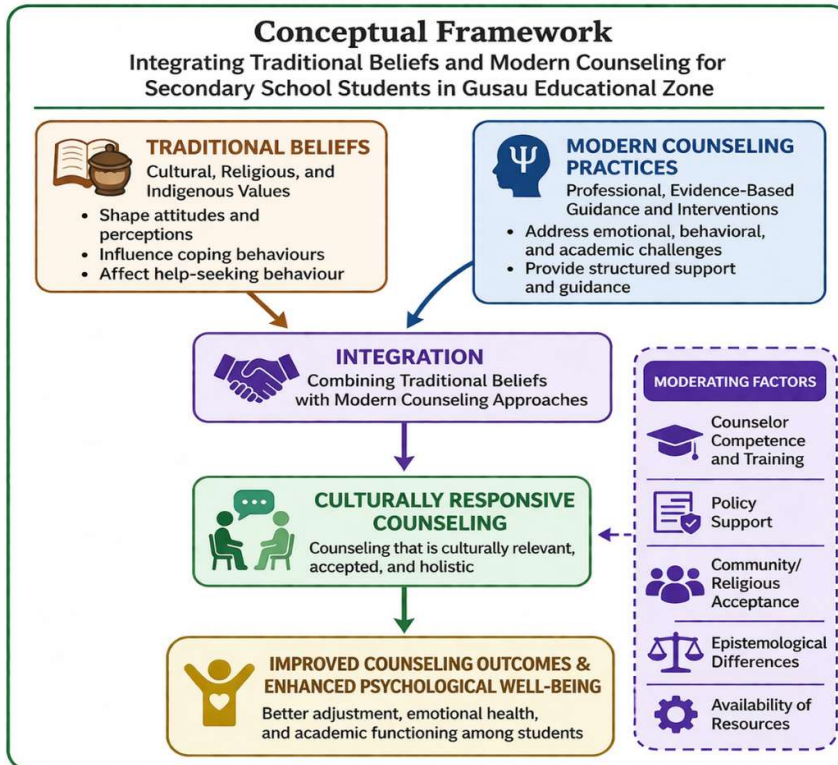
### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study assumes that the integration of traditional beliefs with modern counseling practices influences the psychological well-being and counseling outcomes of secondary school students in Gusau Educational Zone, Zamfara State. Traditional beliefs constitute the cultural, religious, spiritual, and indigenous value systems that shape students' perceptions, attitudes, coping mechanisms, and help-seeking behaviour. These beliefs serve as an important socio-cultural context through which students interpret personal and emotional challenges. Modern counseling practices represent structured professional guidance techniques grounded in psychological theories and evidence-based interventions aimed at improving students' emotional, behavioural, and academic adjustment. However, the effectiveness of such counseling practices may depend on their cultural compatibility with students' indigenous belief systems.

The framework posits that when modern counseling approaches are integrated with students' traditional beliefs, counseling becomes more culturally responsive, acceptable, and relatable, thereby improving counseling outcomes and enhancing students' psychological

well-being. The framework further recognizes that this integration process is moderated by certain challenges and opportunities such as counselor competence, policy support, epistemological differences, community acceptance, and collaboration with traditional/religious leaders. Thus, the study conceptualizes that traditional beliefs function as an independent variable influencing counseling responsiveness, while integrated counseling practices serve as the intervention mechanism that enhances psychological well-being, with contextual factors acting as moderating variables.

**Figure 1: Diagram of Conceptual Framework**



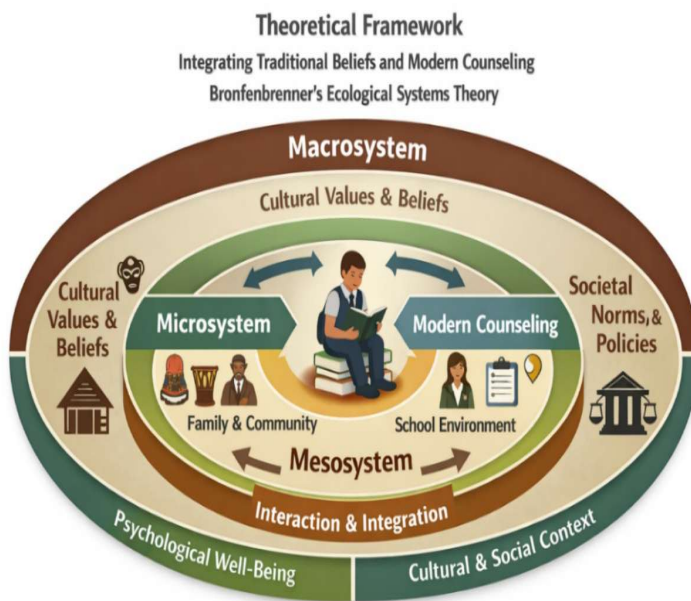
The diagram illustrates that traditional beliefs and modern counseling practices jointly influence the development of culturally responsive counseling for secondary school students. Traditional beliefs shape students' attitudes, perceptions, coping behaviours, and help-seeking patterns, while modern counseling provides professional and evidence-based guidance for addressing emotional, behavioural, and academic challenges. When these two approaches are integrated, they produce culturally responsive counseling that is relevant, acceptable, and holistic to students' socio-cultural realities. This integration ultimately leads to improved counseling outcomes and enhanced psychological well-being among students. However, the effectiveness of the integration process is influenced by moderating factors such as counselor competence and training, policy support, community or religious acceptance, epistemological differences, and availability of resources.

### Theoretical Framework

#### Ecological Systems Theory

This study is anchored on the Ecological Systems Theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), which explains human development as a result of interactions between individuals and their environmental systems. The theory identifies key layers such as the microsystem (family and school) and macrosystem (culture and beliefs), which significantly influence adolescents’ behaviour. In Gusau Educational Zone, traditional beliefs exist within the cultural (macrosystem), while modern counseling practices operate within the school setting (microsystem). The relevance of this theory in culturally responsive counseling. Tudge et al. (2024) emphasized that cultural systems play a crucial role in shaping developmental outcomes. Similarly, Mwangi et al. (2024) noted that integrating cultural values into counseling enhances effectiveness in African contexts, while Osei-Tutu and Affram (2024) highlighted that counseling models rooted in religious and traditional systems align with ecological perspectives. Thus, Ecological Systems Theory provides a suitable framework for understanding how the interaction between traditional beliefs and modern counseling influences students’ psychological well-being.

**Figure 2: Diagram of Ecological System Theory**



Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explains human development as shaped by interactions between individuals and multiple environmental systems. These systems range from the microsystem (family, school, peers) to the macrosystem (cultural values, beliefs, and societal norms), all of which influence adolescents' behavior and well-being. The theory emphasizes that integrating traditional beliefs with modern counseling within these interconnected systems can enhance students’ psychological development and overall adjustment.

### Research Objectives

1. To examine the influence of traditional beliefs on the counseling outcomes of secondary school students in Gusau Educational Zone, Zamfara State.

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2. To evaluate the effectiveness of integrating modern counseling approaches with indigenous traditional beliefs among secondary school students.
3. To identify the challenges and opportunities in combining traditional beliefs and modern counseling for enhancing students' psychological well-being.

**Research Questions**

1. How do traditional beliefs influence the counseling outcomes of secondary school students in Gusau Educational Zone?
2. What is the effect of integrating modern counseling techniques with traditional beliefs on the psychological well-being of secondary school students?
3. What challenges and opportunities arise when combining traditional beliefs with modern counseling practices for secondary school students?

**Hypotheses**

1. **H<sub>01</sub>:** Traditional beliefs have no significant influence on the counseling outcomes of secondary school students in Gusau Educational Zone.
2. **H<sub>02</sub>:** Integrating modern counseling approaches with traditional beliefs does not significantly improve the psychological well-being of secondary school students.
3. **H<sub>03</sub>:** There are no significant challenges or opportunities in combining traditional beliefs with modern counseling practices for secondary school students.

**Research Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the integration of traditional beliefs and modern counseling practices among secondary school students in Gusau Educational Zone, Zamfara State. This design was considered appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data from a representative sample to describe existing relationships among variables without manipulation. The population of the study comprised all secondary school students in the Gusau Educational Zone, from which a sample size of 351 respondents was drawn using a multistage sampling technique involving stratified and simple random sampling methods to ensure adequate representation across schools, gender, and class levels. Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher, titled "Traditional Beliefs and Modern Counseling Integration Questionnaire (TBMCIQ)," which was divided into sections aligned with the research objectives, covering traditional beliefs, counseling outcomes, integration effectiveness, and challenges and opportunities.

The instrument was validated by experts in educational psychology and counseling to ensure content and face validity, while its reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha method, yielding a high reliability index of 0.88, indicating strong internal consistency. The administration of the instrument was carried out with the assistance of trained research assistants, ensuring ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and

voluntary participation were strictly adhered to. Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques; specifically, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the relationship between traditional beliefs and counseling outcomes, paired samples t-test was employed to determine the effectiveness of integrating modern counseling approaches with traditional beliefs on students’ psychological well-being, and one-sample t-test was used to examine the existence of challenges and opportunities in the integration process. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and the results were presented in tables with appropriate interpretation to address the research questions and objectives comprehensively.

**Results**

**Table 1: Pearson Correlation Analysis of Traditional Beliefs and Counseling Outcomes (H<sub>01</sub>)**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Traditional Beliefs	356	3.42	0.68			
Counseling Outcomes	356	3.75	0.72	0.412	0.000	Reject H <sub>01</sub>

The result shows a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.412, p < 0.05$ ) between traditional beliefs and counseling outcomes. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that traditional beliefs significantly influence counseling outcomes among students.

**Table 2:**

**Paired Samples t-test on Integration of Counseling Approaches and Psychological Well-being (H<sub>02</sub>)**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Pre-Integration Well-being	356	2.98	0.74				
Post-Integration Well-being	356	3.81	0.69	15.62	355	0.000	Reject H <sub>02</sub>

The table shows a significant increase in psychological well-being after integrating modern counseling with traditional beliefs ( $t = 15.62, p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that integration significantly improves students’ well-being.

**Table 3:**

**One-Sample t-test on Challenges and Opportunities in Integration (H<sub>03</sub>)**

(Test value = 2.50 – neutral midpoint)

Variables		N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Challenges and Opportunities (Combined)		356	3.36	0.71	18.45	355	0.000	Reject H <sub>03</sub>

The mean score (3.36) is significantly higher than the test value of 2.50, and the p-value is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there are significant challenges and opportunities in integrating traditional beliefs with modern counseling practices.

### Discussion of Findings

The influence of traditional beliefs on counseling outcomes, the result revealed a significant positive relationship between traditional beliefs and counseling outcomes among secondary school students. This implies that students' cultural and traditional orientations play an important role in shaping their responses to counseling interventions. The finding supports earlier studies which established that traditional beliefs influence adolescents' psychological development, coping strategies, and help-seeking behaviour (Ofori & Mohangi, 2024; Wüthrich-Grossenbacher et al., 2023). The result also aligns with Nwafor (2024), who found that belief systems significantly determine attitudes toward mental health services in Nigeria. Therefore, the integration of students' cultural backgrounds into counseling practices enhances effectiveness and relevance.

The effectiveness of integrating modern counseling approaches with traditional beliefs, the findings indicated a significant improvement in students' psychological well-being after integration. This suggests that a combined counseling approach is more effective than using a single approach in isolation. The result is consistent with Osok et al. (2024) and Soori et al. (2024), who reported that integrating traditional and modern mental health systems improves service utilization and outcomes in African contexts. Similarly, Musindo et al. (2023) emphasized that culturally sensitive and integrated interventions yield better mental health outcomes among adolescents. This implies that counseling strategies that acknowledge cultural values and indigenous knowledge systems are more acceptable and impactful among students.

The challenges and opportunities in combining traditional beliefs with modern counseling practices, the findings showed that significant challenges and opportunities exist. While integration enhances cultural relevance, accessibility, and trust in counseling services, it is also constrained by factors such as lack of professional training, differences in belief systems, and absence of clear policy frameworks. This finding corroborates Mkubwa et al. (2024), who identified inadequate training and negative attitudes among practitioners as major barriers, as well as Nanji and Olivier (2024), who noted concerns about the regulation of faith-based practices. However, the opportunities identified such as increased community acceptance and holistic care support the argument for culturally responsive counseling models.

## Conclusion

This study examined the integration of traditional beliefs and modern counseling practices among secondary school students in Gusau Educational Zone, Zamfara State. The findings revealed that traditional beliefs significantly influence counseling outcomes, indicating that students’ cultural backgrounds play a vital role in shaping their psychological responses and attitudes toward counseling. Furthermore, the study established that integrating modern counseling approaches with traditional beliefs significantly improves students’ psychological well-being, making counseling more effective and culturally relevant. However, despite these benefits, the study also identified notable challenges such as lack of trained personnel, differences in belief systems, and limited policy support. Overall, the study concludes that a culturally responsive and integrative counseling approach is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of counseling services among secondary school students.

## Recommendations

1. School counselors should incorporate students’ traditional beliefs and cultural values into counseling practices to improve relevance and effectiveness.
2. Government and educational stakeholders should organize regular training programs for counselors on culturally responsive and integrative counseling approaches.
3. Educational authorities should develop policies that support the integration of traditional and modern counseling practices within the school system.
4. Schools should collaborate with traditional and religious leaders to promote culturally acceptable counseling practices and enhance students’ trust in counseling services.
5. Schools should be equipped with adequate counseling facilities, materials, and personnel to effectively implement integrated counseling approaches.

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