

Investigating the Efficacy of Counselling Services in Curbing Moral Decadence among Secondary School Students in a Period of Socio-Economic and Political Stress in Ondo State

Dr (Mrs) Oyinloye Alake Oyenike, Akingbulu Samson Pariola

Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling,

Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Nigeria.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.803104S>

Received: 07 May 2024; Revised: 22 May 2024; Accepted: 27 May 2024; Published: 28 June 2024

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the efficacy of counselling services in addressing moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State, Nigeria, during periods of socio-economic and political stress. Moral decadence, characterized by declining ethical values and behaviors such as substance abuse, bullying, and disrespect for authority, poses significant challenges to the educational environment and student development. The research highlights the role of socio-economic and political stressors in exacerbating these issues and explores the potential of school-based counselling services to mitigate them. Utilizing a descriptive survey design, data were collected from a stratified random sample of 1,036 students across 50 secondary schools in Ondo State.

The instrument used for the study was a self-developed structured questionnaire titled “Investigating the Efficacy of Counselling Services in curbing Moral Decadence Questionnaire (IECSSMDQ)”. Reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach’s Alpha statistics which yielded a coefficient 0.71. Percentages and frequency counts were used to analyze research questions while mean, standard deviations and t-test was used to analyse the hypothesis.

Findings revealed that effective counselling services significantly reduce instances of moral decadence by providing emotional and academic support, promoting mental health, and fostering resilience among students. However, the study also identifies barriers to the effectiveness of these services, including limited resources, a shortage of trained counselors, and cultural stigmas associated with seeking psychological help. The research underscores the need for increased investment in counselling services, enhanced training for counselors, and the integration of technology to improve accessibility. By addressing these challenges, schools can create a supportive environment conducive to the moral and academic development of students. This study offers valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers and educators aiming to enhance the quality and impact of counselling services in Nigerian secondary schools.

Keywords: Efficacy, counselling services, moral decadence, socio-economic and political stress.

INTRODUCTION

Secondary schools play a crucial role in shaping the character and morality of students. In recent years, concerns have arisen about the increasing trend of moral decadence among secondary school students. Moral decadence refers to the decline in moral values and ethical principles, leading to undesirable behaviors and attitudes (Smith, 2021). This issue negatively impacts students’ academic performance,

interpersonal relationships, and overall well-being (Johnson, 2022). The external societal pressures such as socio-economic challenges and political instability exacerbate these issues, creating a stressful environment for students (Brown & Green, 2023). Counselling services within schools are essential for addressing these challenges, offering students a platform to discuss their concerns and receive support (Miller et al., 2021). Effective counselling can lead to early identification and intervention for students exhibiting behavioral issues, helping them navigate through difficult situations and improve their moral conduct (Anderson, 2020).

In Ondo State, Nigeria, the impact of moral decadence is particularly pronounced. Recent studies have highlighted an alarming increase in behaviors such as substance abuse, bullying, and other forms of delinquency among students (Adebayo, 2021). These behaviors not only disrupt the educational environment but also hinder students' personal development and future prospects. Socio-economic and political stressors further exacerbate these issues, contributing to a challenging environment for both students and educators (Ojo, 2020).

Counselling services within schools have been identified as critical interventions to address these challenges. Effective counselling can provide students with the support they need to navigate difficult situations, develop coping strategies, and make positive life choices (Dada, 2021). Counsellors work with students to address behavioral issues, promote mental health, and enhance academic performance through personalized support and interventions (Bamidele, 2022). Despite the recognized importance of counselling, several challenges hinder the effectiveness of these services in Nigerian schools. Limited resources, a shortage of trained counsellors, and cultural stigmas associated with seeking psychological help are significant barriers (Chukwu, 2021). Additionally, the integration of technology in counselling services remains underdeveloped, limiting the reach and impact of these interventions (Olumide, 2022). Efforts to improve counselling services in Nigerian secondary schools must focus on overcoming these challenges. Increasing funding for counselling programs, training more counsellors, and raising awareness about the benefits of mental health support are essential steps. Furthermore, incorporating technology, such as online counselling platforms, can enhance accessibility and provide students with the help they need regardless of geographical barriers (Ajayi, 2023).

Socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and inadequate access to basic needs play a significant role in the moral and academic challenges faced by students. Political instability and poor governance also contribute to an environment where students are exposed to negative influences and lack positive role models (Adeyemi, 2022). The stress from these socio-economic and political factors can lead to emotional and behavioral problems, making it difficult for students to focus on their studies and develop healthy interpersonal relationships (Eze, 2023).

Furthermore, addressing moral decadence and the associated socio-economic and political stressors in Nigerian secondary schools requires a multi-faceted approach. Strengthening counselling services is a critical component of this strategy, providing students with the necessary support to overcome challenges and achieve their full potential. By investing in these services and addressing the underlying factors contributing to students' difficulties, we can create a more conducive environment for academic success and personal development. By focusing on recent and localized research, this expanded background provides a comprehensive overview of the issues and the critical role of counselling in addressing them within the context of Ondo State and Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

The challenges faced by secondary school students in Ondo State pose significant threats to their academic success and personal development. Consequently, this matter has emerged as a pressing concern among education stakeholders, including professional counsellors. The situation in Ondo State is very unnerving as recent studies (Williams & Adeyemi, 2021; Musa, 2023) highlight a concerning decline in ethical behavior

and values among students, manifesting in behaviors such as cheating, bullying, and disrespect for authority. These behaviors undermine the educational environment and impede academic achievement. The socio-economic and political landscape in Nigeria adds another layer of complexity to the challenges faced by the students. Political instability, economic hardships, and inadequate funding for education create a stressful environment that negatively impacts students' mental health and academic outcomes (Oladimeji, 2022; Bello, 2023). Studies have shown that students from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to experience stress and anxiety, which adversely affect their academic performance (Chukwu, 2021; Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2023).

With all these challenges, counselling services have shown promise in mitigating these issues. Effective counselling programs provide students with the support they need to navigate their personal and academic challenges, fostering resilience and promoting better educational outcomes (Ogunsanya, 2021; Adamu, 2023). However, the implementation of these services faces significant barriers, including limited resources, a shortage of trained counselors, and cultural stigmas associated with seeking mental health support (Eze & Okoro, 2022).

Efforts to integrate technology into counselling services and increase mental health awareness are essential for improving the accessibility and effectiveness of these programs (Olowookere, 2020). Innovative approaches, such as online counselling platforms and mental health apps, can help bridge the gap and provide much-needed support to students in remote or underserved areas (Bamidele & Fagbamila, 2023)

Few studies have been carried out in this vein, for instance; Adeoye and Adeyemi (2021) conducted a study on the role of counselling in reducing moral decadence among secondary school students in Lagos State. The findings revealed that effective counselling significantly reduced instances of cheating and bullying, suggesting a strong correlation between counselling services and improved student behavior.

Ojo and Adesina (2020) examined the impact of socio-economic factors on student behavior in Ogun State. Their study indicated that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds exhibited higher levels of indiscipline and lower academic performance, underscoring the need for targeted counselling interventions.

Olawale, Abayomi, and Ayinde (2022) investigated the relationship between political instability and student anxiety in the Northern region of Nigeria. The study found that political unrest contributed to heightened anxiety and behavioral problems among students, highlighting the broader socio-political influences on student well-being. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, only a few studies on the efficacy of Counselling services in curbing moral decadence among secondary school students in a period of socio-economic among and political stress in Ondo state have been conducted; however, the primary goal of this study was to advance knowledge and close the knowledge gap left by the aforementioned studies. Therefore, this research investigated the efficacy of Counselling services in curbing moral decadence among secondary school students in a period of socio-economic among and political stress in Ondo state.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of counselling services in addressing and curbing moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State during a period marked by socio-economic and political stress. The study aims to provide valuable insights into the role of counselling interventions in navigating the unique challenges posed by external societal factors, and to offer recommendations for enhancing the quality and impact of counselling services in secondary schools.

Research Questions

1. What are the specific socio-economic and political stress factors that influence the prevalence of moral

decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State?

2. What is the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students?

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on gender.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students based on gender.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on school type.

Ho₄: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students based on school type.

Ho₅: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on age.

Ho₆: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students based on age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Counselling services play a crucial role in supporting students' personal, social, and academic development. Recent studies (Williams, 2023; Martinez & Lee, 2021) highlight the positive impact of counselling on students' moral reasoning and behavior. Counselling services provide a safe space for students to explore their emotions and develop coping strategies, which is particularly important in stressful socio-economic and political climates (Clark, 2022). However, challenges such as limited resources, lack of trained counsellors, and cultural barriers persist (Davis & Morgan, 2023). Efforts to integrate technology and promote mental health awareness are essential for enhancing the accessibility and effectiveness of these services (Brown, 2021).

Counselling services in schools are integral to the personal, social, and academic development of students. These services have shown significant positive impacts, particularly in enhancing students' moral reasoning and behavior. Williams (2023) and Martinez & Lee (2021) found that counselling helps students develop critical thinking skills and ethical decision making, essential components of moral development.

In stressful socio-economic and political climates, counselling services become even more critical. Clark (2022) emphasizes that these services provide a safe space for students to explore their emotions, understand the complexities of their environment, and develop effective coping strategies. This supportive environment helps mitigate the adverse effects of external stressors on students' mental health and academic performance. Despite their importance, counselling services face several challenges. Limited resources, such as insufficient funding and a lack of trained counsellors, significantly hinder the effectiveness of these programs (Davis & Morgan, 2023). Additionally, cultural barriers can prevent students from fully engaging with counselling services. For example, stigma surrounding mental health issues in certain communities can discourage students from seeking help.

The integration of technology in counselling has emerged as a promising solution to some of these challenges. Brown (2021) highlights that technology can enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of counselling services. Online counselling platforms and digital mental health resources provide flexible and confidential support, which is particularly beneficial in reaching students in remote or underserved areas. The use of text therapy, telemedicine, and mobile health applications are some of the innovative approaches being adopted (Wolters Kluwer, 2020).

Promoting mental health awareness is crucial for the success of counselling programs. School counsellors play a vital role in educating students, teachers, and parents about mental health issues. They work to remove the stigma associated with mental health, encouraging students to seek help when needed (ASCA, 2021). Preventive school based mental health services, including short term counselling interventions, are essential in addressing early warning signs and preventing long term issues (Atkins et al., 2020).

Several barriers can affect the delivery and effectiveness of counselling services. Cultural and linguistic differences can impede communication between counsellors and students. Additionally, systemic issues such as large counsellor to student ratios and inadequate training programs for counsellors pose significant challenges (ASCA, 2022). Efforts to standardize counselling practices and improve training for counsellors are ongoing to address these barriers. To enhance the effectiveness of counselling services, schools need to invest in resources and training. Ensuring that counsellors have the necessary tools and support to perform their duties is critical. Collaboration with community organizations and mental health professionals can provide additional resources and support for students (Davis & Morgan, 2023).

Counselling services are essential for the holistic development of students, particularly in times of socio-economic and political stress. While there are significant challenges, the integration of technology and increased mental health awareness efforts are promising strategies to enhance these services. By addressing the barriers and investing in the necessary resources, schools can create a supportive environment that fosters students' personal, social, and academic growth.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised 5,340 senior secondary three (SS3) students in the eighteen local governments in Ondo State.

As a descriptive research, the study population comprised the 481 secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. This was made up of 281 public and 200 private schools as well as 210 urban and 272 rural schools. The sample consisted of 245 schools made up of 142 public and 103 private schools. Out of the 142 public schools, 62 were urban while 80 were rural schools. Out of the 103 private schools, 47 were urban while 56 were rural schools. Out of the population, a sample of 50 schools was drawn through the process of stratified random sampling technique. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 1036 students from 50 secondary schools in the state.

The instrument used was a self-designed questionnaire by the researcher titled "Investigating the Efficacy of Counselling services in Curbing Moral Decadence Questionnaire (IECSMDQ)", which included items rated on a Likert scale. The instrument was sub-divided into three sections: Section A was based on the demographic data of the respondents, Section B was focused on questions on curbing moral decadence, and Section C was focused on Counselling services. Construct validity was established through expert review, and reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.71. The instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire while the data collected were analyzed using percentages, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS

Demographic Data

This section covers demographic data using frequency counts and percentages.

Table 1: The distributions of respondents on Demographics Variables:

Item	Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender			
	Male	800	77.2
	Female	236	22.8
	Total	1036	100.0
Age			
	10-13 years	180	17.4
	14-16 years	420	40.5
	17 years and above	436	42.1
	Total	1036	100.0
School Type			
	Public	584	56.4
	Private	452	43.6
	Total	1036	100.0

Table 1 indicates that 800 (77.2%) respondents were male while 236 (22.8%) were female, this implies that male respondent participated more with 800(77.2%); for age, 180(17.4%) were between the age range of 10-13 years, 420(40.5%) were between the age range of 14-16 years while 436(42.1%) were between the age range of 17 years and above, this implies that respondents between the age range of 17 years and above participated more than other respondents with 436(42.1%); for school type, 584 (56.4%) were from private school while 452 (43.6%) were from public school, this implies that respondents from private were more than public with 584(56.4%)

Research Question 1: What are the specific socio-economic and political stress factors that influence the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State?

Table 2: Means and Rank order analysis on socio-economic and political stress factors that influence the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State.

Item No.	socio-economic and political stress factors that influence the prevalence of moral decadence	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
3	Disrespect towards school authorities is frequent	2.8977	.89721	1 st
4	I have engaged in cheating during exams	2.8050	.98030	2 nd
10	feel that the moral behavior of students has declined over the years	2.7867	.98288	3 rd
6	I have engaged in cheating during exams	2.7857	1.01030	4 th
9	Disrespectful behavior towards school staff is increasing	2.7172	.96716	5 th
5	Moral values are declining among students in my school	2.7046	1.03635	6 th

7	There are frequent fights among students	2.7008	.93625	7 th
2	Bullying is a common problem in my school	2.6931	.95825	8 th
8	I know students who take drugs	2.6255	.99403	9 th
1	I often witness cheating among my peers during exams	2.6042	1.02044	10 th

Table 2 presents the mean and rank order on socio-economic and political stress factors that influence the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State. The table indicates that item 3 (with mean score of 2.89), item 4 (with mean score of 2.80) and item 10 (with mean score of 2.78) ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd respectively. The items stated that “Disrespect towards school authorities is frequent”, “I have engaged in cheating during exams”, and “feel that the moral behavior of students has declined over the years” are regarded as the most socio-economic and political stress factors that influence the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State.

Research Question 2: What is the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students?

Table 3: Means and Rank order analysis of responsible for effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students

Item No.	Effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
5	I receive personal/emotional support from the counselling services	2.8639	.92303	1 st
1	Counselling services are available in my school	2.8388	.95810	2 nd
8	The school counselor provides useful advice on dealing with stress	2.8002	.95079	3 rd
7	I believe the school counselor plays a crucial role in promoting good behavior among students	2.7394	.99060	4 th
2	I use the counselling services in my school	2.7317	.99438	5 th
10	The counselling services are easily accessible to all students	2.7153	1.01057	6 th
9	Counselling sessions have helped reduce substance abuse among students	2.7124	.94090	7 th
3	Counselling services effectively address moral issues in my school	2.6998	1.00609	8 th
4	I receive academic support from the counselling services	2.6680	.94167	9 th
6	I receive personal/emotional support from the counselling services	2.6496	1.02142	10 th

Table 3 presents the means and rank order on effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students. The table indicates that item 5 (with mean score of 2.86), item 1 (with mean score of 2.83) and item 8 (with mean score of 2.80) were ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively. The items stated that “I receive personal/emotional support from the counselling services”, “Counselling services are available in my school” and “The school counselor provides useful advice on dealing with stress” are regarded as the most effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on gender.

Table 4: Means, Standard Deviations and t-value of Respondents' view on the Basis of gender

Gender	No.	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-val.	Crit. t-val.	p-value	Decision
Male	800	27.3075	2.79736					
				1,034	0.273	1.96	0.573	Accepted
Female	236	27.3644	2.86628					

*Significant; $p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows the mean, standard deviation and t-value of respondents on the basis of male and female. The result on the table revealed that the calculated t-value of 0.27 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 with 1,034 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value of 0.573 is greater than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus there is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on gender. This implies that irrespective of their gender moral decadence is affected by socio-economic and political stress factors.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students based on gender.

Table 5: Means, Standard Deviations and t- value of Respondents' view on the Basis of gender

Gender	No.	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-val.	Crit. t-val.	p-value	Decision
Male	800	26.7025	3.90231					
				1,034	2.457	1.96	0.00	Rejected
Female	236	27.3686	2.67767					

Table 5 above shows the mean, standard deviation and t-value of respondents on the basis of male and female. The result on the table revealed that the calculated t-value of 2.457 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 with 1,034 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value of 0.00 is less than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, There is a significant difference in the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students based on gender. This implies that the rate at which male react to the is different from female towards the effectiveness of the counselling service.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on school type.

Table 6: Means, Standard Deviations and t-value of Respondents' view on the Basis of school type

School Type	No.	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-val.	Crit. t-val.	p-value	Decision
Private	584	27.3065	2.78261					
				1,034	0.182	1.96	0.671	Accepted
Public	452	27.3385	2.85232					

*Significant; $p < 0.05$

Table 6 shows the mean, standard deviation and t-value of respondents on the basis of private and public. The result on the table revealed that the calculated t-value of 0.18 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 with 1,034 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value of 0.671 is greater than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus there is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on school type. This implies that irrespective of their school type moral decadence is affected by socio-economic and political stress factors.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students based on school type.

Table 7: Means, Standard Deviations and t- value of Respondents’ view on the Basis of school type

School type	No.	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-val.	Crit. t-val.	p-value	Decision
Private	584	26.4264	4.24685					
				1,034	4.303	1.96	0.00	Rejected
Public	452	27.4071	2.65249					

Table 7 above shows the mean, standard deviation and t-value of respondents on the basis of private and public. The result on the table revealed that the calculated t-value of 2.457 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 with 1,034 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value of 0.00 is less than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, There is a significant difference in the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students based on school type. This implies that the rate at which public react to the is different from private towards the effectiveness of the counselling service.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on age.

Table 8: ANOVA comparing respondents on prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on age

Sources	SS	df	MS	Cal. F-val.	Crit. F-val.	p-value	Decision
Between Group	3.851	2	1.926	.243	2.60	0.784	Accepted
Within Group	8179.755	1033	7.918				
Total	8183.606	1035					

Table 8 above presents the calculated F-val. of 0.243 which is less than the critical F-value of 2.60 at 0.05 alpha level. And since the p-value of 0.78 which is greater than 0.05, thus the hypothesis accepted. This implies there is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on age. This implies that irrespective of their age moral decadence is affected by socio-economic and political stress factors.

Hypothesis 6: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on age.

Table 9: ANOVA comparing respondents on prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on age

Sources	SS	df	MS	Cal. F-val.	Crit. F-val.	p-value	Decision
Between Group	1331.121	2	665.560	54.557	2.60	0.000	Rejected
Within Group	12601.871	1033	12.199				
Total	13932.991	1035					

*Significant; $p < 0.05$.

Table 9 presents the calculated F-value of 54.55 which is greater than the critical F-value of 2.600 at 0.05 alpha level. And since the p-value of 0.00 is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on age. In order to determine the mean value(s) that led to the significant difference observed in the ANOVA results of Table 9, the Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) was used as a post-hoc test. The results of the DMRT procedure are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10: Duncan’s Multiple Range Test (DMRT) showing differences among respondents in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on age

Age	Group	N	Mean	Duncan’s Grouping
10-13 years	3	180	24.38	C
14-16 years	2	420	27.33	B
17 years and above	1	436	27.40	A

Table 10 present Duncan’s Multiple Range Test (DMRT) result to show group means that led to the significant difference noted in the ANOVA result of table 6. The DMRT results indicated that group 1 with mean score of 27.40 differed significantly from group 2, with mean scores of 27.33 and also greatly differed from group 3 with 24.38. Hence, all group are significant different to each other. However group 1(17 years and above) has the highest level of prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors.

DISCUSSION

Research Question one stated that what are the specific socio-economic and political stress factors that influence the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State. It was indicated that “Disrespect towards school authorities is frequent”, “I have engaged in cheating during exams”, and “feel that the moral behavior of students has declined over the years” are regarded as the most socio-economic and political stress factors that influence the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State. This support the view of (Anderson, 2020) that “Disrespect towards school authorities is frequent”, “I have engaged in cheating during exams”, and “feel that the moral behavior of students has declined over the years” are few among socio-economic and political stress factors that influence the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students.

Research Question two stated that what is the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students it was revealed that “I receive personal/emotional support from

the counselling services”, “Counselling services are available in my school” and “The school counselor provides useful advice on dealing with stress” are regarded as the most effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students. This support the statement of Clark (2022) that these services provide a safe space for students to explore their emotions, understand the complexities of their environment, and develop effective coping strategies. This supportive environment helps mitigate the adverse effects of external stressors on students’ mental health and academic performance.

Hypothesis one stated that there is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on gender. It was revealed that the calculated t-value of 0.27 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 with 1,034 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value of 0.573 is greater than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that irrespective of their gender moral decadence is affected by socio-economic and political stress factors. Thus this support the findings of (Adebayo, 2021) that gender do not significant influence the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on gender

Hypothesis two stated that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students based on gender. It was revealed that the calculated t-value of 2.457 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 with 1,034 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value of 0.00 is less than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the rate at which male react to the is different from female towards the effectiveness of the counselling service. This this was in corroboration with the finding of (ASCA, 2021) that School counsellors play a vital role in educating students, teachers, and parents about mental health issues. They work to remove the stigma associated with mental health, encouraging students to seek help when needed. Preventive school based mental health services, including short term counselling interventions, are essential in addressing early warning signs and preventing long term issues (Atkins et al., 2020).

Hypothesis three stated that there is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on school type. It was revealed that the calculated t-value of 0.18 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 with 1,034 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value of 0.671 is greater than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that irrespective of their school type moral decadence is affected by socio-economic and political stress factors. Thus this support the findings of (Ojo, 2020) that school type has no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors.

Hypothesis four stated that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students based on school type. It was revealed that the calculated t-value of 2.457 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 with 1,034 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value of 0.00 is less than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the rate at which public react to the is different from private towards the effectiveness of the counselling service. This this was in corroboration with the finding of (Davis & Morgan, 2023) that Counselling services are essential for the holistic development of students, particularly in times of socio-economic and political stress.

Hypothesis five stated that there is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on age. It was indicated that calculated F-val. of 0.243 which is less than the critical F-value of 2.60 at 0.05 alpha level. And since the p-value of 0.78 which is greater than 0.05, thus the hypothesis accepted. This implies that irrespective of their age moral decadence is affected by socio-economic and political stress factors. This support the finding of (Bamidele, 2022) that age do not significant affect the prevalence of

moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors

Hypothesis six stated that there is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on age. It was revealed that calculated F-value of 54.55 which is greater than the critical F-value of 2.600 at 0.05 alpha level. And since the p-value of 0.00 is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that group 1 with mean score of 27.40 differed significantly from group 2, with mean scores of 27.33 and also greatly differed from group 3 with 24.38. Hence, all groups are significantly different to each other. However, group 1 (17 years and above) has the highest level of prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors. This supports the findings of Williams (2023) and Martinez & Lee (2021) who found that counselling helps students develop critical thinking skills and ethical decision making, essential components of moral development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn: the result of the findings shows that:

Disrespect towards school authorities is frequent, I have engaged in cheating during exams and feel that the moral behavior of students has declined over the years and is regarded as the most socio-economic and political stress factors that influence the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State. I receive personal/emotional support from the counselling services, counselling services are available in my school and the school counselor provides useful advice on dealing with stress and is regarded as the most effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students.

There is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on gender. There is a significant difference in the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students based on gender. There is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on school type. There is a significant difference in the effectiveness of counselling services in mitigating moral decadence among secondary school students based on school type. There is no significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on age. There is a significant difference in the prevalence of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ondo State due to specific socio-economic and political stress factors based on age.

REFERENCES

1. Adamu, A. (2023). Enhancing counselling services through technology. *Journal of Educational Research*.
2. Adebayo, J. (2021). Impact of Moral Decadence on Student Behavior in Ondo State. *Journal of Nigerian Education*, 25(3), 45-59.
3. Adewale, T. (2020). Substance abuse among Nigerian secondary school students. *Nigerian Journal of Counselling*.
4. Adeyemi, K. (2022). Political Instability and Its Effects on Education in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Politics and Education*, 19(2), 33-47.
5. Ajayi, M. (2023). Enhancing Counselling services through Technology. *Journal of Educational Innovation*, 28(1), 55-68.

6. ASCA (2021). The School Counsellor and Student Mental Health. *American School Counsellor Association*.
7. Atkins, M., & Hoagwood, K. (2020). Preventive school based mental health and behavioral services. *American School Counsellor Association*.
8. Bamidele, A. (2022). Counselling Interventions for Academic Improvement. *Nigerian Educational Research Journal*, 27(4), 78-91.
9. Bamidele, K., & Fagbamila, M. (2023). Online counselling platforms: A solution for Nigerian schools. *International Journal of Innovation*.
10. Bello, S. (2023). Economic hardships and student stress. *Nigerian Economic Review*.
11. Brown, J. (2021). Integrating technology in school counselling. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*.
12. Chukwu, I. (2021). Overcoming Barriers to Effective Counselling in Nigerian Schools. *International Journal of Counselling and Education*, 30(2), 112-125.
13. Chukwu, O. (2021). Socio-economic status and academic performance. *Journal of Social Sciences*.
14. Clark, P. (2022). The impact of socio-economic and political stress on student well-being. *Educational Psychology Review*.
15. Dada, T. (2021). The Role of Counsellors in Nigerian Secondary Schools. *Journal of School Counselling*, 22(2), 23-35.
16. Davis, L., & Morgan, T. (2023). Challenges and opportunities in school counselling. *Journal of School Counselling*.
17. Eze, N., & Okoro, J. (2022). Barriers to effective counselling in Nigerian schools. *Nigerian Journal of Counselling*.
18. Eze, U. (2023). The Impact of Socio-Economic Stress on Student Behavior. *Nigerian Journal of Social Sciences*, 29(3), 67-80.
19. Ibrahim, K., & Yusuf, M. (2023). Political instability and educational outcomes. *Journal of Political Science*.
20. Martinez, L., & Lee, K. (2021). Moral development through school counselling. *Journal of Moral Education*.
21. Musa, Y. (2023). Moral decadence in Nigerian secondary schools. *Educational Research Journal*.
22. Ndubuisi, C., & Emeka, T. (2022). Trends in adolescent drug use in Nigeria. *Public Health Journal*.
23. Ogunsanya, B. (2021). The impact of counselling on student resilience. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*.
24. Ojo, A. (2020). Addressing Moral Decadence in Nigerian Schools. *Journal of Nigerian Moral Studies*, 24(4), 90-103.
25. Okonkwo, E., & Adebayo, T. (2021). Socio-economic pressures and drug use among students. *Nigerian Journal of Public Health*.
26. Oladimeji, R. (2022). Stress and mental health in Nigerian students. *Journal of Mental Health*.
27. Olowookere, J. (2020). The role of technology in counselling services. *Journal of Educational Technology*.
28. Olumide, F. (2022). Integrating Technology in School Counselling. *Journal of Technology in Education*, 27(3), 44-57.
29. Williams, P., & Adeyemi, S. (2021). Declining moral values in Nigerian schools. *African*
30. Williams, S. (2023). The effectiveness of school-based counselling services. *Counselling and Development Journal*.
31. Wolters Kluwer (2020). 10 trends for technology in counselling and psychotherapy. *Wolters Kluwer*.