# HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AND MOTIVATIONAL DYNAMICS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

Is-haq Abdulsalam[1, 2]*, Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin[1] & Ida Hartina Ahmed Tharbe[1]

ABSTRACT

Help-seeking improves the functioning of young people in schools; however, no previous study was conducted to understand the help-seeking behaviour (HSB) of young people in Northeast Nigeria. Thus, the current study addresses this omission by seeking to better understand factors that motivate young people into help-seeking; relative to learners in public secondary schools in the community of the study. To explore the phenomenon, the study employed the use of FGD technique for twenty-four student sample and in-depth interview for four teacher-counsellors and four in-school administrators with interview topics on individual experiences on help-seeking; including topics on motivational factors that lead learners into seeking help. Using NVivo 10 software, participants' data generated five emergent themes, vis-à-vis: (a) Nature of man and need to understand self; (b) Vulnerability to threats; (c) Need for problem-solving skills; (d) Counsellor characteristics; and (e) Resolving psychosocial challenges. These have been discussed elsewhere in this paper. As recommendations, the study suggests need for (teacher-)counsellors to instill trust and confidence in learners to admit the inevitability of help-seeking to humans; besides, understand differences in humans and influence of diversity on help-seeking for inclusive therapeutic work in schools.

Keywords: help-seeking, help-seeking behaviour, public secondary schools, Northeast Nigeria, helping relationships.
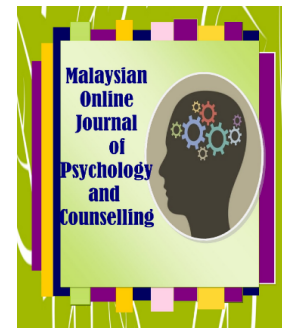
[1] Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya, MALAYSIA

[2] Faculty of Technology Education, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, NIGERIA

Corresponding Author:
ishaqabdulsalam67@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, humans have learnt to be problem-solvers. Perhaps this explains the public concern on importance of interventions; to social competence and overall development of individuals who seek either professional or informal help (see Fathoni et al., 2021; Nezu et al., 2019; Gatechew, 2020; Schnyder et al., 2020). Consistent with situational theory of problem-solving (henceforth STOPS); problem, constraint, and involvement recognition are perceptual and situational to cognitive and epistemic readiness of individuals who push for problem-solving (Chon & Park, 2019). Thus, having communication skills, access to information, analysing information and individuals collaborating are elements basic for survival in the 21st century (e.g., Ay et al., 2019; Tican & Deniz, 2018).

STOPS is a communication theory which expounds why and how an individual communicates to others, given problematic life encounters (Jiang et al., 2017; Kim & Krishna, 2014). Encountering challenging situations leads individuals to interconnecting, or communicating, especially as issues become degenerative or problematic—problem recognition; perhaps, with major impacts on the individual's life—involvement recognition. Conceivably, some remain unskilled to tackle their problem, owing to inadequacy or limitation—constraint recognition (Jiang et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2014). Corollary to STOPS and social support seeking, personal or interpersonal problems emerge daily; evolving social dilemmas and need for problem-solving knowledge to sustain social competence vital for personal-social functioning of individuals (Cong & My, 2019).

Human thought and inquiry (information-seeking) according to Dewey both commence as human experiences an indeterminate situation (a felt difficulty) which transforms subsequently into a problematic situation. This theory describes a rational model of thought, which in help-seeking leads to decision or conclusion-making regarding which of the clusters of solutions are best explored in help-seeking situation (Kim & Grunig, 2011). From African cultural etiology, human personality advances via interpersonal interaction, given art of science of holistic intervention of traditional healing, of reconstruction of the physical, social and spiritual orders of Africa's sociocultural systems (Bojuwoye & Moletsane-Kekae, 2018). This philosophical order is analogous to narrative counselling which embraces multiculturally sensitive approaches in social constructionism via people's vocalisation or languaging of their difficulties (Nafziger & DeKruyf, 2013); thus a dialogical and intersubjective rather than a didactic process in the construction of new meanings (Ingle, 2018). In effect, interface with family, community members, institutions and the broader culture develops human narratives over time (e.g., Asiimwe et al., 2021; Nafziger & DeKruyf, 2013), aiding co-construction of life stories regarding the past, the present and future (Farouk & Edwards, 2020).

As help-seeking remains vital to personal-social and educational development of students, even beyond their secondary schooling, it becomes imperative to study factors that initiate students in public secondary school settings in Northeast Nigeria into help-seeking to understand their help-seeking behaviour (HSB). This is so, as none of the earlier studies were specifically conducted to explore domains that promote students into seeking help for sustainable counselling help-seeking/relationships in schools, while a bevy of literature abounds from western communities.

Adolescence and Help-Seeking

The pathways by which young people are hard-pressed to seek help or participate in help-seeking could be marked inaccurately or skew double-edged, exploring from western samples to provide clues or answers to such. However, paradoxical to this enigma is dearth of literature to define

constructs that motivate adolescents into help-seeking, specifically in Northeast Nigeria while a bevy of literature has defined other domains of adolescence. Complicated as it is, studies into complex constructs like interest, motivation and engagement have adopted use of either small-scale experiments or larger convenient samples of middle-class, undergraduate students, thus helping to advance more threats to defining the extent to which findings of these studies will generalise to new populations of students (Karumbaiah et al., 2019).

Help-seeking is defined as a behavior of actively seeking help from other people which includes discussing one's problem with another person for the sole purpose of obtaining support or guidance whether from formal, for instance—from people who have accredited professional background in the relevant field or from informal sources—such as the family—both immediate and extended, priests and others (see Divin et al., 2018; Gebreegziabher et al., 2019, p. 3; Orjiako & So, 2013). But then, despite the relevance to adolescence, logic and judgment *ab initio* herald individual's intention to go for help. Given this argument, several positions have been advanced to state why young people would intrinsically be motivated to aspire for help-seeking. One of the underlying assumptions or factors is goal states—that first, goal states would reinforce the individual's behaviour, and second, that it is only when the individual's actions are met with success, that the respective goal states are associated with positive effects (Beckmann & Heckhausen, 2018).

Other conceptualisations posit that help-seeking could be fostered by changes in children's development (Pereira et al., 2020) as this domain can be influenced by social and cultural factors or personal and agency factors—for instance, factors relating to counselling services and the counsellor (Pheko et al., 2013). Further still, it is argued that as children develop into adolescents, their meta-cognitive skills improve, and are better positioned to monitor and reflect on their performance and determine their need for help as previous research has revealed that students' achievement and motivational characteristics are important to understanding their help-seeking behaviours (Ryan & Shin, 2011). Overall, situational stimuli alert the organism; charging his/her goal states affectively (Beckmann & Heckhausen, 2018). With these conceptualisations and findings, it is exigent for studies relating to young people in secondary school settings in Northeast Nigeria to commence inquiries into domains that motivate the learner into help-seeking following the importance of this to adolescence.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

With three groups of participants, this study employed the use of qualitative research method with a view to studying participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences in real world settings in a view to making sense of their world (Novek & Wilkinson, 2019; Tharbe et al., 2020) while investigating the phenomenon in question (Creswell, 2013). Besides, this method allows access to data from different venues in multiple time points (Varpio et al., 2017) as much as helping researchers analyse/triangulate the data within and across the participants to establish legitimation (Lam et al., 2016; Gustafsson, 2017). Thus to generate data for the study; the study employed the use of focus group discussion (FGD) for the twenty-four student sample (Caretta & Vacchelli, 2015; Dilshad & Latif, 2013; Ranney et al., 2015) and in-depth face-to-face interview for the two groups of non-student participants (Peters & Halcomb, 2015; Ranney et al., 2015).

Sampling and Recruitment

Two State Ministries of Education granted approvals for participation by schools in the study, with participants recruited purposively across single-sex and coeducational schools for a sample of twenty-four final year (SS3) students aged 18—18y+ (Etikan & Bala, 2017; Taherdoost, 2016) hence neither parental nor proxy consents required. The sample also included four teacher-counsellors with more than 6 years working experience serving as teachers and teacher-counsellors; and four in-school administrators with 10—12 years in school administration recruited via snowball and convenience sampling respectively (Etikan & Bala, 2017; Taherdoos, 2016). The recruitment of SS3 students was given need for extensive self-disclosure and openness by participants (Robinson, 2013) and given their presumed understanding of importance of help-seeking. As inclusion criteria, only students with prowess in communicative English were recruited, as well as sensitivity for gender and religious representativeness while we admitted what availed in schools for the non-student groups. Overall, participants consented to audiovisual recordings of sessions and future participation in member-checks for validation of their social nuances and assess accuracy of positions with informed consent and voluntary participation forms signed (e.g., Burr & King, 2012; Koelsch, 2013). For purposes of confidentiality, participants were assigned pseudonyms, assured safety of session contents/information; their human dignities and privacies (e.g., Farrugia, 2019; Lloyd-Hazlett et al., 2017; Mohd Arifin, 2016). Congruous to ethics in qualitative studies, this study avoided internal and external suppositions from research conceptualisation up to report writing for purposes of trustworthiness (Sorsa et al., 2015; Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Formulating the Instruments

The study employed the use of semi-structured instruments. This was guided by review of extant literature (see Doody & Noonan, 2013; McIntosh & Morse, 2015) on adolescents and HSB (e.g., AlHorany, 2019; Campbell & Wilson, 2018). The process was guided by four distinct phases: gaining insights into relevant themes; making appraisal of reviewed literature for conceptual understandings; noting important/striking domains; and lastly, developing instruments for the study. A few of the questions read: 'Tell me why you think people seek help?'; 'As an individual, what possible problems/difficulties encourage you (—students) into seeking help?'; 'Talking of your (—students') future; how does seeking help assist your (—students') plan for future'. The guides were subjected to expert assessments with preliminary study conducted on a different sample; leading to further improvement on the guides (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). As a gold standard rigour, saturation of the data was validated by ensuring that first; the data was adequate and relevant to address the research questions. Second, the saturation of the data was understood when no new information was forthcoming from the participants' narratives and lived experiences given the sample size (n=24). At the data analysis phase; there were also no emergence of new codes, but rather increasing cases of recurrence of same codes; an indication that additional data would lead not to emergent of new themes (e.g., Lowe et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2017).

Procedure for Data Collection

As part of its data gathering procedure, the study employed the use of in-depth face-to-face interview for teacher-counsellors and in-school administrators. This is to gain meaning and experiences often not easily observed from participants (see Rossetto, 2014; Tavory, 2020) and focus group discussions—FGDs for students for in-depth discussions of their lived experiences (Balasubramaniam, 2019) starting November 2020 through May 2021. While sessions for FGDs had lasted between 70 - 95 mins; interview sessions took an average of 65 - 90 mins for three days

discretely for members. The study collected its data through extensive interviews. Given the constructivist position that multiple realities exist; and individuals would construct knowledge through their lived and shared experiences (Moon & Plaines, 2019), the study engaged multiple data sources to provide various perspectives of the phenomenon under study. This strategy enabled the study to triangulate participants' data corpus within and across the three groups of the participants as supported by two data collection procedures used for the same research design (Renz, Carrington & Badger, 2018). As ground rules, mobile phones were put into vibration mode or silent while differing contributions were respected.

Analysing the Data

Analysis of participants' data commenced with verbatim transcription (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2013; Tharbe et al., 2020) in naturalised form (Azevedo et al., 2017). Listening to the twelve verbatim audiotaped manuscripts based on schools, the study noted keenly participants' nonverbal behaviour (sighs, silence, laughter—latent contents) for the reliability and validity of the study (see Azevedo et al., 2017; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). The use of NVivo 10 software assisted the study to develop stratified sets of codes arranged around nodes in different layers; complemented by use of thematic analytic design (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach assisted the study to identify emerging domains with appraisal of emergent codes to understand their levels of agreements and relevance to topics (Elliot, 2018). Subsequently, codes were collapsed and reworded as well as ranked into categories given their value to generate emergent themes (Parameswaran et al., 2019). To confirm or disconfirm primary and secondary themes, participants were summoned for member-checks at roundtable discussions (e.g., Koelsch, 2013; Moore & Llompart, 2015; Tharbe et al., 2020).

RESULTS

Participants' data revealed five domains that inspire and contribute to HSB of public secondary schools in Northeast Nigeria; namely: (a) Nature of man and need to understand self; (b) Vulnerability to threats; and (c) Need for problem-solving skills. Others include (d) Counsellor characteristics; and (e) Resolving psychosocial challenges. The themes and their categories are presented as follows.

Nature of Man and Need to Understand Self

Primarily this theme identifies nature of man, and centrality of understanding self to man. As people who lack resourcefulness to understand the concept self; learners become curious and obsessed to find answers to issues concerning early adulthood. For instance:

> One of the things that make me go for help; is when I need to know about things regarding myself; I need to understand some things about me ... as a person; a human being.
>
> (Patience—fgd)

A similar comment by one of the interview participants supported this position. For instance:

> At teen age, adolescents are faced by puzzles ... they like to know if they've played the gender role fittingly ... they encounter mixed feelings ... lack ideas, so they can be easily upset.
>
> (Hajiya—iv)

These conundrums lead to pressure for help and intrinsic motivation for vital information; however, learners often have preference for members of their immediate family or confidants given the expediency offered by this source of help:

> I have that temptation—the urge, feeling to go for help when am in problem. But I like to meet the people in my family, or someone close.
>
> (Jamila—fgd)

Largely, the resolve to address dilemmas suffered by learners often leads to making decisions, inadvertently helping in their construction of their help-seeking intentions (HSIs). One of the FGD participants articulated how the desire to address issues intermittently, promote the proclivity for help-seeking in him in the following way:

> I like to see that when am in one trouble or the other, I do not keep it to myself, so going to people for assistance and ideas has changed the way I used to be … no more to myself.
>
> (Raabi—fgd)

Another participant contributed:

> Becoming weary of the unfavourable experience, students resort to making decisions as to what next, what to do … choose to go for help.
>
> (Lami—iv)

Another fundamental uncover is learners' inquisitiveness for meanings and worldviews regarding experiences with seeming odd and foggy connotations. This challenge comes with anxiety for explanation and understanding of vague universal concepts and practices. For instance:

> You think they're nothing unusual; they need help to understand … sometimes we go tale-telling; go experiential when they seek meanings for odd things.
>
> (Helen—iv)

This development helps to broaden the knowledge of the learner in terms of improvement in their cognitive and affective domains as validated by participants' renditions. For instance:

> And again, when you ask, meet people for help, you understand more of those things that are difficult for you to understand except by help from others, you understand better, you feel good [smiled].
>
> (Michael—fgd)

In summary, being neophytes provokes help-seeking in learners and inadvertently adds to domains that contribute to how they construct their HSIs and HSBs; trying to unravel some grey areas.

Vulnerability to Threats

This theme expresses the link between vulnerability and juvenility. It further shows the impact of age and dominant culture on learners and thus, fear of violations of ethical standard as learners transit into puberty, informing their need for help:

… we commit blunders, mistakes as children; we face challenges. The way out is to seek advice; yes guidance from intelligent people.

(Patience—fgd)

While adults appraise and analyse issues, young people lack the ability for deep thinking according to the participants:

Children are not like adults who weigh issues or apply their inner eyes—emotional intelligence. So, they try to manage their inadequacy by getting help.

(Talatu—iv)

Culturally, ethical standards—social etiquette, group honour and moral codes delimit the conduct of adolescents as they attain puberty. This makes information-seeking to be central to learners, restraining value conflicts:

As they grow of age there're value conflicts emerging … take for example, the environment … it becomes perplexing due to protocols, customs. Therefore, they require guidance-counselling … to be clear.

(Lami—iv)

Thoughts about aftereffects of breaches submit learners into help-seeking while they try to shun defilements and possible violations. This view was largely supported by the participants. For instance:

… you break the rule you get punish … learn your lesson in a hard way from anyone around you, so you're afraid; your best bet … you continue to get help—ask question, until you become ok.

(Khadija—fgd)

Subscribing, one of the in-school administrators commented:
There are penalties, when you behave waywardly or you're socially abusive; they withdraw your rights, you suffer deprivation. Automatically you meet people for counselling so you don't deviate.

(Hashim—iv)

In conclusion, juvenility exposes learners to vulnerability and risky delinquent deeds. Conversely, learners secure positive reinforcements and ease from problem behaviours and negative consequences by seeking help to develop positively.

Need for Problem-Solving Skills

In this theme, passions for creative learning to initiate and do new things; acquiring skills to accomplish goals; and skills to achieve future plans were identified as crucial to learners aside of need for skill to improve one's inefficiency. Alluding to lust for creativity to break new grounds, an FGD participant chipped in:

At twelve, I started collecting scraps … to build, manufacture things and sell; I go to workshops where they work; for knowledge. Today I construct, sell, and help my family—help-seeking *ne* (*ne*—a local semantic for 'that is it').

(Ibrahim—fgd)

One of the interview participants revealed:

Imagination helps students. However, you must seek help … it must be embedded in you as a tradition.

(Hajiya—iv)

This element instills efficiency in learners in terms of fixing problems proficiently in addition to ease of completion of tasks:

> In terms of speed, students who engage in help seeking complete the task faster—they've acquired the process and the skill … they have tendency to fix a problem better.
>
> (Helen—iv)

Goal accomplishment is fundamental, however this goes with gridlocks. In effect, gaining requisite information is hallmark for learners' achieving their set objectives. This area of need was highlighted critically by participants' data. For example:

> Goal realisation is one of their worries. It raises their spirits in terms of going for help and replicating requests for help; as long as the juice is worth the squeeze.
>
> (Abdullahi—iv)

Thus, fear of failure constantly raises apprehension in learners, and hence awareness for guidance—counselling and irresistibly, help-seeking as substantiated by data:

> It was time to go the senior class; I thought many times and crazy, of which class: science, arts or social sciences. I became restless, but my uncle study my results, times and times, and fix the class.
>
> (Grace—fgd)

Owing to their naïveté, the school engages confidence-building and help-seeking culture in learners for the purpose of damage control. These need areas are presumed important for positive learner outcome:

> From time to time the school remember [remind] us that by going to get assistance, we'll improve in our academy[ic] and do better.
>
> (Ruth—fgd)

This line of thought was also validated to highlight the criticality of help-seeking to learners. For example:

> We build their confidence; encourage help-seeking for their academic achievements; to avoid self-harming, making extreme decisions because of confusion … disappointments or lack of social direction.
>
> (Talatu—iv)

It is ostensible also from data that learners become unsettled and weary about their future, particularly in relation to their future career and thus mostly need assistance:

> I would like to become a doctor. Another time it's chemical or mechanical engineering. Then I think of passing my WAEC, then my JAMB, then admission.
>
> (Kiliyobas—fgd)

Given cases of career indecisiveness, learners become constrained to making decision and as such, make contacts to gain information to address their difficulties as revealed underneath:

> Ultimately, they look for people who are knowledgeable to help them out … yes, over their career problem.
>
> (Musa—iv)

Through contact-making, learners gain advantage of skills to improve their inefficiencies, including skills to work independently when confronted by difficulties. For example:

> That's how we learn the habit … of seeking help to tackle our problems, sometimes without relying on others.
>
> (Michael—fgd)

In summary, learners imbibe help-seeking as a culture owing to self-awareness of the importance of this to human functioning as well as in helping them live up to expectation.

Counsellor Characteristics Promote Help-Seeking

Demographic and social circumstances of the counsellor do influence counselling alliance. As an exemplar, age; personality of the counsellor; preference for same gender; similarity in language and fluency were identified as crucial in counselling relationship. For instance, regarding age of the counsellor, one of the participants commented:

> As for me I like a young counsellor; like am 18+ and he's say 22, 23y. I'll blend, feel free to talk and like to see him for help.
>
> (Salvation—fgd)

Age impacts power relation and raises suspicion in terms of learners' exploitation as neophytes. One of the teacher-counsellors lamented:

> There's feeling that you might exploit the learner; sell your ideas to her; or go evangelism.
>
> (Happiness—iv)

The personality and gender of the help-giver/counsellor is important in help-seeking situation. Learners like to have matches, particularly in gender and more importantly, considering religious moral burden. This was substantiated by one of the participants thus:

> Usually female students want their gender adorned; honoured, so they don't like to visit male counsellors, not only that, also when he's different in religion, especially in the school.
>
> (Lami—iv)

Another participant contributed:

> As a boy, I feel like am trying to reduce my my reputation … talking about something serious for men to a female or a woman counsellor.
>
> (Solomon—fgd)

Difference in gender often results to uncommunicativeness, non/false-disclosure by learners with female learners displaying shyness and coldness in the presence of male counsellors. This problem calls for trust and confidence-building by teacher-counsellors according to the participants. For example:

> … you force them to meet the opposite sex counsellor, they remain passive [paused], refuse to divulge, or be economical with the truth; the female is shy; indifferent. We're working toward building their morale … confidence in school counselling.
>
> (Talatu—iv)

There is imperative by counsellors to understand human differences and diversity for learners to have faith in school counselling as shown in the verbatim record below:

Am cocksure there would be positive development if the counsellor would respect the differences in students, their social backgrounds, their biases in terms of where they belong.

(Abdullahi—iv)

Another domain identified is language. This factor suggests fondness by learners for help-givers/counsellors who communicate or are proficient in the community's language. This theme encourages help-seeking and disclosure by learners:

I'll discuss more if the person/counsellor can speak our language and very well, than in English.

(Faith—an FGD participant)

Another participant likewise observed:

It has many advantages speaking their language. Using his/her language, the learner bares his/her mind fully to the counsellor.

(Hashim—iv)

This counsellor characteristic checks and prohibits use of a third party to interpret learner's narratives, as it guarantees prolonged consultation. The following narrative accentuates the importance of this domain:

I say my problem in my language, the counsellor understand me … no need for translation, we'll discuss for long.

(Jamaluddeen—fgd)

In conclusion, it is apparent that counsellor characteristics have potential to influence counselling alliance and positive HSB and thus, a worthy constituent in counselling help-seeking and counselling relationships.

Resolving Psychosocial Challenges

This theme reveals adolescent onset disorders and how the maladies oblige learners into help-seeking for effective outcomes. Psychosocial disorders are precipitated when learners are unable to meet demands and targets as revealed by data. Disorders in learners are also stimulated given cases of tensions and unresolved stress, prompting learners into making contacts to seek aid from others.

Given their faith in self-efficacy and self-help, many of the learners avoid seeking help in time; resorting to task endurance. The verbatim narrative below attests to this:

Many of them have confidence in their ability to manage and achieve difficult tasks. But this always bounces back on them [smiled comically].

(Hajiya—iv)

One of the consequences of the inability by learners to meet demands and targets according to participants is possible encounter of tensions and pressures given the determination to achieve within a timespan:

… you don't have that peace of mind, not getting result like you want, even when you've been trying … working hard, so you never settle down.

(Aminu—fgd)

Though many of the learners hardly find appropriate expression to communicate the aftereffects of the pressure they experience; emergence of stress results from learners' continued dissipation of

efforts toward a task, leading to hypersensitivity which metamorphoses into unstableness and feeling of discomfort:

There's this common problem of moving up and down aimlessly; hissing, looking haggard and worried ... looking stressed, in them.

(Helen—iv)

Another participant subscribed:

Whenever I am down because of problem, I think of how it'll affect me, affect my behaviour, everything about me.

(Raabi—fgd)

Precarious and traumatic happenstances often evolve from cases of unresolved tensions, when a learner becomes gloomy—feel low-spirited, acceding to self-harming thoughts or character disorders as revealed by data. For example:

We've seen many of the students attempt suicide because they're frustrated, dissatisfied or take poisonous substances these days.

(Abdullahi—iv)

Under duress, learners resort to help-seeking to overcome possible psychosocial problems:

The point is many of us are smart now ... wise-up, now you get help if you can't do it yourself, so you don't give to crime, criminal acts.

(Abdussalam—fgd)

Conclusively, psychosocial problems have tendency to endanger the psychological wellbeing of learners, typical of adolescents. Contrariwise, seeking help in many instances helps to reduce impacts of such problems on victims or assuage traumatic feelings that lead to acute psychological disorders.

DISCUSSION

Using a qualitative study method; this study highlights new insights into factors that provoke learners in public secondary schools in Northeast Nigeria into help-seeking, given their understanding of centrality of this to their human functioning. Until now, very little is known about factors that stimulate learners into help-seeking in the community, though ample studies have investigated counselling management in schools. In a sense, this study contributes to literature by revealing impact of contextual factors and transition stage, which combine to deconstruct and reform the worldviews and understandings of learners as far as help-seeking is concerned which hitherto, were not documented by studies in Northeast Nigeria.

The findings by the study aligns with a paradigm theorising that understanding phenomena, continual inquiry and search for truth occupy some central positions in human existence as continual inquiry and search are signs of human limitations (Howell, 2016). This finding also follows Piaget's constructivism which posits that conceptual development engenders episodes of change that permit thoughts previously unthinkable (Carey et al., 2015). The different assumptions about reality and knowledge at each stage imply different forms of justification, given that the assumptions provide categories needed by the individual to perceive and organise available information and make judgments about issues, despite that, the process enacting judgments becomes more and more complex, sophisticated and comprehensive from lower to higher stages (Kitchener & King, 1981).

Another highpoint is the finding that knowing the fundamentality of help-seeking to young people has made schools to continue to dissipate efforts toward ensuring that learners continue to embrace help-seeking to improve their quality of life, including their academic achievements. This finding is consistent with the report that one of the cardinal characteristics that are found important for learners' help-seeking behaviour is students' achievement goals; while different motives could inform why they may aspire for help (Tanaka et al., 2002). In addition, a significant finding by this study is the help-seeking orientation displayed by learners. There are clear indications that male and female learners in public secondary schools in Northeast Nigeria exhibit different attitudes and restraint to counselling services in schools owing to counsellor's characteristics; consistent with the study by Yılmaz-Gözü (2013).

While contextual factors have triggered discontent in learners (problems), they have sensitised constructivism (involvement recognition) and gaining new learning experiences—through contact with others for help to demystify conflict evolving between new and previous knowledge as claimed by Reid-Searl et al. (2019); and by STOPS, which posits a manifestation of social dilemmas in human and thus, need for social competence to achieve personal-social functioning (Cong & My, 2019).

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was unable to cover more than Northeast Nigeria, which is one of the geopolitical zones in northern Nigeria to study how learners in public secondary schools construct their HSB and this can be viewed as a limitation and reason why the study might not be generalised to the wider population of high school students in northern Nigeria. In view of this, further research is recommended with scope of the study and sample size expanded using other qualitative approaches for a generalisable outcome.

Implications For School Counselling Practice

Beyond the lone perspectives of students, the findings by the study have broadened our understanding of learners in public secondary schools in Northeast Nigeria, their HSB and domains that prompt the behaviour. Significantly, the zeal to obtain advisory information or help is guided by contextual factors, ideological positions, agency and choice as constructs that help define how learners construct their HSB. Thus, in response to these findings, and given participants expose, this study suggests the imperative for skills and knowledge by school counselling practitioners to practice modern paradigms and thoughts in school counselling to meet remedial and preventive needs of learners to check recourse to survivalist self-reliance. Young people have limited understanding of what counselling involves and benefits from guidance (Prior, 2012), informing why (teacher-) counsellors would need to instill trust and confidence in learners; one, to admit the inevitability of help-seeking to human; and second, to seek more of professional counselling. Given suggestion by participants, the study similarly suggests practitioners' understanding of differences in human and specifically as they relate to learners, and influence of diversity on help-seeking and prosocial behaviour to aid inclusive therapeutic work by (teacher-)counsellors. This understanding becomes essential for practitioners who live and work in locations with sustained cultural diffusion and a vibrant, interactive multicultural presence to be more inclined to broad-minded concepts as far as diversity is concerned (Rodgers & Furcron, 2019).

CONCLUSION

With findings obtained in this study, it is important to consider how sociocultural and developmental issues affect the HSB of adolescents from indigenous communities as previous help-seeking models have been conceptualised along western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic (WEIRD) cultures. In effect, government and relevant authorities in secondary education would need to strengthen counselling services in schools.

Competing Interests

The authors have no potential conflict or competing interests to declare.

REFERENCES
Aga Moh Jaladin (2013). Barriers and challenges in the practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia. A qualitative interview study. *Counselling Psychology, 26*(2), 174-189.

AlHorany, A. K. (2019). Attitudes toward help-seeking counseling, stigma in Arab context: A systematic literature review. *Malaysian Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences, 15*(SUPP1), 160-167.

Asiimwe, R., Lesch, E., Karume, M., & Blow, A. J. (2021). Expanding our international reach: Trends in the development of systemic family therapy training and implementation in Africa. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 47*(4), 815–830. doi:10.1111/jmft.12514

Ay, Ş. Ç., Keskin, H. K. & Akıllı, M. (2019). Examining the effects of negotiation and mediation on students' conflict resolution and problem-solving skills. *International Journal of Instruction, 12*(3), 717-730.

Azevedo, V., Carvalho, M., Fernandes-Costa. F., Mesquita, S., Soares. J., ….. Maia, Â. (2017). Interview transcription: conceptual issues, practical guidelines, and challenges. *Revista de Enfermagem Referêcia, IV*(14), 159-168.

Balasubramaniam, V. C. (2019). Focus group discussions, methodological issues in management research: Advances, challenges, and the way ahead, 93-108. doi: 10.1108/978-1-78973-973-220191007

Beckmann, J., & Heckhausen, H. (2018). Motivation as a function of expectancy and incentive. *Motivation and Action,* 163-220. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-65094-4_5

Blair, L. J. (2015). The influence of therapists' spirituality on their practice: A grounded theory exploration. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 1-10. doi: 10.1002/capr.12015

Bojuwoye, O., & Moletsane-Kekae, M. (2018). African indigenous knowledge systems and healing traditions. *Global Psychologies*, 77-98. doi: 10.1057/978-1-1349-95816-0_5

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Burr, V., & King, N. (2012). 'You're in cruel England Now!': teaching research ethics through reality television. *Psychology Learning and Teaching*, *11*(1), 22-29.

Campbell, R. D & Littleton, T. (2018). Mental health counselling in the Black American Church: reflections and recommendations from counsellors serving in a counselling ministry. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 21*(4), 336-352.

Carey, S., Zaitchik, D., & Bascandziev, I. (2015). Theories of development: In dialog with Jean Piaget. *Development Review*, *38*, 36-54. doi:10.1016/j.dr.2015.07.003

Chon, M.-G., & Park, H. (2019). Predicting public support for government actions in a public health crisis: testing fear, organization-public relationship, and behavioral intention in the framework of the situational theory of problem solving. *Health Communication,* 1-11. doi: 10.1080/10410236.2019.1700439

Cong, K. N., & My, L. N. T. (2019). Development and psychometric properties of a social problem solving test for adolescents. *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy, 38*(1), 76-95.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches.* (3rd ed). Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc.

Divin, N., Harper, P., Curran, E., Corry, D., & Leavey, G. (2018). Help-seeking measures and their use in adolescents: a systematic review. *Adolescent Research Review, 3*(1), 113-122. doi: 10.1007/s40894-017-0078-8

Doody, O., & Noonan, M. (2013). Preparing and conducting interviews to collect data. *Nurse Researcher, 20*(5), 28-32.

Elliott, S., Read, R., & Salkovskis, P. M. (2018). An experimental study in community volunteers of the effects of focusing on views about seeking help for obsessional problems. *Journal of Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders, 19*, 1-5.

Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 62*(1), 107-115. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x

Etikan, I., & Bala, K. (2017). Sampling and Sampling Methods. *Biom Biostat Int J, 5*(6), 1-3.

Farouk, S., & Edwards, S. (2020). Narrative counselling for adolescents at risk of exclusion from school. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 49*(4), 553-564.

Farrugia, L. (2019). WASP (Write a Scientific Paper): The ongoing process of ethical decision-making in qualitative research: Ethical principles and their application to the research process. *Early Human Development, 133*, 48-51.

Fathoni, A., Muhibbin, A., Arifin, Z., Habiby, W. N., & Ismail, M. E. (2021). Implementation of guidance and counselling services to Muhammadiyah elementary schools, Surakarta, provincial Central Java, Indonesia. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences, 42*, 177-184.

Gebreegziabher Y., Girma E., & Tesfaye, M. (2019). Help-seeking behavior of Jimma university students with common mental disorders: A crosssectional study. PLoS ONE 14(2): e0212657. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0212657

Getachew, A. (2020). Assessment of guidance and counselling service centre in higher education institutions: A qualitative research. *Int J Sch Cogn Psychol, 7*(2), 1-6.

Gustafsson, J. (2017) Single case studies vs. multiple case studies: A comparative study. Retrieved from: http://www.divaportal.org/smash/get/diva2:1064378/FULLTEXT01.pdf

Halcomb, E. J., & Davidson, P. M. (2006), Is verbatim transcription of interview data always necessary? *Applied Nursing Research, 19*, 38-42.

Hamilton, A. B., & Finley, E. P. (2019). Qualitative methods in implementation research: An introduction. *Psychiatry Research, 280*, 1-8.

Jiang, H., Kim, J.-N., Liu, B., & Luo, Y. (2017). The impact of perceptual and situational factors on environmental communication: a study of citizen engagement in China. *Environmental Communication,* 1-21. doi: 10.1080/17524032.2017.1346517

Karumbaiah, S., Ocumpaugh, J., & Baker, R. S. (2019). The influence of school demographics on the relationship between students' help-seeking behavior and performance and motivational measures. *Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Educational Data Mining (EDM),* 99-108.

Kim, J-M. & Grunig, J. E. (2011). Problem solving and communicative action: A situational theory of problem solving. *Journal of Communication, 61*, 120-149.

Kim, J-N., & Krishna, A. (2014). Publics and lay informatics: a review of the situational theory of problem solving. *Annals of the International Communication Association, 38*(1), 71-105.

Kitchener, K. S., & King, P. M. (1981). Reflective judgment: Concepts of justification and their relationship to age and education. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 2(*2), 89-116*.* doi:10.1016/0193-3973(81)90032-0

Koelsch, L. E. (2013). Reconceptualizing the member check Interview. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 12,* 168-179.

Lam, W., Fowler, C., & Dawson, A. (2016). The approaches Hong Kong Chinese mothers adopt to teach their preschool children to prevent influenza: a multiple case study at household level. *BMC Nursing, 15*(51), 1-9.

Lee, H., Oshita, T., Oh, H. J., & Hove, T. (2014) When do people speak out? Integrating the spiral of silence and the situational theory of problem solving. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 26*(3), 185-199.

Lowe, A., Norris, A. C., Farris, A. J., & Babbage, D. R. (2018). Quantifying thematic saturation in qualitative data analysis. *Field Methods, 30*(3), 191-207.

Lloyd-Hazlett, J., Moyer, M. S., & Sullivan, J. R. (2017). Adolescent risk-taking behaviors: when do student counselors break confidentiality? *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*, 1-16. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23727810.2017.1381934, 1-16

McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research,* 1-12. doi: 10.1177/2333393615597674

Mohd Arifin, S. R. (2016). Ethical considerations in qualitative study. *International Journal of Care Scholars, 1*(2), 30-33.

Moon, D., & Plaines, D. (2019). Triangulation: A method to increase validity, reliability, and legitimation in clinical research. *JOURNAL OF EMERGENCY NURSING*, *45*(1), 103-105.

Moore, E., & Llompart, J. (2017). Collecting, transcribing, analyzing and presenting plurilingual interactional data. In: Moore, E., & Dooly, M. (Eds.). *Qualitative approaches to research on plurilingual education,* 403-417. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2017.emmd2016.638

Nafziger, J. & DeKruyf, L. (2013). Narrative counseling for professional school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 16*(5), 290-302.

Nezu, A. M., Nezu, C. M., & Gerber, H. R. (2019). (Emotion-centered) problem-solving therapy: An update. *Australian Psychologist, 54,* 361-371.

Novek, S., & Wilkinson, H. (2019). Safe and inclusive research practices for qualitative research involving people with dementia: A review of key issues and strategies. *Dementia, 18*(3), 1042-1059.

Orjiako, O.-E. Y., & So, D. (2013). *The role of acculturative stress factors on mental health and help-seeking behavior of sub-Saharan African immigrants. International Journal of Culture and Mental Health, 7(3), 315–325.* doi:10.1080/17542863.2013.797004

Parameswaran, U. D.,Ozawa-Kirk, J. L., & Latendresse, G. (2019). To live (code) or to not: A new method for coding in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work, 0*(0), 1-15.

Peters K, Halcomb E (2015) Interviews in qualitative research. *Nurse Researcher, 22*(4), 6-7.

Prior, S. (2012). Young people's process of engagement in school counselling. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 12*(3), 233-240.

Pereira, A., Peterman, A., Neijhoft, A. N., Buluma, R., Daban, R. A., Islam, A., … Palermo, T. (2020). Disclosure, reporting and help seeking among child survivors of violence: a cross-country analysis. *BMC Public Health, 20*(1), 1-23. doi: 10.1186/s12889-020-09069-7

Pheko, M. M., Chilisa, R., Balogun, S. K., & Kgathi, C. (2013). Predicting intentions to seek psychological help among Botswana university students: The role of stigma and help-seeking attitudes. *SAGE Open*, *3*(3), 1-11.

Reid-Searl, K., Mainey, L., Bassett, J., & Dwyer, T. (2019). Using simulation to prepare neophyte nursing students to deliver intimate patient care. *Collegian, 26*, 273-280.

Renz, S. M., Carrington, J. M., & Badger, T. A (2018). Two strategies for qualitative content analysis: An intramethod approach to triangulation. *Qualitative Health Research, 28*(5), 824-831.

Robinson, O. C. (2013). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 11*(1), 25-41.

Rodgers, L., & Furcron, C. (2019). Multicultural competence: Exploring the link between globalization, select demographics, and school counselors' self-perceptions. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling.* 10.1007/s10447-018-9367-6

Rossetto, K. R. (2014). Qualitative research interviews: Assessing the therapeutic value and challenges. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 31*(4), 482-489.

Ryan, A. M., & Shin, H. (2011). Help-seeking tendencies during early adolescence: An examination of motivational correlates and consequences for achievement. *Learning and Instruction, 21*(2), 247-256. doi:10.1016/j.learninstruc.2010.07.003

Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B. ... Burroughs, H. (2017). Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Qual Quant.* doi: 10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8

Sorsa, M., Kiikkala, I., & Åstedt-Kurki, P. (2015) Bracketing as a skill in conducting unstructured qualitative interviews. *Nurse Researcher, 22*(4), 8-12.

Taherdoos, H. (2016). Sampling methods in research methodology; how to choose a sampling technique for research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM), 5*(2), 18-27.

Tanaka, A., Murakami, Y., Okuno, T., & Yamauchi, H. (2002). Achievement goals, attitudes *toward help seeking, and help-seeking behavior in the classroom. Learning and Individual Differences, 13*(1), 23-35. doi: 10.1041-6080902)00043

Tavory, I. (2020). Interviews and inference: making sense of interview data in qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-020-09464-x

Tharbe, I. H. A., Sumari, M., Ng, K-M., Razak, N. A. A., & Amat, S. (2020). Emotional intelligence from the perspectives of Malaysian helping professionals: A qualitative study. *Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. & Hum, 28*(4), 1-18.

Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work, 11*(1), 80-96.

Varpio, L., Ajjawi, R., Monrouxe, L. V., O'Brien, B. C., & Rees, C. E. (2017). Shedding the cobra effect: problematising thematic emergence, triangulation, saturation and member checking. *Medical Education, 51*, 40-50.

Yılmaz-Gözü, H. (2013) The effects of counsellor gender and problem type on help-seeking attitudes among Turkish high school students. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 41*(2), 178-192. doi: 10.1080/03069885.2012.726346