

**ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS' EMPATHETIC
ORIENTATION ON STUDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO SEEK HELP IN DELTA STATE
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

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**A RESEARCH WORK WRITTEN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL
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CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned, certify that this research work was written by **Nkechinyere Fidelia IGBOELI** in the Department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City.

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(Head of Department)

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty, my redeemer and stone of help, for His grace that saw me through this phase of my life. For without Him, I would not have been able to pull this through. I give Him alone all the glory and honour.

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the influence of school counsellors' empathetic orientation on students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. Seven research questions guided the study, and seven hypotheses were tested. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of one thousand two hundred and sixty-six (1,266) Senior Secondary School One (SS1) students in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State. The sample comprised one hundred and fifty (150) senior secondary school one students selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure, involving simple random sampling of 10 schools out of 24 public senior secondary schools in the area, and random selection of 15 students from each of the selected schools. The instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire titled "School Counsellors' Empathetic Orientation Scale (SCEOS)" adapted from the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (BLRI), which was developed in 1962. The face and content validity of the instrument were ascertained by three lecturers from the Department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, and a Cronbach Alpha Statistics was used to obtain a reliability coefficient value of 0.882. The data collected were analyzed using Inferential Statistics, specifically Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The findings of the study showed that there is a significant relationship between active listening, emotional validation, perspective-taking, empathetic concern, and open-ended questioning techniques used by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. Furthermore, there is no significant relationship between non-verbal communication and cultural sensitivity by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that

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school counsellors should prioritize developing their empathetic skills to enhance students' willingness to seek help.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The complexities of modern secondary education in Nigeria have created a myriad of challenges that impact students' academic performance, emotional well-being and overall quality of life. These challenges, which are often interconnected and multifaceted, can arise from various sources, including academic pressures, social relationships, family expectations and personal crises. In response to these challenges, students require guidance and support to navigate their educational, vocational and personal-socio-emotional needs. Students' willingness to seek help refers to their inclination to approach school counsellors or other support services for guidance, advice, or emotional support when dealing with personal, academic, or social issues. This willingness is crucial for students to receive timely support, address their concerns and develop resilience. By seeking help, students can access resources and guidance that can help them navigate challenges, achieve their academic goals and improve their overall well-being. Critical to this is the role of school counsellors in cultivating a supportive and inclusive school environment that encourages students to seek help when faced with challenges. This underscores the importance of school counsellors in providing supportive services that foster students' holistic development, including their academic achievement, personal growth and social development.

School counsellors play a pivotal role in fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment that caters to the diverse emotional, social and academic needs of students. As trained professionals, school counsellors possess a unique blend of counselling, teaching and

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administrative skills that enable them to provide guidance, support, and counselling services to

students (Kumar, 2017). Through collaboration with students, teachers and parents, school counsellors identify and address the complex needs of students, including their academic, personal and social concerns. The establishment of positive relationships between school counsellors and students is crucial for promoting students' overall well-being, academic success and social integration. Effective school counsellors create a safe, non-judgmental and empathetic space, encouraging students to seek help, disclose personal concerns and develop a positive therapeutic relationship. Ultimately, school counsellors play a vital role in enhancing the educational experiences and outcomes of secondary school students. According to Fakunle (2017), being a professional counsellor is not enough in helping students meet their needs. When the willingness for students to seek support is not there, then the counsellor's expertise and resources may be underutilized. Critical to this, is the concept of school counsellors' empathetic orientation, which has the potential to foster a positive and supportive relationship between the counsellor and student, ultimately enhancing students' willingness to seek help.

School counsellors' empathetic orientation refers to the ability of school counsellors to understand and share the feelings of their students, while also maintaining a professional and objective stance. Empathetic school counsellors are able to create a safe and supportive learning environment that encourages students to seek help, disclose personal concerns and develop positive relationships with their peers and teachers. Empathetic orientation is the other side of empathy. However, empathy is a fundamental skill in counselling that involves the counsellor putting themselves in the shoes of the client, understanding their feelings and sharing their emotional experience (Ogundipe, 2019). Empathetic orientation, on the other hand, encompasses a broader range of skills and attitudes that enable school counsellors to create a safe, supportive and non-judgmental learning environment. These skills include active listening, emotional validation, perspective-taking, empathetic concern, non-verbal communication, cultural sensitivity and open-ended questioning. Active listening is a critical skill, allowing

counsellors to fully concentrate on and understand the student's message. Emotional validation acknowledges and accepts the student's emotions, helping them feel understood and accepted. This, in turn, enables perspective-taking, where the counsellor sees things from the student's point of view and understands their thoughts and feelings. Empathetic concern is also essential, involving compassion and care for the student's well-being. Reflective responding enables the counsellor to reflect back the student's words and emotions, ensuring understanding. Nonverbal communication, such as maintaining eye contact and using open body language, builds trust and rapport. Furthermore, cultural sensitivity is vital, involving awareness of and respect for the student's cultural background and values. Finally, open-ended questioning encourages students to share their thoughts and feelings in a non-judgmental and supportive environment. Without empathy, effective school counselling cannot take place, as students may feel unheard, misunderstood, or judged. By being empathetic, school counsellors can provide a supportive and non-judgmental space for students to express themselves, which can lead to increased self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-esteem. Furthermore, empathetic orientation involves not only understanding and sharing students' feelings but also being genuine, authentic, culturally sensitive and goal-oriented in the counselling relationship (Eze, 2015).

Various factors in literature have been identified as influence of school counsellors' empathetic orientation on students' willingness to seek help. Active listening, a critical skill in empathetic orientation, has been identified as having a significant influence on school counsellors' empathetic orientation and, subsequently, students' willingness to seek help. Some researchers have employed active listening skills with respect to counsellors' empathetic orientation and discovered that counsellors with strong active listening skills tend to exhibit higher levels of empathetic orientation than those with weaker active listening skills (Kalunta & Chukwuma, 2017). Counsellors with effective active listening skills are more likely to create

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a supportive and non-judgmental environment fosters students' willingness to seek help. Counsellors with strong active listening skills may be more empathetic and understanding, leading to stronger counsellor-student relationships and increased students' willingness to seek help. Conversely, active listening may not necessarily guarantee students' willingness to seek help, suggesting that other factors such as students' personal motivation, perceived severity of their problems and cultural background may play a more significant role in determining students' help-seeking behaviour. Students may not always be willing to seek help even when counsellors exhibit strong active listening skills, particularly if they perceive the counsellor as lacking expertise in addressing their specific concerns or if they fear being judged or stigmatized.

Emotional validation could influence students' willingness to seek help. Some researchers have employed emotional validation skills with respect to counsellors' empathetic orientation and discovered that counsellors with strong emotional validation skills tend to exhibit higher levels of empathetic orientation than those with weaker emotional validation skills. Counsellors with effective emotional validation skills are more likely to create a supportive and non-judgmental environment, which fosters students' willingness to seek help. Emotional validation skills enable counsellors to acknowledge and validate students' emotions, leading to increased students' trust and willingness to seek help (Udeh & Nwosu, 2019). However, Ezeani (2022). Emotional validation may not be sufficient to overcome students' reluctance to seek help, particularly if students have had negative experiences with counsellors in the past or if they fear being judged or stigmatized. Emotional validation may need to be accompanied by other skills, such as empathy and genuineness, to effectively promote students' willingness to seek help.

Perspective-taking is another factor that influences students' willingness to seek help. Perspective-taking refers to the ability of counsellors to understand and appreciate students' experiences and challenges from their perspective. Some researchers have employed perspective-taking skills with respect to students' willingness to seek help and discovered that counsellors with strong perspective-taking skills tend to build stronger relationships with students, which fosters students' willingness to seek help. According to Fajobi & Adebayo (2020), counsellors with effective perspective-taking skills are more likely to understand students' concerns and provide tailored support, which increases students' willingness to seek help. Technical issues, such as lack of understanding and empathy, can hinder effective perspective-taking and impact students' willingness to seek help. Additionally, individual characteristics, including counsellors' biases, willingness, and assumptions, can also pose significant challenges to effective perspective-taking and students to seek help (Adedapo & Olabode, 2019). Conversely, some researchers argue that perspective taking may not always guarantee students' willingness to seek help, particularly if students have had negative experiences with counsellors in the past (Akinola, 2021).

Another factor that could possibly influence students' willingness to seek help is counsellors' empathetic concern. When students perceive counsellors as empathetic and understanding, they may be more likely to seek help. Students who experience empathetic concern from counsellors may feel more comfortable seeking help and are more likely to open up about their concerns. Regarding students' perceptions of counsellors' empathetic concern, it can significantly impact their willingness to seek help. When students feel understood and supported, they are more likely to seek help and engage in the counselling process (Nnenna & Ifeanyi, 2021). On the other hand, students' past experiences and expectations may influence their willingness to seek help, regardless of the counsellor's empathetic concern. Nevertheless,

empathetic concern remains a crucial factor in promoting students' willingness to seek help and should be considered in counselling practices.

Non-verbal communication of school counsellors could influence students' willingness to seek help in secondary schools. Non-verbal communication refers to a set of cues, such as body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice, that convey emotions and attitudes towards students. In the school setting, counsellors' non-verbal communication can either encourage or discourage students from seeking help. The non-verbal cues exhibited by counsellors can undermine the importance of seeking help if not properly managed. Counsellors who exhibit positive non-verbal cues, such as maintaining eye contact and open body language, may build trust with students and increase their willingness to seek help. Some counsellors' non-verbal cues, such as crossing their arms or avoiding eye contact, may give students the impression that they are not approachable or empathetic. According to Ezeani (2019), students are more likely to seek help from counsellors who exhibit warmth and genuineness through their nonverbal cues. Although it can be assumed that counsellors' non-verbal communication plays a significant role in students' willingness to seek help, there is a need to investigate the influence it has on students' help-seeking behaviour.

Counsellors who possess cultural sensitivity and those who do not may show different levels of effectiveness in promoting students' willingness to seek help. This factor has received little attention in previous studies. Counsellors who are culturally sensitive may understand and appreciate the diverse backgrounds and values of their students, creating a safe and supportive environment that fosters help-seeking behaviour. In contrast, counsellors with limited cultural sensitivity may struggle to connect with students from diverse backgrounds, potentially leading to mistrust and decreased willingness to seek help. By contrast, counsellors

with high cultural sensitivity are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours that promote students' willingness to seek help (Eze & Okoro, 2021).

One other factor that could influence students' willingness to seek help is the use of open-ended questioning by counsellors. Open-ended questioning refers to a technique where counsellors ask questions that encourage students to share their thoughts and feelings in detail. Open-ended questioning may help students feel heard and understood, increasing their comfort level in seeking help. Families with strong counsellor student relationships built on open-ended questioning tend to have students who are more likely to open up about their concerns. This lack of inhibition may lead to increased trust and willingness to seek help when students feel their concerns are being actively listened to. Students who experience open-ended questioning from counsellors are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards seeking help than their peers who do not. Open-ended questioning includes active listening, empathy, and non-judgmental attitude. These may have a stronger impact on students' willingness to seek help. Also, counsellors who use open ended questioning are more likely to have students with higher levels of self-awareness and self-expression than students whose counsellors do not use this technique. Additionally, open-ended questioning relates to a higher level of student engagement and motivation to seek help. The use of open-ended questioning may partly explain the association between counsellor-student relationships and students' willingness to seek help. Altogether, it can be assumed that open-ended questioning is associated with increased willingness to seek help; however, there is a need to investigate the influence it has on students' help-seeking behaviour.

Statement of the Problem

ABSTRACT

In Delta State secondary schools, students often face various challenges that can impact their academic performance and emotional well-being. These challenges may include academic stress, social issues, family problems, and emotional difficulties, among others. School counsellors are positioned to provide support and guidance to students, helping them navigate these challenges and achieve their full potential. However, students' willingness to seek help from school counsellors can be influenced by various factors, including the counsellor's approach and demeanor. School counsellor's empathetic orientation can play a significant role in determining students' comfort level in seeking assistance. When counsellors exhibit empathetic behaviours such as active listening, emotional validation, perspective-taking, and empathetic concern, students are more likely to feel understood, valued, and supported. However, the extent to which school counsellors in Delta State secondary schools exhibit empathetic orientation and its impact on students' willingness to seek help remains unclear.

The lack of understanding about the relationship between school counsellors' empathetic orientation and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools has significant implications for student outcomes. If school counsellors are not exhibiting empathetic orientation, students may be less likely to seek help, potentially leading to unresolved issues, decreased academic performance, and negative emotional outcomes. Furthermore, ineffective counselling services can undermine the overall goals of secondary education, including promoting students' social, emotional, and academic development.

This study aims to assess the influence of school counsellor's empathetic orientation on students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. By exploring the relationships between empathetic orientation dimensions (active listening, emotional validation, perspective-taking, empathetic concern, non-verbal communication, cultural

sensitivity, and open-ended questioning techniques to assess students' willingness to seek help, this study will provide insights into the role of school counsellor's empathetic orientation in counselling services. The findings will inform strategies to enhance counselling services, promote students' well-being, and improve academic outcomes in Delta State secondary schools.

Research Question

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. Is there any relationship between active listening by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools?
2. Is there any relationship between emotional validation by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools?
3. Is there any relationship between perspective-taking by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools?
4. Is there any relationship between empathetic concern exhibited by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools?
5. Is there any relationship between non-verbal communication by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools?
6. Is there any relationship between cultural sensitivity by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools?
7. Is there any relationship between open-ended questioning techniques used by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools?

Hypotheses

ABSTRACT

The following hypotheses were formulated and will be tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant relationship between active listening by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.
2. There is no significant relationship between emotional validation by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.
3. There is no significant relationship between perspective-taking by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.
4. There is no significant relationship between empathetic concern exhibited by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.
5. There is no significant relationship between non-verbal communication by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.
6. There is no significant relationship between cultural sensitivity by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.
7. There is no significant relationship between open-ended questioning techniques used by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the influence of school counsellors' empathetic orientation on students' willingness to seek help in Delta State Secondary Schools. Specifically, the study will examine:

- the relationship between active listening by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools,

- ABSTRACT**
- the relationship between emotional intelligence by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools,
 - the relationship between perspective-taking by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools,
 - the relationship between empathetic concern exhibited by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools,
 - the relationship between non-verbal communication by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools,
 - the relationship between cultural sensitivity by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools and
 - the relationship between open-ended questioning techniques used by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Significance of the Study

This study would be of great benefits to students, teachers, counsellors, parents, government and the society at large. The study will provide valuable insights into the impact of school counsellors' empathetic orientation on students' willingness to seek help. The findings of this study will benefit students by enhancing their willingness to seek help from school counsellors who possess high empathetic orientation, thereby improving their academic performance, social adjustment and emotional well-being. Furthermore, the study will provide evidence on the role of school counsellors' empathetic orientation and empathy levels in promoting students' willingness to seek help. This knowledge will enable counsellors to develop effective strategies to improve their empathetic orientation and empathy levels, leading to better relationships with students and increased students' willingness to seek help.

The study will also benefit teachers and school counsellors by providing them with valuable insights into the characteristics of effective school counsellors. This knowledge will enable them to develop effective counselling programmes that meet the needs of their students. Parents will also benefit from the study as it will help to reduce their concerns about their children's academic performance and well-being. The study will also provide policymakers with evidence-based recommendations for improving school counselling services in Delta State.

Finally, the importance of this study lies in its contribution to knowledge. The findings of this study would act as a source of motivation from which other researchers can carry out further research in counselling.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on assessing the influence of school counsellors' empathetic orientation on students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. This study will also determine the extent to which empathetic orientation of school counsellors' influences students' willingness to seek help and investigate the relationship between specific aspects of empathetic orientation and students' help-seeking behaviour. The study is delimited to all public secondary schools in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were operationally defined as used in this study:

- **Counsellor-Student Relationship:** The quality of interaction between school counsellors and students, characterized by mutual respect, trust, and open communication.
- **Empathetic Orientation:** The ability of a school counsellor to create a supportive and non-judgmental environment, where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, feelings, and concerns.

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- **School Counsellor:** A trained professional responsible for providing guidance and counselling services to students within the school setting.
- **Willingness to Seek Help:** Students' readiness to approach school counsellors for guidance and support on academic, personal, or social issues.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of related literature was done under the following headings:

- Theoretical Framework of the Study
- Concept of Empathetic Orientation
- Skills in Empathetic Orientation
- Active Listening and Students' Willingness to Seek Help
- Emotional Validation and Students' Willingness to Seek Help
- Perspective-Taking and Students' Willingness to Seek Help
- Empathetic Concern and Students' Willingness to Seek Help
- Non-Verbal Communication and Students' Willingness to Seek Help
- Cultural Sensitivity and Students' Willingness to Seek Help
- Open-Ended Questioning Techniques and Students' Willingness to Seek Help
- Summary of Reviewed Literature

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study is hinged on: Person-Centered Theory (1942), by Carl Ransom Rogers. Person-Centered Theory (is a Humanistic Theory developed by the American Psychologist, Carl Ransom Rogers (1902-1987), in the year 1942 (Rogers, 1942). This theory posits that individuals have a natural tendency towards self-actualization, but this process can be facilitated or hindered by the therapeutic environment (Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005). Rogers (1942) argued that a supportive and non-judgmental relationship

between the therapist and client is essential for promoting personal growth and self-actualization.

In the context of this study, Person-Centered Theory suggests that school counsellors' empathetic orientation plays a crucial role in creating a supportive environment that encourages students to seek help (Gibbard & Hanley, 2008). When school counsellors provide empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard, students are more likely to feel comfortable and secure, which can increase their willingness to seek help (Rogers, 1951). Person-Centered theory is related to this study because it highlights the importance of the therapeutic relationship in promoting help-seeking behaviors (Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005). Furthermore, this theory emphasizes the importance of creating a non-judgmental and empathetic environment, which is essential for building trust and encouraging students to seek help (Rogers, 1961). By examining the impact of school counsellors' empathetic orientation on students' willingness to seek help, this study aims to contribute to our understanding of how Person-Centered Theory can be applied in educational settings to promote student well-being

Concept of Empathetic Orientation

Empathetic orientation is a vital concept in counselling and therapy, enabling counsellors to create a supportive and non-judgmental environment for their clients. According to Rogers (1957), empathetic orientation involves sensing the client's private world as if it were one's own, without losing the "as if" quality. This concept is characterized by active listening, emotional intelligence and a non-judgmental attitude.

According to Efemena (2016), empathetic orientation is the ability to be present with the client, understand their story and communicate this understanding in a supportive and non-judgmental way. Corey (2017) further emphasize the importance of empathetic orientation,

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stating that it involves seeing things from the client's perspective, understanding their emotions and experiences, and communicating this understanding in a supportive and non-judgmental way. Empathetic orientation is not just a technique, but a way of being with clients, as noted by Ivey and Ivey (2016). By being empathetic, genuine and non-judgmental, counsellors can create a safe and supportive environment for their clients to explore their thoughts and feelings. Empathetic orientation is used for several purposes, including building trust and rapport with clients, understanding clients' emotions and experiences, communicating empathy and understanding and creating a safe and supportive environment for clients to explore their thoughts and feelings (Gladding, 2019). Moreover, empathetic orientation refers to an individual's ability and tendency to be attuned to the emotions and perspectives of others, which is fundamental in promoting social cohesion and enhancing interpersonal relationships (Davis, 1983). In the realm of communication in counselling, empathetic orientation is crucial as it fosters deeper connections and understanding, allowing individuals to not only understand others' feelings but also to share in their emotional experiences (Rogers, 1980). Empathetic orientation is a foundational aspect of effective counselling practice, emphasizing the ability of counsellors to understand and resonate with their clients' emotional experiences (Rogers, 1961). By developing empathetic orientation, counsellors and other professionals can become more effective in their work, build stronger relationships with their clients and provide more supportive and caring services.

To develop empathetic orientation, counsellors and other professionals can engage in various activities, such as practicing active listening and emotional intelligence, engaging in self-reflection and self-awareness activities, seeking feedback from clients and colleagues, and participating in training and professional development programs (Seligman, 2015). According to Rogers (1961), empathetic orientation involves more than merely understanding another's

feelings; it requires a deep and genuine engagement with the client's emotional state, allowing for a connection that fosters trust and openness.

In the context of counseling, empathetic orientation helps create a safe environment where clients feel valued and understood. This is crucial, as it encourages clients to explore their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment (Germer, 2016). Rogers (1980) further asserts that empathy, along with unconditional positive regard and congruence, forms the core of an effective therapeutic relationship, empowering clients to engage in meaningful self-discovery. Furthermore, empathetic orientation in counseling is not solely an emotional response; it is also a skill that can be cultivated and developed by practitioners (Germer & Hepburn, 2017). This highlights the importance of empathetic orientation not only as an innate quality but also as an essential competency that counsellors must continually refine throughout their careers.

Skills in Empathetic Orientation

The skills of empathetic orientation are essential for counsellors and therapists to create a supportive and non-judgmental environment for their clients. One of the key skills is active listening, which involves fully concentrating on what the client is saying, both verbally and non-verbally, and responding in a way that shows understanding and empathy (Wagner, 2018). This skill is critical in building trust and rapport with clients, and it allows counsellors to gain a deeper understanding of their clients' thoughts, feelings and experiences. Emotional intelligence is another important skill in empathetic orientation, which involves being aware of one's own emotions and those of the client, and using this awareness to guide interactions and build rapport (Brackett, 2018). A non-judgmental attitude is also critical, involving avoiding making assumptions or jumping to conclusions about the client's thoughts, feelings or behaviours, and instead, approaching the client with an open and non-judgmental mindset

(Rogers, 1957). Schnitzer (2017) notes that a non-judgmental attitude is essential in creating a safe and supportive environment for clients to explore their thoughts and feelings. In addition to these skills, empathetic reflection is also a vital skill, which involves reflecting back to the client their thoughts, feelings and experiences, in a way that shows understanding and empathy (Hill, 2015). Perspective-taking is another critical skill, which involves being able to see things from the client's perspective, and understanding their thoughts, feelings and experiences (Davis, 1983). Kim (2019) emphasized that perspective-taking is essential in empathetic orientation, as it allows counsellors to understand and share the feelings of their clients. Empathy is also a fundamental skill in empathetic orientation, involving the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person (Rogers, 1957). By possessing high levels of empathy, counsellors can create a supportive and non-judgmental environment for their clients. Self-awareness is also important, involving being aware of one's own thoughts, feelings, and biases and using this awareness to guide interactions with clients (Seligman, 2015). Lee (2018) notes that self-awareness is essential in empathetic orientation, as it allows counsellors to avoid imposing their own biases and assumptions on their clients.

Furthermore, other essential skills in empathetic orientation include attentiveness, which involves being fully present and engaged with the client (Ivey & Ivey, 2013); warmth, which involves showing kindness, compassion, and genuine interest in the client (Rogers, 1957); and genuineness, which involves being authentic, sincere and transparent in interactions with the client (Rogers, 1957). Additionally, validation involves acknowledging and accepting the client's thoughts, feelings and experiences (Linehan, 1997); cultural competence involves being aware of and sensitive to the client's cultural background and experiences (Sue & Sue, 2016); and open-mindedness involves being receptive to new ideas, perspectives, and experiences (Rogers, 1957). Flexibility involves being adaptable and able to adjust to changing

circumstances and client needs (Skovholt & Smith, 2004); sensitivity involves being aware of and responsive to the client's emotional and psychological needs (Hill, 2015); and immediacy involves being present and engaged in the moment, and responding to the client's immediate needs and concerns (Hill, 2015). Congruence involves being authentic and genuine in interactions with the client, and ensuring that one's words and actions are consistent (Rogers, 1957); unconditional positive regard involves showing acceptance, respect, and compassion for the client, regardless of their thoughts, feelings, or behaviors (Rogers, 1957). Reflective listening involves repeating back what the client has said, in order to ensure understanding and show empathy (Ivey & Ivey, 2015); paraphrasing involves rephrasing what the client has said, in order to clarify and ensure understanding (Ivey & Ivey, 2015); and summarizing involves summarizing the main points of what the client has said, in order to provide a clear overview and show understanding (Ivey & Ivey, 2015).

Active Listening and Students Willingness to Seek Help

Active listening has been identified as a crucial component of effective counselling relationships, particularly in enhancing students' willingness to seek help. Numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between active listening and students' willingness to seek help, suggesting that when counsellors exhibit active listening skills, students feel heard and understood, enhancing their trust and comfort level in seeking help (Bayne & Thompson, 2015; Wilcox et al., 2017). This is because active listening enables counsellors to build trust and rapport with students, creating a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable sharing their concerns (Gibson et al., 2019).

Agbakwuru (2018) investigated the impact of active listening on students' willingness to seek help in a Nigerian secondary school setting. The population consisted of all secondary school students in Lagos State, with a sample of 150 students selected through a stratified

random sampling technique. Data was collected using the "Active Listening Scale" (ALS). The findings revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between active listening and students' willingness to seek help. Nnamani and Eze (2020) also explored the relationship between counsellor-student active listening and help-seeking behaviour among university students in Nigeria. The population consisted of all university students in Nigeria, with a sample of 200 students selected through a cluster sampling technique. Data was collected using the "Active Listening Questionnaire" (ALQ) and the "Help-Seeking Behaviour Scale" (HSBS). The results showed a significant positive relationship between active listening and help-seeking behaviour.

Furthermore, Obasi (2019) investigated the influence of teacher active listening on students' attitudes towards seeking guidance among primary school pupils in Enugu State, Nigeria. The population consisted of all primary school pupils in Enugu State, the sample of 100 pupils selected through simple random sampling technique. Data was collected using a self-constructed questionnaire titled: "Teacher Active Listening Questionnaire" (TALQ). The study revealed that teacher active listening significantly predicted pupils' attitudes towards seeking guidance. While Nwosu (2021) found no significant difference in students' willingness to seek help based on counsellor active listening in a study conducted among secondary school students in Abuja, Nigeria. The population consisted of all secondary school students in Abuja, with a sample of 120 students selected through a systematic random sampling technique. Data was collected using the "Counsellor Active Listening Scale" (CALS) and the "Willingness to Seek Help Scale" (WSHS).

Uzoanya and Obasi (2018) investigated the relationship between teacher active listening and students' willingness to seek academic support among secondary school students in Imo State, Nigeria. The population consisted of all secondary school students in Imo State,

with a sample of 180 students selected through stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected using the "Teacher Active Listening Questionnaire" (TALQ) and the "Willingness to Seek Academic Support Scale" (WSASS). The study found a statistically significant positive correlation between teacher active listening and students' willingness to seek academic support.

Emotional Validation and Students Willingness to Seek Help

Emotional validation refers to the process of acknowledging and accepting students' emotions, helping them feel understood and accepted (Okoro, 2015; Aliyu, 2017; Adebayo, 2018). According to Okpo (2019), it is a crucial aspect of therapeutic relationships whereby the counsellor acknowledges and accepts the client's emotions, promoting a sense of safety and trust. Mkar (2020) also highlights its importance in building trust and promoting emotional healing. As a skill that is part of an empathetic orientation, it enables the counsellor to create a supportive environment that fosters emotional well-being and encourages students to open up about their concerns. Research on this topic has yielded varying findings, with some studies reporting significant associations with students' emotional well-being and help-seeking behaviors, while others have found mixed results.

Studies have shown that emotional validation plays a significant role in promoting students' emotional well-being and academic success. Nwankwo (2020) investigated emotional validation's influence on students' emotional regulation, employing a descriptive survey design with 350 secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. The students were selected via stratified random sampling, and data was collected using the Emotional Validation Scale (EVS). Regression analysis revealed significant correlations between emotional validation and students' emotional regulation. Similarly, Ugwuanyi and Onwuka (2019) assessed emotional validation's impact on students' psychological well-being in secondary schools in Enugu State,

Nigeria, surveying 250 students via stratified random sampling. Data was collected using the Psychological Well-being Scale (PWS), and regression analysis revealed significant relationships between emotional validation and students' psychological well-being. Furthermore, Ezeani (2018) examined the relationship between school counsellors' emotional validation skills and students' willingness to seek help, employing a descriptive survey design with 200 secondary school students in Imo State, Nigeria. The students were selected via purposive sampling, and data was collected using the Help-Seeking Behaviour Scale (HSBS). ANOVA analysis revealed that school counsellors' emotional validation skills significantly predicted students' willingness to seek help. Chukwuemeka (2017) also studied the impact of emotional validation on students' self-esteem, sampling 300 secondary school students in Abia State, Nigeria, via purposive sampling. Data was collected using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and findings revealed that emotional validation significantly influenced students' self-esteem. Meanwhile, Okoro (2019) found that emotional validation was positively correlated with students' academic motivation, surveying 250 students in Delta State, Nigeria, via random sampling, and using the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS). Okonkwo (2020) discovered that emotional validation significantly predicted students' resilience, employing a correlational design with 200 students in Rivers State, Nigeria, via stratified random sampling, and using the Resilience Scale (RS).

Additionally, Aduba (2021) investigated the impact of emotional validation on students' stress management, surveying 400 secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria, via random sampling. Data was collected using the Stress Management Scale (SMS), and findings revealed that emotional validation significantly reduced students' stress levels. Similarly, Nnamani (2022) found that emotional validation was positively correlated with students'

emotional intelligence, employing a correlational design with 250 students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, via purposive sampling, and using the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS).

Perspective-taking and Students' Willingness to Seek Help

Perspective-taking involves actively considering and understanding the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of students from their unique viewpoint. According to Okoro (2015), perspective-taking is a crucial skill for counsellors, enabling them to understand students' experiences and provide empathetic responses. Similarly, Aliyu (2017) defines perspective-taking as the ability to see things from the student's perspective, understanding their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Adebayo (2018) emphasizes that perspective-taking involves adopting the student's viewpoint, acknowledging their emotions, and responding with sensitivity. Okpo (2019) also highlights the importance of perspective-taking in building trust and promoting emotional healing. A study conducted by Nwankwo and Okoro (2020) explored the relationship between counsellors' perspective-taking skills and students' willingness to seek guidance and support among secondary school students in Anambra State. The population consisted of all secondary school students in Anambra State, with a sample of 150 students selected using simple random sampling technique. Data was collected using a self-constructed questionnaire titled: "Counsellor Perspective-Taking and Help-Seeking Questionnaire (CPTHSQ)". The findings of the study revealed a significant positive correlation between counsellors' perspective-taking skills and students' help-seeking behavior and support-seeking attitudes.

Okonkwo (2019) investigated the impact of counsellors' perspective-taking levels on students' propensity to seek help and their overall well-being among university students in Enugu State. The population consisted of all university students in Enugu State, with a sample of 200 students selected using purposive sampling technique. Data was collected using a self-

constructed questionnaire titled: "Perspective-Taking and Support-Seeking Scale (PTSS)". The findings of the study revealed that students who perceived their counsellors as having high perspective-taking skills reported higher levels of help-seeking behavior, support-seeking attitudes, and overall well-being. Furthermore, Nnamani (2018) explored the relationship between counsellors' empathetic perspective-taking and students' inclination to seek assistance among primary school pupils in Imo State. The population of the study consisted all primary school pupils in Imo State, with a sample of 120 pupils selected using cluster sampling. Data was collected using the "Empathetic Perspective-Taking Scale (EPTS)". The findings of the study revealed a significant positive correlation between counsellors' empathetic perspective-taking and pupils' inclination to seek assistance and support.

Ituma (2015) investigated the impact of counsellors' perspective-taking levels and communication skills on students' attitudes towards seeking help and guidance among secondary school students in Delta State. The population consisted of all secondary school students in Delta State, with a sample of 100 students selected using purposive sampling technique. Data was collected using a self-constructed questionnaire titled: "Counsellors' Perspective-Taking and Communication Skills on Students' Help-Seeking Attitudes Questionnaire (CPTHSAQ)". The findings of the study revealed that students who perceived their counsellors as having high perspective-taking skills and good communication skills reported higher levels of attitudes towards seeking help and guidance.

Empathetic Concern and Students Willingness to Seek Help

Empathetic concern is a vital aspect of human relationships. According to Batson (1991), empathetic concern refers to "other-oriented emotion elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of someone in need". Petry (2004) notes that empathetic concern is characterized by a constellation of emotions, including sympathy, compassion, tenderness, and

soft-heartedness, felt for another in need. **ABSTRACT** (2006) also highlights the importance of empathetic concern in driving compassionate behaviour. Empathetic concern plays a significant role in coinselling. When counsellors demonstrate empathetic concern, students feel valued, heard, and supported, which can increase their willingness to seek help (Ade, 2027). Research has shown that students who perceive their counsellors as empathetically concerned are more likely to open up about their concerns and seek help (Okoro, 2020; Nwankwo, 2019). By showing empathetic concern, counsellors can create a safe and non-judgmental space for students to express themselves, leading to more effective and supportive counseling relationships. Studies have shown mixed findings on the relationship between empathetic concern and academic performance. For example, Akande (2018) conducted a study on the impact of empathetic concern and self-compassion on academic performance among 120 university students in Nigeria. The students were randomly selected and assigned to either an experimental group or a control group. The experimental group received counselling sessions that emphasized empathetic concern and self-compassion, while the control group received standard counselling sessions. Using the Empathetic Concern Scale (ECS) and the Academic Performance Scale (APS), the results showed that students in the experimental group reported higher levels of academic performance compared to the control group.

Adamu (2015) conducted a study on the relationship between empathetic concern and emotional intelligence among 150 secondary school students in Lagos State. The students were selected using a multistage sampling procedure, and data was collected using the Empathetic Concern Scale (ECS) and the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS). The results showed that students who perceived their teachers as empathetically concerned reported higher levels of emotional intelligence. However, other studies have found no significant relationship between empathetic concern and social adjustment. For instance, Ogunyemi (2019) conducted a study

on the impact of empathetic concern and effort on social adjustment among 100 university students in Ibadan. The students were randomly assigned to either an experimental group or a control group, and data was collected using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) and the Social Adjustment Scale (SAS). The results showed no significant difference in social adjustment between the experimental and control groups. Sani (2022) conducted a study on the impact of empathetic concern on secondary school students' self-esteem in Katsina State. The population of the study consisted of all secondary school students in Katsina State, with a sample of 250 students selected using a multistage sampling procedure. The students were administered the Empathetic Concern Scale (ECS) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) to collect data. The results showed that students who reported higher levels of empathetic concern also reported higher levels of self-esteem.

In another study conducted in Borno State, Mohammed (2020) examined the impact of empathetic concern and emotional regulation on self-esteem among 150 internally displaced persons (IDPs). The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, and data was collected using the Empathetic Concern Scale (ECS) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). The results showed that participants who reported higher levels of empathetic concern and emotional regulation also reported higher levels of self-esteem.

Non-Verbal Communication and Students Willingness to Seek Help

Non-verbal communication refers to the process of conveying meaning and information through non-linguistic cues, such as body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and proximity (Mehrabian, 2015; Knapp & Hall, 2018). According to Akpan and Ofia (2017), nonverbal communication is a crucial aspect of the counseling relationship, as it can convey empathy, understanding, and support, and help establish a positive therapeutic alliance. During counselling, nonverbal communication plays a significant role in shaping students' perceptions

of their counsellors and influencing their willingness to open up about their concerns (Egan, 2016).

Akande (2022) conducted a study on the impact of counselors' nonverbal immediacy on clients' feelings of comfort during counseling sessions. The population of the study consisted of all university students in Nigeria who had sought counseling services. A sample of 150 students was selected using a multistage random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-report questionnaire, which measured clients' perceptions of their counselors' nonverbal immediacy and their feelings of comfort during counseling sessions. The data was analyzed using correlation analysis, which revealed a significant positive relationship between counselors' nonverbal immediacy and clients' feelings of comfort. The findings showed that counselors who exhibited high levels of nonverbal immediacy, such as maintaining eye contact and using open body language, were more likely to create a comfortable and supportive environment for their clients while Esegine (2017) explored the impact of teachers' nonverbal empathy on students' academic motivation among secondary school students in Lagos State. The population of the study consisted of all public secondary school students in Lagos State, from which a sample of 200 students was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-report questionnaire, which measured students' perceptions of their teachers' nonverbal empathy and their academic motivation. The data was analyzed using regression analysis, which revealed a non-significant relationship between teachers' nonverbal empathy and students' academic motivation. The findings showed that teachers' nonverbal empathy did not have a significant impact on students' academic motivation, suggesting that other factors may be more influential.

Ogunyemi (2016) examined the effect of counselors' nonverbal communication style on clients' satisfaction with counseling services among university students in Ibadan. The

ABSTRACT

population of the study consisted of all university students who had sought counseling services, from which a sample of 120 students was selected using a purposive sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-report questionnaire, which measured clients' perceptions of their counselors' nonverbal communication style and their satisfaction with counseling services. The data was analyzed using ANOVA, which revealed a significant difference in clients' satisfaction with counseling services based on their counselors' nonverbal communication style. The findings showed that counselors who exhibited a warm and supportive nonverbal communication style were more likely to have satisfied clients.

Furthermore, Onuigbo (2015) investigated the relationship between nonverbal communication and therapeutic alliance in counseling among secondary school students in Katsina State. The population of the study consisted of all public secondary school students in Katsina State, from which a sample of 250 students was selected using a multistage random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-report questionnaire, which measured students' perceptions of their counselors' nonverbal communication and the therapeutic alliance. However, the data analysis revealed a complex relationship between nonverbal communication and therapeutic alliance, suggesting that the impact of nonverbal communication may depend on other factors such as cultural background and individual differences. The findings highlighted the need for further research to fully understand the relationship between nonverbal communication and therapeutic alliance. Similarly, Mohammed (2014) explored the impact of nonverbal communication on clients' emotional expression during counseling sessions among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Borno State. The population of the study consisted of all IDPs who had sought counseling services, from which a sample of 100 IDPs was selected using a purposive sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-report questionnaire, which measured clients'

perceptions of their counselors' nonverbal communication and their emotional expression during counseling sessions. The data was analyzed using regression analysis, which revealed a significant positive relationship between nonverbal communication and emotional expression. The findings showed that counselors who exhibited empathetic nonverbal cues, such as nodding and smiling, were more likely to facilitate emotional expression in their clients.

Brown (2018) investigated the relationship between nonverbal communication and clients' trust in their counselors. The population of the study consisted of all university students who had sought counseling services, from which a sample of 150 students was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-report questionnaire, which measured clients' perceptions of their counselors' nonverbal communication and their trust in their counselors. The data was analyzed using correlation analysis, which revealed a significant positive relationship between nonverbal communication and clients' trust. The findings showed that counselors who exhibited consistent and congruent nonverbal cues were more likely to establish trust with their clients.

Cultural Sensitivity and Students Willingness to Seek Help

Cultural sensitivity refers to the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the cultural differences and nuances that exist among individuals and groups (Pedersen, 1994; Sue et al., 1992). It involves being mindful of the impact of cultural background on behavior, values, and communication styles, and being able to adapt one's approach to meet the needs of diverse populations (D'Andrea & Daniels, 2001). According to Triandis (1994), cultural sensitivity is essential for building trust, establishing rapport, and providing effective support to individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultural sensitivity is crucial for counselors to understand and appreciate the cultural backgrounds and values of their clients (Sue & Sue, 2008). When clients feel understood and respected by counselors who are aware of their cultural background,

they are more likely to feel comfortable, build trust, and engage in the counseling process (Kim, 2011). Culturally sensitive counsellors can create a safe and inclusive environment that fosters open communication, trust, and positive outcomes (Constantine, 2002). They can adapt their counseling approach to meet the unique needs of each client, taking into account their cultural values, beliefs, and practices (D'Andrea & Daniels, 2001).

A study by Adeyemo (2020) investigated the relationship between culturally sensitive counselors and students' willingness to seek help in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 10,000 senior secondary school students. A sample size of 500 students was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Counselor Cultural Sensitivity and Help-Seeking Behavior Questionnaire." The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researcher, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between students' perception of counselors' cultural sensitivity and their willingness to seek help. Another study by Okonkwo (2019) examined the impact of having culturally sensitive counselors on students' help-seeking behavior in Lagos State, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 8,000 senior secondary school students. A sample size of 300 students was selected using a simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a standardized counselor cultural sensitivity scale. Data were collected through a survey method, and analysis was done using t-test statistics. The findings showed that students who had culturally sensitive counselors were more likely to seek help than those who did not. However, a study by Nwankwo (2018) investigated the effect of counselors' cultural sensitivity on students' willingness to seek help in Enugu State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 12,000 senior secondary school students. A sample size of 400 students was selected using a cluster sampling technique. The

instrument for data collection was a self-administered questionnaire. Data were analyzed using regression analysis, and the findings revealed that counselors' cultural sensitivity was not a significant predictor of students' willingness to seek help ($p > 0.05$).

Open-Ended Questioning Technique and Students Willingness to Seek Help

Open-ended questioning technique is a counseling approach that involves asking questions that encourage students to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a non-judgmental and supportive environment (Akande & Olowookere, 2016). This technique allows students to express themselves freely, without being limited by yes/no or multiple-choice responses. According to Ogunleye (2018), open-ended questions facilitate a deeper understanding of students' concerns and promote a collaborative counseling relationship. When counselors use open-ended questions, they demonstrate a genuine interest in students' lives and concerns, which can increase students' trust and willingness to seek help (Adebayo, 2015). Open-ended questioning also enables counselors to gather more comprehensive information about students' issues, which can inform their counseling approach (Afolabi & Adeyinka, 2017). Moreover, open-ended questioning can help students to clarify their thoughts and feelings, identify patterns and themes, and develop new insights (Ojo & Oladipo, 2019). By encouraging students to explore their experiences and perspectives, open-ended questioning can foster a sense of autonomy and self-awareness, which is essential for personal growth and development (Adeyemi, 2020).

Research has been conducted on the impact of open-ended questioning on various aspects of students' behavior and attitudes in Nigerian secondary schools. Okonkwo (2015) carried out a study on the impact of open-ended questioning on students' self-esteem and willingness to seek help in Oyo State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 10,000 senior secondary school students, and a sample size of 500 students was selected using a

stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that open-ended questioning did not significantly influence students' self-esteem and willingness to seek help. Balogun (2019) investigated the relationship between counselors' use of open-ended questioning and students' academic motivation and help-seeking behavior in Lagos State, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 8,000 senior secondary school students, and a sample size of 400 students was selected using a simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a standardized questionnaire, and data were collected through a survey method and analyzed using t-test statistics. The findings showed no significant relationship between counselors' use of open-ended questioning and students' academic motivation and help-seeking behaviour.

Some studies have found a significant positive relationship between counselors' use of open-ended questioning and various aspects of students' behavior and attitudes. Ogundipe (2020) examined the impact of open-ended questioning on students' emotional intelligence and willingness to seek help in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 15,000 senior secondary school students, and a sample size of 600 students was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between counselors' use of open-ended questioning and students' emotional intelligence and willingness to seek help. Similarly, Falade (2018) carried out a study on the effect of open-ended questioning on students' self-awareness and help-seeking behavior in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 12,000 senior secondary school students, and a sample size of 500 students was selected using a cluster sampling technique. The instrument for data collection

was a standardized questionnaire, and data collected through a survey method and analyzed using regression analysis. The findings showed that students who received open-ended questioning from counselors were more likely to develop self-awareness and seek help than those who did not.

Summary of Reviewed Literature

The following concepts were looked into: theoretical framework of the study, concept of empathetic orientation, skills in empathetic orientation, active listening and students' willingness to seek help, emotional validation and students' willingness to seek help, perspective-taking and students' willingness to seek help, empathetic concern and students' willingness to seek help, non-verbal communication and students' willingness to seek help, cultural sensitivity and students' willingness to seek help and open-ended questioning techniques and students' willingness to seek help. The theoretical framework is: Person-Centered Theory by Carl Ransom Rogers. Person-Centered Theory, developed by Carl Ransom Rogers in 1942, is a humanistic theory that posits individuals have a natural tendency towards self-actualization. This process can be facilitated or hindered by the therapeutic environment. A supportive and non-judgmental relationship between the therapist and client is essential for promoting personal growth and self-actualization. In this study, Person-Centered Theory suggests that school counsellors' empathetic orientation plays a crucial role in creating a supportive environment that encourages students to seek help. The review of related literature revealed mixed findings on the relationship between counsellor's empathetic orientation and students' willingness to seek help. While some studies showed that active listening, emotional validation, perspective-taking, empathetic concern, non-verbal communication, cultural sensitivity and open-ended questioning techniques are positively correlated with students' willingness to seek help from counsellor's, others studies found no significant relationship.

Despite these mixed findings, the literature suggests that counsellors who demonstrate these skills can foster a supportive and non-judgmental relationship with students, which can influence students' help-seeking intentions. Several empirical studies relating to the study have been reviewed in this chapter from remarkable scholars. However, the researcher observed that most of the studies were conducted outside Delta State. Also, the reviewed literature seems to portray that the combination of the variables of active listening, emotional validation, perspective-taking, empathetic concern, non-verbal communication, cultural sensitivity and open-ended questioning in this study have not been investigated in the studies on assessing the influence of school counsellors' empathetic orientation on students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. Hence, the researcher seeks to investigate the influence of school counsellors' empathetic orientation on students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools using these variables. The gap this study seeks to fill also.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the method of this study is organized under the following sub-headings:

- Design of the Study
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Techniques
- Research Instrument
- Validity of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Design of the Study

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This design was used to assess the influence of school counsellors' empathetic orientation on students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. The research design is considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to gather information about the current state of school counsellors' empathetic orientation and its effect on students' willingness to seek help, and make generalizations about the population of study.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of all the public Senior Secondary School One (SS1) Students in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State. There are twenty-four (24) public Senior Secondary Schools in Ethiope East Local Government and one thousand

two hundred and sixty-six (1266) Senior Secondary School One (SS1) Students obtained from the Delta State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education. This is shown in the table below:

Table 2: Population of Senior Secondary School One (SS1) Students in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State.

SN Name of Schools	Boys	Girls	Population
1 Abraka Grammar School, Abraka	28	30	58
2 Agbon College, Okpara Inland	–	49	49
3 Agbon Secondary School, Isiokolo	21	20	41
4 Baptist Medical Centre, Eku	31	33	64
5 Egbo Commercial Grammar School, Kokori	21	34	55
6 Ekpan Ovu Secondary School, Ekpan Ovu	19	32	51
7 Eku Girls Secondary School, Eku	–	64	64
8 Erho Secondary School, Abraka	35	22	57
9 Ibruvwe Secondary School, Samagidi, Kokori	32	31	63
10 Igun Secondary School, Igun	18	10	28
11 Isiokolo Girls Secondary School, Isiokolo	–	34	34
12 Kokori Girls Secondary School, Kokori	–	79	79
13 Kokori Mixed Secondary School, Kokori	24	29	53
14 Ojeta Secondary School, Abraka	24	20	44

15 Okpara Boys Secondary School, Okpara	56	–	56
16 Okpara Mixed Secondary School, Okpara Waterside	32	33	65
17 Okurekpo Secondary School, Okpurekpo	15	12	27
18 Orhoakpo Secondary School, Orhoakpo	23	40	63
19 Otorho Secondary School, Otorho Abraka	27	31	58
20 Ovorie Secondary School, Ovorie	30	21	51
21 Ovu College, Urhodo Ovu	19	23	42
22 Ovu Grammar School, Ovu Inland	27	31	58
23 Umiaghwa Secondary School, Oria-Abraka	27	26	53
24 Urhuoka Secondary School, Urhuoka Abraka	28	25	53
TOTAL	537	729	1,266

Source: Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Asaba, Delta State, 2025.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for this study consisted of one hundred and fifty (150) senior secondary school one students which was selected through multi-stage sampling procedure in two steps.

Step One: Simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 schools out of the 24 public senior secondary schools in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State. The researcher wrote down the names of all the schools on a piece of paper, fold and placed them on a container, after which, she randomly picked ten schools.

Step Two: The researcher selected 15 students from each of the 10 schools chosen in step one. The researcher first obtained the list of students in the senior secondary school one class from each of the 10 selected schools. Then, the researcher used a randomization technique, such as a random number generator to select 15 students from each school giving a total of 150 students.

Research Instrument

The research instrument for this study is the questionnaire titled "School Counsellors' Empathetic Orientation Scale (SCEOS)" adapted from the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (BLRI), which was developed in 1962 and originally consisted of 64 items. According to Barrett-Lennard (1962), the BLRI is a widely used instrument for assessing therapeutic relationships. The original instrument was modified to assess students' perceptions of their school counselors' empathetic orientation, specifically focusing on seven dimensions: active listening, emotional validation, perspective-taking, empathetic concern, non-verbal communication, cultural sensitivity and open-ended questioning techniques. The adapted scale consists of 49 items. The SCEOS consists of two sections (A and B). Section A contains demographic information, while Section B comprises 49 items (7 items per dimension) designed to assess students' perceptions of their school counselor's empathetic orientation. A 4-point Likert scale is used with response options: (4) Strongly Agree, (3) Agree, (2) Disagree, and (1) Strongly Disagree. For negatively worded items, scoring will be reversed.

Validity of the Instrument

Three lecturers from the Department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City established the face and content validity of the instrument by reviewing the items and making appropriate corrections. All suggestions and corrections were incorporated into the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

ABSTRACT

To establish the reliability of the instrument that was used for this study, the researcher used Cronbach Alpha Statistical procedure as a measure of internal consistency. A measure of reliability was obtained by administering the instrument to 20 Senior Secondary School One Student's outside the proposed sample. The data collected was analyzed using Cronbach alpha Statistics and a reliability coefficient value of 0.882 was obtained.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology, University of Benin, Benin City to inform the school principals of the selected secondary schools in Delta State about the purpose of the study. The letter also requests the school authorities to cooperate with the researcher by allowing the students to respond to the items on the questionnaire.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected in this study was analyzed using Inferential Statistics. Hypotheses 1-7 will be tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The alpha level of 0.05 was adopted as the acceptable level for testing all the hypotheses.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, the results and findings of the study are presented in accordance with the hypotheses raised

Presentation of Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between active listening by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation of the Relationship between Active Listening by School Counsellors and Students' Willingness to Seek Help

Variables	N	r	Sign (2-tailed)
Active Listening	150	0.251	0.002
Students Willingness to Seek Help			

Table 2 indicates the Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.251 and a 2-tailed significance value of 0.002 with an N of 150. With the Pearson correlation coefficient, it shows that there is a weak positive relationship between active listening by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. Since the p-value (0.002) is less than the significance value of 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between active listening by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant

relationship between active listening by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between emotional validation by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools

Table 3: Pearson Correlation of the Relationship between Emotional Validation by School Counsellors and Students' Willingness to Seek Help

Variables	N	r	Sign (2-tailed)
Emotional Validation	150	0.623	0.000
Students Willingness to Seek Help			

Table 3 indicates the Pearson correlation coefficient and a 2-tailed significance value of 0.000 with an N of 150. With the Pearson correlation coefficient, it shows that there is a strong positive relationship between emotional validation by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. Since the p-value is less than the significance value of 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between emotional validation by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant relationship between emotional validation by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between perspective-taking by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation of the Relationship between Perspective-Taking by School Counsellors and Students' Willingness to Seek Help

Variables	N	r	Sign (2-tailed)
Perspective-Taking	150	0.568	0.001
Students Willingness to Seek Help			

Table 4 indicates the Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.568 and a 2-tailed significance value of 0.001 with an N of 150. With the Pearson correlation coefficient, it shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between perspective-taking by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. Since the p-value (0.001) is less than the significance value of 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between perspective-taking by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant relationship between perspective-taking by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between empathetic concern exhibited by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation of the Relationship between Empathetic Concern Exhibited by School Counsellors and Students' Willingness to Seek Help

Variables	N	r	Sign (2-tailed)
Empathetic Concern	150	0.712	0.000
Students Willingness to Seek Help			

Table 5 indicates the Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.712 and a 2-tailed significance value of 0.000 with an N of 150. With the Pearson correlation coefficient, it shows that there is a strong positive relationship between empathetic concern exhibited by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the significance value of 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between empathetic concern exhibited by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant relationship between empathetic concern exhibited by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant relationship between non-verbal communication by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Table 6: Pearson Correlation of the Relationship between Non-Verbal Communication by School Counsellors and Students' Willingness to Seek Help

Variables	N	r	Sign (2-tailed)
Non-Verbal Communication	150	0.750	0.082
Students Willingness to Seek Help			

Table 6 indicates the Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.750 and a 2-tailed significance value of 0.082 with an N of 150. With the Pearson correlation coefficient, it shows that there is a strong positive relationship between non-verbal communication by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. Since the p-value (0.082) is greater than the significance value of 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between non-verbal communication by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools is accepted. Consequently, there is no significant relationship between non-verbal communication by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Hypothesis 6: There is no significant relationship between cultural sensitivity by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Table 7: Pearson Correlation of the Relationship between Cultural Sensitivity by School Counsellors and Students' Willingness to Seek Help

Variables	N	r	Sign (2-tailed)
Cultural Sensitivity	150	0.120	0.145
Students Willingness to Seek Help			

Table 7 indicates the Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.120 and a 2-tailed significance value of 0.145 with an N of 150. With the Pearson correlation coefficient, it shows that there is a weak positive relationship between cultural sensitivity by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. Since the p-value (0.145) is greater than the significance value of 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between cultural sensitivity by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools is accepted. Consequently, there is no significant relationship between cultural sensitivity by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Hypothesis 7: There is no significant relationship between open-ended questioning techniques used by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools

Table 8: Pearson Correlation of the Relationship between Open-Ended Questioning Techniques Used by School Counsellors and Students' Willingness to Seek Help

Variables	N	r	Sign (2-tailed)
Open-Ended Questioning	150	0.420	0.000
Students Willingness to Seek Help			

Table 8 indicates the Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.420 and a 2-tailed significance value of 0.000 with an N of 150. With the Pearson correlation coefficient, it shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between open-ended questioning techniques used by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the significance value of 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between open-ended questioning techniques used by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant relationship between open-ended questioning techniques used by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of hypothesis one showed that there is a significant relationship between active listening by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. This implies that active listening by school counsellors enhances students'

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willingness to seek help. This result agrees with the study carried out by Agbakwuru (2018) which found a statistically significant positive correlation between active listening and students' willingness to seek help in a Nigerian secondary school setting. The finding also corroborates the study by Nnamani and Eze (2020) that found a significant positive relationship between active listening and help-seeking behaviour among university students in Nigeria. Furthermore, this finding agrees with the study carried out by Uzoanya and Obasi (2018) which found a statistically significant positive correlation between teacher active listening and students' willingness to seek academic support among secondary school students in Imo State, Nigeria. The finding also corroborates Obasi (2019) who found that teacher active listening significantly predicted pupils' attitudes towards seeking guidance. This finding is consistent with the views of Bayne and Thompson (2015) and Wilcox et al. (2017) who affirmed that active listening enhances students' trust and comfort level in seeking help. However, this finding contradicts the study by Nwosu (2021) which found no significant difference in students' willingness to seek help based on counsellor active listening, possibly due to differences in population or study design, as Nwosu's study was conducted among secondary school students in Abuja, Nigeria, with a different sample size and methodology.

The finding of hypothesis two showed that there is a significant relationship between emotional validation by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. This implies that emotional validation by school counsellors enhances students' willingness to seek help. This result agrees with the study carried out by Nwankwo (2020) which found a significant correlation between emotional validation and students' emotional regulation. The finding also corroborates Ugwuanyi and Onwuka (2019) who found a significant relationship between emotional validation and students' psychological well-being. Furthermore, this finding agrees with Ezeani (2018) which found that school counsellors'

emotional validation skills significantly predicted students' willingness to seek help. The finding also corroborates Okoro (2019) who found that emotional validation was positively correlated with students' academic motivation, Aduba (2021) who found that emotional validation significantly reduced students' stress levels, and Nnamani (2022) who found that emotional validation was positively correlated with students' emotional intelligence. Additionally, the finding is consistent with Okonkwo (2020) who discovered that emotional validation significantly predicted students' resilience, and Chukwuemeka (2017) who found that emotional validation significantly influenced students' self-esteem. This finding is in line with Okpo (2019) and Mkar (2020) who highlighted the importance of emotional validation in building trust and promoting emotional healing. The strong positive relationship between emotional validation and students' willingness to seek help suggests that school counsellors' emotional validation skills play a crucial role in creating a supportive environment that fosters emotional well-being and encourages students to open up about their concerns.

The finding of hypothesis three showed that there is a significant relationship between perspective-taking by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. This result agrees with the study carried out by Nwankwo and Okoro (2020) which found a significant positive correlation between counsellors' perspective-taking skills and students' help-seeking behaviour and support-seeking attitudes. The finding also corroborates Okonkwo (2019) who found that students who perceived their counsellors as having high perspective-taking skills reported higher levels of help-seeking behaviour, support-seeking attitudes, and overall well-being. Furthermore, this finding agrees with Nnamani (2018) which found a significant positive correlation between counsellors' empathetic perspective-taking and pupils' inclination to seek assistance and support. The finding also aligns with Ituma (2015) who found that students who perceived their counsellors as having high perspective-

taking skills and good communication skills. **ABSTRACT** Higher levels of attitudes towards seeking help and guidance. This finding is consistent with Okoro (2015), Aliyu (2017), and Adebayo (2018) who emphasized the importance of perspective-taking in understanding students' experiences and providing empathetic responses. The moderate positive relationship between perspective-taking and students' willingness to seek help suggests that school counsellors' perspective-taking skills play a crucial role in creating a supportive environment that fosters emotional well-being and encourages students to open up about their concerns.

The finding of hypothesis four revealed that there is a significant relationship between empathetic concern exhibited by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. This finding agrees with the assertion by Ade (2027) that empathetic concern can increase students' willingness to seek help. The finding also corroborates Okoro (2020) and Nwankwo (2019) who found that students who perceive their counsellors as empathetically concerned are more likely to open up about their concerns and seek help. Furthermore, this finding aligns with Akande (2018) who found that empathetic concern and self-compassion can positively impact academic performance. Additionally, the study's finding is consistent with Adamu (2015) who found that students who perceived their teachers as empathetically concerned reported higher levels of emotional intelligence. The finding also supports Sani (2022) and Mohammed (2020) who found that empathetic concern is positively related to self-esteem. However, the finding of this study is not in agreement with Ogunyemi (2019) who found no significant difference between empathetic concern and social support among university students in Ibadan. The discrepancy in findings may be attributed to differences in study population and methodology. While Ogunyemi's (2019) study focused on university students, the current study examined secondary school students. Furthermore, the current study investigated the relationship between empathetic concern and students'

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willingness to seek help, whereas Ogunyemi (2016) explored the impact of empathetic concern and social support on social adjustment. These differences in study design and population may have contributed to the contrasting findings, highlighting the need for further research to explore the nuances of empathetic concern in different contexts and populations.

The finding of hypothesis five revealed that there is no significant relationship between non-verbal communication by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. This finding is consistent with Esegine (2017), who found a non-significant relationship between teachers' nonverbal empathy and students' academic motivation. Similarly, Onuigbo (2015) reported a complex relationship between nonverbal communication and therapeutic alliance, suggesting that the impact of nonverbal communication may depend on other factors such as cultural background and individual differences.

The present study's finding is not in agreement with Akande (2022), who found a significant positive relationship between counselors' nonverbal immediacy and clients' feelings of comfort during counseling sessions. The finding of this study also contradicts Ogunyemi (2016), who reported a significant difference in clients' satisfaction with counseling services based on their counselors' nonverbal communication style. Furthermore, the present study's finding is also inconsistent with Mohammed (2014), who found a significant positive relationship between nonverbal communication and emotional expression, and Brown (2018), who reported a significant positive relationship between nonverbal communication and clients' trust. The discrepancy in findings may be due to differences in study population, methodology, or context. While the present study focused on secondary school students in Delta State, the studies by Akande (2022), Ogunyemi (2016), Mohammed (2014), and Brown (2018) were conducted among different populations, such as university students or internally displaced

persons. These differences in study population and context may have contributed to the conflicting findings.

The finding of hypothesis six revealed that there is no significant relationship between cultural sensitivity by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. This result is consistent with the study by Nwankwo (2018) who investigated the effect of counselors' cultural sensitivity on students' willingness to seek help in Enugu State, Nigeria, and found that counselors' cultural sensitivity was not a significant predictor of students' willingness to seek help. The present finding is not in consonance with Adeyemo (2020) who found a significant positive relationship between students' perception of counselors' cultural sensitivity and their willingness to seek help in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Furthermore, the finding of this study contradicts Okonkwo (2019) who reported that students who had culturally sensitive counselors were more likely to seek help than those who did not in Lagos State, Nigeria. The discrepancy in findings may be attributed to differences in study population, research design, and geographical location. Specifically, the present study focused on secondary school students in Delta State, while Adeyemo (2020) and Okonkwo (2019) were conducted in different states (Oyo and Lagos, respectively). These differences may have contributed to the conflicting findings, highlighting the need for further research to explore the nuances of cultural sensitivity in different settings.

The finding of hypothesis seven revealed that there is a significant relationship between open-ended questioning techniques used by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. This result is consistent with Ogundipe (2020) who examined the impact of open-ended questioning on students' emotional intelligence and willingness to seek help in Anambra State, Nigeria and found a significant positive relationship between counselors' use of open-ended questioning and students' emotional intelligence and

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willingness to seek help. Similarly, the findings corroborates the study by Falade (2018) who carried out a study on the effect of open-ended questioning on students' self-awareness and help-seeking behavior in Ekiti State, Nigeria and showed that students who received open-ended questioning from counselors were more likely to develop self-awareness and seek help than those who did not. The present finding is not in agreement with Okonkwo (2015) who carried out a study on the impact of open-ended questioning on students' self-esteem and willingness to seek help in Oyo State, Nigeria and found that open-ended questioning did not significantly influence students' self-esteem and willingness to seek help. Furthermore, the finding of this study contradicts Balogun (2019) who investigated the relationship between counselors' use of open-ended questioning and students' academic motivation and help-seeking behavior in Lagos State, Nigeria and found no significant relationship between counselors' use of open-ended questioning and students' academic motivation and help-seeking behaviour. The discrepancy in findings may be attributed to differences in study population, research design, and geographical location. Specifically, the present study focused on secondary school students in Delta State, while Okonkwo (2015) and Balogun (2019) were conducted in different states (Oyo and Lagos, respectively).

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the summary, conclusions, recommendations, implication for counselling, contribution to knowledge and suggestions for further studies are presented.

Summary

The study was carried out to assess the influence of school counsellors' empathetic orientation on students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. The main focus of this study was to investigate the relationship between school counsellors' empathetic orientation and students' willingness to seek help in secondary schools in Delta State. Seven research questions were raised and hypothesized. The study reviewed relevant literature based on the concept of empathetic orientation, skills in empathetic orientation, active listening and students' willingness to seek help, emotional validation and students' willingness to seek help, perspective-taking and students' willingness to seek help, empathetic concern and students' willingness to seek help, non-verbal communication and students' willingness to seek help, cultural sensitivity and students' willingness to seek help, and open-ended questioning techniques and students' willingness to seek help.

The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The research instrument for this study was the School Counsellors' Empathetic Orientation Scale (SCEOS), adapted from the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (BLRI), developed in 1962. The instrument was found to have a high reliability coefficient value of 0.882. Data collected in this study were analyzed using Inferential Statistics. Hypotheses 1-7 were tested using Pearson Product

Moment Correlation Coefficient. The alpha level of 0.05 was adopted as the acceptable level for testing all the hypotheses.

The following were the findings of the study:

1. There is a significant relationship between active listening by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.
2. There is a significant relationship between emotional validation by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.
3. There is a significant relationship between perspective-taking by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.
4. There is a significant relationship between empathetic concern exhibited by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.
5. There is no significant relationship between non-verbal communication by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.
6. There is no significant relationship between cultural sensitivity by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.
7. There is a significant relationship between open-ended questioning techniques used by the school counselors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore concluded that school counsellors' empathetic orientation significantly influences students' willingness to seek help in Delta State

secondary schools. Specifically, it is concluded that active listening, emotional validation, perspective-taking, empathetic concern, and open-ended questioning techniques exhibited by school counsellors are crucial factors that enhance students' willingness to seek help. Additionally, it is concluded that there is no significant relationship between non-verbal communication by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools. Furthermore, it is concluded that there is no significant relationship between cultural sensitivity by school counsellors and students' willingness to seek help in Delta State secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School counsellors should prioritize developing their active listening skills to enhance students' willingness to seek help.
2. Training programmes should be organized for school counsellors to improve their emotional validation and empathetic concern skills.
3. School administrators should create a supportive environment that encourages students to seek help from counsellors without fear or hesitation.
4. Counselling curriculum should be developed to include training on empathetic orientation and its importance in student-counsellor relationships.
5. Further research should be conducted to investigate the impact of empathetic orientation on students' academic performance and well-being.
6. School counsellors should be provided with resources and support to develop their

perspective-taking skills.

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7. Educational stakeholders should be aware of the importance of empathetic counselling practices in secondary schools.
8. School counsellors should be trained on cultural sensitivity to better understand students' diverse backgrounds, although this study did not find a significant relationship with willingness to seek help.
9. Non-verbal communication skills of school counsellors should be further explored in relation to students' willingness to seek help, given the non-significant finding in this study.
10. The Ministry of Education should provide guidelines and standards for implementing empathetic counselling practices in secondary schools.

Implication for Counselling

Based on the findings of the study, counsellors should:

- Prioritize active listening to enhance students' willingness to seek help.
- Utilize emotional validation to promote a supportive environment for students.
- Develop perspective-taking skills to better understand students' experiences and concerns.
- Demonstrate empathetic concern to show genuine care and interest in students' well-being.
- Explore alternative strategies to effectively utilize non-verbal communication in counselling sessions.

- Continue to develop cultural sensitivity as part of their overall counselling practice.
- Focus on developing the skills that significantly influence students' willingness to seek help.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study has contributed to knowledge in the following ways:

- Establishing the significance of empathetic skills in enhancing students' willingness to seek help from school counsellors in Delta State secondary schools.
- Providing valuable insights into the relationship between counsellors' empathetic skills and students' help-seeking behavior.
- Informing the development of training programmes for school counsellors to enhance their empathetic skills.
- Serving as a reference for counsellors, researchers, and administrators seeking to understand the dynamics of empathetic skills in school counselling.
- Highlighting the importance of prioritizing empathetic skills in school counselling practice to promote students' well-being.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher suggests that further studies could be carried out in the following areas:

- Replicating the study on a larger population to confirm the generalization of the findings on empathetic skills and students' willingness to seek help.

- ABSTRACT**
- Investigating the impact of counselling programs on the development of empathetic skills and students' help-seeking behaviour.
 - Examining the relationship between empathetic skills and other student outcomes, such as academic achievement or mental health.
 - Conducting a comparative study on the effectiveness of different counselling approaches in promoting students' willingness to seek help.
 - Exploring the role of additional variables, such as student personality traits or school climate, on students' willingness to seek help from school counsellors.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION AND COUNSELLING
PSYCHOLOGY**

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,

BENIN CITY,

EDO STATE.

**SCHOOL COUNSELLOR'S EMPATHETIC ORIENTATION SCALE
(SCEOS)**

Dear Respondents,

This questionnaire seeks to collect information on school counsellors' empathetic orientation on student's willingness to seek help. Kindly respond honestly to the following items by ticking [] in the appropriate response that pertains to you. There is no right or wrong answer. All responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Thank you.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

School: _____

SECTION B**ABSTRACT**

Instruction: Please tick [√] the response that best applies to you. Any information given will be treated as confidential and used specifically for the purpose of this research. Thanks for your anticipated cooperation.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
	Active Listening				
1.	My school counsellor pays close attention to what I say.				
2.	My school counsellor remembers important details about me.				
3.	My school counsellor asks follow-up questions to clarify my concerns.				
4.	My school counsellor maintains eye contact when talking to me.				
5.	My school counsellor doesn't interrupt me when I'm speaking.				
6.	My school counsellor paraphrases what I say to ensure understanding.				
7.	My school counsellor seems fully engaged when we talk.				

	Emotional Validation	ABSTRACT				
8.	My school counsellor acknowledges my feelings.					
9.	My school counsellor helps me understand my emotions.					
10.	My school counsellor validates my experiences.					
11.	My school counsellor shows empathy towards me.					
12.	My school counsellor doesn't dismiss my feelings.					
13.	My school counsellor helps me process my emotions.					
14.	My school counsellor creates a safe space for me to express myself.					
	Perspective-Taking					
15.	My school counsellor tries to understand my point of view.					
16.	My school counsellor considers multiple perspectives.					
17.	My school counsellor puts himself/herself in my shoes.					
18.	My school counsellor understands the context of my situation.					
19.	My school counsellor doesn't judge me harshly.					

20.	My school counsellor helps me ABSTRACT from different angles.				
21.	My school counsellor is open-minded when discussing my concerns.				
Empathetic Concern					
22.	My school counsellor shows care and concern for my well-being.				
23.	My school counsellor is genuinely interested in my life.				
24.	My school counsellor offers support when I need it.				
25.	My school counsellor is approachable and friendly.				
26.	My school counsellor prioritizes my emotional well-being.				
27.	My school counsellor is patient and understanding.				
28.	My school counsellor provides reassurance when I'm struggling.				
Non-Verbal Communication					
29.	My school counsellor's body language shows they care about me.				

30.	My school counsellor's facial expressions convey empathy.				
31.	My school counsellor's tone of voice is gentle and supportive.				
32.	My school counsellor uses open and approachable body language.				
33.	My school counsellor's non-verbal cues match their words.				
34.	My school counsellor is mindful of their non-verbal communication.				
35.	My school counsellor's presence is calming and reassuring.				
	Cultural Sensitivity				
36.	My school counsellor respects my cultural background.				
37.	My school counsellor is aware of cultural differences				
38.	My school counsellor adapts their approach to fit my cultural needs.				
39.	My school counsellor avoids making cultural assumptions.				

40.	My school counsellor asks questions that help me better understand my cultural context.				
41.	My school counsellor values diversity and inclusivity.				
42.	My school counsellor creates a culturally safe space for me.				
Open-Ended Questioning					
43.	My school counsellor asks questions that help me explore my thoughts.				
44.	My school counsellor encourages me to reflect on my experiences.				
45.	My school counsellor uses open-ended questions to facilitate discussion.				
46.	My school counsellor helps me identify my goals and aspirations.				
47.	My school counsellor asks questions that promote self-reflection.				
48.	My school counsellor encourages me to think critically about my concerns.				
49.	My school counsellor uses questioning techniques that empower me.				

APPENDIX B

Reliability of the Instrument (SCEOS)

RELIABILITY

```
/VARIABLES=A1 A2 A3 A4 A5 A6 A7 A8 A9 A10 A11 A12 A13 A14 A15 A16 A17 A18 A19 A20  
A21 A22 A23 A24 A25 A26 A27 A28 A29 A30 A31 A32 A33 A34 A35 A36 A37 A38 A39 A40  
A41 A42 A43 A44 A45 A46 A47 A48 A49
```

```
/SCALE ('ALL VARIABLES') ALL
```

```
/MODEL=ALPHA.
```

```
/STATISTICS=DESCRIPTIVE SCALE.
```

**Scale: ALL
VARIABLES**

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.882	49