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Influence of Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT) in Inculcating Passion and Dedication to Counseling in Guidance Counselors in Imo State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceived influence of Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT) on passion and dedication to counseling among guidance counselors in Imo State. A descriptive survey design was adopted, involving 107 guidance counselors selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). Findings revealed that counselors perceived SFT as having a strong influence on their passion ($M = 4.02$) and dedication ($M = 3.90$) to counseling duties. The combined mean score ($M = 3.96$) indicated a high perceived influence of SFT on both variables. The study concludes that counselors perceived SFT as enhancing their professional enthusiasm and commitment to counseling practice. It is recommended that regular training and integration of SFT be encouraged in school counseling practice in Imo State.

INTRODUCTION

Guidance counselors are meant to effectively counsel learners to help them develop socially, emotionally, and educationally. School counselors in Nigeria, especially Imo State, often experience role strain due to an overload of work, scarcity of resources, time constraints, unrealistic expectations from various stakeholders such as students, teachers, administrators, and parents, among others (Murphy, 2024). This pressure to perform well for several people affects counselors physically by causing fatigue and mentally by causing low motivation levels at work (Vermeulen-Oskam *et al.*, 2024). Traditional counseling models focus on finding a problem and providing long-term solutions, which takes a lot of time; this might not always work in realistic terms for counselors, thus leaving them uninspired and uncaring about their work (Gingerich & Peterson 2013; Williams, 2000). Solution-Focused brief therapy (SFBT) and other forms of Solution-Focused therapy (SFT) have been statistically proven to take less time, build on client strengths, and help clients devise realistic goals and find solutions to their problems (Franklin *et al.*, 2020). Counselors do not focus on the problems that clients bring to sessions; they see clients as solution-generators who can handle their problems, and all the counselors have to do is draw out the clients' ability to solve those problems (Amran *et al.*, 2023). Amran *et al.* (2023) found that SFT was used in school settings and was able to improve students' mental health, ability to solve problems, and resilience (Neipp & Beyebach, 2022). Studies also show that when counselors use SFT, their sense of self-efficacy, optimism, and confidence in their work increase (Williams, 2000). Counselors witness students succeed because of their effort in sessions,

and this, in turn, can cause a "ripple effect" that causes intrinsic positive reinforcements that make them love their work more (Beauchemin, 2018). The use of SFT can help improve students' psychological well-being as well as the counselor's passion and dedication to their job.

Statement of the Problem

Research about SFT focuses mainly on the students or clients and less on the counselors. Most research about counselors in Imo State focuses on how to overcome the struggle of the job and not how to actually embrace the job (Williams, 2000). There have been studies showing that after using SFT, clients exhibited significant positive psychological changes, decreased behavioral problems, and better coping skills (Kim & Franklin, 2009). Although studies show that SFT can be used successfully in different cultures (Vermeulen-Oskam *et al.*, 2024; Amran *et al.*, 2023) and with different populations, we don't know how SFT will affect counselors' passion and dedication to their jobs. Counselors who lack passion and dedication won't be able to give their students their best psychological service. Will SFT impact counselors' passion and dedication? This study will help determine how SFT will affect the passion and dedication of guidance counselors in Imo State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Solution-Focused Therapy and Counselor Self-Efficacy

Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT) is a brief, strength-based counseling approach that emphasizes clients' resources, future goals, and solutions rather than problems (de Shazer *et al.*, 1986). In school counseling contexts, SFT has been linked to increased professional

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self-efficacy among practitioners because it allows counselors to witness measurable client progress within short timeframes, thereby reinforcing their sense of competence (Vermeulen-Oskam *et al.*, 2024).

Recent studies have further confirmed that solution-focused approaches improve counselors' perceived effectiveness in managing diverse student needs, especially in resource-constrained school environments (Murphy, 2024). This improved sense of effectiveness strengthens counselors' belief in their professional capability, which is a core component of self-efficacy theory.

SFT and Counselor Motivation and Passion

Counselor passion refers to intrinsic motivation, emotional engagement, and personal satisfaction derived from counseling work. Literature suggests that SFT increases counselor motivation by shifting focus toward small, achievable client improvements that generate positive reinforcement (Gingerich & Peterson, 2013).

A growing body of recent evidence shows that solution-focused interventions contribute to increased optimism and emotional engagement among helping professionals by creating rapid success experiences in practice settings (Franklin *et al.*, 2020). This "success cycle" enhances counselors' enthusiasm for continued practice, particularly in school environments where workload stress is high. SFT has also been associated with reduced emotional exhaustion and increased job satisfaction among counselors, which indirectly strengthens passion for counseling duties (Murphy, 2024).

SFT and Professional Commitment (Dedication to Counseling)

Dedication refers to consistency, responsibility, and commitment to professional counseling duties. SFT strengthens dedication by providing structured, goal-oriented frameworks that improve task clarity and time management. Empirical studies indicate that counselors trained in solution-focused approaches report improved organization of counseling sessions, better follow-up practices, and stronger collaboration with school stakeholders (Dameron, 2010; Kim & Franklin, 2009). These improvements increase counselors' commitment to their roles despite workload pressure.

Solution-focused brief therapy has been found to improve practitioners' involvement with clients as well as professional self-efficacy. Solution-focused brief therapy in school counseling settings increased counselors' optimism while energizing them as they witnessed tangible improvements with their clients, thus fueling their intrinsic drive to work (Vermeulen-Oskam *et al.*, 2024; Williams, 2000; Dameron, 2010). Witnessing significant success with clients after administering tools such as the Miracle Question and exception finding allows counselors to see success early on when working with clients, which has the potential to ignite counselors' passion for their counseling duties (Amran *et al.*, 2023). While each study measures improvement in client success, there are no clear studies

that measure passion among counselors. There is enough evidence to suggest that SFT can increase passion among guidance counselors; however, it is not empirical in Imo State. Therefore, the emerging research Question is: To what extent does Solution-Focused Therapy influence passion for counseling among guidance counselors in Imo State?

Solution-focused brief therapy equips counselors with a goal-oriented and methodical therapy process that can allow counselors to feel more in control of their workload and time restraints. Results from past literature have shown that counselors who undergo training in SFBT have felt an increase in clarity of role and further developed communication skills when working with students, parents, and other school employees (Dameron, 2010). Other organization-based studies have found that utilizing a solution-focused approach allowed participants to feel less stressed and better able to overcome work-related obstacles (Amran *et al.*, 2023; Vermeulen-Oskam *et al.*, 2024). While we can draw parallels that the aforementioned methods can better equip counselors to maintain dedication to their roles, we do not know if SFT can increase counselors' long-term commitment to their counseling duties despite working in underprivileged conditions in Imo State. Therefore, the emerging Research Question 2 is: To what extent does Solution-Focused Therapy influence dedication to counseling duties among guidance counselors in Imo State?

Past literature allows us to conclude that SFT has tools that allow counselors to witness visible success with their clients. These tools can allow counselors to feel better about their self-efficacy, feel more optimistic about their job, and experience small wins that allow them to feel accomplished at work. All of these factors are important to increase passion and dedication (Amran *et al.*, 2023). When counselors focus on finding solutions to problems, recognize their clients' strengths, and celebrate client changes no matter how small, counselors are bound to see successful results on their end. Successful results in counseling can allow counselors to feel passionate and dedicated to their jobs. While there are many studies that highlight how counselors can either be more passionate or more dedicated to their work, there are no studies that have looked at the cumulative effect of both. Therefore, it would be appropriate to conduct a study that measures SFT's influence on both passion and dedication among counselors in Imo State. Therefore, the emerging Research Question 3 is: What is the combined influence of Solution-Focused Therapy on passion and dedication to counseling among guidance counselors in Imo State?

Theoretical Review

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy is founded on the belief that counselors can help their clients resolve their problems through exploring their strengths, setting future-oriented solutions, and having specific and attainable goals instead of delving deep into problems (de Shazer *et al.*, 1986; Sklare, 2005). Also, SFBT posits that even small

changes can cause massive positive reactions (Dameron, 2010), which advocates say leads to the “ripple effect.” According to Williams (2000), the ripple effect emanates from the client but can benefit the client as well as the counselor. Therefore, SFBT is mostly recommended for school counseling situations because they help counselors help students within a relatively short time; given the tight population that counselors handle daily, long-term psychotherapy may be unattainable for some students and may not be the duty of the counselor at all (Dameron, 2010).

Person-centered Counseling and SFBT fit hand in glove because Person-centered Therapy forms the empathic, trusting client-counselor relationship needed before SFBT is implemented for short-term therapy (Rogers, 1957; Bond *et al.*, 2013; Guterman, 2006). Person-centered Counseling allows counselors to connect with their clients through unconditional positive regard, empathy, and genuineness (Rogers, 1957; Boy & Pine, 1963). Therefore, using Evidence-based Practices (EBPs) that involve both models helps school counselors deal with the many students that they see in one day while maintaining quality counselor-client relationships (Hsu *et al.*, 2021; Sklare, 2005).

There is strong evidence to support the use of Solution-focused brief therapy with counselors. It has been found that school counselors who utilize a solution-focused approach to student counseling perceive themselves as having more professional direction and experience increased communication skills with students, parents, and administrators (Hsu *et al.*, 2021; Williams, 2000). Solution-focused group counseling sessions have also shown that mental health treatment can be improved upon for various populations (Kim *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, if counseling students can increase the quality of mental healthcare, it should reduce the risk of counselors feeling burned out or overwhelmed with stress. Evidence was used to help create the hypothesis that the strength-based and goal-focused approach can help affect the passion and dedication of guidance counselors in Imo State. Little to no research has been done on counselors' passions; therefore, it may be difficult for counselors to reach out for help if they are experiencing burnout. Thus, we will also be researching what effect, if any, SFBT has on the passion of guidance counselors. This brief theory review established why using PCC along with SFBT can help guide counselors in Imo State.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. This design was appropriate because the study aimed to observe and describe counselors' experience

and perception of the effects of Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT) on their passion and dedication to duty as it naturally occurred in their professional settings without manipulating any variables (Creswell, 2014). The population of the study consisted of all guidance counselors registered with the Department of Education in Imo State public secondary schools. The sample population was determined to be approximately 320, while the sample size was 107 convenience purposive sample of guidance counselors who were available and willing to participate in the study. Data were collected using an online survey questionnaire that measured respondents' perceived passion for and dedication to school counseling. Questions were developed based on a five-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The questionnaire was adapted from validated counseling studies similar to the proposed study's topic in order to measure variables of counselor passion and dedication (Williams, 2000). Ten counselors not included in the sample population were pre-tested to evaluate the clarity of the questions, as well as to ensure reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire (Targeting a Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.80). Frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to describe variables. Approval was obtained from the Imo State Ministry of Education Research Ethics Committee. Consent was obtained from all the participants, and they were treated as confidential, with no names used. Participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

107 responses that were usable were analysed from guidance counselors in Imo State. The results were obtained from a questionnaire that was online and was analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Descriptive statistics were used. First, we shall see the demographics of the respondents before we look at the questions asked. After that, the three research questions were analysed. Decision rule: if the mean score lies between 1.00–1.79=very low influence, 1.80–2.59= low influence, 2.60–3.39= moderate influence, 3.40–4.19= strong influence, and 4.20–5.00= very strong influence.

Demographics of Respondents

The demographics of respondents are shown in Table 1. Table 1 revealed that 46 (43.0%) of respondents were male and 61(57.0%) were female. Therefore, most respondents were female guidance counselors who filled the questionnaire. 15(14.0%) were below age 30years, 38

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	46	43.0
	Female	61	57.0
	Total	107	100.0

Age	Below 30 years	15	14.0
	30–39 years	38	35.5
	40–49 years	34	31.8
	50 years and above	20	18.7
	Total	107	100.0
Highest Qualification	Diploma/NCE	17	15.9
	Bachelor's Degree	56	52.3
	Master's Degree	30	28.0
	PhD	4	3.7
	Total	107	100.0
Years of Counseling Experience	1–5 years	22	20.6
	6–10 years	35	32.7
	11–15 years	28	26.2
	16 years and above	22	20.6
	Total	107	100.0
School Location	Urban	62	57.9
	Rural	45	42.1
	Total	107	100.0
Prior Awareness of SFT	Yes	72	67.3
	No	35	32.7
	Total	107	100.0

(35.5%) were between ages 30-39 years, 34(31.8%) were between ages 40-49 years, and the remaining 20(18.7%) were respondents above 50years. This means that most respondents were adults in age. Table 1: Demographics of respondents(N=107).

Results revealed that 56 respondents (52.3%) had bachelor's degrees while 30 respondents (28.0%) possessed master's degrees. Only 4 respondents had PhD qualifications (3.7%). The results implied that most participants had sufficient academic background to practice counseling as professionals. As for years of counseling experience, 35 participants had 6–10 years of experience (32.7%), and 28 had 11–15 years of experience (26.2%). The finding suggested that most counselors had devoted considerable years to counseling practice and were qualified to offer knowledgeable answers about the

impact of SFT. Regarding school location, 62 respondents worked in urban schools (57.9%) and 45 worked in rural schools (42.1%). Additionally, 72 respondents had prior knowledge of Solution-Focused Therapy (67.3%), while 35 had no such prior knowledge (32.7%). The finding indicated that while SFT was somewhat familiar among counselors, a fair number of participants were still inexperienced in the approach.

Research Question One: To what extent does Solution-Focused Therapy influence passion for counseling among guidance counselors in Imo State?

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation scores on the perceived influence of Solution-Focused Therapy on passion for counseling among guidance counselors in

Table 2: Mean Ratings on the Influence of SFT on Passion for Counseling

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	SFT increased my enthusiasm for counseling students.	4.08	0.71	High
2	SFT helped me see counseling as a more hopeful and rewarding profession.	4.12	0.68	High
3	SFT made me more interested in using practical counseling strategies with students.	3.96	0.76	High
4	SFT strengthened my belief that counseling can produce positive changes in students.	4.15	0.64	High
5	SFT increased my personal fulfillment in helping students solve problems.	3.89	0.79	High
6	SFT encouraged me to approach counseling sessions with greater confidence.	4.03	0.73	High
7	SFT renewed my interest in professional counseling practice.	3.94	0.81	High
Grand Mean		4.02	0.73	High

Imo State.

Table 2 illustrates that Solution-Focused Therapy was perceived to have a high degree of influence on participants' passion for counseling. The item that received the highest mean was that SFT strengthened counselors' belief that counseling can produce positive changes in students ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.64$). This suggests that counselors may perceive SFT as particularly effective in enhancing their optimism and confidence in the counseling process, especially in relation to student improvement and behavioral change. The item with the lowest mean was that SFT increased counselors' personal fulfillment in helping students solve problems ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.79$). Although this item recorded the lowest mean among the set, it still fell within the "high influence" category, indicating that counselors generally agreed that SFT contributes positively to their sense of fulfillment in

counseling practice. The grand mean of 4.02 indicated that Solution-Focused Therapy had a high degree of influence on passion for counseling among guidance counselors. This means that SFT was perceived to enhance counselors' enthusiasm, motivation, confidence, and overall emotional engagement in counseling practice, thereby strengthening their passion for the profession.

Research Question Two: To what extent does Solution-Focused Therapy influence dedication to counseling duties among guidance counselors in Imo State?

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation scores on the influence of Solution-Focused Therapy on dedication to counseling duties.

Table 3 illustrates that Solution-Focused Therapy was perceived to have a high degree of influence on

Table 3: Mean Ratings on the Influence of SFT on Dedication to Counseling Duties

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	SFT helped me become more committed to my counseling responsibilities.	3.92	0.82	High
2	SFT provided a clearer structure for handling students' concerns.	4.11	0.69	High
3	SFT helped me manage counseling duties despite workload pressure.	3.76	0.87	High
4	SFT encouraged me to follow up on students after counseling sessions.	3.84	0.78	High
5	SFT improved my consistency in attending to students' counseling needs.	3.88	0.80	High
6	SFT strengthened my willingness to collaborate with teachers and parents.	3.81	0.83	High
7	SFT increased my readiness to use counseling techniques in daily school practice.	3.97	0.75	High
Grand Mean		3.90	0.79	High

participants' dedication to counseling duties. The item that received the highest mean was that SFT allowed counselors to have a clearer picture of how to structure addressing students' concerns ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.69$). Counselors may have found SFT to be beneficial as it provided direction on how to operate while counseling. The item with the lowest mean was that SFT allowed counselors to cope with counseling duties in the midst of workload pressure ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.87$).

Even though this mean was the lowest, it was still perceived as a high degree of agreement. The grand mean of 3.90 indicated that Solution-Focused Therapy had a

high degree of influence on dedication to counseling duties. This means that SFT had an influence on how counselors were able to follow up, collaborate, and want to commit to counseling.

Research Question Three: What is the combined influence of Solution-Focused Therapy on passion and dedication to counseling among guidance counselors in Imo State?

Table 4 presents the combined mean ratings for passion and dedication in relation to Solution-Focused Therapy.

The mean scores in Table 4 revealed that respondents'

Table 4: Combined Influence of SFT on Passion and Dedication to Counseling

Variable	Number of Items	Mean	SD	Decision
Passion for Counseling	7	4.02	0.73	High
Dedication to Counseling Duties	7	3.90	0.79	High
Combined Influence	14	3.96	0.76	High

mean score for passion for counseling was $M = 4.02$ and the mean score for dedication to counseling duties was $M = 3.90$. The combined mean score of 3.96 fell within the high category of both scales. It can therefore be concluded that Solution-Focused Therapy had a high combined influence on the passion and dedication of Imo State guidance counselors. SFT was perceived to not

only improve counselors' emotional interest in counseling but also increase counselors' practical commitment to performing counseling duties. Also notable from the results was that SFT had a very slightly higher influence on passion compared to dedication. Perhaps this is because SFT's main tenets of hope, focusing on strengths, attending to small changes, and cultivating

positive solutions may speak more to counselors' intrinsic interests and while dedication to counseling duties was high, it may still be more susceptible to external factors such as heavy workload, administrative tasks, and limited access to counseling resources in schools.

Taken together, the study's findings revealed that guidance counselors in Imo State perceived SFT as being beneficial to their practice by increasing passion and dedication. Due to the respondents' academic background and work experience as shown in the demographics, one can trust that the responses given by participants were honest and genuine. All three research questions yielded high mean scores, which points to the solution-focused approach being beneficial in strengthening counselors' drive, confidence, commitment, and consistency in providing school counseling services to students.

Discussion of Findings

Solution-Focused Therapy was perceived by counselors to positively influence passion by a large margin. The grand mean score for the passion construct was 4.02. In simpler terms, counselors felt more enthusiastic, optimistic, and intrinsically motivated to counsel after learning about SFT. Solution-focused work has been cited by counselors to increase passion due to the strategies involved in emphasizing clients' strengths and resources, collaborating on small attainable goals, and witnessing student success (Hsu *et al.*, 2021). Counselors interviewed said using techniques such as the Miracle Question and searching for exceptions allowed them to work with students with more hope and professional efficacy. These findings echo theory on solution-focused counseling. Brief, goal-oriented interventions help clients succeed and can create a "ripple effect" wherein counselor passion is strengthened as well (Vermeulen-Oskam *et al.*, 2024). Counselors in Imo State, therefore, may find SFT especially useful since it allows them to serve more students with less time spent on each while keeping counselors passionate about their work.

As for dedication to counseling activities and duties, counselors also perceived SFT to have had a large influence. The grand mean of 3.90 for the dedication variable showed that counselors felt that SFT led them to be more consistent, committed, and likely to follow through with their counseling responsibilities. This correlation supports previous studies that prove counselors feel more structured and clearer on how to manage their student caseloads when using SFT, thus allowing them to be better able to attend to students despite a busy workload (Neipp & Beyebach, 2022; Murphy, 2024). Reported outcomes from counselors who used SFT include feeling more collaborative with teachers and parents and feeling more confident in carrying out counseling lessons as they were planned. Other studies have found that when counselors use solution-focused interventions, they feel more efficacious in their jobs and are able to manage their time more effectively to meet the expectations of their school system while ensuring

quality of service is upheld (Beauchemin, 2018; Gingerich & Peterson, 2013).

Passion and dedication had a grand mean of 3.96. This means counselors who used SFT not only improved on one area of the proposed theoretical model but both. Counselors interviewed reported feeling more passionate about their work while also feeling more dedicated to completing counseling tasks. These findings support the literature on using both PCC and SFT with counselors. The counseling relationship and empathy provided by the counselor (PCC) in addition to goal-oriented interventions (SFT) work together to improve counselor drive and follow-through with counseling duties (Beauchemin, 2018; Neipp & Beyebach, 2022; Murphy, 2024). One practical takeaway from this study is that allowing counselors in Imo State to be exposed to SFT can be used as an inexpensive form of professional development. Not only will students receive better quality services, but counselors will feel better about their jobs and increase passion and dedication that may be lost amidst student-counselor ratio overload and excessive oversight from school administrators. Demographically, most participants fell between the ages of 30-49 and possessed at least a bachelor's degree. This means that the respondents were experienced enough and well-educated to understand the implications of SFT. There were slightly more female counselors who took the survey (57%) than male counselors. This reflects the workforce population of Imo State and implies that SFT can increase passion and dedication for both male and female counselors. Approximately 2/3 of counselors had heard of SFT before the study. This may skew the results to some extent, as those who were already familiar may have had higher perceptions of SFT. On the other hand, this leaves counselors who were not aware of SFT open to receiving training in the future. Counselors in Imo State can use SFT to help them feel more passionate about their work and more dedicated to seeing their counseling tasks through.

CONCLUSION

The study found that Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT) significantly increased the passion of guidance counselors in Imo State. Results revealed that counselors working with SFT felt a positive difference in terms of feeling more passionate, motivated, fulfilled by their work, and committed to their counseling duties. Results from the descriptive survey showed that SFT elicited feelings of confidence and follow-through and increased the likelihood that counselors will partner with teachers, parents, and other professionals. Counselors found SFT helpful because it gave direction on what to do in sessions with students and offered emotional support to do their jobs. This implies that brief, goal-directed, and strength-based practices can help clients and counselors when used with empathy. Results from testing whether passion and commitment to counseling were related to demographics showed that age, gender, educational

background, and years of experience were not related to passion and commitment. Counselors can use Solution-Focused Therapy to boost the overall capacity of guidance counselors. Solution-Focused Therapy can help improve how counselors feel about their jobs and how committed they are to doing their work. When counselors feel passionate about what they do, they will be more likely to take the necessary steps to follow through with counseling students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were given:

1. Schools should provide regular SFT training for guidance counselors to enhance their passion for counseling.
2. Guidance counselors should integrate SFT techniques into daily practice to strengthen dedication to their professional duties.
3. Educational authorities should support SFT-based professional development programs to improve counselors' motivation and effectiveness in student services.

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