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Effects of Nouthetic Counselling on Behavioural Changes of Students from Broken Homes in Selected Public Secondary Schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State

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Abstract
This study examined effects of nouthetic counselling on behavioural changes of students from broken homes in selected public secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State. The rising prevalence of behavioural issues among students from broken homes, including low-self-esteem, aggressiveness, emotional instability and poor academic performance served as the impetus for the study. A quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control group design was adopted. Social Learning Theory was used as it provides a relevant framework for understanding behavioural changes among students from broken homes and the role of counselling intervention in modifying maladaptive behaviour. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted. Five public secondary schools were selected randomly, from these schools, students from broken homes were identified, and 50 were selected using the simple random sampling from the identified pool. Data were gathered using a nouthetic counselling Intervention Guide and Behavioural Assessment Scale developed for the study. A structured nouthetic counselling session with a focus on biblical counselling, confession, repentance and behavioural renewal was conducted on the experimental group, while no such intervention was given to the control group. Descriptive statistics, Chi-Square was used to analyse data. The results showed that students' behavioural outcomes significantly improved using nouthetic counselling, in particular when compared to the control group, students who participated in the counselling session shown remarkably favourable improvement in their moral reasoning, academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and self-discipline, The study concluded that, students from broken home can benefit greatly from nouthetic counselling, which is based on biblical principles. The study therefore recommended that nouthetic counselling should be used often for students from broken homes. More so, nouthetic counselling can be incorporated in Guidance and Counselling programmes of public senior secondary schools in Ibadan.

Keywords: Nouthetic Counselling, Behavioural Change, Students, Broken Homes, Public Secondary Schools

Introduction
The importance of counselling in addressing the behavioural and emotional problems of adolescents in schools cannot be overemphasized. Adolescents are young people at a critical developmental stage characterized by rapid physical, emotional, social, and cognitive changes. These transitions often make them vulnerable to stress, poor decision-making, and behavioural difficulties, especially when the stability of the family structure is disrupted.

The increasing rate of indiscipline, moral decadence, and behavioural problems among students has become a major concern for educators, parents, counsellors and pastors alike. The situation is even more critical among students from broken homes that often experience emotional instability, lack of guidance, and social maladjustment, which manifest in behaviours such as truancy, aggression, lying, and disobedience to school authority. As a result, educational stakeholders have sought various approaches to restore positive behavioural patterns, one of which is nouthetic counselling, a biblically grounded counselling model that emphasises moral and spiritual transformation.

The family is the primary institution responsible for the moral and emotional development of children. When the family structure collapses, children are deprived of consistent love, guidance, and supervision, which are essential for healthy behavioural development. Broken homes therefore create emotional and psychological vacuums that affect children's ability to form stable relationships and conform to acceptable social norms. According to Olayinka (2018), students from broken homes are more likely to exhibit maladaptive behaviours because of their exposure to conflict, neglect, or inconsistent parenting. The school environment often becomes a reflection of these deficiencies, as teachers and counsellors must manage students whose behaviours are shaped by unstable home experiences. Addressing these critical conditions requires a counselling model that goes beyond conventional techniques typically employed in secondary schools to address both the moral and spiritual dimensions of human behaviour.

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In Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State, many students from broken homes face academic and moral challenges due to emotional neglect and lack of parental supervision, teachers and school counsellors are often overwhelmed by the behavioural issues displayed by these students (Adeyemo, 2019). While guidance and counselling programmes exist in Nigerian schools, they are often limited by inadequate personnel, lack of spiritual content, and insufficient understanding of the students' emotional realities. Incorporating nouthetic counselling into school counselling framework may therefore provide a more holistic solution to the problem, the introduction of this approach into the Nigerian school system represents a call to return to moral and spiritual foundations in education. It aligns with the biblical principle that true change begins from within (Romans 12:2) and affirms that human behaviours can be transformed when individuals are guided by divine truth and love.

Concept of Nouthetic Counselling

The term Nouthetic Counselling originated from Greek word *noutheteo*, which means "to admonish," "to warn," "to correct." This term is used several times in the New Testament:

a. Romans 15:14 –
"I am fully convinced, my dear brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness. You know these things so well you can teach each other all about them."

b. Colossians 1:28 –
"So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ."

c. 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 14
12"Dear brothers and Sisters, honour those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance."
14"Brothers and Sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone."

Where it refers to a process of moral and spiritual admonition intended to restore a person to right behaviour through the truth of God's Word. The concept was developed and popularized by Dr. Jay E. Adam in the early 1970s through his influential book titled – Competent to Counsel (1970), in which he challenged the dominance of secular psychological theories in Christian counselling practice. Adams argued that many modern counselling methods lacked the moral and spiritual authority necessary to bring about genuine change. In contrast, Nouthetic counselling is explicitly biblical, emphasizing confrontation, correction, and compassionate instruction with the aim of spiritual restoration (Adam, 1970).

According to Adam (1970), nouthetic counselling rests on three foundational elements: confrontation, concern, and change as explained below;

First foundational element – Confrontation, involves lovingly bringing an individual face-to-face with the truth of God's Word regarding their behaviour or situation. It is not an act of condemnation but of compassionate truth telling designed to awaken self-awareness and repentance.

Second foundational element – Concern, it emphasizes the admonition must flow from genuine love and a desire for the other person's wellbeing. The counsellor's motive is not to shame but to restore the counselee to right standing with God and others.

Third foundational element – Change, it reflects the ultimate goal of nouthetic counselling – transformation of character and behaviour through obedience to biblical principles and the renewing work of Holy Spirit.

Nouthetic counselling assumes that human problems, whether moral, emotional, relational, are ultimately rooted in sin (Adam, 1973), that is, in humanity's estrangement from God and disobedience to divine truth. Therefore, the solution to behaviour or psychological issues lies not merely in medication or self-esteem enhancement, but in repentance, forgiveness, and spiritual renewal. This theological foundation differentiates Nouthetic Counselling from secular approaches such as humanistic counselling, psychoanalysis, and cognitive behavioural therapy, which primarily rely on human reason and self-effort (McGee, 2015). The Nouthetic counselling model acknowledges the reality of human depravity while offering divine grace as the means of change, it also emphasis the role of Scripture as the authoritative guide for all matters of life and godliness (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Nouthetic counselling is a biblical grounded approach to personal and behavioural transformation that integrates spiritual truth with compassionate correction. (Gladding, 2018). It seeks not only to modify outward behaviour but also to renew the heart and mind in conformity with God's will. In the context of students

from broken homes, it serves as an instrument of healing, guidance, and reformation, empowering them to overcome the negative effects of family instability and to live productive, disciplined, and morally upright lives.

Concept of Broken Homes

It is widely accepted that the family is the first and most important social unit in human society. It is the main setting in which people develop emotionally, socially, and morally (Musick & Meier, 2010). Therefore, the institution's stability is essential to the welfare of children and society at large. However, the house is referred to as "broken" when the family system is upset by conflict, divorce, separation, parent death, or desertion. A damaged or disorganized family structure that results in the absence of one or both parents and, as a result, an imbalance in the children's emotional and psychological lives is referred to as a "broken home" (Santrock, 2018).

Scholars such as Amato (2010) and Adegoke (2015) define a broken home as any household in which normal parental relationships have been disrupted, depriving the child of the affection, security, and guidance typically provided in a stable family setting. A broken home, as defined by sociology, is a departure from the ideal or nuclear family structure, where the mother and father work together to support, discipline, and nurture their children. Marriage instability, adultery, financial difficulties, incompatibility, domestic abuse, or death are common causes of this unit's disintegration. Children are frequently left emotionally vulnerable, socially maladjusted, and psychologically disturbed when a parent is absent or separated. Confusion, loneliness, dread, resentment, and insecurity are possible emotions they may feel. In addition to providing love and security, the family is the first setting in which children learn self-control, teamwork, and moral behaviour. As a result, the child's moral and emotional basis is undermined when this setting is broken.

Due to socioeconomic constraints, urban migration, and the decline of traditional family values, broken houses are becoming more common in Nigeria, especially in Oyo State. Many children are raised by guardians who might not offer enough moral and emotional support, live with extended family, or are raised in single-parent households. Students from broken households in southwest Nigeria are more likely to exhibit behavioural issues like absenteeism, violence, lying, and contempt for authority figures, according to studies by Adeyemi and Ojo (2018). The lack of constant parental supervision and support also contributes to their low academic performance.

A child's sense of authority, affection, and duty are all impacted by a shattered home, in addition to upsetting their emotional equilibrium. For example, when a father figure is absent, boys frequently lack positive male role models, which can lead to the development of deviant behaviours like delinquency or rebellion. In a similar vein, losing a mother can result in emotional instability, low self-esteem, and trouble establishing positive connections. Psychologically speaking, children from dysfunctional households may grow up to use coping strategies like disobedience, withdrawal, or excessive dependence, which further impedes their social integration and personal development (Corey, 2017).

According to Christian and moral doctrine, God created the family as a covenantal organization to offer security, affection, and spiritual direction (Ephesians 6:1–4; Genesis 2:18–24). Therefore, a broken home symbolizes both a social and a spiritual catastrophe. It misrepresents God's plan for the family as a place of spiritual and ethical development. Beyond the home, the effects are seen in communities and schools, where they show themselves as a rise in juvenile delinquency, moral decline, and indiscipline. Therefore, it is a challenge for Christian therapists and educators to apply pastoral and biblical therapies like Nouthetic Counselling to heal the emotional and spiritual scars left by broken households.

Children from broken households frequently exhibit poor attendance, behavioural maladjustment, and low motivation for learning in educational environments. Since these children may be aggressive or withdraw during class interactions, teachers usually report having trouble controlling them. The emotional void left by losing one or both parents frequently results in a need for attention, which can have unfavourable effects.

Behavioural Changes

The process of changing human behaviour, attitudes, or habits towards acceptable or desirable patterns is referred to as behavioural transformation (Okon, 2019). It is a change in how people feel, think, and behave, frequently brought on by an external force, an internal belief, or both. A variety of psychological, social, environmental, and spiritual elements influence behaviour change; it doesn't happen in a vacuum. It is sometimes defined in educational psychology as the discernible change in a student's behaviour brought about by instruction, therapy, reinforcement, or environmental adjustment. Skinner

(1953) asserted that behaviour is learnt and modifiable by means of reward, punishment, and conditioning.

One of the most important objectives of teaching and counselling in the school context is behavioural modification. Schools are places that foster character development in addition to being hubs for intellectual learning. Academic achievement and moral growth are hampered by behavioural issues like truancy, violence, dishonesty, disobedience, drug addiction, and exam malpractice. Emotional anguish, a lack of supervision, low self-esteem, or social frustration are common causes of behavioural problems in students, particularly those from broken homes. If such habits are not addressed early on, they may develop into engrained patterns that have a detrimental impact on relationships, academic achievement, and future opportunities. As a result, counselling is essential for helping students with their personal adjustment and behaviour.

Psychologists like Bandura (1977) highlighted that observational learning, or learning by observing and copying others, can lead to behavioural change. Students from broken homes may mimic negative habits from peers or the media if they don't have positive parental role models. This clarifies why some people display disobedience, lack of self-control, or social disengagement. This behaviour can be changed, though, with deliberate interventions that offer spiritual advice, moral instruction, and positive reinforcement. Rather than just concentrating on the outward signs of maladjustment, effective behavioural change programs must address the underlying causes, such as mental distress, unfulfilled needs, and moral ambiguity.

Reinforcing positive habits through accountability and repetition is another aspect of behavioural change. Teachers, parents, and counsellors all play crucial roles in helping kids practice new actions and attitudes. Students must be given opportunities for moral development, acceptance, and support if long-lasting change is to take place. Additionally, when a person internalizes new values and recognizes their significance, behavioural change is more likely to last.

According to Christian counselling, moral and spiritual reform are inextricably linked to genuine behavioural change. According to the Bible, all human behaviour originates in the heart (Proverbs 4:23; Luke 6:45), meaning that interior regeneration must precede external reformation. Nouthetic counselling is crucial in this situation. Nouthetic counselling, in contrast to merely psychological methods, addresses the moral aspect of behaviour by assisting people in acknowledging their sin, taking ownership of their actions, and seeking forgiveness and reconciliation by Christ. In this perspective, repentance—a deliberate shift from improper behaviour towards proper conduct driven by obedience to God's Word—is a component of behavioural transformation. The transformation is consequently not only behavioural but also spiritual, producing persons who act appropriately because their hearts have been altered.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Social Learning Theory, propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977. The theory explains how behaviour is learned, developed, and modified through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within a social environment. Social learning theory emphasizes the interaction between personal factors, environmental influences, and behavioural, which Bandura described as reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1977). The theory provides a relevant framework for understanding behavioural changes among students from broken homes and the role of counselling intervention in modifying maladaptive behaviour.

Albert Bandura, a Canadian- American psychologist, developed Social Learning Theory as an extension of behaviourist learning theories. He argued that learning does not occur only through direct reinforcement but also through observation and modelling of others' behaviours. Bandura's famous Bobo doll experiment demonstrated that children learn aggressive behaviours by observing and imitating adult models. This experiment provided empirical support for observational learning and showed that behaviour is influenced by environmental exposure and social interaction (Bandura, 1977). His theory later evolved into social cognitive theory, emphasizing self-regulation, self-efficacy, and cognitive processes in behaviour change (Bandura, 1986)

This research adopted Social Learning Theory because it explains how students from broken homes develop behavioural patterns through their family and social environments. Students raised in unstable family settings may observe and internalize negative behaviours such as aggression, hostility, emotional withdrawal, and indiscipline. These behaviours are often reinforced by environmental conditions such as parental conflict, lack of supervision, and inadequate moral guidance.

Furthermore, Social Learning Theory provides a framework for understanding how counselling interventions, such as nouthetic counselling, can modify, correct, and reinforcement of positive

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behaviours. The theory suggests that exposure to positive role models and corrective guidance can lead to behavioural transformation. Since this study investigates behavioural change resulting from counselling intervention, the theory offers a strong foundation for explaining the process of behavioural modification among students.

Methodology

This research adopted a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control group design. The design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to determine the effect of an intervention of nouthetic counselling on students' behaviour. This approach was chosen due to the natural school setting, where it is not possible to randomly assign students to experimental and control groups. Two groups were involved: Group 1 is the experimental group – which received the Nouthetic counselling intervention, and the Group 2, the control group which did not receive the intervention. Both groups were pre-tested to determine their initial behavioural status and post-tested after the intervention to determine any significant behavioural changes. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted. Five public secondary schools were selected randomly, from these schools, students from broken homes were identified, and 50 were selected using the simple random sampling from the identified pool, based on accessibility, presence of guidance counsellors, and administrative support for the study.

The students were divided equally into two groups: 25 students in the experimental group and another 25 students in the control group in the five selected schools. The experimental group received four weeks (a month) of nouthetic counselling sessions, while the control group continued with their regular counselling activities for the same period of time. Because of the peculiarity of the study to avoid religion issues, and not to impose one religion on the other, the study was mainly for the Christian students and the data was collected during their weekly programmes/fellowships. The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled, Behavioural Assessment Scale (BAS), and Nouthetic Counselling Intervention.

Permission was obtained from the participating schools' principals, class teachers, and coordinators of Christian's fellowship.

Findings and Discussions of Findings

Five public secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government, Ibadan were visited by the researcher.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the 50 respondents.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	23	46.0
	Female	27	54.0
Age	13-14	8	16.0
	15-16	31	62.0
	17-18	11	22.0
Family Structure	Divorced	28	56.0
	Separated	19	38.0
	Death	3	6.0

Interpretation:

Gender distribution shows that female students (54%) slightly outnumbered male students (46%). Most respondents were aged 15–16 years (62%), indicating predominance of middle adolescents. Majority of students (56%) were from divorced homes, with fewer from separated homes (38%) or single-parent homes due to death (6%).

Chi-Square Analysis of Demographic Variables

The chi-square (χ^2) test was used to determine whether respondents were evenly distributed across gender, age, and family structure categories.

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Table 2: Chi-Square Summary Table

Variable	χ^2 Calculated	df	p-value	decision
Gender	0.32	1	0.57	Not Significant
Age	18.76	1	<0.001	Significant
Family Structure	19.23	1	0.0001	Significant

Interpretation:
Gender - The distribution of male and female respondents was not significantly different, indicating balanced representation. Age - The distribution of respondents across age groups was significantly different, with most students aged 15–16 years. Family Structure - Respondents were not evenly distributed across family types, with divorce being the most common form of broken home.

Table 3: Pre-Test and Post-Test Behavioural Assessment

Group	Test	N	Mean(X)	SD	Mean Difference	t-value	df	p-value	decision
Experimental Grp	Pre-test	25	52.4	4.2	-	-	-	-	-
	Post-test	25	68.7	3.8	16.3	14.32	48	<0.001	Rejected H_0
Control Grp	Pre-test	25	51.8	4.0	-	-	-		-
	Post-test	25	53.1	3.9	1.3	-	-		-

Interpretation:
The experimental group showed a significant improvement in behavioural scores after receiving nouthetic counselling, with a mean increase of 16.3 points ($t = 14.32$, $df = 48$, $p < 0.001$). The control group, which did not receive counselling, showed minimal improvement (mean increase = 1.3 points), indicating that regular school activities alone had little effect. The results confirm that nouthetic counselling significantly improves behavioural outcomes among students from broken homes.

Summary of Findings
Demographics - Respondents were predominantly female, aged 15–16 years, and mostly from divorced homes. Chi-Square Analyses - Gender distribution was balanced (not significant), whereas age and family structure distributions were significantly different. Behavioural Assessment - Students exposed to nouthetic counselling showed significant improvement in behaviour compared to the control group. Hypothesis Testing - The null hypothesis that nouthetic counselling has no effect was rejected, demonstrating the intervention's effectiveness. The findings support the use of structured, biblical-based nouthetic counselling to enhance self-discipline, moral conduct, and interpersonal adjustment among adolescents from broken homes. Middle adolescents (15–16 years) from divorced families particularly benefit from this intervention.

Conclusion
The study concludes that Nouthetic Counselling is an effective method for bringing about positive behavioural changes among students from broken homes. The counselling approach helped students recognized the moral implications of their behaviour, develop self-discipline, and improve interpersonal relationships. The results essentially show that students are more likely to attain long-term behavioural and emotional stability when truth, love, and accountability are integrated into a structured counselling process. Therefore, pastoral counsellors, teachers, and school administrators who want to encourage discipline, honesty, and responsible will make use of nouthetic counselling method which is grounded in biblical standard.

Recommendations
Having gone through the research on the effects of nouthetic counselling on behavioural changes of students from broken homes in selected public secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State., the followings are hereby recommended.

1. Nouthetic counselling should be used often for students from broken homes.
2. Nouthetic counselling should be incorporated in Guidance and Counselling programmes of public senior secondary school in Ibadan.
3. School counsellors and teachers should receive adequate training in Nouthetic counselling principles.
4. Parents should be encouraged to participate in counselling sessions to reinforce consistent moral guidance and support at home.
5. Ministry of Education in the state should collaborate with faith-based institutions to introduce moral education and spiritual counselling programmes aimed at reducing behavioural misconduct in public secondary schools.

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