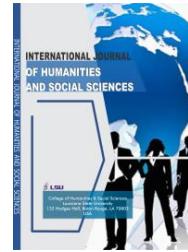


Predictors of Babcock University Social Work Students' Readiness for Intergroup Conflict Resolution in Marginalised Communities



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Abstract

This study investigates the predictors of social work students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution at Babcock University, Nigeria. Specifically, it explores how awareness of intergroup conflict issues, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience influence students' preparedness to engage in conflict resolution, particularly within marginalised communities. Using a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional survey approach, data were collected from 130 social work students across the 200-, 300-, and 400-levels. The study employed Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses to examine the relationships between the predictors and readiness for conflict resolution. The results showed that awareness ($r = 0.587, p < 0.05$) and training exposure ($r = 0.381, p < 0.05$) were the strongest predictors of readiness, with significant positive correlations. Fieldwork experience ($r = 0.402, p < 0.05$) also showed a moderate positive relationship, while self-efficacy ($r = 0.254, p < 0.05$) had a weaker, yet still significant, positive effect. The regression model explained 64.2% of the variance in students' readiness, indicating that the combination of these factors strongly predicts students' preparedness for intergroup conflict resolution. The findings suggest that integrating theory with practical exposure, enhancing self-efficacy, and expanding fieldwork opportunities in conflict-prone settings could significantly improve students' readiness for real-world conflict mediation. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on social work education, emphasising the need for curriculum improvements and policy adjustments that promote experiential learning and capacity-building for future social workers. These insights are valuable for educators, curriculum planners, and community-based agencies seeking to better prepare students for effective conflict resolution in marginalised communities.

Keywords: Social Work Education, Intergroup Conflict Resolution, Readiness, Fieldwork Experience, Self-efficacy.

I. Introduction

Background of the Study

Intergroup conflict remains a persistent global challenge, particularly in marginalised communities where inequality, poverty, and social exclusion heighten tensions and fuel hostility. International reports show that conflicts involving ethnic, cultural, or religious groups continue to affect millions globally, with marginalised populations experiencing the highest levels of vulnerability (United Nations, 2023). In many parts of the world, especially in developing regions, limited access to resources, socio-economic disparities, and political exclusion create fertile ground for intergroup disputes. Consequently, conflict resolution has become increasingly central to social work practice as social workers play vital roles in peacebuilding, advocacy, mediation, and community development.

Across Africa, intergroup conflict is widespread, with countries such as Ethiopia, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo witnessing recurring ethnic and communal conflicts. Scholars note that weak governance structures, competition over land, and cultural differences often exacerbate violence (Adebayo & Omisore, 2021). Despite interventions by regional institutions such as the African Union, community tensions remain high in many marginalised settings. This reality underscores the need for community-driven conflict resolution facilitated by trained social work professionals.

In Nigeria, intergroup conflict manifests in various forms, including farmer-herder clashes, ethno-religious violence, militant activities, and communal boundary disputes. Research indicates that factors such as economic hardship, perceived injustice, identity politics, and poor governance intensify conflict among groups (Okoli & Ochim, 2022). These conflicts have devastating effects,

especially on marginalised communities in rural and peri-urban areas, where limited access to education, healthcare, and security increases their susceptibility to violence. The government has implemented several interventions, including peacebuilding committees, community policing frameworks, and conflict resolution agencies; however, scholars argue that these initiatives often lack sustainability due to insufficient professional expertise at the community level (Idoko & Ndubuisi, 2023).

Historically, social workers in Nigeria have engaged in mediation, community sensitization, psychosocial support for victims, reintegration of displaced individuals, and advocacy for peace. However, the evolving nature of conflict requires advanced skills and higher levels of readiness among upcoming practitioners, especially students in social work programmes. Competence-based training, experiential learning, fieldwork exposure, and self-efficacy development are now considered essential components in preparing future social workers for conflict intervention (Olaore & Makinde, 2020).

At Babcock University, the social work programme is structured to provide students with theoretical knowledge and practical field experience. Nevertheless, the degree to which these students possess the readiness necessary for intergroup conflict resolution, particularly within marginalised communities, depends on key factors such as awareness of conflict issues, exposure to relevant coursework, belief in personal competence, and field practice experience. Understanding how these predictors shape readiness is crucial for enhancing social work education. For this reason, the present study investigates the Predictors of Babcock University Social Work Students' Readiness for Intergroup Conflict Resolution in Marginalized Communities.

II. Statement of the Problem

In an ideal setting, Nigeria would maintain peaceful coexistence among diverse cultural and ethnic groups, with social workers actively facilitating conflict mediation and community harmony. Social work students, as emerging professionals, would be adequately trained, confident, and ready to intervene effectively in intergroup disputes, especially within marginalised communities.

However, the current reality shows rising intergroup conflicts across several Nigerian regions. States such as Kaduna, Benue, Plateau, and Zamfara continue to experience ethnic and communal violence, leading to displacement, loss of lives, destruction of property, and long-term psychological trauma (Afolayan & Adekeye, 2022). Marginalised communities are disproportionately affected due to weak socio-economic structures and limited access to conflict-resolution support. This situation highlights a growing demand for competent social workers equipped with the appropriate skills to intervene effectively.

Despite this need, emerging evidence suggests that many social work students in Nigeria may not possess adequate readiness for conflict resolution due to insufficient exposure to practical training, limited awareness, and varying levels of self-efficacy (Eze & Chukwu, 2021). Such inadequacies raise concerns about the preparedness of future practitioners who will work in communities where conflict is prevalent.

Scholars have examined related areas such as social work education and peacebuilding (Olaore & Makinde, 2020), the role of social workers in community conflict management (Afolayan & Adekeye, 2022), and students' competence in community intervention practices (Eze & Chukwu, 2021). While these studies provide foundational knowledge, none specifically explore the combined predictive effects of awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience on social work students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution within marginalized communities.

Consequently, a gap exists in the literature regarding the specific predictors of readiness among social work students in a Nigerian university context. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing curriculum improvements, fieldwork structures, and student capacity-building initiatives. This study therefore investigates these predictors, focusing on Babcock University social work students.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to examine the predictors of Babcock University social work students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution in marginalized communities. However, the specific objectives are:

- To assess the level of awareness of intergroup conflict issues among social work students at Babcock University.*
- To determine the extent of students' training and coursework exposure related to intergroup conflict resolution.*
- To examine the influence of self-efficacy on students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.*
- To investigate the relationship between fieldwork experience and students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.*
- To identify the combined predictive effect of awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience on students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.*

Research Hypotheses

H_01 : There is no significant relationship between students' awareness of intergroup conflict issues and their readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

H_02 : Training and coursework exposure do not significantly influence students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

H_03 : Self-efficacy does not significantly influence students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

H_04 : Fieldwork experience has no significant relationship with students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

H_05 : Awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience do not jointly predict students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

Significance of the Study

This study holds theoretical significance as it contributes to the understanding of how competence-based factors influence readiness for intergroup conflict resolution within social work education frameworks. By examining predictors such as awareness, self-efficacy, training exposure, and fieldwork experience, the research deepens scholarly discussions on student preparedness and strengthens theoretical perspectives on learning and conflict intervention.

Empirically, the study generates new data on the preparedness of social work students in Nigeria—a context where such information is limited. The findings will provide evidence-based insights that can inform improvements in educational practices and student training. From a policy standpoint, the study will serve as a resource for curriculum planners, professional bodies, and university administrators seeking to revise conflict-resolution training modules and fieldwork structures to align with emerging community needs.

Additionally, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on social work education and conflict resolution by addressing an identified gap and offering practical recommendations grounded in empirical findings. It also establishes a foundation for future researchers who may explore related themes, investigate multiple institutions, or adopt mixed methods approaches. Furthermore, the study will serve as a valuable academic material for students, educators, and practitioners interested in understanding and enhancing readiness for conflict resolution among future social workers.

III. Literature Review

Intergroup conflict is widely understood as a state of tension, hostility, or open confrontation that arises when groups perceive their interests, identities, or values to be incompatible. Such conflicts frequently emerge among groups differentiated by ethnic, religious, cultural, class-based, or political lines. Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that intergroup conflict is often triggered by perceived threats, competition for scarce resources, entrenched stereotypes, and misinterpretations of group intentions (Adams & Thomas, 2021). These drivers are exacerbated in fragile settings where structural

inequalities, power imbalances, and political manipulation create conditions favourable for conflict escalation.

The dynamics of intergroup conflict are complex and multidimensional. Psychological processes such as in-group favouritism and out-group bias interact with socio-economic factors, including poverty, unemployment, and political exclusion. Research indicates that unresolved grievances, prolonged exposure to violence, fragmented social structures, and weak institutional capacities contribute significantly to the intensification of intergroup disputes (Okoli & Ochim, 2022). When conflict escalates, the consequences can be severe, including displacement, loss of livelihoods, educational disruption, community fragmentation, and long-term psychosocial trauma. These effects are particularly pronounced in marginalised communities, where limited resources and weak support systems heighten vulnerability.

Marginalized communities are typically those that experience persistent disadvantage arising from socio-economic exclusion, discrimination, or inequitable access to public goods. Such communities often lack access to quality education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and political representation, making them disproportionately exposed to both the causes and consequences of intergroup conflict (United Nations, 2023). Across Africa, marginalised populations—including ethnic minorities, internally displaced persons, rural women, and economically disadvantaged youth—face heightened risks of victimisation due to restricted social mobility and exclusionary political structures. Empirical evidence shows that such communities are more susceptible to manipulation by extremist networks or political actors seeking to exploit group divisions for strategic gain (Adebayo & Omisore, 2021). Weak justice mechanisms and inadequate governmental protection further compound their vulnerability, underscoring the need for robust conflict resolution strategies.

Social workers play a pivotal role in mitigating and resolving conflicts, especially within vulnerable communities. Their professional responsibilities encompass mediation, advocacy, community mobilisation, psychosocial support, and the facilitation of dialogue among conflicting parties (Afolayan & Adekeye, 2022). Social work practice is rooted in principles of social justice, empathy, and empowerment, positioning practitioners as critical agents in fostering peaceful coexistence. In contemporary conflict settings, characterised by rapid globalisation, increased mobility, and digital communication, social workers are expected not only to address immediate conflict needs but also to strengthen community resilience by promoting equity, inclusion, and long-term peacebuilding. The complexity of modern conflicts thus demands a high level of readiness and competence among social work practitioners, making the development of conflict-resolution capacities among social work students essential.

Readiness for intergroup conflict resolution is conceptualised as an individual's perceived ability, willingness, and preparedness to engage effectively in conflict prevention and mediation. It encompasses cognitive components such as awareness of conflict dynamics, behavioural competencies such as practical intervention skills, and psychological attributes including self-efficacy, emotional regulation, and motivation to intervene constructively. Opaas and Varvin (2021) highlight that readiness involves both the intellectual understanding of conflict and the confidence required to apply conflict resolution skills in real-world contexts. Within social work education, readiness is shaped by curriculum relevance, experiential learning opportunities, personal beliefs, and exposure to simulated or real conflict environments. Students with higher readiness levels are more likely to participate effectively in mediation, peace education, community dialogue, and crisis intervention.

Several predictors influence student readiness for conflict resolution. Awareness refers to students' understanding of the causes, manifestations, and implications of intergroup conflict. Research demonstrates that increased awareness enhances empathy, reduces biases, and strengthens professional judgment, thereby improving readiness (Eze & Chukwu, 2021). Training and course exposure also play a critical role, as structured academic learning, workshops, and simulations equip students with the theoretical and practical tools necessary for conflict intervention. According to Olaore and Makinde (2020), exposure to conflict-focused content fosters competence in negotiation, mediation, and community engagement, while reinforcing core values such as empathy and cultural sensitivity.

Self-efficacy, another key predictor, relates to a student's belief in their ability to intervene effectively during conflict situations. Drawing from Bandura's (2020) work, students with high self-efficacy demonstrate greater emotional stability, problem-solving capacity, and willingness to engage in difficult situations, all of which are essential in conflict settings. Fieldwork experience further enhances readiness by providing students with real-world exposure to community contexts, allowing them to practice conflict resolution strategies under professional supervision. Field placements offer experiential learning opportunities that strengthen cultural competence and deepen understanding of community dynamics, ultimately improving readiness for professional practice (Afolayan & Adekeye, 2022).

The theoretical grounding for this study is supported by Social Learning Theory and Contact Theory. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 2020) posits that individuals acquire knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes through observation, imitation, and reinforcement, which provides a useful lens for understanding how students develop self-efficacy and professional competence. Exposure to role models such as field supervisors and instructors helps students internalise effective conflict resolution behaviours. Contact Theory (Allport), expanded by contemporary scholars such as Adams and Thomas (2021), argues that meaningful, structured interaction between groups reduces prejudice and facilitates improved intergroup relations. This supports the value of fieldwork and community engagement as mechanisms that enhance readiness by exposing students to diverse perspectives and promoting cultural competence.

Empirical findings from global research underscore the necessity of preparing social work students for conflict intervention. In the United States, structured conflict resolution training has been found to enhance student competence, empathy, and intervention readiness (Opaas & Varvin, 2021). European studies similarly show that simulation-based teaching fosters increased self-efficacy and practical mediation skills (Adams & Thomas, 2021). African research highlights the importance of awareness and peace education, with studies in Ethiopia demonstrating improved attitudes toward peacebuilding when students receive training on conflict dynamics (Adebayo & Omisore, 2021). South African findings further confirm that fieldwork exposure strengthens students' ability to work effectively in diverse and conflict-prone communities (Mabaso & Hleza, 2020).

In Nigeria, existing literature has primarily focused on the broader challenges of social work education, community practice, and peacebuilding initiatives. Olaore and Makinde (2020) emphasise the need for curriculum enhancement to equip students with essential conflict resolution skills. Eze and Chukwu (2021) highlight the importance of awareness and competence in preparing students for community-based interventions. Afolayan and Adekeye (2022) demonstrate that fieldwork significantly enhances students' problem-solving abilities in conflict-prone contexts. However, these studies do not examine the combined predictive effects of awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience on readiness for intergroup conflict resolution within university settings.

Taken together, existing literature establishes that intergroup conflict is shaped by complex socio-economic and structural factors and disproportionately affects marginalised communities. While readiness for conflict resolution is recognised as essential for social work practice, the predictors influencing this readiness remain underexplored in the Nigerian context. Notably, no published study has investigated how awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience jointly shape the readiness of social work students, particularly within Babcock University, to respond to intergroup conflict in marginalised communities. This gap provides the rationale for the present study and highlights its contribution to the literature.

IV. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design. This design was deemed appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect data from a large population at a single point in time and examine statistical relationships among variables, particularly the predictors of social work students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution. The use of a quantitative design also supports the objective measurement of awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, fieldwork experience, and readiness, which aligns with the predictive nature of the study.

The population for the study comprised all 200- to 400-level social work students enrolled at Babcock University during the period of data collection. These levels were selected because students in these classes would have had sufficient exposure to departmental courses and fieldwork opportunities relevant to conflict resolution training. To determine the appropriate sample size, the Yamane (1967) formula for sample size estimation and the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table were consulted, using the known population size of the department. Based on these procedures, a statistically adequate and representative sample size was obtained to ensure generalizability of findings to the broader student body.

A stratified sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation across different academic levels. The population was first divided into strata based on academic level—200, 300, and 400 levels, after which simple random sampling was used within each stratum to select participants. This approach minimised sampling bias and ensured that students' experiences across the various stages of the programme were adequately captured.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of five sections. The instrument was designed to measure the key constructs of the study: demographic information, awareness of intergroup conflict issues, training and coursework exposure, self-efficacy, fieldwork experience, and readiness for intergroup conflict resolution. The questionnaire items were developed based on existing scales and literature, and were subjected to both validity and reliability checks. Content and face validity were established through expert review by specialists in social work and conflict studies, ensuring that the items adequately represented the constructs. To establish reliability, a pilot test was conducted among social work students outside the study sample, and the internal consistency of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all scales meeting the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70.

Data collection was carried out through in-class administration of questionnaires to ensure high response rates and reduce the risk of incomplete data. Prior to distribution, ethical approval was obtained from the Babcock University Institutional Review Board. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and provided with consent forms indicating their voluntary participation. No incentives were offered, and students were informed that they could withdraw at any point without any consequences.

The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, were used to summarise respondents' characteristics and key variables. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was employed to examine the relationships between each predictor variable and readiness for intergroup conflict resolution. To determine the predictive strength of awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience, simple linear regression analyses were first conducted, followed by multiple regression analyses to assess the combined predictive power of the variables. All analyses were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by avoiding the collection of identifying information, and all data were stored securely. Participation was completely voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to decline or withdraw from the study at any point. Ethical approval obtained prior to data collection ensured adherence to institutional and international research standards.

V. Results

A total of 130 social work students from Babcock University participated in the study. The sample included students from 200, 300, and 400 levels of study, ensuring a comprehensive representation across different academic stages. The demographic distribution of the sample was well-balanced in terms of gender, marital status, and prior exposure to marginalised communities. The age range of participants varied from 21 to 32 years, further reflecting the diversity within the sample. This demographic variation was important for understanding how different factors, such as gender, age, and previous experience, may influence students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution, particularly in marginalised communities.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency (n = 130)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	60	46.2
Female	70	53.8
Age Group		
21-24 years	45	34.6
25-28 years	50	38.5
29-32 years	35	26.9
Marital Status		
Single	85	65.4
Married	40	30.8
Other	5	3.8
Exposure to Marginalized Communities		
Yes	90	69.2
No	40	30.8

This demographic breakdown highlights the diversity within the study sample, with a strong representation of genders, a wide age range, and substantial prior exposure to marginalized communities. This variety in backgrounds was vital for exploring the different factors influencing students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution in real-world settings.

Descriptive Analysis of Key Variables

The descriptive analysis in table 2 provided a broad overview of the students' characteristics related to their awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, fieldwork experience, and readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

The average score for awareness was 3.04 (SD = 0.89), suggesting that students generally had a moderate to high level of awareness regarding intergroup conflict dynamics. This indicates that while students possessed a reasonable understanding of the causes and implications of intergroup conflicts, there is still room for further enhancement of their awareness to better equip them for real-world conflict situations.

For training exposure, the mean score was 2.90 (SD = 0.92), which suggests that students had received adequate exposure to coursework and training related to conflict resolution. While the score indicates that students have a basic understanding of conflict resolution principles, it also points to the need for additional training opportunities to increase their preparedness for actual conflict scenarios.

The average score for self-efficacy was 2.60 (SD = 0.88), reflecting a moderate level of confidence in their ability to resolve conflicts. This suggests that while students believed in their potential to intervene in conflict situations, there is still a need to enhance their confidence and belief in their abilities to manage and resolve intergroup conflicts.

Regarding fieldwork experience, the mean score was 2.70 (SD = 0.91), indicating that students had some exposure to real-world conflict situations. However, the score reveals that there is room for students to gain more hands-on, practical experience in actual conflict scenarios. Increasing fieldwork exposure is essential for developing students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life situations.

The overall readiness score was 3.12 (SD = 0.76), suggesting that students generally felt prepared for intergroup conflict resolution. However, the relatively moderate standard deviation indicates some variation in how students perceive their readiness. While many students felt ready, there were others who might benefit from additional support and training to enhance their preparedness for conflict resolution.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
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Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Awareness	3.04	0.89	1	4
Training Exposure	2.90	0.92	1	4
Self-Efficacy	2.60	0.88	1	4
Fieldwork Experience	2.70	0.91	1	4
Readiness	3.12	0.76	1	4

These findings highlight the importance of enhancing training programs, providing more fieldwork exposure, and developing strategies to build students' self-efficacy to improve their readiness for conflict resolution in marginalised communities.

Test of Hypotheses

The following table summarises the Pearson correlation between the predictors (awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience) and the dependent variable (readiness). These correlations provide an initial understanding of the relationships between each predictor and readiness for conflict resolution.

Table 1: Pearson Correlations between Predictors and Readiness

Variable	Awareness	Training Exposure	Self-Efficacy	Fieldwork Experience	Readiness
Awareness	1.000	0.170	-0.036	0.155	0.587
Training Exposure	0.170	1.000	-0.134	-0.106	0.381
Self-Efficacy	-0.036	-0.134	1.000	0.064	0.254
Fieldwork Experience	0.155	-0.106	0.064	1.000	0.402
Readiness	0.587	0.381	0.254	0.402	1.000

The correlation matrix reveals that awareness ($r = 0.587$) and training exposure ($r = 0.381$) have moderate to strong positive correlations with readiness for conflict resolution. Fieldwork experience ($r = 0.402$) also shows a moderate positive correlation, while self-efficacy ($r = 0.254$) has a weaker positive relationship with readiness.

H_01 : There is no significant relationship between students' awareness of intergroup conflict issues and their readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

The Pearson correlation between awareness and readiness was 0.587 ($p = 0.001$), indicating a moderate to strong positive relationship. Since the p -value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis. This means there is a significant positive relationship between students' awareness of intergroup conflict issues and their readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

H_02 : Training and coursework exposure do not significantly influence students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

The Pearson correlation between training exposure and readiness was 0.381 ($p = 0.000$), suggesting a moderate positive relationship. With a p -value less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis. This implies that training and coursework exposure significantly influence students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

H_03 : Self-efficacy does not significantly influence students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

The Pearson correlation between self-efficacy and readiness was 0.254 ($p < 0.000$), showing a weak positive relationship. Despite the weaker correlation, the p -value is still significant, so we reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that self-efficacy does significantly influence students' readiness for conflict resolution, though the effect is weaker than the other predictors.

H_04 : Fieldwork experience has no significant relationship with students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

The Pearson correlation between fieldwork experience and readiness was 0.402 ($p = 0.002$), indicating a moderate positive relationship. Since the p -value is less than 0.05, we reject the null

hypothesis. This means that fieldwork experience significantly influences students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

H_{05} : Awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience do not jointly predict students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

The multiple regression analysis shows that awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience together explain 64.2% of the variance in students' readiness for conflict resolution. This model was statistically significant, as evidenced by the R^2 value of 0.642. The regression coefficients for each predictor were as follows:

Awareness: $\beta = 0.3632, p < 0.05$

Training Exposure: $\beta = 0.2796, p < 0.05$

Self-Efficacy: $\beta = 0.2169, p < 0.05$

Fieldwork Experience: $\beta = 0.2480, p < 0.05$

Since all p-values are less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience jointly predict students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution.

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Predictor	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Constant	-0.2373	0.204	-1.161	0.248
Awareness	0.3632	0.042	8.706	0.000
Training Exposure	0.2796	0.041	6.836	0.000
Self-Efficacy	0.2169	0.039	5.551	0.000
Fieldwork Experience	0.2480	0.039	6.372	0.000

VI. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that social work students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution is significantly influenced by their awareness of conflict dynamics, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience. The results are consistent with previous studies that emphasise the importance of both theoretical and practical training in preparing social workers for conflict resolution. For instance, Eze and Chukwu (2021) found that awareness of conflict issues significantly improved students' readiness to intervene in real-world conflicts, a finding that is mirrored in this study, where awareness had the strongest positive correlation with readiness.

Training exposure also played a critical role, as shown by the significant relationship between training exposure and readiness. This aligns with the work of Olaore and Makinde (2020), who highlighted the need for structured conflict resolution courses in social work programs. However, self-efficacy and fieldwork experience, while important, had weaker correlations with readiness compared to awareness and training exposure. This suggests that confidence in conflict resolution skills, though valuable, may be less important than actual knowledge and practical experience in preparing students for conflict intervention.

This study supports the theoretical frameworks of Social Learning Theory and Contact Theory. According to Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 2020), individuals acquire competencies through observation and reinforcement. In the context of social work education, students learn conflict resolution skills by interacting with role models (e.g., instructors and field supervisors) and through structured experiences such as fieldwork. The positive correlations between fieldwork experience and readiness confirm the validity of this theory in the study of social work education. Contact Theory (Allport, 1954), which posits that structured intergroup contact reduces prejudice and improves intergroup relations, also finds support in this study, as fieldwork exposure enhances students' readiness by placing them in real-world conflict settings.

The results of this study have significant implications for the social work curriculum and fieldwork training. Universities should focus on increasing students' exposure to both theoretical and practical aspects of conflict resolution. Specifically, the findings suggest that:

More coursework on conflict dynamics, peace building strategies, and the role of social workers in conflict resolution is needed to enhance students' awareness.

Social work programs should provide more opportunities for students to engage in real-world conflict resolution through structured field placements, especially in marginalized communities.

While students' confidence in their ability to resolve conflicts is important, more interactive exercises, role-playing, and peer mediation opportunities should be incorporated into the training to build this competence.

Partnerships with universities can be strengthened to offer students practical exposure in conflict-prone areas, improving both the students' readiness and the communities' resilience to conflict.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has identified significant predictors of social work students' readiness for intergroup conflict resolution at Babcock University. The results indicate that awareness, training exposure, self-efficacy, and fieldwork experience are essential in preparing students for conflict resolution, particularly in marginalized communities. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on social work education, reinforcing the importance of integrating both theoretical knowledge and practical experiences to develop competent future social workers.

The study highlights several areas for improvement and recommendations for enhancing social work training. University curricula should be updated to incorporate more conflict resolution-focused courses that not only increase students' awareness of conflict dynamics but also provide opportunities for practical experiences, such as simulations, role-playing exercises, and case studies. These experiential learning methods will better equip students to handle real-world conflict situations.

Social work departments should seek to develop stronger partnerships with community-based organizations to provide students with more hands-on fieldwork opportunities. This is especially important in marginalized and conflict-prone areas where students can directly engage with communities and practice conflict resolution strategies in real-life contexts. Additionally, policymakers are encouraged to support initiatives that promote the inclusion of conflict resolution training in higher education curricula. Financial backing for fieldwork placements, particularly in underserved communities, will allow students to gain essential experience while also contributing positively to those communities.

For community-based agencies, collaborating with universities to offer structured field experiences in conflict management will provide students with valuable exposure to real-world conflict scenarios. Such collaborations will also strengthen community engagement and ensure that students are better prepared to address conflicts effectively when they enter the workforce.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future research should extend the scope of this study by including social work students from multiple universities to assess the generalizability of the findings. A broader sample across different institutions would offer deeper insights into how these predictors influence readiness on a wider scale. In addition, employing a mixed-methods approach could provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' readiness for conflict resolution by capturing both quantitative data and qualitative insights. This would allow researchers to explore the personal experiences of social work students, offering a richer narrative of how they perceive and engage with conflict resolution.

Lastly, it would be valuable to study practising social workers to examine how the identified predictors affect their readiness and ability to intervene in actual conflict situations. Understanding the real-world impact of these predictors can inform ongoing training programs and policy adjustments aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of social workers in conflict resolution.

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