

## **CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL MALADJUSTMENT AND IMPACT OF COUNSELLING IN ENHANCING STUDENTS-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP IN SECONDARY SCHOOL MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS**

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**Abstract** - This study examined the challenges of implementing counseling programme and their impact on teacher-student relationships in multicultural classrooms in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone, Enugu State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The study population comprised 389 school counsellors, and since the population was manageable, no sampling was conducted. The Counselling Challenges and Impact Questionnaire (CCIQ) were developed as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was face validated by three experts, two from the Department of Counselling and Human Development and one from the Department of Science Education (Research, Measurement, and Evaluation), all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha method, which yielded a coefficient of 0.86, ensuring the consistency of the instrument. Data collection was carried out through direct administration of the questionnaire, and responses were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. A decision rule of 2.50 was applied, with mean scores at or above this threshold considered significant. The findings of the study revealed that cultural differences and peer pressure posed significant challenges to students' social adjustment, while inadequate funding and limited administrative support hindered the effective implementation of counseling programme. It was recommended that school administrators allocate more resources and institutional support to strengthen counselling services. This study contributes to knowledge by highlighting the necessity of culturally responsive counseling approaches to enhance teacher-student relationships in multicultural classrooms.

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**Keywords:** Counselling programmes, multicultural classrooms, teacher-student relationships

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### **Introduction**

In an increasingly diverse educational landscape, students in multicultural classrooms encounter various social and academic challenges that may affect their overall adjustment and learning experiences. The role of counselling in education has become more significant in addressing these challenges by providing psychological support, guidance, and intervention strategies to foster students' social and emotional well-being (Gibson & Mitchell, 2019). Private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone, like many educational institutions, accommodate students from different ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds, making it essential for school counselling programs to be structured in a way that promotes inclusivity, academic success, and overall social harmony. Among the numerous benefits of counselling, its impact on social adjustment and teacher-student relationships is particularly critical in ensuring that students integrate successfully into their learning environments. Counselling in education is a structured professional service aimed at providing students with the necessary emotional, social, and academic support to navigate challenges and improve their overall school experience (Corey, 2021). According to Gibson and Mitchell (2019), school counselling encompasses career guidance, mental health support, and social skills development, all of which

contribute to students' personal and academic success. Sue and Sue (2021) highlight that effective counselling helps students develop self-awareness, manage conflicts, and build resilience, particularly in diverse classroom settings. In the context of this study, counselling in education is operationally defined as the professional intervention and guidance services available in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone that help students navigate social challenges, enhance interpersonal relationships, and foster academic engagement in multicultural classrooms.

Social adjustment refers to a student's ability to adapt to new social environments, establish meaningful relationships, and function effectively within a given educational setting (Santrock, 2020). In multicultural classrooms, where students come from diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, social adjustment is a crucial determinant of student success, influencing self-esteem, classroom participation, and academic motivation (Banks & Banks, 2019). Gay (2020) explains that poor social adjustment can lead to isolation, behavioral issues, and reduced academic performance, making counselling a necessary intervention to equip students with coping strategies, emotional intelligence, and social competence. From an operational perspective, social adjustment in this study refers to how well students in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone adapt to multicultural classroom settings, interact positively with peers and teachers, and develop essential interpersonal skills. Counselling interventions play a crucial role in ensuring that students receive adequate support to overcome cultural barriers, discrimination, and emotional distress, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and improving their academic performance. A positive teacher-student relationship is an essential factor in promoting students' academic success, emotional well-being, and social development (Woolfolk, 2021). Teachers serve as mentors, role models, and facilitators of learning, and their ability to foster strong, supportive relationships with students significantly influences classroom engagement and behavior (Brown & Trusty, 2020). In multicultural classrooms, where students come from varied backgrounds, effective counselling can help teachers develop cultural competence, improve their communication strategies, and create an inclusive learning environment that values diversity (Corey, 2021). Research has shown that teachers who receive counselling training are more equipped to address students' emotional and social challenges, leading to improved classroom management, reduced conflicts, and better student participation (Gibson & Mitchell, 2019). Counselling provides teachers with intervention strategies that enable them to better understand their students' backgrounds, respond to their needs, and create a culturally responsive teaching environment. In this study, teacher-student relationships are operationally defined as the interactive and supportive connections between educators and students that influence students' social adjustment and overall classroom experiences in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone.

Multiculturalism in education refers to the coexistence of diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups within a school setting and the strategies used to ensure inclusivity and equality in learning (Banks & Banks, 2019). In a multicultural classroom, differences in cultural norms, communication styles, and learning expectations can create barriers to effective teacher-student interactions and peer relationships (Gay, 2020). Without structured support, students from marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds may experience difficulty integrating into the school environment, leading to social isolation and academic disengagement (Sue & Sue, 2021). Counselling serves as a bridge to help students navigate multicultural challenges by providing them with social skills, conflict resolution strategies, and emotional support to improve their adaptability and overall

school experience. Additionally, it assists teachers in developing cultural awareness and sensitivity, enabling them to foster an inclusive classroom environment where all students feel valued and supported (Woolfolk, 2021). In this study, multiculturalism is operationally defined as the presence of students from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone and the impact of counselling on fostering inclusivity and harmonious teacher-student relationships. Counselling plays a crucial role in strengthening teacher-student relationships by fostering mutual understanding, improving communication, and addressing emotional and behavioral challenges that may hinder effective interactions in the classroom (Brown & Trusty, 2020). In multicultural classrooms, where students come from diverse backgrounds, teachers may encounter difficulties in understanding students' unique needs, learning preferences, and cultural expectations. Counselling provides both teachers and students with the necessary support to bridge these gaps, creating a more inclusive and harmonious learning environment (Sue & Sue, 2021). One way counselling strengthens teacher-student relationships is by equipping teachers with cultural competence and emotional intelligence, enabling them to recognize and respond effectively to students' socio-emotional needs (Gay, 2020). Through training sessions, counselling workshops, and one-on-one consultations, teachers gain a deeper understanding of their students' backgrounds, reducing biases and fostering respect in the classroom. Woolfolk (2021) asserts that counselling interventions such as peer mediation, conflict resolution training, and mentoring programs help teachers establish trust and open communication with students, ultimately improving classroom dynamics.

Additionally, counselling facilitates early identification of learning and emotional difficulties, allowing teachers to provide timely interventions and support to struggling students (Gibson & Mitchell, 2019). By working closely with school counselors, teachers can implement personalized support strategies that enhance students' classroom engagement, motivation, and academic success. Research by Banks and Banks (2019) suggests that teacher-student relationships improve significantly when students feel heard, understood, and supported by their educators, fostering a positive school climate where mutual respect and collaboration thrive. By examining the role of counselling in enhancing social adjustment, particularly in strengthening teacher-student relationships in multicultural classrooms, this study aims to provide practical insights into how counselling interventions can contribute to a more inclusive, supportive, and productive learning environment in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone.

Counselling plays a crucial role in promoting social adjustment among students, particularly in multicultural classrooms where diverse backgrounds can lead to differences in communication styles, values, and expectations. Effective counselling interventions help students develop emotional resilience, foster positive social interactions, and strengthen relationships with their teachers. In private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone, school counselors facilitate social integration by providing students with coping strategies and support mechanisms to navigate academic and social challenges. Students in multicultural classrooms often experience stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation due to cultural differences and adjustment difficulties. Counselling provides a safe space for students to express their concerns, receive emotional validation, and develop coping strategies to handle social and academic pressures. School counselors use therapeutic techniques to address issues such as low self-esteem, social anxiety, and peer pressure, thereby fostering a supportive learning environment. Emotional support in school settings has been found to contribute significantly to students' academic

performance and overall well-being (Santrock, 2020). Cultural diversity in the classroom can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and social barriers among students and between students and teachers. Counselling helps bridge cultural gaps by promoting awareness and appreciation of different traditions, beliefs, and perspectives. Through counselling sessions, students learn to embrace diversity and develop empathy toward their peers from different backgrounds. Additionally, counselors equip teachers with strategies to handle cultural sensitivity in their interactions with students, thus creating a more inclusive and harmonious classroom environment (Gay, 2020). Effective communication is essential for positive teacher-student relationships and peer interactions. However, language barriers, cultural norms, and personal insecurities may hinder students' ability to express themselves clearly. Counselling helps students develop essential communication skills, such as active listening, assertiveness, and nonverbal communication. Furthermore, conflict resolution training through counselling enables students to handle disagreements constructively, reducing incidents of bullying, discrimination, and peer conflicts. By fostering open dialogue and mutual understanding, counselling enhances social cohesion in the classroom (Sue & Sue, 2021). An inclusive school environment ensures that every student feels valued and respected, regardless of their cultural or socio-economic background. Counselling programs in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone incorporate activities that promote cultural sensitivity, such as peer mentoring programs, diversity workshops, and classroom discussions on inclusivity. Counselors work closely with teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies that accommodate students' diverse learning needs and backgrounds. When students feel included and respected, they are more likely to participate actively in classroom activities and establish meaningful relationships with their teachers. Strengthening teacher-student relationships through counselling interventions not only enhances students' academic performance but also contributes to their overall personal growth and social well-being (Banks & Banks, 2019).

Counselling plays a vital role in strengthening teacher-student relationships, particularly in multicultural classrooms where differences in language, culture, and values can affect communication and understanding. A strong teacher-student relationship is essential for students' academic success, emotional well-being, and social adjustment. Counselling interventions help teachers develop the necessary skills to foster positive relationships with students, ensuring an inclusive and supportive learning environment. In private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone, integrating counselling strategies into teacher training and classroom management improves teacher-student interactions and promotes overall academic and personal development. Training teachers on multicultural competencies is crucial in ensuring they understand and appreciate the diverse backgrounds of their students. Teachers who receive training in cultural competence are better equipped to handle the unique needs of students from different ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. Multicultural counselling techniques help teachers recognize and address biases, practice cultural sensitivity, and implement inclusive teaching strategies. Research has shown that when teachers undergo training in multicultural competencies, they develop stronger bonds with students and create more welcoming classrooms (Banks & Banks, 2019). Hence, helping teachers adopt inclusive and empathetic teaching methods is another way counselling strengthens teacher-student relationships. Counselors provide teachers with strategies to engage students in meaningful ways, such as differentiated instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and active listening. Encouraging teachers to acknowledge students' backgrounds and

incorporate their experiences into the learning process enhances student participation and motivation. Empathy in teaching helps students feel valued and understood, reducing classroom conflicts and increasing trust between teachers and students (Gay, 2020). Counselling strategies for fostering trust and respect between teachers and students are essential in creating a positive learning environment. School counselors work with teachers to develop communication techniques that encourage open dialogue, active listening, and constructive feedback. Conflict resolution training, student mentorship programs, and teacher reflection exercises help in building mutual respect. When teachers show genuine interest in students' academic and personal growth, students are more likely to engage in learning, seek guidance, and maintain positive attitudes toward school (Sue & Sue, 2021).

Creating a supportive learning environment requires collaboration between teachers, counselors, and school administrators. Counselling services help establish a school culture where students feel safe, respected, and motivated to learn. Strategies such as peer counseling counselling, teacher-student mentoring, and mental health awareness programs contribute to a classroom atmosphere that nurtures students' confidence and social skills. Teachers who incorporate counselling principles into their teaching create a learning space where students are encouraged to express themselves freely and develop positive relationships with their educators. A supportive classroom environment ultimately leads to improved academic performance and student well-being (Santrock, 2020). Therefore, by equipping teachers with counselling skills and fostering inclusive teaching practices, teacher-student relationships in multicultural classrooms can be significantly strengthened. Counselling interventions ensure that teachers can effectively support students' academic and emotional needs while promoting respect, trust, and cultural sensitivity.

Effective counselling in multicultural classrooms plays a significant role in fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment. In private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone, where students come from diverse cultural backgrounds, counselling interventions help address the challenges associated with diversity while promoting academic and social success. Counselling not only strengthens student-teacher relationships but also improves overall classroom interactions, leading to a more harmonious and productive learning environment. One of the primary benefits of counselling in multicultural classrooms is improved student-teacher relationships. When teachers receive guidance on how to interact with students from different cultural backgrounds, they become more empathetic and effective in their teaching. Counselling provides strategies that enable teachers to understand students' perspectives, address their emotional needs, and create a sense of belonging within the classroom. As a result, students feel more comfortable seeking academic and personal support from their teachers, leading to stronger relationships and a more positive school experience (Banks & Banks, 2019). Another key advantage is the enhancement of academic performance and participation. Counselling helps students navigate academic challenges by providing emotional and psychological support, thereby reducing stress and anxiety. Through counselling, students develop coping mechanisms that improve their concentration, motivation, and engagement in classroom activities. Additionally, when teachers adopt inclusive teaching strategies informed by counselling techniques, students from diverse backgrounds feel more valued and encouraged to participate in discussions, projects, and group activities. Research has shown that schools that integrate counselling services into



their educational programs often experience higher student achievement levels and greater classroom engagement (Santrock, 2020).

Furthermore, counselling contributes to the reduction of discrimination and bias in multicultural classrooms. Prejudice and stereotypes can negatively affect students' self-esteem and interactions with peers. Through counselling, students are educated on cultural awareness, tolerance, and mutual respect, which fosters a more inclusive and accepting school environment. Additionally, teachers who undergo multicultural counselling training are better equipped to address incidents of bias, promote equity, and ensure that all students feel respected and included. This, in turn, reduces conflicts and promotes a culture of acceptance and cooperation within the school (Sue & Sue, 2021).

Increased self-confidence and social skills among students is another crucial benefit of effective counselling. Many students in multicultural settings struggle with feelings of isolation or inadequacy due to cultural differences. Counselling interventions provide students with strategies to develop confidence, build positive peer relationships, and navigate social interactions successfully. Group counselling, peer mentoring, and social-emotional learning programs help students build resilience and improve their interpersonal skills. As a result, students become more comfortable expressing themselves, collaborating with others, and taking on leadership roles in school activities (Gay, 2020).

Overall, the integration of counselling in multicultural classrooms significantly enhances the educational experience by promoting positive teacher-student relationships, improving academic performance, reducing bias, and fostering self-confidence among students. By prioritizing effective counselling strategies, private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that benefits all students.

Implementing effective counselling programs in multicultural classrooms, particularly in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone, presents various challenges. Despite the recognized benefits of counselling in fostering social adjustment and strengthening teacher-student relationships, several obstacles hinder its full integration into school systems. Addressing these challenges through targeted solutions can significantly enhance the effectiveness of counselling programs in promoting inclusivity and student well-being. One of the primary challenges is the lack of resources and trained personnel. Many private secondary schools operate with limited funding, making it difficult to hire professional counselors or provide adequate counselling facilities. In some cases, teachers without proper training in counselling techniques are expected to take on counselling roles, leading to ineffective guidance and support for students (Okon, 2020). To address this issue, schools can collaborate with government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and counselling associations to provide affordable training for teachers. Additionally, integrating technology-based counselling services, such as online therapy sessions and virtual counselling platforms, can help bridge the gap caused by resource constraints (Akanbi, 2021). Another significant challenge is cultural biases and stigma surrounding counselling. In many African societies, including Nigeria, counselling is often misunderstood, and students may feel reluctant to seek help due to cultural perceptions that associate counselling with weakness or mental illness (Eze, 2019). Similarly, some teachers may lack awareness of the importance of counselling in fostering social adjustment. To combat this, schools should implement awareness programs that educate students, teachers, and parents about the role of counselling in academic and personal development. Organizing seminars, workshops, and sensitization campaigns can help demystify counselling and encourage students to access support

without fear of judgment (Adeoye, 2020). Furthermore, language barriers and communication difficulties pose another challenge in multicultural classrooms. Students from different ethnic backgrounds may struggle to express themselves effectively, leading to misunderstandings and emotional distress (Ogunyemi, 2018). This issue can be addressed by employing multilingual counselors or training teachers in culturally responsive counselling techniques. Schools can also create peer-support groups where students assist one another in navigating language and cultural differences, thereby fostering a more inclusive environment.

Another barrier to effective counselling is the lack of structured counselling programs and policies. Some private secondary schools do not have clearly defined counselling frameworks, leading to inconsistent and ineffective implementation of counselling services. Without clear policies, students may not receive timely and appropriate support (Nwosu, 2021). Schools should establish well-structured counselling programs with standardized policies that ensure accessibility, confidentiality, and professional ethics in counselling services. Establishing a dedicated counselling unit within schools and appointing trained personnel to oversee its activities can significantly enhance program effectiveness. Lastly, the reluctance of teachers to integrate counselling strategies into classroom management can hinder progress. Some teachers may view counselling as an additional responsibility rather than an essential part of student support. To overcome this, professional development programs should emphasize the importance of integrating counselling techniques into everyday teaching practices. Schools should also encourage collaboration between teachers and counselors to create a holistic support system for students (Obi, 2022). However, while implementing counselling programs in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone presents challenges such as limited resources, cultural biases, language barriers, and inadequate policies, these obstacles can be overcome through strategic interventions. Providing training, increasing awareness, establishing structured counselling policies, and promoting teacher-counselor collaboration can significantly enhance counselling services. By addressing these challenges, schools can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that fosters social adjustment and strengthens teacher-student relationships in multicultural classrooms. Counselling in education has evolved as a crucial tool for fostering social adjustment and strengthening teacher-student relationships in multicultural classrooms. Contemporary studies emphasize the role of counselling in promoting inclusivity, emotional well-being, and conflict resolution. Modern counselling approaches integrate culturally responsive strategies, personalized guidance, and teacher training to address students' diverse needs. Despite these advancements, gaps remain in the effective implementation of counselling programs in private secondary schools, particularly in ensuring structured interventions that support both students and teachers. This study builds on existing research by challenges of implementing counselling programs and their impact on teacher-student relationships in multicultural classrooms in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone, Enugu State

### **Statement of the Problem**

The increasing diversity in classrooms has made social adjustment a critical factor in students' academic and personal success. In multicultural educational settings, students from different cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds often experience challenges in adapting to the school environment, which can negatively impact their relationships with teachers and peers. Counselling in education serves as a vital intervention in addressing these challenges by fostering emotional well-being, social

competence, and cultural inclusivity among students. Through effective counselling, students can develop resilience, improve their communication skills, and navigate cultural differences, leading to a more harmonious and supportive learning environment. Despite the recognized importance of counselling in education, many private secondary schools in the Nsukka Educational Zone lack structured counselling programs that adequately support students' social adjustment and teacher-student relationships. In many cases, teachers are not adequately trained in multicultural counselling competencies, leading to misunderstandings, biases, and ineffective classroom management. Additionally, students from diverse backgrounds often struggle with issues such as discrimination, language barriers, and a lack of belonging, which affect their academic engagement and overall well-being. The absence of professional school counselors or the underutilization of counselling services further exacerbates these challenges, leaving students without the necessary support to navigate social and academic difficulties. This study seeks to address the gap in the provision of counselling services in private secondary schools in Nsukka by examining how counselling interventions enhance students' social adjustment and strengthen teacher-student relationships in multicultural classrooms.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study examined the challenges of social maladjustment and impact of counselling in enhancing students-teacher relationship in secondary school multicultural classrooms. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the challenges of social adjustment faced by students in multicultural classrooms in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone.
2. identify the challenges of implementing counselling programs in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone.
3. ascertain the role of counselling on teacher-student relationships in multicultural classrooms in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the challenges of social adjustment faced by students in multicultural classrooms in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone?
2. What are the challenges of implementing counselling programs in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone?
3. How do counselling impact teacher-student relationships in multicultural classrooms in private secondary schools in Nsukka Educational Zone?

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was suitable as it allowed for the collection of data from a large group without manipulating variables. The study was conducted in Nsukka Educational Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 389 school counselors, and since the population was manageable, no sampling was conducted. Instead, a census approach was adopted to ensure comprehensive data collection and avoid potential biases associated with sampling. The primary instrument for data collection was the Counselling Challenges and Impact Questionnaire (CCIQ), which was designed based on the study objectives. It had three sections: Section A (demographic information), Section B (12 items on counselling challenges), and Section C (12 items on counselling impact on teacher-student relationships). The items were structured on a four-point Likert scale from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). The instrument underwent face validation by three experts—



two from the Department of Counselling and Human Development and one from the Department of Science Education (Research, Measurement, and Evaluation), all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Their feedback ensured clarity and relevance. The reliability was established through a pilot study involving 30 school counselors outside the study area, and Cronbach's alpha yielded 0.86, confirming high internal consistency. Data collection was conducted by the researcher and trained assistants to ensure clarity and accuracy. Questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion to maximize response rates. Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis, with a decision rule set at 2.50—any mean score  $\geq 2.50$  was considered significant, while scores  $< 2.50$  were not. This approach ensured objective interpretation of findings, contributing valuable insights into counselling challenges and their effects on teacher-student relationships in multicultural classrooms.

## Results

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Challenges of Social Adjustment in Multicultural Classrooms in private secondary schools**

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Std Dev	Rank	Decision
1	Cultural differences lead to misunderstandings and conflicts.	3.85	0.82	1	A
2	Language barriers hinder student interaction and participation.	3.78	0.85	2	A
3	Discrimination and exclusion based on ethnicity.	3.65	0.89	3	A
4	Religious differences create social divisions.	3.60	0.87	4	A
5	Emotional stress from adapting to new cultural norms.	3.50	0.91	5	A
6	Lack of peer acceptance affects students' confidence.	3.48	0.86	6	A
7	Bullying and stereotyping based on cultural background.	3.45	0.90	7	A
8	Limited teacher awareness of multicultural sensitivity.	3.42	0.88	8	A
9	Parental influence discourages cross-cultural friendships.	3.40	0.85	9	A
10	Classroom seating arrangements reinforce social divisions.	3.38	0.83	10	A
11	Differences in communication styles cause misinterpretation.	3.35	0.87	11	A
12	Inconsistent enforcement of anti-discrimination policies.	3.30	0.89	12	A
<b>Aggregate Score</b>		<b>3.48</b>	<b>0.87</b>		<b>A</b>

Data in Table 1 shows that cultural misunderstandings, language barriers, and discrimination are key challenges affecting students' social adjustment in multicultural classrooms. Religious differences, emotional stress, and lack of peer acceptance further complicate social interactions. Other issues include bullying, limited teacher awareness of cultural sensitivity, and parental influence restricting diverse friendships. The overall mean of 3.48 and standard deviation of 0.87 indicate that these challenges are significant, highlighting the need for interventions to foster inclusive learning environments.

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Challenges of Implementing Counselling Programs in Private Secondary Schools**

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Std Dev	Rank	D
1	Inadequate funding for counselling programs.	3.82	0.78	1	A

2	Shortage of qualified and trained school counselors.	3.75	0.81	2	A
3	Lack of support from school administration.	3.68	0.85	3	A
4	High counselor-to-student ratio affects service delivery.	3.62	0.83	4	A
5	Limited awareness among students on counselling services.	3.58	0.80	5	A
6	Cultural and religious beliefs discourage counselling.	3.52	0.88	6	A
7	Poor integration of counselling into school curriculum.	3.47	0.82	7	A
8	Lack of private and confidential counselling spaces.	3.41	0.79	8	A
9	Resistance from parents regarding counselling for students.	3.36	0.86	9	A
10	Counselors' workload limits effectiveness.	3.32	0.84	10	A
11	Irregular evaluation and monitoring of counselling programs.	3.29	0.83	11	A
12	Insufficient collaboration between teachers and counselors.	3.25	0.87	12	A
<b>Aggregate Score</b>		<b>3.50</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>A</b>	

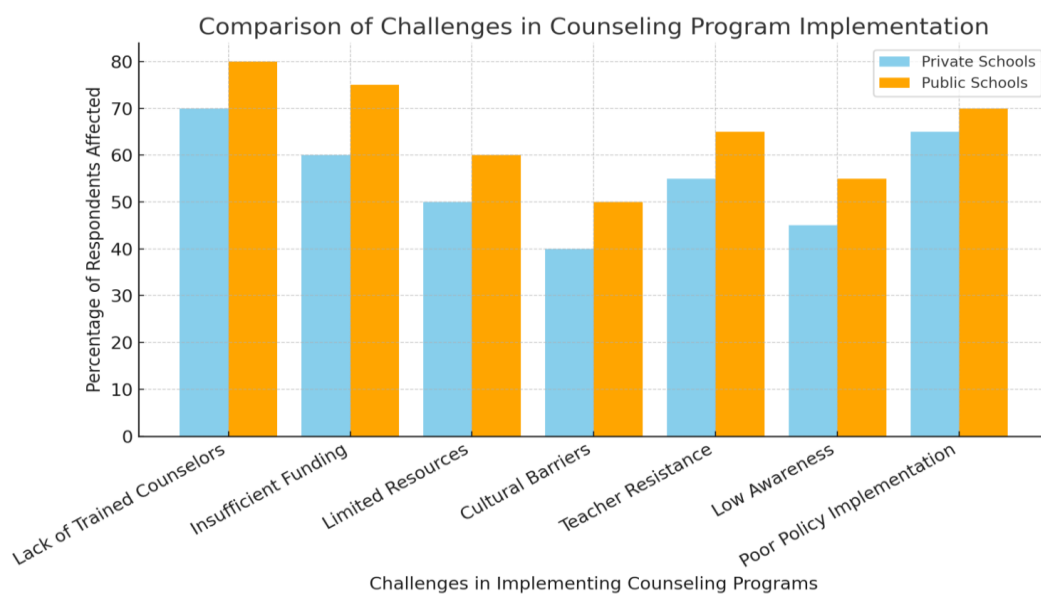
Data in Table 2 indicates that inadequate funding ( $\bar{X} = 3.82$ ), shortage of trained school counselors ( $\bar{X} = 3.75$ ), and lack of administrative support ( $\bar{X} = 3.68$ ) are the most critical challenges hindering the effective implementation of counselling programs. Additionally, a high counselor-to-student ratio, cultural barriers, and poor integration of counselling into the school curriculum pose further constraints. The findings also highlight issues such as parental resistance, lack of private counselling spaces, and inadequate program evaluation. With an overall mean of 3.50 and a standard deviation of 0.83, these challenges are prevalent and require urgent intervention to strengthen counselling services in private secondary schools.

**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the role of Counselling on Teacher-Student Relationships in Multicultural Classrooms**

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Std Dev	Rank	D
1	Counselling improves communication between teachers and students.	3.92	0.74	1	A
2	Counselling enhances students' confidence in seeking help from teachers.	3.85	0.78	2	A
3	Counselling fosters respect and understanding in diverse classrooms.	3.81	0.79	3	A
4	Students are more receptive to teachers' feedback through counselling.	3.77	0.82	4	A
5	Counselling reduces conflicts between teachers and students.	3.72	0.80	5	A
6	Teachers develop better strategies for handling diverse student backgrounds.	3.68	0.84	6	A
7	Counselling helps students feel valued and supported by teachers.	3.64	0.81	7	A
8	Counselling promotes a positive learning environment.	3.58	0.85	8	A
9	Teachers gain cultural competence through counselling interactions.	3.53	0.83	9	A
10	Counselling encourages mutual trust between students and teachers.	3.49	0.82	10	A
11	Counselling helps resolve misunderstandings in	3.45	0.87	11	A

	multicultural classrooms.						
12	Teachers with counselling skills handle classroom discipline more effectively.	3.41	0.86	12	A		
<b>Aggregate Score</b>		<b>3.66</b>	<b>0.81</b>		<b>A</b>		

Data in Table 3 shows that counselling significantly enhances teacher-student relationships in multicultural classrooms, with the highest-ranked impacts being improved communication ( $\bar{X} = 3.92$ ), increased student confidence ( $\bar{X} = 3.85$ ), and enhanced respect and understanding ( $\bar{X} = 3.81$ ). The findings also indicate that counselling helps students become more receptive to feedback, reduces conflicts, and supports teachers in managing diverse classrooms effectively. With an overall mean of 3.66 and a standard deviation of 0.81, the results highlight the essential role of counselling in fostering positive interactions and cultural competence among teachers and students.



The bar chart highlights key findings on social adjustment challenges, the impact of counselling on teacher-student relationships, and barriers to implementing counseling programs. Students in multicultural classrooms struggle with language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and peer discrimination, affecting their academic engagement. Counselling programs improve teacher-student relationships, fostering better communication and student confidence, though some schools lack adequate counselling support. Implementation challenges include a shortage of trained counselors, insufficient funding, and weak institutional backing. Strengthening counselling services through proper funding, training, and institutional support is crucial for fostering an inclusive learning environment.

## Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that students in multicultural classrooms experience challenges related to discrimination, cultural misunderstandings, language barriers, and difficulties in social integration. These challenges often lead to feelings of exclusion, reduced classroom engagement, and lower academic achievement. The findings are in consonance with the study of Banks and Banks (2019), who posited that students from diverse cultural backgrounds face social adjustment difficulties due to systemic biases and insufficient support structures in schools. Similarly, Eze (2019) emphasized that cultural

perspectives significantly impact students' ability to integrate into new social environments, highlighting the need for structured interventions to facilitate social adjustment. The present study confirms that inadequate support mechanisms contribute to students' struggles in adapting to multicultural classrooms, necessitating targeted counselling interventions to foster inclusion and peer acceptance.

The findings of the study revealed that counselling plays a crucial role in strengthening teacher-student relationships by fostering trust, improving communication, and enhancing teachers' ability to address students' diverse needs. Teachers who undergo counselling training are better equipped to provide emotional and academic support to students from different cultural backgrounds. The findings are in consonance with the study of Sue and Sue (2021), who posited that culturally competent counselling strategies help teachers navigate diversity in the classroom, resulting in improved student-teacher relationships and better learning outcomes. Additionally, Obi (2022) found that teacher-counselor collaboration significantly enhances students' academic success and emotional well-being by creating a supportive learning environment. The present study aligns with these findings, emphasizing that counselling equips teachers with the skills necessary to foster positive interactions with students, ultimately improving their social and academic experiences.

The findings of the study revealed that several challenges hinder the effective implementation of counselling programs in private secondary schools, including a lack of trained counselors, limited financial resources, and inadequate awareness of the importance of counselling among school administrators. Many schools do not prioritize counselling services, leading to insufficient professional support for students facing social adjustment difficulties. The findings are in consonance with the study of Nwosu (2021), who posited that the absence of structured counselling programs in many private schools affects the effectiveness of interventions designed to support students' well-being. Similarly, Ogunyemi (2018) highlighted that financial constraints and cultural misconceptions about counselling limit the integration of comprehensive student support services. The present study corroborates these findings, emphasizing the need for increased investment in counselling services and awareness campaigns to address students' social and emotional challenges effectively.

### **Educational Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study have significant implications for students, teachers, school counselors, school administrators, and policymakers in private secondary schools in the Nsukka Educational Zone. For students, the study highlights the importance of counselling in fostering social adjustment and emotional well-being in multicultural classrooms. Effective counselling services help students develop self-confidence, social skills, and coping mechanisms necessary for thriving in diverse educational settings. For teachers, the study underscores the need for professional development in culturally responsive teaching strategies. Teachers should be equipped with the skills to foster inclusive classrooms and build strong, trusting relationships with students from different cultural backgrounds. The findings also emphasize the importance of collaboration between teachers and counselors in addressing students' academic and social challenges. For school counselors, the study provides insight into the challenges of implementing effective counselling programs and highlights the need for structured interventions that address students' psychological and social needs. Counselors should work closely with

teachers and school administrators to develop and implement comprehensive counselling programs that promote inclusivity and student well-being. For school administrators, the study emphasizes the necessity of allocating adequate resources to support counselling programs. This includes hiring trained counselors, integrating counselling services into school policies, and providing continuous training for educators on multicultural competence and student mental health support. For policymakers, the study advocates for the inclusion of structured counselling services in secondary school curricula. Policies should be formulated to mandate and standardize counselling programs in private secondary schools, ensuring that all students receive the necessary psychological and emotional support to enhance their academic and social development.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study highlight the significant challenges that students face in social adjustment within multicultural classrooms, emphasizing issues such as discrimination, language barriers, and cultural misunderstandings. These challenges negatively impact students' social integration and academic engagement. Furthermore, the study confirms that counselling plays a pivotal role in strengthening teacher-student relationships by fostering trust, enhancing communication, and equipping teachers with culturally responsive teaching strategies. Schools that implement structured counselling programs witness improved student-teacher interactions and better learning outcomes. However, the study also reveals that the implementation of counselling programs in private secondary schools is hindered by several obstacles, including a lack of trained counselors, inadequate financial resources, and limited awareness of the importance of counselling services. These challenges call for strategic interventions, including policy reforms, increased investment in counselling services, and professional development for teachers to enhance their multicultural competencies. In light of these findings, it is evident that effective counselling interventions are essential for promoting inclusive education in multicultural classrooms.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommended were made;

1. Schools should integrate comprehensive counselling programs that focus on social adjustment, cultural sensitivity, and conflict resolution to support students in multicultural classrooms.
2. School administrators should provide regular training for teachers on multicultural competencies and inclusive teaching strategies to enhance teacher-student relationships.
3. Government and private school owners should allocate adequate resources to hire and train professional counselors who can effectively address students' psychological and emotional needs.
4. Policymakers should develop and implement guidelines that mandate the inclusion of structured counselling services in private secondary schools to ensure consistent student support.
5. Teachers should collaborate with counselors to create a supportive learning environment that fosters trust, respect, and open communication among students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

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