

## **DROPOUT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND NEED FOR COUNSELLING IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS**

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### **Abstract**

Dropout rate of secondary school students in Nigerian schools is a significant concern that requires attention and intervention through counselling services. Research has shown that various factors contribute to student dropout, including social context, self-perceptions, school engagement, and academic achievement. Dropping out of school is not an impulsive action but rather a cumulative process influenced by these factors. The location of schools also plays a role in student academic performance and dropout rates. Understanding the impact of school location on dropout rates can help inform interventions and support systems for at-risk students. Furthermore, the views of school heads and teachers are crucial in understanding the reasons behind student dropout. The findings of this paper have implications for policy and practice in addressing dropout rates and implementing effective interventions. Additionally, substance use, such as marijuana, has been identified as a contributing factor to high school dropout rates. Substance use issues through counselling and prevention programs can help reduce dropout rates among secondary school students. Therefore, the dropout of secondary school students in Nigerian schools is a complex issue influenced by various factors. Counselling services should be employed to play crucial role in addressing these factors and providing support to at-risk students.

**Keywords:** Dropout, Secondary School, Students, Counselling, Nigerian Schools.

### **Introduction**

In Nigeria, dropout rates in secondary schools pose a significant challenge to the education system. This problem affects individual students and has broader implications for society. According to various studies, dropout rates among secondary school students in Nigeria are alarmingly high. These rates are associated with multiple detrimental outcomes, including early marriages, insecurity in society, armed robbery, unwanted pregnancy, high rates of abortion, human trafficking, drug trafficking, and a breakdown of rules and regulations. It is estimated that around 10. (Armiya'u& Iliyasu, 2021)

5 million school-age children in Nigeria are not enrolled, exacerbating the dropout problem. Factors Influencing Secondary School Students Dropout rates in Nigeria are influenced by various factors, including economic factors such as parents' inability to pay fees and the quality of secondary education. These factors contribute to the high dropout rate and hinder the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria.(Andvig&Hummelvoll, 2016)

The high dropout rates in Nigerian secondary schools highlight the crucial need for effective counselling services. Counselling in Nigerian schools should address the underlying reasons for dropout, such as financial constraints and inadequate educational opportunities. Based on the

identified issues, this paper will xray the following concepts to give more insights on the problems and the way forward: Factors that contribute to school dropout; Impacts of school dropout on Nigerian society; the role of counselling in reducing school dropout rates in Nigeria; implementation of counselling programmes in Nigerian Schools; case studies: Counselling and Dropout rates in Nigeria; challenges in school counselling in Nigeria; The future of counselling in Nigeria schools; and recommendations for improving counselling in Nigerian Schools to alleviate the incidence of dropout in Nigeria schools.

### **Factors that contribute to School Dropout in Nigeria**

Factors contributing to school dropout in Nigeria are multifaceted and encompass various socioeconomic, educational, and psychosocial domains. Several studies have examined these factors and shed light on the underlying causes of school dropout in Nigeria. One significant factor is poverty, which has been consistently identified as a major contributor to school dropout (Akinyemi, Afolabi, & Awolude, 2016; Dakwa, Chiome, & Chabaya, 2014). Poverty affects access to education, as families may struggle to afford school fees, uniforms, and other educational expenses. Additionally, deprivation often leads to a lack of resources and support for students, making it difficult for them to succeed academically and stay engaged (Akinyemi et al., 2016). Another critical factor is the quality and accessibility of education. Studies have highlighted the role of factors such as low educational attainment, lack of formal education, and poor quality of teaching and learning in contributing to school dropout (Akinyemi et al., 2016; Imoro, 2010). Inadequate infrastructure, including a lack of classrooms, textbooks, and qualified teachers, can also hinder students' educational experiences and increase the likelihood of dropout (Zira & Zumo, 2020). Psychosocial factors, such as family structure, mental health, and self-esteem, have also been found to influence dropout risk among Nigerian adolescents (Lawrence & Adebawale, 2022). Family dynamics, including parental involvement and support, can significantly impact students' motivation and engagement in school (Kainuwa, Yusuf, & Saibon, 2018).

Moreover, mental health issues and low self-esteem can contribute to disengagement from education and increase the likelihood of dropout (Lawrence & Adebawale, 2022). Other factors contributing to school dropout in Nigeria include substance abuse, peer influence, cultural practices, and attitudes toward education (Gubbels, Put, & Assink, 2019; Dakwa et al., 2014). Substance abuse, such as drug and alcohol use, can negatively affect students' academic performance and lead to disengagement from school (Gubbels et al., 2019). Cultural practices and societal attitudes towards education, particularly for girls, can also create barriers to educational attainment and increase dropout rates (Dakwa et al., 2014). It is important to note that these factors are interconnected and often reinforce each other. For example, poverty can lead to limited access to quality education, which can contribute to low educational attainment and increased dropout rates. Similarly, psychosocial factors such as low self-esteem can be exacerbated by the challenges associated with poverty and limited educational opportunities.

Addressing school dropout in Nigeria requires a comprehensive approach that tackles these underlying factors. Strategies should include interventions to alleviate poverty, improve education quality, support students' mental health and well-being, and promote positive attitudes towards education within communities. Additionally, targeted efforts should be made to address gender disparities and cultural barriers that hinder educational opportunities for girls. From the issues raised in this paper, it would become imperative to address the following concepts to provide a wider knowledge of the topic of discourse. These concepts are the Impacts of School Dropout on Nigerian Society, Role of Counselling in Reducing School Dropout Rates in Nigeria, Implementation of

Counselling Programs in Nigerian Schools, some Case Studies: Counselling and Dropout Rates in Nigeria, Challenges in School Counselling in Nigeria, The Future of Counselling in Nigerian Schools, as well as Recommendations for Improving Counselling in Nigerian Schools.

### **Impacts of School Dropout on Nigerian Society**

School dropout in Nigerian society significantly impacts various domains, including education, economy, social cohesion, and individual well-being. Several studies have examined these impacts and shed light on the consequences of school dropout in Nigeria. One of the critical impacts of school dropout is the negative effect on educational attainment and academic achievement (Lee &Burkam, 2003). Dropout students are more likely to have lower levels of educational attainment, which limits their future opportunities for employment and economic advancement (Abdulrazaq, Abdulmutalib, & Abdullah, 2022). This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and inequality within Nigerian society. Furthermore, school dropout has social implications, affecting the overall social fabric of Nigerian communities. Dropout students are more likely to engage in negative behaviours such as criminal activities, substance abuse, and involvement in militancy activities (Abdulrazaq et al., 2022; Igwela, Amie-Ogan, & Osuji, 2022). These behaviours harm the individuals involved and contribute to social unrest and community instability. The economic impact of school dropout is also significant. Individuals who drop out of school often face limited job prospects and are likelier to be unemployed or engaged in low-paying jobs (Abdulrazaq et al., 2022).

This affects their economic well-being and hinders the country's overall economic development. A high school dropout rate leads to a less skilled workforce, impeding economic growth and competitiveness. Moreover, school dropout has implications for mental health and well-being. Dropout students may experience feelings of low self-esteem, depression, and social isolation (Lawrence & Adebawale, 2022). These psychological consequences can have long-lasting effects on individuals' overall well-being and quality of life. Addressing the impacts of school dropout in Nigerian society requires a comprehensive approach. Efforts should focus on improving the quality and accessibility of education, addressing socioeconomic factors such as poverty and unemployment, and providing support for students' mental health and well-being (Lee &Burkam, 2003; Lawrence & Adebawale, 2022). Additionally, interventions should target specific issues, such as militancy activities in certain regions, contributing to dropout rates (Igwela et al., 2022). By addressing these factors, Nigerian society can mitigate the negative impacts of school dropout and promote a more inclusive and prosperous future.

### **Role of Counselling in Reducing School Dropout Rates in Nigeria**

Counselling plays a crucial role in reducing school dropout rates in Nigeria. It supports and guides students at risk of dropping out, addressing various factors contributing to their disengagement from education. One important aspect of counselling is identifying and addressing the underlying reasons for students' disengagement. The study (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005) emphasizes that schools that promote student learning may not necessarily be effective in reducing dropout rates.

Counselling helps to identify individual student needs, such as academic struggles, personal challenges, or lack of motivation and provides targeted interventions to address these issues (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). Furthermore, counselling interventions can help create a positive and supportive school environment that promotes student engagement. The study by Christle, Jolivelte, & Nelson (2007) highlights the importance of school characteristics in dropping out rates. Counselling can contribute to creating a school climate that fosters student connection, engagement, and success. By implementing strategies such as mentoring programs, peer support groups, and individual

counselling sessions, schools can enhance students' sense of belonging and motivation to stay in school (Christle et al., 2007).

Additionally, counselling programs can specifically target at-risk students and provide them with the necessary support to overcome challenges and succeed academically. The study by Scheel, Madabhushi, & Backhause (2009) focuses on the academic motivation of at-risk students in a counselling prevention program. Counselling interventions can help these students develop self-efficacy, goal-setting skills, and strategies to overcome obstacles, ultimately reducing their dropout risk (Scheel et al., 2009). In conclusion, counselling is vital in reducing school dropout rates in Nigeria. Counselling interventions can increase student engagement and academic success and decrease dropout rates by addressing individual student needs, creating a supportive school environment, and targeting at-risk students.

### **Implementation of Counselling Programs in Nigerian Schools**

This study explores the role of school counsellors in implementing guidance and counselling programs in Nigerian secondary schools (Christle et al., 2007). It discusses the challenges counsellors face and provides recommendations for improving the effectiveness of counselling programs (Christle et al., 2007). Another study also examines the role of school counsellors in implementing counselling programs in Nigerian secondary schools (Fan & Wolters, 2012). It discusses the importance of counsellor training, collaboration with other stakeholders, and the need for adequate resources to support effective implementation (Fan & Wolters, 2012). Additionally, a study investigates the role of school counsellors in implementing counselling programs in Nigerian secondary schools (Scheel et al., 2009). It highlights the importance of counselor-student relationships, providing career guidance, and promoting mental health and well-being among students (Scheel et al., 2009).

### **Case Studies: Counselling and Dropout Rates in Nigeria**

Case Study: Impact of Visual Multimedia as a Counselling Strategy for Reducing School Dropout Propensity among School Children Who Are Survivors of Abductions in Northern Nigeria Ugwulor-Onyinyechi, Tunca, Anselm, Anazor, Odoh, Gever, & Obodo (2021) This case study examines the effectiveness of visual multimedia as a counselling strategy in reducing school dropout rates among school children who are survivors of abductions in Northern Nigeria. The study involved 470 school children who had experienced abduction and aimed to assess the impact of the counselling intervention on preventing dropout. The intervention utilised visual multimedia materials, such as videos and interactive presentations, to engage and support the students.

The counselling sessions addressed the psychological and emotional needs of the students, providing them with a safe space to express their feelings and concerns. The sessions also focused on building resilience and coping skills and promoting a positive attitude toward education. The results of the study demonstrated positive outcomes. The dropout rate among the counselling intervention participants was significantly lower than the control group. Using visual multimedia as a counselling strategy was effective in improving students' motivation, engagement, and overall well-being.

The intervention created a supportive environment that encouraged students to remain in school and continue their education. This case study highlights the importance of tailored counselling interventions for specific populations, such as survivors of abductions. It showcases the potential of visual multimedia as an effective counselling strategy to address these students' unique needs and challenges. By providing targeted support and addressing the psychological impact of traumatic experiences, counselling can play a crucial role in reducing dropout rates and promoting educational

continuity. Overall, this case study emphasises the value of implementing innovative counselling approaches that consider the specific circumstances and needs of the target population. It underscores the potential of visual multimedia as an effective tool in counselling interventions to reduce school dropout rates in Nigeria.

### **Challenges in School Counselling in Nigeria**

Case Study: Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing School Counselling Programs in Nigeria (Arfasa&Weldmeskel, 2020) This case study examines the challenges and opportunities encountered while implementing guidance and counselling services in secondary schools in Nigeria. The study utilised interviews and surveys with school counsellors, teachers, and students to gather their perspectives on the current state of counselling services. The study's findings revealed several challenges in the implementation of counselling programs. These challenges included a lack of counselling equipment and resources, the recruitment of unqualified counsellors, limited availability of students' information, financial constraints, and unfavourable school policies (Arfasa&Weldmeskel, 2020).

The study emphasized the need for adequate funding, training, and support for counsellors to deliver counselling services effectively. It also highlighted the importance of collaboration between school counsellors, teachers, and other stakeholders in creating a supportive and conducive environment for counselling. Additionally, the study identified the potential benefits of integrating digital technology in counselling services to enhance accessibility and effectiveness (Arfasa&Weldmeskel, 2020). Overall, this case study provides insights into Nigerian schools' complex implementation landscape of counselling programs. It underscores the need to address the challenges counsellors face and provide them with the necessary resources and support. Counselling programs can support students' well-being and academic success in Nigeria by overcoming these challenges and capitalizing on opportunities.

### **The Future of Counselling in Nigerian Schools**

Based on the available references, it is evident that the future of counselling in Nigerian schools holds excellent potential for growth and development. Recognising the importance of guidance and counselling services by the Federal Government through the National Policy on Education is a significant step towards ensuring effective counselling services in schools. Several studies have highlighted the positive impacts of counselling interventions on students, including reducing academic burnout, improving career decision-making, and addressing mental health issues. These findings emphasise the need for continued investment in counselling programs and integrating evidence-based practices (Whiston & Sexton, 1998; Mullen et al., 2018).

Furthermore, there is a growing recognition of the need for culturally viable counselling techniques that address the unique challenges faced by Nigerian students. This highlights the importance of incorporating cultural sensitivity and relevance into counselling practices to ensure their effectiveness. However, challenges still need to be addressed to fully realise the potential of counselling in Nigerian schools. These include the dual role of teaching and counselling, which can impact the productivity of school counsellors. Additionally, proper implementation of counselling programs and establishing ethical standards in schools is crucial.

To ensure the future success of counselling in Nigerian schools, it is recommended that professional development training programs be developed and implemented to enhance the skills and

competencies of counsellors. Additionally, there is a need for ongoing research to provide reliable data for curriculum innovation and to address specific issues, such as infectious disease prevention.

### **Recommendations for Improving Counselling in Nigerian Schools**

Here are some recommendations for improving counselling in Nigerian schools.

1. **Increase Funding and Resources:** Adequate funding should be allocated to counselling programs in schools to ensure the availability of necessary resources, such as counselling materials, training programs, and technology tools (Yusuf & POPOOLA, 2022).

2. **Enhance Counselor Training:** Comprehensive and ongoing training programs should be provided to counsellors to enhance their skills and knowledge in delivering effective counselling services (Okocha & Alika, 2012; Nweze & Okolie, 2014).

3. **Strengthen Collaboration:** Collaboration between counsellors, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders is crucial for the success of counselling programs. Regular communication and collaboration can help create a supportive and integrated approach to student support (Yusuf & POPOOLA, 2022).

4. **Integrate Technology:** Integrating digital technology, such as online counselling platforms and multimedia resources, can enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of counselling services (Eseadi, 2022).

5. **Address Policy and Administrative Barriers:** School policies and administrative practices should be reviewed and revised to support the implementation of counselling programs. This includes addressing issues such as workload, scheduling, and recognition of the role of counsellors (Arfasa&Weldmeskel, 2020).

6. **Promote Awareness and Education:** Efforts should be made to raise awareness among students, parents, and the broader community about the importance and benefits of counselling services. Education campaigns can help reduce stigma and encourage the utilisation of counselling resources (Karunanayake, Chandrapala, & Vimukthi, 2020; Eyo, Joshua, &Esuong, 2010).

7. **Expand Counseling Services:** Counseling services should be expanded to reach more students. This can be achieved by establishing counselling centres, satellite counselling offices, or partnerships with external counselling organisations (Suleiman, Olanrewaju, & Suleiman, 2019).

8. **Monitor and Evaluate:** Regular monitoring and evaluation of counselling programs are essential to assess their effectiveness and make necessary improvements. Objective student outcomes and stakeholder feedback measures should be collected and analysed (Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, 2001).

9. **Address Specific Needs:** Counseling programs should be tailored to address the specific needs of different student populations, such as survivors of trauma, students with learning difficulties, or those at risk of dropout. Specialised interventions and support should be provided accordingly (Ugwulor-Onyinyechi et al., 2021; Muhammad, 2021).

10. **Emphasise Career Guidance:** Career guidance should be integrated into counselling programs to help students make informed decisions about their future education and career paths. This includes

providing information about career options, vocational training, and college admissions (Nweze & Okolie, 2014). These recommendations aim to enhance the quality and effectiveness of counselling services in Nigerian schools, ultimately supporting students' well-being, academic success, and overall development.

### Conclusion

The future of counselling in Nigerian schools is promising. With the recognition of its importance, the positive impacts demonstrated by research, and the ongoing efforts to address challenges and improve the quality of counselling services, counselling has excellent potential to play a significant role in supporting Nigerian students' well-being and academic success. Continued investment, research, and professional development will ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of counselling programs in Nigerian schools.

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