

*Original Research Article*

# Cultural Diversity and Counselling Practice in Kumba Municipality, Southwest Region, Cameroon

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Abstract

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The study aimed to investigate the extent to which Cultural Diversity impacts School Counselling Practice in the Kumba Municipality of the South West Region in Cameroon. Three objectives were used; to find out the extent to which Cultural beliefs, Religious Background and Language can influence School Counselling practice in the Kumba Municipality of the South West Region in Cameroon. These three specific objectives were transformed into three hypotheses. The survey research design was adopted for the study. The study population consists of Practicing Counselors in Functional schools within the Kumba Municipality. Data were collected from 64 counselors using a questionnaire via purposive sampling techniques. The reliability coefficient value of the questionnaire was acceptable 0.832. Data collected were analyzed using SPSS 25.0 adopting descriptive and inferential statistical tools (Pearson test). Findings showed, more of the Counselors 75.6% see Cultural beliefs as a major influence of Counselling Practice. Also, 67.7% of the Counselors indicated that religious background plays a major role in affecting school counselling practice. 76.2% of Counselors also said Language is a major indicator of school counselling Practice. Inferentially, the findings further revealed that Cultural Beliefs (R-value = .277\*\*, p-value .001), Religious Background (R-value= .323\*\*, p-value .000), and Language (R-value= .246\*\*, p-value .000) strongly correlate with School Counselling Practice. Thus, it was recommended that given that cultural beliefs, religious background, and language significantly influence the counseling process, counselors should adapt their approaches to accommodate the diverse cognitive and emotional needs of their students.

**Keywords:** Counselling Practice, Cultural Beliefs, Cultural Diversity, Language, Religious Background

## INTRODUCTION

As societies continue to diversify in response to changing patterns, many clients seeking to develop a cultural identity based on these multiple dimensions are often confronted with varied challenges in this process. Maintaining a connection to their culture of origin while adjusting to their new cultural environment seems to be the most challenging in the midst of many others. Attempting to achieve a balance is an important

developmental process for many clients and should be considered when providing help within the multicultural context (Shin and Muñoz, 2009). Counselors' awareness of how issues of social class affect the lives of clients is relevant in addressing their needs. Counselor's sensitivity to a client's experience of any form of oppression or discrimination is an essential cultural competence for client empowerment. Multicultural counselling empowers

clients to combat the negative effects of marginalization resulting from ideologies (Harley, Stebnicki, and Rollins, 2000). In many cultural contexts, it is important to remember that there is little distinction between religious/spiritual and secular life. Culturally competent Counselors, therefore, must be open to exploring and including spiritual/religious dimensions within the counselling process (Maglio, 2009).

In developing a multicultural counselling agenda, consideration should be given to the fact that “culture” is more than just race/ethnicity; exploring intra-group differences as well as inter-group differences, and that Culture hides much more than it reveals and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Empirical evidence has proven that the real job is not to understand foreign cultures but to understand one’s own Cultural diversity in the context of school counseling refers to recognizing and addressing the different cultural backgrounds, values, and experiences that students bring to the counseling process.

In a school setting, Counselors must be culturally competent to effectively support students from diverse backgrounds, as cultural factors significantly influence mental health, learning, and behaviour (Sue, 2001). Understanding the complexities of cultural identity—such as ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, and religion—helps Counselors tailor their interventions and create an inclusive environment where all students feel understood and respected. Culturally competent Counselors are aware of their own cultural biases and strive to provide services that are responsive to the unique needs of students from various cultural backgrounds. This involves being mindful of communication styles, family dynamics, and the educational challenges students from diverse cultures may face (Arredondo et al., 1996). For example, a counsellor working with an immigrant student may need to consider the student’s experience with acculturation and the potential challenges they face, such as language barriers or cultural displacement (Choi et al., 2008).

Moreover, school Counselors must be proactive in engaging with families from different cultural backgrounds. This includes considering cultural differences in parenting practices and attitudes toward education (Bui and Turnbull, 2015). In some cultures, there may be a strong emphasis on family privacy, which can impact how parents engage with school Counselors. Therefore, it is essential for Counselors to build trust and establish communication that respects cultural norms.

To foster a more inclusive school environment, school Counselors can implement programmes that celebrate cultural diversity, encourage dialogue about cultural differences, and provide resources that address the specific needs of students from diverse backgrounds (Hays, 2008). By doing so, they contribute to the

development of a supportive environment where all students feel valued and empowered to succeed academically and emotionally.

The Meme Division in the South West Region of Cameroon, harbors all domains of secondary school institutions (Government (bilingual and non-bilingual), Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, Apostolic, Muslim and other lay private institution) therefore presents a picture of a typical cultural dispensation where students, administrators, teachers and counselors from diverse cultures with different beliefs, values, religious and language background interact. This makes the expectations of Counselors more challenging as they must navigate different cultural realities in order to provide tangible help to the clients.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The personal experiences and belief systems of Counselors are distinctly different from those of their students and other clients. This presents a challenge for Counselors in managing culturally diverse practices that may conflict with their own experiences, morals, values, and beliefs. Educators who lack awareness of cultural diversity struggle to fully grasp the dynamics of the various cultural groups they encounter in their daily work. This limited understanding can lead to perpetuating stereotypes and making inaccurate judgments about students’ cultural identities, as they may differ from the dominant cultural group.

In the Kumba Municipality, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of students from diverse cultural backgrounds enrolling in secondary schools. These students have unique cognitive, social, and emotional needs that must be addressed in order to create a supportive learning environment. School Counselors who are attuned to cultural diversity are better equipped to implement culturally responsive teaching and counselling practices to effectively support these students in Meme Kumba Municipality, regardless of their race, socioeconomic status, disability, or gender. It is imperative to study the impact of cultural diversity on school counselling in order to enhance counselors’ awareness of cultural differences and their potential effects on learning outcomes. This knowledge will enable Counselors to better support student learning and ensure that cultural diversity is viewed as a valuable asset rather than a barrier to academic success.

### **Research Questions**

The main research question is what is the impact of cultural diversity on school counseling practice in Meme Division of the South West Region of Cameroon?

### Specific research questions

1. To what extent does cultural beliefs effects school counseling Practice in Kumba Municipality?
2. To what extent does religious background influences school counseling Practice in Kumba Municipality?
3. To what extent does language affect school counseling in secondary school Practice in Kumba Municipality?

### General Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between cultural diversity and school counselling practice in Kumba Municipality of the South West Region of Cameroon.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity plays a crucial role in secondary school counselling, especially in multicultural settings where students come from a variety of cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In these diverse environments, it is imperative for Counselors to possess cultural competence and sensitivity towards the unique needs, values, and experiences of each student. Understanding cultural diversity is essential in providing effective counselling that honors students' identities and assists them in navigating academic, emotional, and social challenges. Cultural diversity encompasses the presence of different cultural, ethnic, and religious groups within a community. In the realm of secondary school counselling, it influences students' behaviours, communication styles, and their perceptions of mental health and counselling services (Sue, 2001). Many schools have students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, each with distinct family structures, values, and social norms. For instance, students from collectivist cultures may prioritize group harmony and family unity, impacting how they approach individual challenges or mental health issues (Hays, 2008). It is crucial for Counselors to acknowledge these differences and tailor interventions to align with each student's cultural context to ensure effectiveness and respect.

Cultural diversity extends to language, customs, and attitudes towards education. Some students may come from families with a strong educational background, while others may be first-generation students navigating the educational system (Arredondo et al., 1996). Additionally, in culturally diverse settings, students may encounter challenges such as discrimination or prejudice, which can affect their academic performance, self-esteem, and overall mental well-being (Choi et al., 2008). School Counselors must be equipped to address these issues and cultivate a supportive, inclusive environment where

all students feel valued and heard. Culturally competent counselling plays a vital role in effective secondary school counselling within a multicultural environment. It requires Counselors to possess awareness, knowledge, and skills to effectively engage with students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Sue and Sue, 2013). Culturally competent Counselors understand how cultural factors impact a student's worldview, coping mechanisms, and attitudes towards seeking help. For instance, students from various cultures may have different levels of trust in Counselors or mental health services based on their past interactions with authority figures or societal stigmas related to mental health (Chung and Bemak, 2002).

Integrating cultural competence into counselling practices involves respecting and understanding students' values and beliefs while challenging any cultural misconceptions that may hinder their personal development. This includes utilizing culturally relevant interventions, such as involving families when necessary, acknowledging the significance of spirituality or religion, and adapting counselling techniques to align with the student's cultural background (Hays, 2008). For example, a counselor working with a student from a religious background may incorporate spiritual coping mechanisms like prayer or meditation into the counselling process, ensuring that these interventions are in line with the student's beliefs. While cultural diversity brings numerous benefits, it can also pose challenges in secondary school counselling. One significant obstacle is the potential for cultural misunderstandings. Variances in communication styles, such as indirectness or respect for authority, can lead to confusion or hinder effective counselling (Sue, 2001). Counselors must be attuned to these differences and adjust their communication strategies to ensure students feel heard and respected. Addressing language barriers is also crucial. Many students from immigrant backgrounds may feel more comfortable in their native language, necessitating the use of interpreters or bilingual Counselors to facilitate effective communication.

### Cultural Belief

Cultural beliefs play a significant role in shaping students' perceptions of themselves, their challenges, and their interactions with Counselors. In many cultures, mental health issues are often considered private matters or are stigmatized (Chung and Bemak, 2002). For instance, in collectivist cultures, the importance of family reputation and social harmony may lead individuals to view seeking counselling outside of the family as a sign of weakness or failure (Kim and Lee, 2011). Therefore, it is imperative for Counselors to be mindful of these cultural nuances when working with students from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that they honor cultural values and adopt a culturally sensitive approach to counselling (Sue et al., 1992).

By understanding these cultural beliefs, Counselors can establish rapport and trust with students, which is essential for effective intervention. In secondary schools, where adolescents are navigating identity formation and increasing independence, recognizing how cultural beliefs influence their self-concept and worldview is crucial for guiding them through academic and personal challenges. Counselors may need to consider how a student's ethnic group or family values impact their academic performance or career aspirations (Sue, 2001). In order to effectively incorporate cultural beliefs into cognitive counselling approaches, Counselors must possess cultural competence and be adaptable in their methods. When working with a student from a collectivist background, a counselor can assist the student in recognizing cognitive patterns related to family expectations and academic pressure. However, it is also important for the counselor to encourage the student to consider these pressures within the broader context of their family's values and cultural norms (Chung and Bemak, 2002). This approach allows for a balanced method where the counselor respects cultural beliefs while aiding the student in developing healthier cognitive and emotional responses to their challenges.

Another crucial element of this integration is the counselor's ability to adjust cognitive strategies to align with culturally specific ways of thinking. In cultures where indirect communication is prevalent for instance, a counsellor may utilize techniques that enable the student to express themselves more comfortably. This could involve storytelling or indirect problem-solving strategies, rather than direct confrontation of negative thoughts (Hays, 2008). By adapting counselling techniques to fit the cultural context of the student, Counselors can effectively support their clients in a more meaningful and impactful way.

### **Religious Background**

The influence of religious background is a crucial factor in secondary school counselling in especially in Africa, as it significantly impacts students' values, perspectives, and responses to various challenges. Religion is deeply ingrained in many African societies, shaping family dynamics, community practices, and individual identities (Ngubane, 2013). Therefore, it is imperative for Counselors in secondary schools to possess cultural and religious competence in order to effectively support students while honouring their religious beliefs and practices. Religion plays a pivotal role in shaping adolescents' coping mechanisms, moral development, and decision-making processes. Many students rely on their religious teachings to navigate stress, academic pressures, and personal issues. Students from Christian or Muslim backgrounds especially often turn to their faith to overcome challenges such as academic expectations,

family obligations, and peer relationships (Moulin, 2009). Practices like prayer, fasting, and participation in community rituals serve as valuable coping strategies and sources of emotional support.

Religious beliefs can also influence how students perceive mental health and counselling services. In some cultures, there may be a stigma attached to mental health issues, as they are often interpreted through a religious or spiritual lens (Munyoro, 2014). For instance, mental health problems may be attributed to spiritual causes like ancestral displeasure or demonic influence, rather than being recognized as psychological or emotional disorders (Okon and Nyong, 2017). Consequently, students may be hesitant to seek assistance from Counselors if they believe their concerns should be addressed within the context of their religious beliefs. Counselors in African secondary schools are tasked with the important responsibility of engaging students effectively through culturally and religiously sensitive approaches. It is crucial for Counselors to recognize and respect the diverse religious backgrounds of students, whether they identify as Christian, Muslim, indigenous, or a combination of these beliefs. Taking an inclusive approach is essential, as it ensures that Counselors do not make assumptions about students' religious views.

When working with students, a counselor should acknowledge the significance of prayer during stressful times and encourage the student to utilize this practice as a source of emotional resilience. Additionally, incorporating elements of the student's religious tradition into the counselling process, such as using religious texts for reflection or suggesting faith-based coping strategies, can be beneficial (Moulin, 2009). It is imperative for Counselors to refrain from imposing their own religious beliefs on students, especially in a multicultural and multi-faith school environment. Instead, they should provide support that respects the autonomy of the student while leveraging the strengths of their religious or spiritual beliefs (Nelson and Prilleltensky, 2005). Collaborating with religious leaders or faith-based organizations may also be advantageous in addressing students' emotional and spiritual needs, particularly in communities where religion holds significant social importance (Munyoro, 2014).

In multicultural African classrooms, religious differences can sometimes lead to conflicts or tensions among students. Counselors must be prepared to mediate these issues by fostering an environment of respect and understanding. In certain African countries, interfaith tensions between religious groups, such as Christians and Muslims, can impact students' interactions and emotional well-being within school settings (Ngubane, 2013). School Counselors play a crucial role in promoting interfaith dialogue, conflict resolution, and empathy, thereby contributing to a harmonious and inclusive school environment.

## Language and Communication

In many parts of Africa, students often speak various indigenous languages at home but receive their education in colonial languages such as English, French, or Portuguese (Pennycook, 2007). This linguistic dichotomy poses a challenge, as students may feel more at ease expressing themselves in their native tongues but are required to communicate in a second or third language at school, including during counselling sessions. This bilingual environment can impact the counselling process in multiple ways. Students may encounter difficulties in conveying their emotions and concerns effectively in a language in which they are not fully proficient. This can be especially problematic when addressing intricate issues like mental health, academic stress, or personal challenges (Abubakar et al., 2014). The inability to articulate themselves adequately may impede the establishment of trust between the student and the counselor, potentially diminishing the effectiveness of the counselling process. Consequently, Counselors must be attuned to the linguistic obstacles students confront and, whenever feasible, conduct counselling in the student's preferred language or enlist the services of an interpreter.

Counselors must also recognize that the meanings of certain words and phrases can vary across languages, particularly concerning psychological concepts (Murray, 2007). For example, terms related to mental health or emotional distress may lack direct equivalents in indigenous African languages, leading to potential misinterpretations. Counselors should demonstrate flexibility and creativity in their communication methods, utilizing metaphors, storytelling, or cultural references that resonate with the student. Language is a vital component of cultural identity. Students take great pride in their mother tongue, as it serves as a link to their heritage and community (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007). However, in certain contexts, there exists a stigma surrounding the use of indigenous languages, particularly when they are perceived as less prestigious than colonial languages. This stigma can impact students' self-perception and sense of belonging within the school environment (Murray, 2007). It is imperative for Counselors to recognize these dynamics and understand how a student's linguistic identity can influence their self-esteem and willingness to engage in counselling.

Counselor's ability to exhibit cultural sensitivity and adaptability in their communication style becomes paramount. Utilizing culturally relevant techniques, such as storytelling or involving community elders in the counselling process, can aid in bridging language barriers (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007). Furthermore, Counselors can integrate elements of local languages and culture into their approach to enhance the relatability and efficacy of counselling sessions. Within many African communities, there exists a significant stigma

surrounding mental health and counselling (Chirisa, 2012). Language plays a crucial role in shaping the understanding and discourse surrounding mental health. In certain cultures, mental health issues may be framed using terminology associated with spiritual or supernatural causes, rather than psychological or medical explanations (Abubakar et al., 2014). For example, a child exhibiting signs of withdrawal or anxiety may be described as "possessed" or "affected by ancestral spirits" rather than being recognized as experiencing psychological distress.

## Theoretical Review

### Cultural Competence Theory Dr. Josepha Campinha-Bacote (1998)

Cultural Competence Theory is a concept that emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting the cultural differences and diversity among individuals. This theory posits that individuals should strive to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to effectively navigate and communicate across different cultural contexts. Cultural Competence Theory refers to the ability of Counselors to understand, respect, and work effectively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This theory emphasizes that Counselors should be aware of and actively engage with the cultural factors that shape clients' experiences, including religion, language, and belief systems. Cultural competence involves a continuous process of gaining knowledge about different cultural groups, reflecting on one's own biases and assumptions, and developing skills that enhance effective counselling (Sue et al., 1992).

A counselor should be aware of the role religion plays in a client's life, including how religious coping mechanisms (e.g., prayer, meditation) are used during times of distress. Language barriers can be a significant challenge in counselling, especially when clients do not speak the counselor's native language. Counselors should avoid imposing dominant cultural values and instead adapt their therapeutic approach to align with the client's cultural framework.

### Acculturation Theory John W. Berry (1997)

Acculturation Theory, describes the process by which individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds come into contact and adapt to one another's cultural norms. Acculturation can involve the adoption of elements from the dominant culture (assimilation) or the maintenance of one's original culture (separation), and the negotiation of both cultures (integration or biculturalism). Language, beliefs, and religious practices often undergo changes during this process, as individuals

and communities adjust to new cultural contexts (Berry, 1997).

Acculturation theory provides Counselors with insight into the challenges clients face when adjusting to a new cultural environment. Counselors can identify signs of acculturation stress, such as identity confusion or cultural dissonance, especially in clients who are struggling with language barriers or religious conflicts between their culture of origin and the new environment. Berry's model outlines four acculturation strategies—assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. By identifying the client's acculturation strategy, Counselors can tailor their approach. Acculturation theory also emphasizes the role of language in cultural adaptation. Counselors need to be aware of the client's language proficiency and consider the potential challenges language barriers may present. This could involve using bilingual therapists or interpreters to ensure effective communication.

### **Ecological Systems Theory (EST) Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979)**

Ecological Systems Theory (EST), offers a framework for understanding the various environmental influences that shape an individual's development. According to EST, human behavior is not solely influenced by internal factors but is also a product of multiple layers of environmental systems. These systems range from the immediate environment (family, peers) to broader societal structures (community, culture, policy). Bronfenbrenner emphasized that these systems do not operate in isolation but interact dynamically, affecting an individual's experiences and behaviour in complex ways. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Ecological Systems Theory encourages Counselors to adopt a holistic approach when working with culturally diverse clients. Counselors must understand how a client's culture is embedded within various environmental systems and how these systems may contribute to the client's challenges or resilience. By considering these multiple layers of influence, Counselors can help clients develop coping strategies that take into account both personal and environmental factors.

When integrated, the Cultural Competence Theory, Ecological Systems Theory and Acculturation Theory offer a holistic framework for Counselors to work effectively with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultural Competence Theory helps Counselors appreciate the role of religion, beliefs, and language in shaping the client's worldview, Acculturation Theory provides insight into the challenges clients face when adapting to a new cultural environment while EST provides a broader framework for understanding the environmental systems that contribute to these experiences.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The survey research design using the cross-sectional approach was adopted for the study because data were collected from the participants in one shot. The population of the study included all the Counselors of GTHS Kumba, CCAS Kumba, and GHS KumbaMbeng, GBHS Kumba, GHS Kang Barombi and GTHS Kang Barombi,. The target population comprise all active Counselors who take part in school counselling in these schools. The target population refers to the entire group of individuals from which the researcher drew data. The purposive sampling techniques were used for the study. Questionnaire was the only instrument used for data collection. The validity of the questionnaire was ascertained as test items were designed with reference to literature review. The questionnaire consisted of 18 close ended items measured using the Four point Likert Scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree). The reliability analysis of the questionnaire was tested using the Cronbach Alpha test with the results presented on the Table 1 below.

The reliability analysis of all variables was satisfactory with the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient value ranged from 0.842 to 0.887. The overall reliability coefficient value is 0.832 above the threshold of 0.7. Data were collected using face-to-face. Data collected were analyzed using SPSS 25.0. Descriptive statistical tools (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistical tools (Pearson test) was used to test the hypotheses of the study. In addition to the Pearson test, a Multiple Regression Analysis was also computed. Finally, findings were presented using tables with all statistics presented at 95 confidence interval (CI).

## **FINDINGS**

Of the 65 respondents, the majority 38(58.5%) of them were males while the rest 27(41.5%) were females. 27(41.5%) majority were between 31—35 years, 36-40 occupied 18(27.6%), respondent above 40 years of age represented 9(13.8%), those between 26-30 had 8(12.3%) while the youngest age group of 18-25 scoring 3(4.6%). It can be observed that the majority 42(64.6%) of the respondents were married, 18(27.7%) were single, 2(3.0%) divorced while 3(4.6%) were those who in some kind of relationship. Table 2

### **Research Question One: To What Extent Does Cultural Beliefs Effects School Counselling Practice in Kumba Municipality of Meme Division of The South West Region of Cameroon?**

Table 3 presents the findings of a study conducted with

**Table 1. Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire**

Variables	Cronbach Alpha Coefficients	Variance	No of items
Cultural Beliefs	.887	.065	6
Religious Background	.843	.097	6
Language Affect	.842	.043	6
<b>Overall reliability analysis value</b>	<b>.871</b>	<b>.263</b>	<b>18</b>

**Table 2. Demographic Analysis**

Demographic Data		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender of Respondents	Male	27	41.5
	Female	38	58.5
Age of respondent (years)	18-25	3	4.6
	26-30	8	12.3
	31-35	27	41.5
	36-40	18	27.6
	41+	9	13.8
Marital Status	Single	18	27.7
	Married	42	64.6
	Divorced	2	3.0
	Widow(er)	3	4.6

**Table 3. Cultural Beliefs and School Counselling Practice**

Items	Responses				
	SA	A	D	SD	N
There are challenges in counselling when there are cultural is differences from between the Counselor and the Client	30 (46.2)	21 (32.3)	08(12.3)	06(9.2)	65
Counselling is preferable when the Client's culture is similar to that of the Counsellor	21(32.3)	44(67.7)	00(00)	00(00)	65
Cultural views of a Practicing community should be included in the school's yearly program planning.	23 (35.4)	12(18.5)	30(46.1)	00(00)	65
There is a possible frustrating experience working with Clients whose cultures are different from that of the Counsellor.	22 (33.8)	25(38.5)	11(16.9)	07(10.8)	65
Priding cultural belief and its accomplishments should be cardinal for counselling Practice.	33 (50.8)	23 (35.4)	09(13.8)	00(00)	65
Knowledge of a particular culture may affect expectations of student performance.	31(47.7)	10(15.4)	21(31.3.)	03(04.6)	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>160(41)</b>	<b>135(34.6)</b>	<b>79(20.3)</b>	<b>16(4)</b>	<b>390</b> <b>100</b>

65 participants on the challenges in counselling related to cultural differences between the counselor and the client. The data indicates that the majority of respondents, 78.5% (57), feel that counselling becomes more difficult when there are cultural disparities between themselves and the individuals they are assisting. Conversely, 13.5% (8) of participants do not perceive cultural differences as impacting their counselling practices. Furthermore, all 65 participants recognize the importance of having similar cultural backgrounds between the client and the

counselor for more effective counselling. When asked about incorporating cultural perspectives from the local community into the school's annual programme planning, 60% (35) of respondents expressed a strong desire for this integration to enhance counselling outcomes, while 40% (30) were ambivalent. Interestingly, the study found that 72.3% (47) of respondents found it potentially frustrating to work with clients from different cultural backgrounds, while 27.7% (18) did not share the same sentiment. Additionally, 86.2% (56) of participants

**Table 4.** Religious Background and School Counseling Practice

Items	Responses				
	SA	A	D	SD	N
Adapting in programs to accommodate the different religion is an appropriate strategy for Counselling.	23 (35.4)	20 (30.8)	13(20)	09(13.8)	65
Interacting with People of different religion can be helpful when the Counselor is working with Clients who's religious	12 (18.5)	45 (69.2)	08(12)	00(00)	65
It is sometimes difficulties and challenging working with clients form certain religious background different from mine	31(47.7)	10(15.4)	21(32)	03(04.6)	65
Education and religion make a perfect blend in school counselling	22 (33.8)	25(38.5)	11(16)	07(10.8)	65
Priding religious belief and its accomplishments should be cardinal for counselling Practice	6 (9.2)	14(21.5)	20(30)	25(38.5)	65
Religious belief and orientation can have a significant impact on the counselling process.	35(53.9)	25(38.5)	5(7.7)	0(0)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>129(33.1)</b>	<b>139(35.6)</b>	<b>78(20)</b>	<b>44(11.3)</b>	<b>390</b> <b>100</b>

emphasized the significance of incorporating cultural beliefs and achievements into counselling practices, with only 13.8% (9) expressing disagreement. In terms of the impact of cultural knowledge on performance expectations, 63.1% of respondents believe that understanding a particular culture can influence student performance expectations, while 36.9% disagree. Overall, the data underscores the positive correlation between cultural diversity and effective school counselling, as 75.6% of participants agreed with the survey findings, while 24.4% expressed disagreement.

#### **Research Question Two: To What Extent Does Religious Background Influences School Counseling Practice in Kumba Municipality of Meme Division of The South West Region of Cameroon?**

The data presented indicates that out of a sample of 65 respondents, 66.2% (42) agreed that adjusting counselling programmes to accommodate different religions is a suitable approach. Conversely, 33.7% (22) of respondents held a contrasting view. Additionally, 87.7% (57) of respondents acknowledged the benefits of interacting with individuals of different religions when counselling clients with differing belief systems, while 12.3% (8) disagreed. Furthermore, 63.1% (41) of respondents noted that working with clients from diverse religious backgrounds can present challenges, while 39.9% (24) expressed disagreement with this perspective. An overwhelming majority of 72.3% (45) agreed that incorporating education and religion can enhance the effectiveness of school counselling, with 27.7% (20) holding a different opinion. The study findings emphasized that prioritizing religious beliefs and achievements should not be a primary focus in

counselling practices, with 69.3% (45) in agreement and 30.7% (20) holding a conflicting view. Moreover, the majority of respondents (92%) emphasized the significant impact of religious beliefs and orientations on the counselling process. In conclusion, the data analysis suggests that religious background plays a significant role in school counselling within the Kumba subdivision. The majority of respondents supported the importance of considering religious diversity in counselling practices, highlighting the need for sensitivity and awareness in addressing clients' diverse beliefs and backgrounds. Table 4

#### **Research Question Three: To What Extent Does Language Affect School Counseling Practice in Kumba Municipality of Meme Division of The South West Region of Cameroon?**

The data presented in Table from a sample of 65 participants shows that a majority of 94.2% (56) believe that students should be referred for testing if rapport-building difficulties are believed to be due to language differences, while 13.8% (9) disagree with this view. Additionally, 50.8% (33) of respondents support the idea of accepting non-standard English language in counseling, when necessary, whereas 49.2% (32) advocate for the consistent use of standard language. Furthermore, the data reveals that 58.4% (38) believe that translating standardized tests to the client's first language is appropriate for accurate results, contrasting with 41.5% (27) who disagree. A significant number, 73.3% (47), suggest that counselling in the client's second language may impact the counselling process, while 29.2% (19) disagree. Regarding the use of varying languages during counselling, 72.3% (47) favor this



**Table 5.** Language and School Counseling Practice

Items	Responses				
	SA	A	D	SD	N
Clients should be referred for testing if rapport building difficulties appear to be due to language differences.	23 (35.4)	33 (50.8)	09(13.8)	00(00)	65
Non-standard English Language should be acceptable in the counselling processing whenever it seems inevitable.	33(50.8)	00 (00)	32(49.2)	00 (00)	65
Translating a standardized achievement or intelligence test to the Client's First language is appropriate in order to achieve accurate results	6(09.2)	32(49.2)	16(24.6)	11(16.9)	65
Counselling in the Client's Second language may affect the outcome of a counselling Process.	22(33.8)	25(38.5)	11(16.9)	07 (10.8)	65
Varying the language used maybe more suitable over the use the same language throughout the counselling process	25(38.5)	22(33.8)	09 (13.8)	9(13.8)	65
The language and the accent of both the client and the Counselor may have similar impact on the counselling Process	11(16.9)	34(52.3)	13(20)	07(10.8)	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>120(30.8)</b>	<b>146(37.4)</b>	<b>90(25)</b>	<b>34(9.4)</b>	<b>390</b> <b>100</b>

**Table 6.** Verification of Hypotheses

	Cultural Diversity	School Counselling	
	<b>Pearson Test</b>	Cultural Beliefs	R-Value
p-value			.001
n			65
Religious Background		R-Value	.323**
		p-value	.000
		n	65
Language		R-Value	.264**
		p-value	.000
		n	65

**Critical  $T_{xy}=0.250$**

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

approach as opposed to using the same language throughout, which is supported by 29.2% (19). Finally, in terms of the impact of language and accents on the counselling process, 69.2% (45) agree that both the client and counsellor's language and accent play a significant role, while 30.8% (20) disagree. In conclusion, the descriptive analysis indicates that participants generally agreed with the questionnaire items, suggesting that language differences have a substantial impact on school counselling in the Kumba Municipality. This analysis suggests a significant relationship between language diversity and school counselling in secondary schools in the Kumba Municipality. Table 5

### Verification of Hypotheses

The analyses reveal compelling evidence of significant

positive correlations between cultural beliefs, religious background, and language with school counselling in secondary schools within the Kumba Municipality. The correlation coefficient for cultural beliefs and school counselling stood at 0.277, surpassing the critical value of 0.250 at  $N=65$ , thereby rejecting the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis. This suggests a noteworthy relationship, with cultural beliefs emerging as a key predictor of school counselling. Similarly, the correlation coefficient for religious background was 0.323, exceeding the critical value and leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis in support of the alternative hypothesis, underscoring the strong influence of religious background on school counselling. Additionally, the correlation coefficient for language and school counselling was 0.264, also surpassing the critical value and resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming the significant impact of language on the

counselling process in secondary schools. In summary, these findings underscore the robust positive associations between cultural beliefs, religious background, and language with school counseling in the Kumba Municipality. Table 6

## DISCUSSIONS ON FINDINGS

The first objective of this study aimed to investigate the influence of cultural beliefs on school counselling in secondary schools within the Kumba Municipality. To test this, a hypothesis was formulated which indicated confirmed that a significant relationship exists between cultural beliefs and school counselling. This suggests that cultural beliefs actively influence the school counseling process, with Counselors considering cultural diversity as an important factor in their practices. High awareness and involvement in cultural beliefs and diversity within educational settings impact the counselling process, as Counselors relate their experiences, challenges, and achievements to the cultural contexts of their students. These findings resonate with Morris (2014), whose research emphasized the importance of a counselor's cultural values and ethnic identity, which influence their approach to counselling, especially when dealing with cultural diversity.

The second objective focused on investigating the relationship between religious background and school counselling in secondary schools in the Kumba Municipality. The hypothesis proposed confirmed a significant positive relationship between religious background and school counselling. This finding is consistent with Mueller (2012), whose study explored the importance of spirituality and religious beliefs in counseling practice. The findings indicated that Counselors recognize the influence of their clients' religious backgrounds on therapeutic processes, as spiritual beliefs significantly impact the way counseling is conducted. This highlights the crucial role religious background plays in shaping the school counselling experience, especially within diverse communities. The third objective of the study aimed to determine whether language influences school counselling in secondary schools in the Kumba Municipality. The findings indicated that there is indeed a significant relationship between language and school counselling. This suggests that language, as a communication tool, plays a significant role in shaping the school counselling experience in the Kumba Municipality. However, these findings contrast with the work of Rosenblum (2011), who explored the experiences of bilingual and multilingual therapists working with clients from similar backgrounds. Rosenblum's research found that language switching in therapy is common, and therapists often experience a range of emotions, such as intimacy or distance, due to language dynamics. This highlights the complex role

language plays in counselling, as it can both bridge and create barriers in the therapeutic relationship.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the findings from this study demonstrate that cultural beliefs, religious background, and language all have significant impacts on school counselling in secondary schools in the Kumba Municipality. These factors were found to positively influence the counselling process, with Counselors adapting their approaches based on cultural, religious, and linguistic considerations. The study highlights the need for Counselors to be aware of and incorporate these aspects into their practice, ensuring that they are providing culturally competent and effective counselling services to students from diverse backgrounds. Based on the findings, it is recommended that school counselors in the Kumba Municipality enhance their understanding of the cognitive abilities and cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds of students when conducting counselling. Given that cultural beliefs, religious background, and language significantly influence the counselling process, Counselors should adapt their approaches to accommodate the diverse cognitive and emotional needs of their students. This may involve incorporating culturally relevant practices, recognizing the role of religious beliefs in shaping students' values, and addressing potential language barriers that may affect communication. By fostering a counselling environment that respects and responds to these factors, Counselors can better support students' cognitive development and emotional well-being, ensuring a more effective and personalized counselling experience. Moreover, Counselors should engage in continuous professional development to stay informed about the cognitive and cultural diversity within their student population, ultimately enhancing their ability to address the specific needs of each student.

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