



Psychosocial Support for Teachers Experiencing Emotional Challenges in Special Schools: Implications for Counseling

*S O Olatunbosun¹, J Pillay¹

¹Department of Early Childhood Education and Care, Faculty of Education, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

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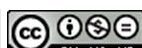
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ABSTRACT

This study examined psychosocial support mechanisms for special education teachers (SETs) in Southwest Nigeria, with a focus on special primary schools by emphasizing implications for counseling and psychological strategies amid emotional challenges. A quantitative design was utilized by targeting SETs. Data were collected through the Psychosocial Support for Teachers Questionnaire (PSSTQ; $\alpha=0.82$) and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and percentile ranks. Findings revealed high stress among SETs, propelled by scarce resources such as inadequate teaching materials, outdated technology, and emotional strain from bonding with students facing significant challenges. Notable gaps include insufficient professional development and social support networks, which are hindering stress management and optimal performance. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the need for an elaborate approach to support SETs, integrating professional development, psychological counseling, and the creation of robust support networks. It advocates for policy interventions to bolster resources and support systems, highlighting the indispensable role of SETs in fostering the growth and development of learners with special needs. The implications for counseling include the recommendation for targeted support strategies that address the unique challenges SETs face, promoting their well-being and, by extension, enhancing the quality of education for learners in special schools.



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INTRODUCTION

Special schools, also known as special educational needs (SEN) schools, cater to children and young people with complex educational needs that cannot be met in mainstream schools. They offer specialized education and support, often focusing on specific areas of SEN like communication, cognition, social-emotional, or sensory/physical needs. Given that this type of school is enmeshed in unique characteristics, including those of the schools, teachers, and special learners, the need for specialized, competent, and psychologically supported teachers to administer these schools becomes paramount. Research shows that teachers who teach in special schools face various challenges and contend that swift intervention should be ascribed to these schools and teachers to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and tenets of qualitative education (Mpangane et al., 2024). All teachers have challenging tasks and limited resources, but special education teachers may have more tasks when working with young children with impairments, which could affect their health (Brunsting et al., 2021; Jeon et al., 2022). This work, therefore, examines the psychosocial support mechanisms available to special



education teachers (SETs) facing emotional challenges in special schools in Southwest Nigeria, the available psychological support for SETs, and its implications for counseling.

The level and height of stress, responsibilities, and demands of being a teacher are overwhelming, let alone being a teacher in a special school and dealing with learners who need special attention compared to their peers (Agyapong et al., 2022; Mpangane et al., 2024; Suttles, 2024). This study uses the term "special education teachers" (SETs) to refer to teachers working in special schools. SETs are responsible for educating learners with a range of needs, including learning, mental, emotional, or physical challenges. Learners with mild to moderate disabilities are taught various disciplines by adapting general education lessons and fundamental skills (Tarantino et al., 2022). It is pertinent to establish that learners with special needs depend on SETs to navigate well for complete growth and development. Thus, the SET has various responsibilities, including supporting and enhancing learners' total development (social, emotional, and educational) (Kim et al., 2024). SETs work with learners who require extra support to reach their full potential. This implies that SET responsibilities include developing programs of learning activities, facilitating lessons effectively despite learners' disabilities, and providing academic and personal support to learners with distinct needs (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprabhan, 2016; Ogba et al., 2020).

SETs frequently operate under resource constraints, particularly due to shortages or limited availability of teaching materials, outdated technology, and inadequate classroom facilities (Mbon et al., 2023), which can lead to frustration and stress while working to ensure quality education (Bani & Lach, 2024; Yangambi, 2023). SETs tend to invest so much emotion in doing their job by building rapport and establishing trust as well as offering emotional guidance and support to both learners with disabilities and their families—an essential part of the responsibilities carried by a special education teacher (Frisby & Martin, 2010; Singal et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2022). Although forming meaningful connections with students while managing the emotional toll of witnessing their struggles and challenges can be emotionally draining. Adeniyi et al. (2010) explained that certain exceptionalities can predict stress among SETs. For example, teachers working with learners with severe behavioral disorders or severe physical disabilities may experience higher levels of stress than those working with learners with other different disabilities.

Psychosocial welfare recognizes the interaction between psychological variables and social experiences and includes a person's mental, emotional, and social health, including things like social functioning, happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and personal development (Durnova, 2024; Eiroa-Orosa, 2020; Kumar, 2020; Olatunbosun & Pillay, 2024). Olagunju et al. (2021) affirmed that the psychosocial well-being of special education teachers in Nigeria is a significant concern, with research indicating that a substantial proportion of teachers experience psychological distress and burden. These issues can negatively impact SETs' performance and the quality of education they provide to students with developmental disabilities. Also, SETs face various stressors related to their job descriptions. These stressors include classroom challenges, emotional exhaustion, the severity or degree of disabilities among students, specific types of exceptionalities, inadequate administrative support, role conflict and confusion, and psychological indicators such as stress, anxiety, and fear (Anderson, 2021; Olagunju et al., 2021). Research suggests that listening to teachers' experiences can help policymakers design better support systems, especially in inclusive classrooms and standardized assessment settings. Providing strong professional development is important because it reduces stress and helps teachers improve how they teach, ultimately benefiting young learners. (Anderson, 2021; Dignath et al., 2022; Osiesi, 2020; Osiesi et al., 2024; Osiesi et al., 2025).

The literature unequivocally emphasizes the imperative of addressing teacher professional development's variability and inconsistent quality (Osiesi, 2020; Osiesi et al., 2024; Osiesi et al., 2025). Moreover, it firmly underscores the crucial role of social assistance from special education staff and other teachers in mitigating how occupational stress impacts their work. (Anderson, 2021). Addressing the psychosocial well-being of special education teachers in Nigeria is essential

and calls for immediate and sustained intervention (Olagunju et al., 2021). The unique stressors related to their job descriptions and the need for social support and professional development highlight the importance of addressing these challenges to enhance the well-being and performance of special education teachers and ultimately benefit their students and the broader educational system. Despite special school teachers' increased susceptibility to burnout, research on the topic of exhaustion in the teaching job is incomplete and dispersed (Mulyani et al., 2021). The majority of studies on teacher burnout have primarily examined experiences within conventional classroom environments (Ramdan et al., 2020). The emotional difficulties that SETs encounter and the psychological care that they receive while teaching at special schools in Nigeria have received little to no attention. Against this backdrop, this current study examines the psychosocial support mechanisms available to special education teachers (SETs) facing emotional challenges in special schools in Southwest Nigeria, the available psychological support for SETs, and its implications for counseling.

Psychosocial Support for Teachers Experiencing Emotional Challenges in Special Schools

Psychological support is essential for teachers' overall output and life fulfillment (Olatunbosun et al., 2024). Mulyani et al. (2021) highlight the emotional challenges faced by teachers in special schools, including high-stress stages because of demanding roles and managing learners with developmental disabilities, which can result in declined job satisfaction and professional exhaustion. Challenging student behaviors, such as social and intellectual disabilities, also contribute to teacher exhaustion (Brunsting et al., 2021; Hofmann & Müller, 2022; Klaver et al., 2020). Owobi and Bodang (2018) affirmed that special education teachers often face a lack of support from parents, who may be disinterested or overly protective, negatively impacting the learner and the teacher. The difficulties of maintaining discipline in a special needs classroom and national budget constraints resulting in fewer teacher assistants and essential resources undeniably contribute to the emotional challenges faced by special education teachers (Alias & Salleh, 2017). Psychosocial support for teachers in special schools includes interventions to enhance their well-being and roles, emphasizing the importance of addressing emotional distress and burnout among educators (Undiyaundeye & Basak, 2020).

Because their jobs and learners are complex, special schoolteachers need to be professionally involved in management best practices and give instructions (Ramdan et al., 2020). Each learner's issues must be evaluated by these teachers, who must also speak out for them and work in tandem with their parents. According to Jovanović et al. (2019), burnout is more prevalent among special education teachers than among general education teachers. Critical difficulties such as maintaining student chastisement and the risk of verbal or physical misuse from special education children are causing these teachers to experience burnout more frequently (Ramdan et al., 2020). To synthesize the research findings on teachers' behaviors towards the introduction of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) students in physical education, Tarantino et al. (2022) conducted a mixed-methods systematic review combined with a meta-analysis to examine educators' perspectives on the inclusion of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in physical education. The results indicated that teachers generally hold favorable attitudes toward inclusion, particularly in cases where they have prior experience working with SEND learners. It was further revealed, through integrated quantitative and qualitative evidence, that teachers' attitudes are shaped by several interrelated factors. These include their level of knowledge and professional preparation; overall teaching experience; direct exposure to SEND students; the specific type and severity of the disability; as well as the availability of collaboration, teamwork, and instructional support within the school environment.

Initiatives such as the National Policy on Inclusive Education in Nigeria aim to recruit relevant personnel like counsellors, caregivers, sign language teachers, and psychologists to support special education needs, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive support systems for SETs (Isah, 2010). The Education Cannot Wait (ECW) program in Nigeria focuses on providing holistic training and financial support for teachers, including educator stipends,

teacher training on inclusion and gender equality, and mentorship programs to address mental health and psychosocial support needs among educators (Ozioko et al., 2021). Teacher development projects in Nigeria, such as those supported by UNICEF and USAID, offer training on disability-inclusive practices, sign language, Braille, and active learning techniques to equip teachers in regular and special schools with the important skills to enhance children with disabilities effectively (Ashipala et al., 2024; UNICEF, 2025).

Special Education Teachers (SETs) Work-Related Stress

Specialized educators are a prerequisite to successfully implementing special education programs to assist children with disabilities (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). According to Crouse and Rice (2018), teachers dealing with children with developmental impairments face various challenges that require specialized approaches. These challenges include managing problem behaviors, intervention programming, curriculum implementation, and limited professional preparation for teaching students with disabilities. Teachers often struggle with inadequate resources, such as teaching materials and classroom space, a lack of special needs education teachers, and poor learning environments (Pherali et al., 2020). SETs dealing with learners with developmental impairments need intensive direct instruction, remedial learning techniques, segmented learning objectives, and careful handling of behavioral challenges, among other supports. (Lee, 2021).

Several studies have shown that teachers can experience work-related stress (such as fatigue, burnout, worry, anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, or depression) resulting from aspects of their teaching work and mediated by the perception that job demands are a threat and by coping mechanisms activated to reduce the threat. (Ahmed & Shabbir, 2019; Agyapong et al., 2022; Farooqi et al., 2022). SETs experience varying levels of psychosocial stressors and emotional challenges. Research indicates that special education teachers often face higher stress levels due to the unique demands of teaching students with special needs, such as extra attention, resources, and time requirements, compared to regular students (Jeon et al., 2022). Mulyaniet et al. (2021) highlight that special education teachers face high-stress levels due to the demanding nature of their roles, including managing challenging behaviors, individualized teaching, and navigating complex relationships with students and parents.

The emotional toll of dealing with learners with developmental disabilities can lead to burnout, affecting SETs' personal lives and job satisfaction (Kebbi, 2018; Jeon et al., 2022). Moreover, special education teachers' declination worsens the stress levels among those currently employed, emphasizing the need for effective coping mechanisms and emotional regulation strategies to alleviate burnout and maintain a healthy work environment. The mediating role of emotional regulation is widely viewed as a significant contributor to lowering burnout levels among special school teachers, emphasizing the importance of managing emotions to reduce stress and enhance job satisfaction (Mulyani et al., 2021). The psychosocial stressors and emotional challenges SETs confront in special schools highlight the necessity of giving enough psychosocial assistance, resources, and coping mechanisms to increase teachers' well-being and success in helping children with developmental challenges (Addy et al., 2021; Stark et al., 2021).

J-D Model and Psychosocial Support Strategies

In occupational health psychology, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model serves as a framework for analyzing factors contributing to job stress and employee well-being (Scholze & Hecker, 2024; Li et al., 2025). It consists of two main concepts: job demands, which involve psychological, physical, social, or organizational factors; and occupation resources, which aid in achieving work objectives, decreasing workloads, and promoting personal and professional growth. (Taris & Schaufeli, 2015). According to this model, high levels of job demands and limited resources lead to strain and health deterioration, which may manifest as burnout, depression, and physical health problems. However, strong job resources can promote employee engagement and improve performance, even when demands are high. The JD-R model is a strategic technique to improve psychosocial support for teachers in special schools (De Carlo et al., 2019). It involves

identifying and managing specific needs and resources relevant to their roles, addressing emotional strain, high workload, and behavioral challenges. The model also includes emotional support, professional training, and administrative support. Surveys or focus groups are conducted to assess the impact of these demands to understand stress levels and monitor job dissatisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Targeted interventions include training on emotional resilience, structured programs, increased resources, and a supportive organizational culture. Policies are reviewed to support mental health, and regular check-ins are conducted to gather feedback. Regular adjustments to resources and support measures are made based on evolving needs. This approach supports teachers with emotional challenges and contributes to a more effective and nurturing environment for the students they educate. The JD-R model and psychosocial support strategies can be effectively integrated to support teachers in special schools, addressing emotional challenges and providing practical interventions. Thus, the purpose of this current research is to investigate the prevalence of emotional challenges among SETs, the perceived available support systems for SETs, the perceived barriers to accessing psychosocial support by SETs, and strategies or interventions that can be implemented to enhance psychosocial support for teachers in special education settings. Research on providing psychological support for teachers in special schools is crucial as it helps to reduce stress and burnout among teachers, improving mental health and enhancing job satisfaction. Studies of this kind positively impact student-teacher relationships, increase student engagement, and lead to better student outcomes. It can also inform education policy and practice (especially for special education) and improve school culture, enhancing educational quality. By supporting teachers, schools can improve the general excellence of education provided to learners.

Based on the Above Discussion, the Following Research Questions Were Raised

1. What is the prevalence of emotional challenges among teachers in special schools?
2. What psychosocial support systems are available for teachers in special schools?
3. What are the perceived barriers to accessing psychosocial support among teachers in special schools?
4. What strategies or interventions can be implemented to enhance psychosocial support for teachers in special education settings?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

A non-experimental descriptive quantitative design was utilized for this study. Descriptive quantitative research is a method that uses numerical data and statistical techniques to provide a clear and systematic description of a situation, population, or phenomenon, without altering variables or inferring cause-and-effect relationships. (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019).

Research Respondents

A sample of 240 SETs (female = 57%, male = 43%) aged between 29 and 58 ($M = 38$; $SD = 1.20$) were chosen as respondents from eight special schools in Southwest Nigeria through the application of a convenient sampling technique. All SETs in service beyond 12 months were eligible for the study. We employed the judgmental sampling technique to select these respondents because of the unique attributes of being a SETs (Jacob et al., 2021).

Research Instruments

The researchers developed a questionnaire to collect data on respondents' demographic profiles, as well as their perspectives on observed psychosocial challenges, teacher well-being, and intervention strategies used in schools. The instrument included four background items addressing participants' roles, length of service at the school, subjects taught, and any added psychosocial engagement obtained. A 4-point Likert scale of close-ended questions for



psychosocial support for teachers with emotional challenges followed these. Two experts in tests and measurements examined the questionnaire to determine the face validity of the items and questions, which was further improved based on their suggestions. The questionnaire was pilot-tested among 20 SETs in another geopolitical zone using a test-retest method to determine the instrument's reliability, which yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were duly informed about the purpose of the research and were given clear instructions on what to expect. They were also assured that their responses would be kept confidential. This was ensured by maintaining anonymity by assigning unique identifiers to respondents and ensuring confidentiality through a confidentiality statement at the beginning of the questionnaire, thus safeguarding the information disclosed by respondents using such information for research purposes only. In the selected schools, the research assistant helped organize the participants. On average, it took each participant an hour to complete the survey. The appropriate educational authority granted authorization to administer the research instrument. The research was therefore conducted in compliance with ethical standards.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26, where descriptive statistical techniques were applied to examine and summarize the observed trends in the dataset. Frequencies, percentages, and percentile order ranking statistics were used to summarize the results. The study outcome was segmented into three phases to answer the research questions effectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The socio-demographic data of the respondents from special schools reveals a gender distribution of 58% males and 42% females. The result shows the distribution of participants. The majority of respondents have been at the sampled school for 1-5 years. The data also shows that 30.4% of respondents have received social support training, while 69.6% have not. This information helps understand the demographics and training needs of staff within these special schools.

Table 1. Socio-demographic data of respondents based on gender and type of special school.

Variables		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	100	42.0
	Male	140	58.0
School	School 1	33	13.8
	School 2	41	17.1
	School 3	38	15.8
	School 4	22	9.2
	School 5	23	9.6
	School 6	28	11.7
	School 7	32	13.3
	School 8	23	9.6
No of Years at the school	Below 1 years	26	10.8
	1-5 years	75	31.3
	6-10 years	40	16.7
	11-15 years	35	14.6
	16-20 years	51	21.3
	21 years and above	13	5.4
Social support training received by staff	Yes	73	30.4
	No	167	69.6

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of emotional challenges among teachers in special schools?

Table 2 indicates the results of the emotional problems encountered by respondents are summarized in a format showing the number of respondents agreeing ("Yes") or disagreeing ("No") with each statement, alongside the percentage of total responses. The majority, 79.2 percent of the respondents, said they feel high-stress levels due to job responsibilities. 60 percent of the respondents in special schools had developed a diminished sense of professional efficacy. This implies that more than half feel less effective, which could have impacted their morale and learners' outcomes. The third construct focuses on anxiety triggered by emotional intensity, and a significant number of 146 (60.8%) responses revealed that emotional intensity at work is a significant trigger for anxiety.

Less than half of the respondents experienced extreme exhaustion and cynicism, suggesting variability in job experience. A very high number of respondents point to critical deficiencies in support or resources. More than half of the respondents point to depression triggered by high job demands, which indicates a serious concern about mental health due to job demands. More than 90 percent of respondents' responses revealed that they are overwhelmed by constant emotional demands. This highest agreement rate stresses the need to address emotional demands. Respondents' responses revealed that 60% disagreed and 40% agreed with the construct that measured whether serious emotional demands drain teachers. This suggests a division in experiences among teachers. Results on the negative impact on work-life balance revealed that many teachers do not feel their work-life balance is negatively impacted.

This result can be extremely useful for understanding special schools' primary concerns affecting mental health and well-being. The current study found that 79.2% of teachers in special schools encounter high-stress levels due to job responsibilities, with 60% feeling less effective and anxiety triggered by emotional intensity. Less than half experience extreme exhaustion and cynicism, while over half experience depression due to high job demands. Over 90% are overwhelmed by constant emotional demands, highlighting the need for addressing these demands. However, 60% disagree, and 40% agree on the extent of emotional exhaustion, suggesting a divide in experiences among teachers. These findings support an earlier study by Adigun and Mngomezulu (2022) that examines job stress among teachers of learners with specific care. Education stakeholders could use this data to prioritize interventions, focusing first on mitigating issues related to resource availability and addressing fatigue, followed by managing stress and emotional drainage at work (Avola et al., 2025; Naghie et al., 2015). This finding was expressed in the JD-R model, suggesting that increased job demands can produce burnout and decreased work involvement if not balanced by sufficient job resources, like social support and professional and autonomy development opportunities. Interventions that reduce job demands and increase resources can improve special education teachers' well-being and occupational fulfillment (Avola et al., 2025; Castro Silva et al., 2023).

Table 2. Prevalence of emotional challenges among teachers in special schools

S/N	prevalence of emotional challenges among teachers in special schools	Yes f(%)	No f(%)	Remark
1	I constantly experience high stress levels due to my job responsibilities,	190 (79.2)	50 (20.8)	High Stress Levels
2	I feel diminished sense of professional efficacy	144 (60.0)	96 (40.0)	Declining Job Efficacy
3	Anxiety get trigger by emotional intensity of the work environment	146 (60.8)	94 (31.2)	Anxiety
4	I feel extreme exhaustion, cynicism about my job	90 (37.5)	150 (62.5)	Less Fatigue
5	I feel exacerbated by a lack of adequate resources or support for teachers.	205 (85.4)	90 (14.6)	Lack of Support
7	Sometimes depression feelings get triggered by the high job demands	135 (56.3)	105 (43.7)	Depression

S/N	prevalence of emotional challenges among teachers in special schools	Yes f(%)	No f(%)	Remark
8	I feel overwhelmed by constant emotional demands without adequate time to recharge	217 (90.4)	23 (9.6)	Seriously Overwhelmed
9	I feel drained by serious emotional demands	80 (40.0)	160 (60.0)	Not Feeling Drained
10	I feel that my emotional stress at work negatively impacts my work-life balance	129 (64.5)	71 (35.5)	Work-Life Balance Impact

Research Question 2: What psychosocial support systems are available for teachers in special schools in Nigeria?

Table 3 presents information on the availability and perceived effectiveness of various supportive support systems for teachers. "Access to psychological counseling" was ranked 1st with a mean score of 3.2. Ranked second is professional development and training, with a mean score of 2.8. Also, career advancement opportunities and motivation were ranked 3rd with a mean score of 2.6. Items on "recognition through awards, public acknowledgment, and insurance that covers mental health services and recreational facilities" were all below 2.5, which is the cut-off point for a 4-point Likert scale research instrument.

Table 3. Psychosocial support systems are available for teachers.

Psychosocial Support Systems	Mean	Rank
There are professional development and training	2.8	2 nd
Access to psychological counselling	3.2	1 st
Insurance that covers mental health services	1.6	5 th
Recreational facilities	1.4	6 th
Recognition through awards, public acknowledgment	1.8	4 th
Career advancement opportunities and motivation	2.6	3 rd

The result of research question three reveals that teachers in special schools face barriers to accessing psychosocial support, including economic limitations, insufficient resources, high workloads, and poor communication about support options. These barriers are the most significant, requiring improvement through increased funding, improved support infrastructure, and better resource distribution. This finding is consistent with the finding of an earlier study by Adebisi et al. (2014), which also found that teachers face numerous barriers to accessing psychosocial support, including economic limitations. Babedi (2013) has earlier established that SETs face significant barriers to accessing psychosocial supports and further explains that lack of funding leads to shortages of trained staff, inadequate facilities, and limited access to external support services. This implies that these barriers may hinder SETs' ability to provide necessary support for their students and themselves. Similarly, Mahwai and Ross (2023) reported that high workloads and time constraints seem to be a significant stressor for SETs, as they spend more time on administrative tasks and are often unsure about how to access external mental health services for referrals.

Research Question 3: What are the perceived barriers to accessing psychosocial support among teachers in special schools?

Table 4 shows the results above present various barriers to accessing psychosocial support among teachers in special schools. Economic limitations and insufficient resources were ranked first with a mean score of 3.7. High workloads due to the intensive needs of their learners were ranked 3rd with a mean score of 3.0. Also, poor communication about support options and their benefits can lead to underutilization," with a mean score of 2.6, which was ranked 4th. This information provides valuable insights into the primary obstacles that prevent individuals from accessing necessary psychosocial support. Economic and resource-related barriers rank highest, indicating

key areas for improvement. Addressing these could involve increasing funding, enhancing support infrastructure, and ensuring adequate and well-distributed resources.

Table 4. Barriers to Accessing Psychosocial Support Among Teachers in Special Schools

Barriers to Accessing Psychosocial Support	Mean	Rank
Economic limitations	3.7	1 st
Stigma associated with seeking help for mental health issues	2.5	5 th
Insufficient resources	3.7	1 st
High workloads due to the intensive needs of their students	3.0	3 rd
Poor communication about support options and their benefits can lead to underutilization.	2.6	4 th

Insurance coverage for mental health services rates low, suggesting that this area significantly lacks support, which could be crucial for teachers' well-being. The availability and quality of recreational facilities are rated the lowest, indicating they are either inadequate, underutilized, or undervalued by the respondents. This finding seems to align with the proclamation in the JD-R model that emphasizes how job demands and resources impact employee (SETs') mental health. Job demands, such as work quantity and pace, can lead to stress symptoms like burnout and job pressure (Bakker et al., 2023). Also, the discovery of this study is at variance with an earlier study by Ntukidem, Ntukidem, and Eyo (2011), which found that while public special schools had limited recreational facilities, private special schools were better equipped. Similarly, the study of Ezema, Ifelunni, Okenyi, and Ogara (2020) focused on leisure activities for special needs schools but did not specifically rate the availability or quality of recreational facilities for teachers as psychosocial support. So, based on the provided results, there is no clear evidence to support the claim that the availability and quality of recreational facilities are rated the lowest by teachers in special schools in Nigeria. The information indicates a more mixed picture, which implies that more targeted research is needed to make a definitive assessment.

Research Question 4: What interventions can be implemented to enhance psychosocial support for teachers in special education settings?

Table 5 presents possible interventions designed to enhance psychosocial support, their mean effectiveness, and their rank order. Teacher social-emotional well-being interventions were ranked first with a mean score of 3.8. Partnership approaches to well-being were rated second with a mean score of 3.7. The establishment of easily accessible confidential mental health services was ranked 3rd with a mean score of 3.6. Basic psychosocial support (PSS) training and promoting work-life balance through flexible working hours were ranked 4th and 5th, respectively. All the above items were found significant and relevant interventions.

Table 5: Interventions to enhance psychosocial support for teachers in special education.

Interventions to enhance psychosocial support	Mean	Rank
Teacher social-emotional wellbeing interventions	3.8	1 st
Establish easily accessible, confidential mental health services	3.6	3 rd
Promote work-life balance through flexible working hours	3.3	5 th
Basic psychosocial support (PSS) training	3.4	4 th
Partnership approaches to wellbeing include collaborating with teachers and other stakeholders.	3.7	2 nd

The findings from the analyzed data emphasize the critical significance of psychosocial support for teachers experiencing emotional challenges. These discoveries highlight the need for addressing SETs' emotional health and well-being to improve teaching effectiveness. The research highlights that SETs' well-being directly affects the overall running of schools and education systems, highlighting the need to prioritize strategies that enhance SETs' enthusiasm,

promote enjoyment of leisure time, and support work–life balance. By focusing on strengthening SETs' emotional well-being, fostering a supportive work environment, and providing psychological support, policymakers and education managers can positively impact the entire education system, reducing SETs' burnout and turnover while improving student results.

Moreover, the finding of this study stresses the need for partnership approaches to SETs' well-being, emphasizing that strengthening teachers' personal well-being is vital for educational practices and government policymaking. By selecting paramount conditions that influence teachers' well-being and implementing interventions to enhance emotional health, education policymakers and institutions can improve the effectiveness and quality of education, reduce burnout and attrition among teachers, and ultimately enhance student outcomes. By and large, the findings underscore the fundamental role of psychosocial support in addressing emotional challenges faced by teachers and highlight the positive impact such support can have on the entire educational ecosystem.

Implications for Counseling

The outcomes of this study's findings have huge impacts for counseling and educational practices and policies, emphasizing the role of fostering a work environment that balances job demands with resources. By recognizing the need of balancing job demands with resources, schools and educational institutions can promote better mental health outcomes and improve overall employee well-being. The interventions that can be implemented to enhance psychosocial support for teachers in special education arrangements include various strategies such as partnership approaches, accessible confidential mental health services, basic psychosocial support training, and flexible working hours (Chinyama et al., 2020; Pollock et al., 2020). These interventions are crucial for supporting the psychosocial well-being of teachers who are experiencing emotional challenges. Partnership approaches, as highlighted in research, emphasize the importance of collaborations between teachers, parents, children, other professionals such as counselors, therapists, psychologists, health educators, and researchers to create effective support systems.

The respondents rated psychological counseling alongside professional development and training as the most available psychosocial support system for teachers in Nigeria's special schools. This intervention, which is the highest ranked, focuses directly on enhancing teachers' emotional and psychological health. These may include programs such as mindfulness training, stress management workshops, or counseling services specifically tailored for teachers in special schools. Given its high score, this indicates strong effectiveness in promoting overall mental health and occupational fulfillment among teachers in special schools.

It is pertinent to understand that providing accessible confidential mental health services is crucial for correcting the issue of mental challenges encountered by teachers in special schools, as this directly influences the well-being of teachers. Basic psychosocial support training for school counselors equips special schools and health educators with the required tools and skills to offer psychosocial assistance to SETs and their families (Olatunbosun et al., 2024). Moreover, implementing flexible working hours can help teachers manage their workload effectively and maintain their own mental health, ultimately enhancing their capability to support students in special education configurations. These interventions have a vital role in promoting a conducive environment for teachers and improving outcomes for students and educators in special education.

An increase in funding for special schools is imperative to alleviate resource shortages, enabling the acquisition of modern teaching aids and adequate facilities, which in turn could reduce job-related stress. To enhance both well-being and effectiveness, CPD programs for special education teachers should be tailored to include training in stress management, coping mechanisms, and resilience development. Furthermore, fostering community and peer support networks can offer a valuable platform for sharing experiences and strategies, reducing feelings of isolation among special education teachers. Advocacy for policies that address the

psychosocial needs of these educators is essential, as is further research into effective interventions and support mechanisms.

Collaborative partnerships between special schools, mental health organizations, and educational research institutions could also play a crucial role in developing innovative support solutions and raising awareness about the importance of psychosocial support for special education teachers. By taking these steps, we can significantly improve the well-being of special education teachers, leading to better educational outcomes for students with disabilities and creating a more sustainable teaching environment. This holistic approach not only acknowledges the invaluable role of special education teachers but also actively supports their mental health and professional development, ensuring they are fortified to meet the demands of their challenging yet crucial roles.

CONCLUSION

The implications for counseling on the psychosocial support available to teachers experiencing emotional challenges in special schools are significant, as counseling plays a crucial role in providing psychosocial support to special education teachers facing emotional challenges in special schools. SETs face unique stressors and emotional burdens, especially when dealing with diverse learners with disabilities. Counselling interventions can help develop coping strategies, enhance resilience, and improve overall well-being. Creating a supportive environment and implementing effective psychological services can mitigate the negative impact of emotional challenges on special education teachers. Thus, counseling is essential for promoting mental health, job satisfaction, and overall well-being.

In all, this study provides further empirical data that affirms that SETs face several emotional challenges in the various special schools in Nigeria. These SETs encounter significant barriers to accessing psychosocial support, including the lack of funding, shortages of special education-trained staff, inadequate facilities, limited access to external support services, economic limitations, high workloads, and poor communication about support options leading to underutilization. The study also provides possible interventions to enhance psychosocial support for SETs, such as teacher social-emotional well-being interventions, partnership approaches to well-being, availability of easily accessible confidential mental health services, as well as training and promoting work-life balance through flexible working hours.

This study mainly focused on teachers in special schools experiencing emotional challenges. While the study offers valuable insights into the available psychosocial support, the specific limitation of the study is that the study only considers the perspective of teachers, neglecting the viewpoints of other stakeholders such as students, administrators, or support staff, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the situation. Also, the findings of this study might be time-bound and not reflective of the evolving nature of psychosocial support mechanisms or the changing dynamics within special schools over time.

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Author (s):

* Stella Oluwakemi Olatunbosun (Corresponding Author)
Department of Early Childhood Education and Care, Faculty of Education,
University of Johannesburg,
Corner Kingsway, University Rd, Johannesburg 2092, South Africa
Email: stellao@uj.ac.za

Jace Pillay
Department of Early Childhood Education and Care, Faculty of Education,
University of Johannesburg,
Corner Kingsway, University Rd, Johannesburg 2092, South Africa
Email: jacep@uj.ac.za
