

Student's Perception of Counsellors' Emotional Stability and Their Counselling Effectiveness in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State

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Abstract: This study was predicted on the premise that emotional maturity, being one of the counsellors' personality characteristics, exerts some level of influence on counselling effectiveness of counsellors among secondary school students in Calabar Metropolis. The objective of the study was to investigate and establish the relationship between emotional stability of counsellors and their counselling effectiveness among secondary school students as a launching-pad for further research on other personality characteristics of guidance counsellors. Five hundred senior secondary one and two students selected from ten public schools constituted the sample for the study. Equal random and stratified random sampling techniques were employed in the selection of the schools and subjects for the study, respectively. A self developed questionnaire titled: Emotional Stability Profile Questionnaire (ESPQ) was validated and used for the data collection. The null hypothesis was tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Statistics. The result revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional stability and counselling effectiveness. It was concluded that the level of emotional maturity exhibited by the counsellor exerts some level of significant influence on counselling process. It was therefore, recommended that counselors should covet and cultivate in them a high level of emotional maturity since it is capable of fostering counselling process.

Key words: Perception, counsellors, emotional stability, counselling effectiveness, senior

INTRODUCTION

The guidance counsellor is a happy and jovial person who helps those in need. The need for which he provides help include educational, vocational and personal-social as well as psychological needs. The counsellor is the manager of a project called the "client". In congruent with this fact, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in its National Policy on Education emphasizes that in view of; the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects and in view of personality mal adjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors shall be appointed in post primary institutions. This is an expression of the degree of importance attached to guidance and counselling in the anal of education in Nigeria. A counsellor manages the client's educational, vocational and personal-social potential so that these resources may be developed maximally with benefit to the individual and society. He regards an individual as an asset that must be exploited fully. In managing the client, both the counsellor and client work together.

Guidance and counselling as a helping process entails a blend of direction and permissiveness for better understanding of the individual personality traits which will enable the individual to take rational decisions in all sphere of life. The National Policy on Education quoted above emphasizes on personality characteristics of students which counsellors have to address. Emotional stability being one of the personality characteristics of counsellors is capable of making or marring the counselling process. Due to the dearth of counsellors in the school system, the Federal government has made it a policy in training interested teachers in guidance and counselling so that counselling personality characteristics could be inculcated in them. Nwachukwu (2000) admits that the need for guidance counsellor in schools has become paramount in the Nigerian educational development and service delivery. This position is apt in view of the fact that the long and short term educational aims, goals and objectives need to be articulated and realized. Moreover, researchers live in a world of perplexities and where everything is changing in a very rapid dimension, at times these changes become

dangerously perplexing that the very progress of students at school is threatened. At such perplexing and frightening situations, it requires the services of the emotionally mature guidance counsellor to make meaningful impression on the thwarted and confused students. The effective counsellor is on relatively good terms with his emotion and controls it most of the time, if not all the time, whereby able to work on emotion of others in contact with him. Belkin (1995) aptly agrees that somebody's character is an indelible mark that reveals his personality and this mark is also indelibly engraved on the psyche of the client with whom he comes into such contact.

Olayinka (1993) further reiterates that every educational policy in any modern society should give priority to effective counselling. Adequate provision of effective guidance and counselling services is very essential and the passion with which the counselling is given could be a panacea to certain vices in the secondary school system. These vices, uncertainties, maladaptive behaviours and challenges confronting the young today can be diagnosed and resolved through effective and emotionally mature disposition of the guidance counsellors. An individual is considered mature emotionally when he perceives events and situations realistically and in an extensional manner is not defensive. He accepts the responsibility for his own behaviour, evaluates experiences in terms of the evidence coming from his own senses, changes his evaluation of experiences only on the basis of new experience, accepts others as unique individuals different from him and prizes others (Akinade, 2005). Emotional maturity could imply, the behaviour exhibited by an individual who is congruent. This quality characteristically depicts emotionally mature guidance counsellors. Ene (2005) evaluating the influence of guidance counselling on occupational preference of adolescent viewed emotional maturity as the opposite of emotional disturbance which Akinade (2005) affirms is characterized by unadaptive behaviour unusually accompanied by anxiety which has been learned through conditioning. He further maintained that it originates when an individual is punished for behaviour motivated by a bodily need or drive with the result that the person experiences anxiety and becomes unnecessarily inhibited when the need arises.

From the on-going, certain thoughts about maturity is glaring. There is the emotional maturity which has to do with the behaviour and reaction of an individual at a given time and situation. There is a mental maturity attained as a result of learning and level of education acquired over time. Here, mental model comes to play which is the presentation of the information contained in the premises of a problem. There is also the experiential maturity which

has to do with the receiving, especially in the organism of sensory or psychological event taking place (Uba, 1993). The focus of this study is on the counsellors' emotional maturity and how it affects counselling effectiveness.

One's emotion has the positive and the negative forms, joy and sadness. The occurrence or manifestation of the positive form most of the time denotes and constitutes on individual's maturity. An individual's emotion could be reflected in the following areas:

Emotional disturbance: This is characterized by un-adaptive behavior, usually accompanied by anxiety learned through conditioning. It originates when an individual is punished for behavior motivated by a bodily need or drive with the result that the person experiences anxiety and becomes inhibited when the need arises.

Emotional bleeding: This refers to exposure of a client to excessive maximal dose of fear or anxiety provoking stimulus over a long period of time (Guthrie and Horton, 1946).

Emotional intelligence: Is a form of intelligence that refers to how effectively people perceive and understand their own emotions and the emotions of others and can regulate and manage such behaviors. High level of emotional intelligence can motivate oneself and restrain impulses and help one to handle interpersonal relationships effectively.

Emotion focused coping: Refers to responses directed at the individual's internal state or the person's emotional reactions to stressful events better for situations which cannot be changed but it is not often encouraged because some of the strategies make stress worse. For example, distancing withdrawal, escape or avoidance, touring to religion, self-control, reappraisal and acceptance of responsibilities, substance abuse and use of defense mechanism.

Emotionally fertile home: This refers to a home with warmth that is happy, members cooperate, trust and communication with each other. Members are supportive and loving. Children grow up as responsible people (Akinade, 2005). Since, the work of counselors have to do with emotion of clients, emotional stability will facilitate counseling process and create meaningful and enduring impacts in the life of clients, it should therefore be acknowledged that guidance counselors must be sufficiently stable, emotionally, so that clients can participate or predict their behaviour. On the other hand, an emotionally unstable counsellor with his frequent changing moods and unpredictable behaviour is a bad signal to counselling setting and effectiveness.

Aziude and Iwundu (1995) are in affirmation that for a guidance counsellor to function effectively such must be emotionally sound an assertion supported by Olawale (2002) when he proposed that counselling work is more emotionally demanding than teaching. Since, counselling is emotionally demanding, it follows that for a guidance counsellor to be effective in the execution of his counselling program, he must necessarily be emotionally mature. Emotional maturity is an indispensable variable in the counsellor's professional role if he must effectively assist the needy individual to resolve his conflict. Dave (1991) posits that:

One of the prime objectives of counselling is to assist the needy individual in moving from immaturity towards a state of maturity. This movement is a lifelong process in living organisms ... It becomes a multifaceted and complicated process on account of the complex nature of human personality. It is best natural that an expert who is supposed to lead a human being along this path should be himself a mature person. Again the expert's maturity and the needy person's conviction about this maturity alone can lay the foundations of the experts-needy relationship in a counselling situation

Olawale (2002) counsels that guidance counsellors in the process of their counselling activities try to be emotionally balanced. Moreover, it is pertinent and highly valuable that a guidance counsellor is not carried away by the severity of client's difficulties he should rather detach himself from the pains of the counselee. He should be like a nurse or medical doctor who remains detached from the pains of the patients in order to be effective in dealing with the problem. To be able to effectively deal with the client's emotions, therefore, the counsellor who must help the clients resolve their conflicts and confusions should be emotionally stable and well adjusted.

Ene and Esuabanga (2011) also reports that an effective counsellor is a well adjusted individual. Although, he is not expected to be free from every personality weakness, it is important that a counsellor be free from severe emotional conflict. He further elucidates that understanding of one's own behaviour is important in dealing with others. To him an effective guidance counsellor has considerable insight into his own feelings and actions. He similarly acknowledges that under normal circumstances the guidance counsellor should be emotionally stable. Suffice it to say that every counselling environment needs to be emotionally supportive through counsellor's emotional stability if the client must be assisted to resolve his conflicts. Counselling is a therapeutic relationship and it takes a therapist or

surgeon's emotional maturity to diagnose the patient's ailment, deal with it or perform the necessary operation to relief the patient. From the foregoing, it is clear that guidance and counselling services inevitably involves emotional stability. To be able to perform creditably well as a guidance counsellor, therefore, requires that apart from other personality characteristics possessed, the counsellor should be emotionally mature and stable. Emotional stability is therefore an indispensable tool and skill in the personality of any guidance counsellor if such must be effective in turning around counselling process.

Purpose of the study: This study seeks to investigate the relationship between counsellors' emotional maturity and counselling effectiveness among secondary school students in Calabar Metropolis.

Statement of the problem: The society, no doubt, has seen the need for guidance counsellors in secondary schools but it is clear that establishing guidance services in schools and being able to attain positive and practical results are two different things altogether. Nwachukwu (2000) observes that the purpose of counselling is to help individuals attain those personal goals which will result in positive changes in their lives. The inescapable question which readily comes to mind is: to what extent have the counsellors and their counselling programmes been able to achieve this stated purpose? While some counsellors have somehow been able to achieve their set goals and societal expectations others have not.

The inability of some counsellors and their school guidance programmes to achieve expected goals is sometimes attributed to their personality characteristics which render them ineffective. Steward and Colleagues agree with this allegation, they remarked that counselling services cannot be better than the counsellor who delivers them. Ineffective counselling has indeed caused the society more harm than good. Sometimes the young ones in secondary schools make wrong career choices because of the guidance counsellors' inability to effectively handle guidance matters affecting them. Some students even resolve never to seek counselling because of their bitter experiences with the counsellors' misdemeanor arising from personality characteristics. This development leads to frustration, lack of interest and a sense of inadequacy in the lives of the young men and women. The aftermath of this unhealthy development is that those directly affected are dissatisfied with themselves with others and with life generally. Their situation has in turn contributed to their becoming what they are agents of confusion and destruction.

Why do we have many cases of wrong choice of career, truancy, examination malpractices, unemployability, cultism and general waywardness in the society today? Why do people depend on columnists in newspapers and magazines for advice? Imagine a situation where many of the youths and adults today rely almost exclusively on pseudo prophets, Imams and Babalawos for guidance and advice in solving their personal problems. How could one explain the over-production in the training and development of the nation's manpower needs in certain areas and under-production in some others? Why is there so much job dissatisfaction among the civil and public servants? Why is it that many people today almost always desire to change their jobs if given the least opportunity? Why do the politicians become desperate in buying votes than fulfilling their campaign promises? Why are many marriages breaking up almost immediately after they are consummated? Why are some married partners today enduring rather than enjoying one another?

Researchers are agitated by these multitudinous calamities invading and ravaging the society and wonders what will become of this otherwise promising society of the should situation continue unchecked. However, being disturbed alone does not help matters proper investigation has to be carried out to determine why things remain the way they are. This is what has given birth to this research. Although, a number of variables must have conspired against counsellors' effectiveness, researchers intend to find out whether emotional stability as a counsellor's personality characteristic has a role in the success or failure of counselling processes or programmes of schools in Calabar Metropolis.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design adapted for this study was the descriptive survey design. According to Hassan (1995), survey research design involves direct contact with a population of sample that has characteristic personality qualities or attributes relevant to a specific investigation. For Ary *et al.* (1979), the descriptive survey design enables researchers to employ questionnaire to seek the opinion of representative sample on which conclusions, inferences and generalization are made on contemporary phenomenon. This is very harmonious with the present study since counselling effectiveness or otherwise is a contemporary phenomenon in the secondary school system. Moreover, the descriptive survey design has a wide scope of advantage because a great deal of information could be obtained from a large population and the characteristics of the defined population can also be inferred to the sample drawn from such population. In view of these reasons therefore, the design is appropriate for this study.

Sample and sampling technique: The target population for this study consisted of all the secondary school students in Calabar Metropolis numbering 17,953. From this, 500 students were drawn from ten schools, fifty students from each. A random sampling was employed in selecting five schools from Calabar South Local Government Area and five from Calabar Municipality. The second stage involved the actual sampling of the subjects in which stratified random selection of 25 males and 25 females from each of the ten schools was drawn using a table of random numbers. This was to ensure an unbiased representative sample in which each of the subjects had equal and independent chance of being chosen. The Hat and Draw Method employed is accepted as having the highest probability of selecting a representative sample for research (Denga and Ali, 1998). It also increased the probability of having a sample with similar traits to those observable in the entire population thus making generalization of the findings on the population possible.

Instrumentation: The third stage involved the sampling of the consensus that adjudged the instruments to be appropriate for its intended data collection. This procedure became necessary because content validity is the most important property of an instrument (Kerlinger, 1986). The reliability of an instrument is the degree to which the instrument consistently yields the same scores when administered a number of times under the same or slightly different conditions (Denga and Ali, 1998). To ascertain the reliability of the instrument for this study, the test-retest estimate was used. The instrument was pilot tested using the students from two schools that were not part of the sample for the main study. The test was administered again after 2 weeks interval to the same set of students. The two sets of scores were correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The result of the test-retest reliability coefficient was 0.85 which is considered significant.

RESULTS

Hypothesis H₀: The null hypothesis speculated that the level of counsellors emotional maturity has no significant relationship with counselling effectiveness. The independent variable in this hypothesis is counsellors' emotional maturity while the dependent variable is counseling effectiveness. They were continuous variables therefore the Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used in testing the relationship between the two variables. The result is shown in Table 1.

Based on the statistical analysis in Table 1, the calculated value of 0.327 is higher than the critical value of 0.1946 at 0.05 level of significance. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between counsellors' emotional maturity and counseling effectiveness (N = 500)

Variables	$\Sigma x/\Sigma y$	$\Sigma x^2/\Sigma y^2$	Σxy	r_{xy}	Sig. r
Counsellors' emotional maturity (x)	5896	72284	143833	327*	0
Counseling effectiveness (y)	12051	300603	-	-	-

Significant at 0.05 level, critical $r = 0.1946$; $df = 498$

significant positive relationship between counsellors' level of emotional stability and counselling effectiveness among secondary school students in Calabar Metropolis.

The implication for this is that the higher the level of emotional stability of a counsellor, the higher the level of effectiveness in counselling. That is to say that the more the guidance counsellor matures emotionally the more his chance of succeeding in his counseling programmes.

DISCUSSION

Variations in and level of emotional maturity manifested during counselling processes significantly influence counselling effectiveness. Since, the research of a counsellor has to do with emotions of clients, the level of stability in his emotions will facilitate counselling process and create meaningful and enduring impacts in the lives of his clients. It is required that guidance counsellors be sufficiently stable emotionally if they must be able to anticipate or predict the behavior of their clients. On the other hand, an emotionally unstable counsellor with his frequent changing mood and unpredictable behaviours will be scary before his clients. This bad signal spells doom to counselling process and cannot make for effectiveness.

Moreover, counselling as an emotionally and intellectually demanding chores which requires counsellors to have a high degree of control over their behavior will only achieve its intended purpose when its operatives are emotionally stable. This is in congruent with Asuquo (2002) who found a significant relationship between counsellors' emotional disposition and their over all guidance and counselling effectiveness. Idowu (2004) also reveals that effective counsellors exhibit among other qualities, the ability to maintain emotional distance from their counselees. Similarly, Corey (1991) opines that counsellors' ability to maintain appropriate distance emotionally from the counselee is one of the characteristics associated with counsellors' effectiveness.

The guidance counsellor needs to develop a faith in the dignity and intrinsic worth of every individual as a person. He should develop the belief that every individual has a right to lead a life which is individually satisfying and socially effective and until he attains emotional maturity, attainment of self-worth is a mirage. Some of the qualities and personality characteristics of a counsellor culminates in his emotional stability because it takes emotional maturity to be congruent, patient and emphatic

in any counselling situation. One of the prime objectives of counselling is to assist the needy individual in moving from immaturity towards a state of maturity and the counsellor must attain this state of maturity before he can successfully achieve this in his client. Oladele (2000) affirms this when he asserted that emotional stability can have important effects on social interaction and that it is one of the most effective means of promoting positive change in the behavior of clients.

This study further reveals that counsellors with high level of emotional stability induce greater self exploration throughout the process of counselling and do produce constructive behavioural personality change in clients' deterioration. This is so because an expert counsellor with high level of emotional maturity is able to react in a cordial and friendly manner to even stubborn clients with warmth for rapport between them. The study also shows that a guidance counsellor with a stable emotional level is one whose emotions has grown to the point of being able to manage his won emotions and by extension those of his clients.

In this study, emotional maturity and stability of a counsellor is what induces other counsellors' personality characteristics during counselling. It makes for therapeutic relationship between the counsellor and the counselee thus enabling the counsellor to employ appropriate techniques which match the temperament and personality patterns of the client. However, this is at variance with Kayode (2008) study which concluded that emotional maturity as a measure was unrelated to counselling process. It could be adduced that Kayode's result must have been affected by either faulty instrument or unexplainable bias arising from his respondents. Moreover, Kayode's result is an isolated case, a drop of water on the ocean, compared to the body of literature reviewed all indicating positive relationship between emotional stability and counselling effectiveness. This study indicates that a counsellors' level of emotional stability tremendously affects his role either positively or negatively and this renders counselling process effective or ineffective. A high level of emotional stability will make for effective counselling while the lack of it can mar the entire process.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the scope of emotional stability disposition exhibited by the counsellor during

counselling process and his counselling effectiveness. It also touches on the resultant effects of counselling on the social life and interpersonal relationship of youths in relation to others in the school system.

The level of emotional stability exhibited by the counsellor goes a long way to prepare ground for a therapeutic relationship and success or otherwise of the counselling situation. Emotional stability becomes a skill in the hands of an efficient counsellor in order to induce other characteristics for the development of confidence in the counsellee. When a counsellee is confident enough in the counsellor to open up and express his problem then the counselling process is already on its express way to success or being effective. On the other hand, when the counsellor is not accommodative enough to command the respect and confidence of the counsellee then the client will try to be funny and this in turn expresses the inefficiency simply put the ineffectiveness of the counselling process. The effective counsellor is on relatively good terms with his clients. He is concerned about social progress but always exhibits appropriate self-control.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the study findings and discussions so far, the following recommendations are advanced:

- Since, emotional stability is capable of paving way for effective counselling, every guidance counsellor must cultivate and covet it
- Counselling Organization of Nigeria (CASSON) is called upon to urgently articulate measures for evaluating the emotional stability of practicing counsellors
- Students in Calabar Metropolis should be encouraged to always pay visits to counsellors by way of referrals to enable counsellors' self-evaluation of emotional stability
- Government and employers of labour on their part should regularly train and retrain counsellors through workshops and seminars where the trait of emotional stability is emphasized and inculcated in guidance counsellors

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