



THE ROLES OF COUNSELLING CONNOISSEURS IN PROMOTING UNITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting unity in Nigeria. Three hypotheses were tested in the study. The study employed a descriptive survey method. A total of 460 respondents participated in the study. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to select five out of the six geo-political zones based on population and location. Two states were randomly selected in each of the five geo-political zones. The major instrument was tagged "Roles of Counselling Connoisseurs in Promoting Unity Questionnaire (RCCPUQ)" was used. Data collected were analyzed. The findings revealed that the major roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting unity include advocacy visits male and female counsellors differed in their opinion on the roles of counsellors in national integration; the educational qualification of the respondents influenced their views and respondents also differed based on the years of service. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made; that the counselling experts in Nigeria should have representatives in every committee inaugurated by the Government to focus and assist people in areas faced with national crisis in order to provide the required counselling services to the people in such areas. The Federal government should give the counselling profession the maximum encouragement and support in order for them to be able to participate in national issues that can promote unity. School counsellors should enlighten the students on the need for unity and integration among Nigerians. Seminars and workshops should be organized by counsellors in collaboration with the government, Non-Governmental Organizations and other stakeholders in order to discuss and tackle contemporary issues on National unity and stability.

Keywords: Roles of Counselling, Counselling, Connoisseurs, Unity of Nigeria



Introduction

Counsellors are trained therapists who engage in the preventive and curative intervention programmes. The counsellor and the client cooperate and collaborate to find solutions to problems. Adeoye (2004) defined counselling as a specialty in the field of psychology whose practitioners assist clients to improve their well-being, alleviate distress, resolve crisis and increase their ability to be creative, innovative and make appropriate decisions. It is clear that developing countries are faced with lots of crisis that threaten their unity and socio-political stability. Onifade (2013) defined national integration as the process of unifying a society which tends to make it harmonious in all things. According to Onifade (2013) a country is well integrated when there is no violence and the allocation of resources are evenly distributed. Since the return of democracy the craze to amass wealth by the politicians has been the major cause of violence and national disunity in Nigeria. Adeleye (2014) reported that the Civil war of 1967-1970 was believed to have been fought to keep Nigeria as one country, but the consequences of that war has led to disunity.

The issue of Boko haram insurgency is a pointer to disunity among the various religious organizations in the country. The insurgents engaged in killings and abductions. Ethno-religious conflict is a major potent factor for disunity in Nigeria. Salawu (2010) defined ethno-religious conflict as a relationship in which members of one ethnic or religious group and



another multi-ethnic and multi-religious is characterized by lack of cordiality. The revealed cases of corrupt governors showed the inadequacies in our political scene. The lack of dedicated and charismatic leader has deterred the progress of the country (Adeleye, 2014). The major problem is the inability of our political leaders to consider ways of promoting unity and co-existence among the various tribes in Nigeria. Militants in the Niger Delta have continuously demanded for some certain privileges which when denied ended in insurgence, security threat and further disintegration (Onifade, 2013). Wanogho (2011) stated that the activities of the Islamic terrorist group, Boko Haram and their global connections with ISIS (International terrorists) has become a concern among Nigerians. The social restiveness of our youth and militancy are great challenges to national integration and peaceful co-existence in the country. Onifade (2013) observed that Nigerian's efforts at achieving national integration might not be realized. Adeleye (2014) noted that like South Africa, there is a need for more National conferences. Campbell (2012) suggested that the way forward is for the government to consciously and deliberately de-emphasize racism, ethnicity, religious bigotry, and cultural segregation. Iyaji (2000) advocated for national integration as a policy in order to promote national stability and integration.

It has been observed that the survival of Nigeria as a nation depends largely on our degree of tolerance not only in economic, social and political stability but to a large extent, on the ability of every citizen to possess some measure of common understanding, attitudes, beliefs, skills and purposes (Sababa & Domiva, 2012). These attributes can be inculcated in youths very early



in their educational development. Thus, the importance of guidance and counseling in this respect cannot be over-emphasized. Olorungbemi (2012) mentioned that the government should expedite action to legally enact law that backs up the counseling profession; this is because the trained counsellor can help to ensure effective national unity. The counsellors are empowered and trained to promote healthy relationship in the society. They are trained therapists who engage in the preventive and curative intervention programmes. The counsellor and the client often cooperate and collaborate to find solutions to problems. Adeoye (2004) defined counselling as a specialty in the field of psychology whose practitioners assist clients to improve their well-being, alleviate distress, resolve crisis and increase their ability to be creative, innovative and make appropriate decisions. Passer and Smith (2007) noted that human behavior is environmentally controlled. The behaviorist explained that behavior is learnt and can be unlearned. Counselors can help to develop new skills, encourage peaceful co-existence among various parties, improve communication and negotiation skills at the same time modify maladaptive behavior.

According to Agbakwuru and Opara (2013) the counsellor can promote national integration and peaceful co-existence by identifying the problems militating against this process. They can set goals and select techniques that will be useful in each community. However, the counsellor, through the assistance of Association of Professional Counsellors in Nigeria (APROCON) can move from one community to another where there are problems engaging in enlightenment



programmes on the need for national stability and integration. Enlightenment campaign by the counsellors in seminars and workshop can emphasize on the gains of national stability and integration.

Sokari (2006) emphasized that effective use of information is necessary for people's liberation from ignorance, misconception and national disability. The application of rational emotive therapeutic process of Albert Ellis can help change the thoughts of many Nigerians who engage in acts that continually encourage disintegration. Counsellors can restructure the thought pattern of the upcoming youths by discouraging sectionalism, violence and disintegration (Idzua & Anande, 2012). Group therapy, modeling, use of reinforcement can also be used by school counsellors to promote stability and sense of national integration among the youths (Ekoja, 2009).

Statement of the problem

Nigeria is confronted with myriads of challenges such as problem national disintegration, ethnic politics, religious and racial cleavages. These internal contradictions have led to religious and ethnic crisis (Onifade, 2013) observed that efforts at achieving national integration have not being realized. Thus, the integration crisis is manifested in every sector within the country. Despite the various efforts of the government to establish a nation with common identity, the unifying gap has continued to expand. For example, the formation of National Unity Schools, National Youth Service Corps and the Nigerian symbol were all premeditated to promote unity yet there is still disintegration. Salawu (2010) noted that poverty and ineffective governance



have further increased ethnic divisions. The springing up of various ethnic and regional militants and terror merchandises are evidences of problems and disunity among the different tribes in Nigeria. Since independence, unifying of various religious and ethnic groups has become amajor challenge in Nigeria. Ibrahim and Chaminda (2017) carved away at re-situating Nigeria towards sustainable national unity. Osimen, Balogun and Adenegan (2013) looked at ethnicity and identity crisis in Nigeria while Adeleye (2014) carried out a study on observable hindrances to national unity and social-political stability. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, none has worked on roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting national unity. It wasbased on these gaps therefore; the research study examined the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting unity in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting unity in Nigeria. The study intended to find out the influence of variables such as gender, educational qualification and years in service on the duties of counsellors in promoting Unity in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting Unity in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting unity in Nigeria on the basis of gender.



2. There is no significant difference in the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting unity in Nigeria on the basis of educational qualification.
3. There is no significant difference in roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting unity in Nigeria on the basis of years of service.

Methods

The research design used for this study was the descriptive survey method. The target population of the study consisted of all professional trained counsellors in Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in selecting the respondents that participated in the study. At the first stage, a cluster of six geo-political zones was considered. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to select five out of the six geo-political zones based on population and location. Two states were randomly selected in each of the five geo-political zones. As such, a total of 460 (10 counsellors in each of the selected states) respondents participated in the study. The major instrument was tagged Roles of Counselling Connoisseurs in Promoting Unity Questionnaire (RCCPUQ). Items in the questionnaire were derived from information obtained from the review of related literature. The instrument had two sections. Section A dealt with the demographic data of the respondents while Section B consisted of items on the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting unity. The 4-point Likert Type Scale response format was adopted for use on Section B as thus: Strongly Agree: 4 points; Agree: 3 points; Disagree: 2 points; and Strongly Disagree: 1 point.



In order to ascertain the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was given to four experts from related field of study in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma to check for the content validity. The suggestion of these experts was considered in the final draft of this questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was established using test-retest method within an interval of four weeks. The instrument was administered on 20 primary school counsellors in Ekpoma metropolis. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to compute the correlation co-efficient of the instrument. A reliability index of 0.68 was obtained. Hence the instrument was deemed statistically reliable.

Results

Demographic Data

This section presents the results of data obtained from the respondents in frequency counts and percentages

Table1: Distribution of Respondents Based on Personal Data

Personal Data	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	276	60.0
Female	184	40.0
Total	460	100.0
Educational Qualification		
First Degree	368	80.0
Postgraduate	92	20.0
Total	460	100.0
Years of Service		
1–10years	345	75.0
11–20years	115	25.0
Above20years	-	-
Total	460	100.0



Table 1 indicated that 460 respondents participated in the study out of which, 276 (60%) of the respondents were males, while 184 (40%) of the respondents were females. One's educational qualification, 368 (80%) of the respondents have first degree, while 92 (20%) of the respondents were having a postgraduate degree. The table also shows that 345(75%) of the respondents have spent between 1 – 10 years, while 115 (25%) have spent between 11 – 20 years in service.

Research Question One: What are the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting unity in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Rank Order on the Roles of Counselling Connoisseurs in Promoting Unity

Item No.	Counsellor's roles in promoting unity include:	Mean	Rank
1	Advocacy visits/trips	3.05	1st
2	Encouraging the spirit of tolerance among various ethnic groups	2.54	9th
3	Assertive training	2.57	7th
4	Teaching of negotiation skills to people of all age groups	2.51	11th
5	Community counselling for awareness and attainment of uniform goals	2.49	12th
6	Dialoging with aggrieved groups	2.38	15th
7	Rehabilitation	2.85	3rd
8	Cognitive restructuring of clients with psychological concerns	2.47	13th
9	Behaviour modification and adjustment	3.00	2nd
10	Awakening the spirit of reconciliation among the youth	2.60	6th
11	helping people of all ages improve on their communication skills	2.52	10th
12	Developing clients coping strategies to problems	2.42	14th
13	Reduction of deviancy among in-school adolescents	2.55	8th
14	Inculcating conflict resolution skills	2.62	5th
15	Organizing seminars/workshops on how to tackle contemporary issues	2.75	4th



Table 2 shows that items 1, 7 and 9 (*Counsellor’s roles in Promoting Unity include advocacy visits/trips; behaviour modification and adjustment; rehabilitation*) with mean scores of 3.05, 3.00 and 2.85 ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd. while ranked last is Item 6with mean score of 2.38. Since eleven out of the fifteen items have mean scores that area bove the mid-mean score of 2.50, then it can be said that majority of the respondents attested that counsellors have a role in promoting unity.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting Unity in Nigeria on the basis of gender.

Table3: t-test showing the Roles of Counselling Connoisseurs in Promoting Unity

Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal.t-value	p-value
Male	276	49.08	5.64	458	10.51*	0.001
Female	184	44.25	3.23			

*Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table3 shows a calculated t-value of 10.51 and a p-value of 0.001. The calculated p-value is less than the alpha value at 0.05. The hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting Unity in Nigeria on the basis of gender.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the roles of counselling connoisseurs’ counsellors in promoting Unity in Nigeria on the basis of educational qualification.



Table 4: t-test on the Roles of Counselling Connoisseurs in Promoting Unity Based on Educational Qualification

Edu. Qualification	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal.t-value	p-value
First Degree	368	47.87	5.10	458	6.00*	0.02
Postgraduate	92	44.25	5.47			

*Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows a calculated t-value of 6.00 and a p-value of 0.02. The calculated p-value is less than the alpha value at 0.05. The hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting Unity in Nigeria on the basis of educational qualification.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting Unity in Nigeria on the basis of years of service.

Table 5: t-test on the Roles of Counselling Connoisseurs in Promoting Unity in Nigeria on the Basis of Years of Service

Years of Service	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal.t-value	p-value
1 – 10 years	345	48.26	4.04	45	8.26*	0.01
11– 20 years	115	43.80	7.19	8		

*Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 5 shows a calculated t-value of 8.26 and a p-value of 0.01. The calculated p-value is less than the critical t-value. The hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the in the roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting Unity in Nigeria on the basis of years of service.



Discussion

The study revealed that the major roles of counselling connoisseurs in promoting unity include advocacy visits. Advocacy visit can be source of enlightenment on the need of national integration. Advocacy visits are necessary especially when there is a major social problem in an area that needs the attention of major stakeholders (Agbakwuru &Opara, 2012).

Male and female counsellors differed in their opinion on the roles of counsellors in national integration. It has been observed that gender have influence on perceptions especially on topical issues of national relevance. However, Adeleye (2014) noted that Nigerians are not convenient with the current disunity and instability in the country. Awoyemi (2012) recommended the need for private and public counselling practices as a solution to the multi-dimensional disunity confronting Nigerians.

The educational qualification of the respondents influenced their views. Counselling services are provided in a range of ways depending on the counsellor's level of training (Bukoye, Adeoye & Oyinloye, 2012). It is expected that the views of a degree holder as it relates to national stability and integration will be different from their counterparts with higher degrees. In the discharge of their responsibilities as counsellors in issues of national integration, Akinyemi (2010) emphasized that the contemporary Nigeria society with different challenges of instability and disunity needs qualified, competent and certified counsellors to assist the government in taking informed decisions.



Respondents also differed based on the years of service. Onifade (2013) observed that the efforts of the government at achieving national unity could be difficult. Wanogho (2011) explained that through personnel efforts, Martin Luther was able to de-emphasized racism, ethnicity, religion, cultural affiliation, and all the potential bottlenecks, in order to achieve peaceful co-existence. This he did by organizing lectures, seminars, workshop, and rallies and without regards to race, ethnic divide, cultural and religious affiliation. In achieving national integration history could repeat itself if these processes are followed. Adeoye (2004) confidently expressed that the experience of a counsellor counts in releasing valid and useful information that will bring about useful adjustment. In doing this, counsellors, also organize seminars, lectures, training the trainer, workshop, etc as a form of enlightenment.

Implication for Counsellors

The counselling association, as a matter of urgency must ensure that legal recognition is given to counselling profession in Nigerian. This will empower counsellors to contribute their quota towards national integration. Awoyemi (2012) pointed out that the absence of enabling framework in form of a degree or act of parliament is one of the greatest challenges confronting counselling profession.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that the counselling experts in Nigeria should have representatives in every committee inaugurated by the Government to focus and assist



people in areas faced with national crisis in order to provide the required counselling services to the people in such areas. The Federal government should give the counselling profession the maximum encouragement and support in order for them to be able to participate in national issues that can promote unity. School counsellors should enlighten the students on the need for unity and integration among Nigerians. Seminars and workshops should be organized by counsellors in collaboration with the government, non-Governmental Organizations and other stakeholders in order to discuss and tackle contemporary issues on National unity and stability.

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