

Teachers And Students Perception On Counsellor's Ethical Behaviour Duringcounselling Relationship In Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.

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Abstract: Ethical principles and behaviour in Guidance and Counselling are standardized and acceptable repertoire of the counselling relationship. This study was carried out to examine the perception of teachers and students on the Counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour during counselling relationship in Minna, Niger State. Specifically, the study aimed at investigating the perception of teachers and students on Counsellor's expressed confidentiality, empathy and self-disclosure during counselling relationship. The population of study was 54,461 comprising of 46,461 SS 3students and 8000 teachers. The sample size was 325 students and 56 teachers. While 12 schools were purposively selected for having a functional Guidance and Counselling units, stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The study adopted an Ex post facto research design. An 18-item questionnaire constructed by the researcher served as the instrument for the study. It was sub-sectioned into four; each solicited information on socio-demographic data, perception on confidentiality; empathy; and self-disclosure respectively. The reliability co-efficient index value of the instrument was 0.78.Four research questions guided the study, while 4 hypotheses were raised and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings of the study indicated among others that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that counsellors expressed high degree of ethical principles and behaviour. However, there is a significant difference between the perception of teachers and students on counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour during counselling relationship, with an overall calculated t-value of 5.29. Also, on the perception of Counsellor's expressed confidentiality, the overall calculated t-value of 8.98 indicated that there is a significant difference. It was, therefore, concluded that counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour should be upheld during counselling relationship in Minna, Niger State. Among the recommendations were that; workshops should be organized to educate other school personnel on the parameters of confidentiality. Also,Counsellor's should always imbibe and express confidentiality, empathy and self-disclosure during counselling relationship. These are very fundamental, as they enhance confidence, trust, willingness, free expression and motivate self-disclosure in the client, thereby resulting in the attainment of counselling goals.

Keywords: Counsellor; Confidentiality; Empathy; Self-disclosure; perception.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The diverse needs, challenges and concerns of the human race are so numerous, tasking and demanding that an individual, in his limited knowledge, may never be able to resolve them all. These needs cut across need for love, belongingness and approval; need for achievement, understanding and vocation; need for freedom, economic and political security; need to tackle emotional and behavioural problems and need to handle devastating health challenges (AbdulAzeez&Sumangala, 2015). It is against the above-mentioned needs that there should be an effective working relationship between one who is vulnerable (counselee) and another who is professionally trained and skilled (Counsellor) to give assistance to the former. A counselling relationship is a professional interaction between a Counsellor, who has the expertise and makes deliberate efforts to assist the individual(s) understand self and learn to solve his problems (Mogbo, Ndaman&Mamman, 2010). Guidance and Counselling, as a professional discipline, is guided by ethical principles and norms that should moderate the behavioural disposition and practices of the Counsellor. The ethical principles do not only uphold the integrity and image of the profession, but, also promote healthy and effective counselling relationship. Counselling ethical behaviour include; confidentiality, self-disclosure, mutual respect, good rapport, empathy, good communication skills, genuineness, proper dress code.

Perception simply refers to one's view, understanding or thought towards a given phenomenon in the society. Perceptions, as opined by Schacter (2011), involve the identification and interpretation of information which helps in understanding a phenomenon in the environment. In other words, the perception towards an issue

has great potential to influence its practice and success or failure. The perception of the Counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour by teachers and secondary school students may largely determine the accessibility of the guidance and counselling services in schools. Aminu (2018), in his study, revealed that both teachers and students have negative perceptions towards school guidance and counselling services working on students' future career, personal problems, students' empowerment and decision making. This negative perception had influence on the effective practice and implementation of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools. Simply put, it is only teachers and students in secondary schools who have good understanding of the ethical principles and behaviour guiding the professional Counsellor, that can easily access the guidance and counselling services and be able carry-on through to a logical end.

One ethical principle of guidance and counselling is confidentiality, which is of core importance in a counselling relationship. This implies keeping information about and from the client secret. Effective counselling relationship is rooted on a foundation of confidence and trust. These do not only enhance the clients' willingness to express their 'stories' freely, but, honestly disclose their feelings, fears, thought, memories and desires (Abubakar, 2018). Put differently, an atmosphere of confidentiality does not only make for clear expression and definition of the problem or need; but also enhance the setting of achievable goals, which are targeted at resolving the client's needs. Martin (2017) opined that confidentiality in counselling dictates maintaining personal information about a counsellee and ensuring that no other (not even another Counsellor) has access to such information without the counsellee's consent. Stressing the importance of confidentiality in counselling, the American Counselling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2005) stated that Counsellors should respect the client's right to privacy and shun illegal and unwarranted disclosure of confidential information. The Association further stated that, confidentiality belongs to the client not the Counsellor. Hence, assurance of confidentiality is a pre-requisite for effective counselling relationship. However, there are instances where there can be a breach of confidentiality. Such instances include when there is a threat to life, security of client and others; court order or legal procedures and when there is continual abuse of the client, especially in case of sexual harassment and peer victimization. Also, confidentiality can be breached when the client had given explicit consent (Oramah, 2012; Ford and Croot, 2014). As Abubakar (2018) aptly put it, the right to privacy of client can be compromised when the interest of the society outweighs it in order to preserve a stable societal structure. Where situation warrants a breach of confidentiality, the Counsellor must not only ensure minimal harm to the client but also, that ethical and institutional laws are correctly adhered to (Martin, 2017). It is pertinent to note that confidentiality in counselling is a professional vow or contract to respect the right of the client by not divulging any information received from client during a counselling relationship except by his or her explicit consent.

Another ethical principle and behaviour necessary for an effective counselling relationship is empathy. This refers to the Counsellor's therapeutic skill that involves a commitment to understanding the counsellee's personal frame of mind or concern. Decety and Yoder (2016) defined empathy as "a multifaceted construct used to account for the capacity to share and understand the thoughts and feelings of others". It also includes conveying such understanding back to the counsellee through reflective listening. Empathy is an expression of active listening skills and deep understanding of counsellee's fears, worries, anxieties and challenges without giving room to complexity. Empathy can be evidenced from the counsellor's tone of voice, body movement, facial expression, active listening and careful statements. Expressed empathy by a counsellor results in the counsellee feeling cared for and understood; thereby promoting greater level of trust and self-understanding for the counsellee and higher job satisfaction for the counsellor. . Consequently he or she becomes confident to express whatever problematic issues wholeheartedly (Selva, 2019). Empathy is the most effective means of promoting changes in the behaviour of counsellee. In a study by Elliot, Bohart, Watson & Greenberg (2011), there was indication that not only was empathy a predictor of the outcome of effective therapeutic relationship ($r=31$), but also, as opposed to observer and therapists measures, client measures, predicted the outcome best ($r=32$). This implies that while empathy was a moderate predictor of outcome, the client's perception of being understood by the Counsellor, was a robust predictor of outcome. In summation, Elliot, et. al.(2011), opined that irrespective of theoretical preference and empirical literature connecting empathy to therapeutic outcome, Counsellor's empathy is a key change-agent in a counselling relationship.

The importance of self-disclosure as an ethical principle during counselling relationship cannot be over-emphasized. Self-disclosure is a verbal expression of deep and sensitive information, thought, action, feelings and concerns (Farber, 2003). Self-disclosure in counselling relationship has its root in Psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud in 1911 (Okoiye, Okezie & Ukoha, 2018). Freud opined that, a client should disclose everything that comes to his mind whether the client saw as relevant or not. Put differently, a client's challenges are usually rooted in some suppressed 'insignificant' experiences of the past as one develops from one stage to another. Hence, for healing or resolution to occur, there must be thorough analysis of personal sensitive contents. Self-disclosure can be viewed as a way of demonstrating a Counsellor's genuineness and positive regard; present a Counsellor as humans who may have experienced challenges and reassures the client that his and her challenges are not strange phenomenon. Self-disclosure is viewed positively in a behavioural or

cognitive behavioural therapy, when it is intended to model client's self-disclosure. When counseling a client from a different socio-cultural background, as in multi-cultural counselling approach, self-disclosure can be a means of earning the client's trust. A study by Blackburn (2011) indicated interplay between client's self-disclosure and therapeutic relationship. According to the findings, clients are likely to perceive self-disclosure positively if they viewed the Counsellor as being warm and empathic. Also, clients under high level of psychological distress are more prone to higher self-disclosure. Refusal to self-disclosure in a counselling relationship has the potentials not only to slow the progress made; arrive at shabby and wrong counseling but also, results in impromptu termination of the counselling relationship. In a nutshell, a purposeful and 'open' counselling relationship, hinged on confidentiality, empathy and self-disclosure, has the potentials to make life meaningful to clients thereby assisting them to attain the desired self-adjustment and self-fulfillment. The ethical principles and behaviour of counselling are global constructs of which Niger State is not an exception. Niger State is a multi-cultural state. Its capital, Minna, is a cosmopolitan and a melting-point of various ethnic and social groups within and outside the state. It lies on Latitude 3:20° East and Longitude 11:30° North. Being centripetally located in the north central geo-political zone of Nigeria, Niger State is the largest state in the country. It shares borders with Kwara and Kebbi States and Benin Republic in the West; Zamfara and Kaduna States in the North; Kogi State in the South and Abuja- the Federal Capital Territory in the South East (Niger State Government, 2008). Against the above strategic location, the choice of Niger State for this study can be justified, as knowledge, ideas and findings generated from this study, can be easily disseminated to other parts of the nation.

II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Many practicing Counsellors in the schools of Niger State face the challenges of most students and teachers being unwilling to access guidance and counselling services. Also, their unwillingness to self-disclosure had often led to abrupt termination of counselling relationship, without achieving the set-goals. This can be very frustrating. Put differently, despite the numerous needs of students and teachers (as individuals in the human society), and the availability of professionally trained Counsellor within the school system especially, there is a low accessibility of the guidance and counselling services in secondary school in Niger State. Most secondary school students in Niger State hardly access the guidance and counselling services. Also, neither do the teachers access the guidance counselling services nor make referral of the students to the services. In other words, there seems to be no synergy between the ethical principles and behaviour of the Counsellor and the students' needs due to inadequate awareness of these principles. This becomes an issue of concern to the researcher because the professional ethics of a Counsellor, such as, confidentiality, empathy, rapport, genuineness are a staple part of a Counsellor's armamentarium to assist the vulnerable; thus, counselling services in schools need to be greatly patronized and utilized. This study, therefore, sought to evaluate the ethical principles and behaviour of the Counsellor vis-à-vis its perception by teachers and students in secondary schools in Niger State, so as to examine how it influences a counselling relationship.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at determining the perception of the teachers and students of the Counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour. Specifically, the study aimed at investigating the teachers' and students' perception of Counsellor's expressed confidentiality, empathy and self-disclosure during counselling relationship.

Research questions

The following research questions gave direction to the study:

1. What is the perception of teachers and students on the Counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour?
2. Is there any difference in the perception of teachers and students on the counsellor's expressed confidentiality?
3. Is there any difference in the perception of teachers and students on the counsellor's expressed empathy?
4. Is there any difference in the perception of teachers and students on the counsellor's expressed self-disclosure

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.5 percent level of significance

H_0^1

There is no significant difference between the perception of the teachers and students on Counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour.

H_0^2

There is no significant difference between the perception of the teachers and students on Counsellor's expressed confidentiality.

H_0^3

There is no significant difference between the perception of the teachers and studentson Counsellor's expressed empathy.

H_0^4

There is no significant difference between the perception of the teachers and students on Counsellor's expressed self-disclosure.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an Ex-post facto design. This is a research design that is suitable for collection of data on a social research that seeks to find the relationship between independent and dependent variables after an action or event has already occurred. The design seeks to identify the causative relationship between the independent and dependent variables, since the researchers do not have complete control over the dependent variable. The population of the study was 54,461 comprising of 46,461 SS 3 students and 8,000 secondary schools teachers in Niger State. The sample size was 381. This was justified by Research Adviser sample size table 2006. The sample size consisted of 325 SS 3 students and 56 teachers selected from schools that had functional Guidance and Counselling Units across the State. Twelve schools were purposively selected while stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select the students and teachers, based on the population of the students and teachers in each of the selected schools. The instrument of the study was an 18-item questionnaire constructed by the researcher. The questionnaire was sub-sectioned into four. Section A solicited for information on the socio-demographic data of respondents; Section B solicited for information on perception of Counsellor's confidentiality; Section C solicited for information on perception of Counsellor's empathy; while Section D sought data on perception of self- disclosure, during counselling relationship. Responses were sought on a 4 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagreed (1); Disagreed (2); Agreed (3); Strongly Agreed (4). The scale was validated by two professionals in measurement and evaluation and one experienced school Counsellors. The observations and contributions from these experienced experts were greatly utilized to ensure the face, content, construct and criterion- reference validity of the instrument. The test-retest technique was utilized to ensure that the instrument was adequate to measure what it was meant to measure. Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method, a reliability co-efficient index of 0.78 was realized. With the help of twotrained research assistants, the researcher administered the questionnaires to the respondents. The data generated was analyzed and the null hypotheses tested at 0.5 level of significance using t-test.

IV. RESULTS

Demographic Data

Table 1: Teachers and Students Respondents who hadengaged in Counselling with a Counsellor

Engaged in Counselling		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Teachers	Yes	18	32%
	No	38	68%
Total		56	100.0%
Students	Yes	136	41.8%
	No	189	58.2%
Total		325	100.0%

From table 1 above, 18 (32%) of the teachers had engaged in counselling with a counsellor while, 38 (68%) of them have not engaged in counselling with a counsellor. Also, 136 (41.8%) of the students had engaged in counselling with a counsellor while, 189 (58.2%) of students have not engaged in counseling with a counsellor. This evidenced the claim by the researcher that guidance and counselling services are not adequately utilized and accessed by teachers and students in secondary schools in Minna, Niger State

Test of Hypotheses

H_{01} : There is no significant difference between the perceptions teachers and students on the Counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour.

Table 2:t-Test Result of Teachers' and Students' Perceptions on Counsellor's Ethical Principles and Behaviour

Variable	N	Df	Mean	Std Dev.	t-value Cal.	t-value Crit.	Sign. Level (p)
Teachers	56	379	46.02	6.34	5.290*	1.966	0.000
Students	325		50.47	5.73			

*-Significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 2above presents the t-test result of teachers' and students' perceptions on Counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour. From the table, t-value calculated (5.290) is greater than t-value critical (1.966) and the significant level (0.000) is less than 0.05 confidence level of significance. This indicated that there is significant difference between the teachers' mean response (46.02) and students' mean response (50.47) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, hypothesis one that say there is no significant difference between the teachers' and students' perceptions on the Counsellor' ethical principles and behaviour is rejected. Hence there is significant difference between the teachers' and students' perceptions on the Counsellor' ethical principles and behaviour, with the teachers recording a lower level of perception than the students.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between perceptions of the teachers and students on the Counsellor's expressed confidentiality.

Table 3:t-Test of Difference between Teachers' and Students' Perceptions on Counsellor's Confidentiality.

Variable	N	Df	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value Cal.	t-value Crit.	Sign. Level (p)
Teachers	56	379	14.63	1.91	8.98*	1.966	0.000
Students	325		17.87	2.59			

*- Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 3 above presents the t-test analysis of teachers' and students' perceptions on Counsellor's expressed confidentiality. From the table, t-value calculated (8.98) is greater than t-value critical (1.966) and the significant level (0.000) is less than 0.05 confidence level of significance. This indicated that there is significant difference between the teachers' mean response (14.63) and students' mean response (17.87) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, hypothesis two that say there is no significant difference between the perception of teachers and students on the Counsellor' expressed confidentiality is rejected. The implication is that while, the students were more favourably disposed to accepting a counsellor's confidentiality during a counselling relationship, the teachers had some reservations. This reservation could be traced to their preference of clients "keeping my issues to myself" on the questionnaire.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference between the perceptionof teachers and students on the Counsellor'sexpressed empathy.

Table 4:t-Test of Difference between Teachers' and Students' Perceptions on Counsellor's Empathy.

Variable	N	Df	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value Cal.	t-value Crit.	Sign. Level (p)
Teachers	56	379	15.75	2.99	1.777 ^{ns}	1.966	0.076
Students	325		16.44	2.61			

ns- Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 4 above presents the t-test result of teachers' and students' perceptions on Counsellor's expressed empathy. From the table, t-value calculated (1.777) is less than t-value critical (1.966) and the significant level (0.076) is greater than 0.05 confidence level of significance. This indicated that there is no significant difference between the teachers' mean response (15.75) and students' mean response (16.44) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, hypothesis three that say there is no significant difference between the teachers' and students' perceptions on the Counsellor' expressed empathy is accepted. That implies that the respondents agreed with the Counsellor's ethical principles as regards to empathy.

Ho₄: There is no significant difference between the perceptions of teachers and students on the Counsellor's expressed self-disclosure.

Table 5:t-Test of Difference between Teachers' and Students' Perceptions on Counsellor's Self-disclosure.

Variable	N	Df	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value Cal.	t-value Crit	Sign. Level (p)
Teachers	56	379	15.64	2.39	1.594	1.966	0.112
Students	325		16.16	2.23			

ns- Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table 5 above presents the t-test analysis of teachers' and students' perceptions on Counsellor's expressed empathy. From the table, t-value calculated (1.594) is less than t-value critical (1.966) and the significant level (0.112) is greater than 0.05 confidence level of significance. This indicated that there is no significant difference between the teachers' mean response (15.64) and students' mean response (16.16) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, hypothesis four that say, there is no significant difference between the teachers' and students' perceptions on the Counsellor' expressed self-disclosure is accepted.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study made some remarkable findings. From the socio-demographic data generated in this study, it is very apparent that most teachers (68%) in the secondary schools in Niger State neither seek counselling with the professionally trained Counsellor nor make referral of students to the Counsellor. This calls for concern because "Introduction to Guidance and Counselling" is one of the core courses that every teacher-on-training must undertake before graduation. One would, therefore, expect the teachers to appreciate the ethical principles and behaviour of professional Counsellors and accord great importance to seeking guidance and counselling and encourage maladjusted students to do so. The students indicated about 42% engagement in counselling with a Counsellor, which is still below average. Despite the low rate of accessing the counselling services, it is significant to note that, majority of the respondents were of the opinion that Counsellors expressed high degree of ethical principles and behaviour.

On the first postulation that, there is no significant difference between the perception of teachers and students on the Counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour, the finding indicated that t-value calculated (5.290) is greater than t-value critical (1.966) and the significant level (0.000) is less than 0.05 confidence level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis one is rejected. There is a significant difference between the perception of teachers and students on the Counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour. With the teachers' mean response (46.02) and students' mean response (50.47), it is an indication that the students had a better perception of the ethical principles and behaviour of the Counsellor. The study also indicated that, there is a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers and students on the Counsellor's expressed confidentiality. The t-value calculated (8.98) is greater than t-value critical (1.966) and the significant level (0.000) is less than 0.05 confidence level of significance. Hence, the second hypothesis was rejected. While, teachers' mean response was 14.63, the students' mean response was 17.87. This invariably means that, the students had more confidence in the Counsellor's ability to keep their information secret, carefully and respect their right to privacy without unnecessary compromise, than the teachers. The disposition of the students in this study, had confirmed assertions by previous studies (Chinweuba & Ike, 2018; Zur, 2016; Hansen, 2009) that, expressed confidentiality is a professional promise or contract, which cannot be breached except under agreed upon condition. The teachers' perception may be as a result of feeling matured enough, to handle whatever challenges of life that may come their way. Such is erroneous, because a problem shared, is a problem solved. Also, a professionally trained Counsellor has been equipped with the techniques, skills and counselling approach that best suit a client's peculiar challenges.

According to the findings of this study, the third and fourth hypotheses were accepted since there is no significant difference between the perceptions of teachers and students on the counsellors expressed empathy and self-disclosure. On perceptions of Counsellor's expressed empathy, the t-value calculated (1.777) is less than t-value critical (1.966) and the significant level (0.076) is greater than 0.05 confidence level of significance. The teachers' mean response (15.75) and students' mean response (16.44) tallied. This indicates that the respondents agreed that expressed empathy on the part of the Counsellor, projects them as unique character with positive mindset to accept others' weakness, deficiencies and ready to give clients a sense of belongingness without condemnation. Positive perception of Counsellor's empathy propels the clients to feel comfortable, focus, relax and without undue reservation, express their concerns and anxieties to the Counsellor. This disposition of respondents lends weight to findings by Okoiye, et.al, (2018); Elliot, et.al, (2011) in their studies that empathy facilitates positive self-disclosure and effective counselling relationship. Also, the respondents expressed positive perception of the counsellor's expressed self-disclosure during counselling relationship. The overall calculated t-value (1.594) is less than t-value critical (1.966) and the significant level (0.112) is greater than 0.05 confidence level of significance. The teachers' mean response (15.64) and students' mean response (16.16) are at par, thereby leading to the acceptance of null hypothesis four. This implies that both teachers and

students agreed that self-disclosure strengthens therapeutic alliance. This is because, not only will the client understand that he or she is not alone in his or her maladjustment, but also, finds in the Counsellor an experienced significant one, who will bring his wealth of experience to bear on the client's challenges. In other words, self-disclosure does not only depicts a counsellor's genuineness, positive regard and as a normal human being who also faces challenges, but also, encourages the client to freely reveal every useful information that will help get to the root of his or her problem.

VI. CONCLUSION

Counselling relationship is a unique interaction held in an atmosphere of confidentiality, empathy, rapport, mutual respect, genuineness, self-disclosure, with the aim to assist the clients increase the understanding of self(s) and relationship with others, to develop more resourceful way of living, and to bring about desired positive changes in their lives. The result of the study revealed that both teachers and students have understanding of the Counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour, as effective skills and techniques during counselling relationship. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that Counsellors expressed high degree of ethical principles and behaviour. However, there is a significant difference in the perception of teachers and students on Counsellor's expressed confidentiality. Therefore, counsellor's ethical principles and behaviour cannot be said to be responsible for the low turn-out of the respondents to seeking counselling with school Counsellors.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is pertinent to note that, following the result of the study, the researcher engaged in one-on-one interaction with some respondents on why many of them do not engage in counselling with the school Counsellor. They lamented on the inadequate number of Counsellors in the schools and their tight schedules, which make them (Counsellors) not to really give quality time to listen to their challenges. Against this background, therefore, the researcher recommended that the Government at all levels and school administrators should disengage the Counsellors from teaching other subjects in the classroom, so that they can focus on the counselling relationship.
2. Counsellors should endeavour to guarantee the confidentiality and right of privacy of the clients by handling crucial information from the client carefully. However, Counsellors should make known to the client the limit of confidentiality before the on-set of counselling relationship.
3. Workshops should be organized for other school personnel, educating them about the parameters of confidentiality.
4. Counsellors should always express empathy during counselling relationship in order to assure and reassure the client of understanding their frame of reference and willingness to assist them rediscover their potentials.
5. Counsellors should motivate the clients' self-disclosure by modelling the wealth of their life experience that is relevant for the clients to borrow from.

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