



**INFLUENCE OF ETHICAL AND PERSONALITY
CHARACTERISTICS OF PRACTICING COUNSELLORS
ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ADAMAWA STATE
TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLOR
EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AND CERTIFICATION**

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Abstract:

This study investigates the influence of ethical and personality characteristics of counselling practitioners on the growth and development of the counselling profession in Nigeria. Research questions were raised to identify the major ethical and personality characteristics exhibited by practicing Counsellors in Adamawa state tertiary institutions of learning, while the hypotheses sought to find out if the respondents differ in their possession of the desirable ethical and personality characteristics. All students and Counsellors from Adamawa state citadel of higher learning constituted the population for the study. The sample comprised of 109 students and 25 practicing Counsellors in Adamawa state tertiary institutions. A modified four point Likert type scale instrument was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was validated and found to be reliable at 0.71 Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient. The data collected were analyzed using means, standard deviation, independent t-test, and two sample Kolmogorov Smirnov tests. The findings revealed that counselling practitioners in Adamawa state tertiary institutions possess the expected personality characteristics, but lack the basic knowledge and skills to effectively service students' cases. The study also revealed that the counsellor education curriculum of most universities was defective. The products of such institutions may not possess the minimum requirement to be certificated as professional practicing Counsellors. It was therefore recommended among other things that the counsellor education curriculum be overhauled and new courses on current issues such as multi-culturalism in counselling be integrated into the curriculum in order to meet the minimum conditions for certification and licensure.

Keywords: counsellor education programme; multi-culturalism in counselling; personality characteristics; ethical behaviour; professional growth and development; certification and licensure

1. Introduction

Professional counselling practice is all about helping self and others to find solutions to the problems of human existence. Practicing professional Counsellors should exhibit professionally acceptable ethical and personality characteristics in order to build confidence and to assist incongruent clients to address the problems of human existence (Kolo, 2011). Ibrahim (2010) defines professional ethics as rules that govern the conduct and behaviours of a given profession. Ethics which are critical in professional counselling includes exhibiting confidentiality in all counselling situations, avoidance of use of one's religious beliefs in counselling students in a multi – cultural environment and having carnal knowledge with ones' client.

Personality refers to one's physical appearance and other personal and behavioural characteristics (thoughts, feelings, actions, attitudes, lifestyles, manner of speech, dressing habit, intelligence, work ethics, humility, humour, likes/dislikes, beliefs etc.) that make him different from others and unique as a person. It refers to what a person really is; the things that are most typical and characteristics of the person. It can also be defined as those things that make an individual different from others. It includes physical appearance, manner of speech or the kind of impression the person makes on others (Umeano, 1999). Counsellors' personality characteristics include neatness, responsible dressing, self-confidence, and honesty (Nwoye, 1988).

In the traditional Africa, wise men existed in every cultural community. They were highly revered by community members because of their old age, possession of desirable personality characteristics, possession of wisdom and the enormous contributions in the solution of personal, social, spiritual and psychological problems. The arrival of Christian Missionaries in the Continent of Africa witnessed the emergence of western education and another group of wise men popularly called Guidance Counsellors. These wise men have many things in common except that while the later use effective instruments such as psychological tests and other techniques in the diagnosis and treatment of human problems, the former use none. Secondly, while wise men in their cultural communities offer their services free of charge, professional practicing Counsellors are employed by both government and private institutions. Professional practicing Counsellors who work in educational institutions, like their counterparts in the cultural communities are expected to exhibit certain ethical standards and personality characteristics to be able to earn respect and confidence from their clients and employers.

Departments and faculties of education in Nigerian Universities and some Colleges of Education have been training Counsellors to work in primary, secondary schools, colleges of education and other similar tertiary institutions. The admission

requirements for these students to read education and higher degrees in counselling are sadly the same for other programmes of study in the Universities. As a professional course, it is expected that students who are admitted should possess certain ethical and personality characteristics that are relevant to the counselling profession. Most departments and faculties of education do not consider these qualities that are very critical in the production of functional Counsellors. What one sees in the Nigerian counselling profession are myriads of practicing Counsellors who exhibit unethical behaviours and personality characteristics that are at variance with the societal expectations of professional Counsellors. When professional Counsellors exhibit all kinds of uncultured behaviours, one wonders whether they actually went through the training programme and if they did, whether they possess the relevant professional attributes at the entry point.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of Counsellors are graduated with lower and higher degrees who do not possess the desirable characteristics and ethical principles that will earn them respect and confidence from their clients and general public. Many of these professional counselling practitioners have not been sufficiently exposed to relevant courses during the didactic aspect of the training programme. Omengala (2011) carried out a study to identify areas of similarities and differences in the courses offered in the master's Degree programme in northern Nigerian Universities. The result revealed that there are more differences than similarities in the courses offered in various Universities in Nigeria. For instance, the counsellor education programmes in most Nigerian Universities do not seem to emphasize multi-culturalism in counseling which is very critical in preparing Counsellors to work in multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious setting like Nigeria. Many of them, who are products of such a given cultural system, find it difficult to successfully operate in helping clients from other cultural environments. Many Counsellors complain of lack of sufficient knowledge and skills which is traceable to the differences in training received by these Counsellors. According to Omengala (2011), courses in psychological testing and vocational guidance are not offered or made compulsory in most universities that are offering the programme. These inadequacies have become a challenge because they cannot handle clients in areas they were not taught. It is therefore, the conviction of these authors that contemporary Guidance Counsellors may either lack the basic professional requirements at entry points or are not adequately prepared to work in mono-cultural or multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious Nigerian environment. Such practicing Counsellors may not be able to meet the minimum requirement for certification and licensure by the Counselling Association of Nigeria. These shortcomings have serious implication for counsellor education programmes on professional development. This paper therefore, examined the ethical and personality characteristics of practicing Counsellors and their influence on professional growth and development.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian Professional Practicing Counsellors are products of the counsellor education programmes mounted by departments and faculties of education in the Nigerian universities. Many of these products are consumed by the three levels in the education system; private, government ministries and departments. Concerned professional Counsellors including the authors have observed that most Nigerian Counsellors lack the basic ethical behaviours and personality characteristics expected of professional Counsellors in their work environments. Practicing Counsellors sometimes have problems in respect of what constitute acceptable behaviours to be exhibited either in the counselling relationship or social group. Each counsellor exhibits behaviour in accordance with the cultural norms and values of their state origin, the institutions in which they work their training, type of degrees and needs of clients lead to differences in their ethical conduct. These Counsellors may not possess the desired ethical and personal characteristics to be certified as professional counselors in school and non-school settings.

There has not been any study on the effectiveness of the Counsellor Education Programmes mounted by departments and faculties of education in Nigeria on service delivery and professional growth and development as far as the search for literature is concerned. This study therefore determined the extent to which lack of ethical behaviours and personality characteristics expected of professional counselors influence professional growth and development of the Nigerian counselling profession.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The Purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of ethical and personality characteristics of practicing Counsellors on professional development in Adamawa state tertiary institutions. The specific objectives of the study were enumerated as follows:

1. determine the influence of ethical behaviours of Professional Practicing Counsellors on the growth and development of the Nigerian Counselling Profession;
2. determine the perception of Male and Female professional Counsellors on their ability to handle Clients' problem on multi-cultural environment;
3. determine the influence of Personality Characteristics of Professional Counsellors on the growth and development of the counselling profession; and
4. examine the implications of the Ethical and Personality Characteristics of Professional Practicing Counsellors on the counsellor education programmes and certification.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What are the major ethical behaviours of Professional Counsellors in Nigeria?

2. What are the personality characteristics that influence Counsellors professional practice?
3. To what extent do the counsellor education programmes mounted by departments and faculties of education provide adequate training for counsellor trainees?

1.5 Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of Counsellors ethical behaviours of Students and Practicing Counsellors in Adamawa state tertiary institutions.
2. There is no significant difference in perception between Male and Female professional Counsellors on the ability of Nigerian Counsellors to handle clients' problems in multi-cultural environment
3. There is no significant difference in the perception between Students and Counsellors on the possession of acceptable ethical and personality characteristics by counselling practitioners.

2. Materials and Methods

The study is descriptive in nature and is a survey research design which seeks to find out the opinion of participants regarding their perceived influence of ethical and personality characteristics of professional Counsellors on their professional growth and development. It is a survey type because it is aimed at collecting data on and describing it in a systematic manner; the characteristics, features or facts about a given population (Nworgu, 2006; Adeyemi, 2007)

2.1 Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all practicing Counsellors across the state and undergraduate students in Adamawa State tertiary institutions, such as; Modibbo Adama University of Technology (MAUTECH), Adamawa State University (ADSU) Mubi, Federal Polytechnic (FEDPOLY) Mubi, Adamawa State Polytechnic Yola (ADSPY), Federal College of Education (FCE) Yola, College of Agriculture (COA) Ganye, College of Health Technology (COHT) Mubi.

2.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of the study consisted of 109 undergraduates and 25 Guidance Counsellors randomly selected from MAUTECH, Yola, ADSU, Mubi, FCE, Yola, FEDPOLY, Mubi, COA, Ganye, and COHT, Mubi. The sample of the undergraduate students was made up of 69 males and 40 females. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants from tertiary institutions in Adamawa state that have Guidance counselling Clinics.

2.3 Research Instrument

The instrument titled: Influence of Ethical Values and Personality Characteristics of Professional Counsellors on their professional development (EVPCCCL) was designed by the researchers to collect data for the study. The instrument consisted of two parts (Sections A, B, C, D, E & F). Section A sought for demographic information of the respondents, while Sections B, C, & D consisted of EVPCCCL modified four point Likert type scale with 12, 14 and 10 statements designed to elicit information from the respondents on the influence of ethical values and personality characteristics of professional Counsellors on their professional development. Similarly, Sections E and F consisted of 14 and 16 statements which elicited information on personality characteristics and professional training of Counsellors. The instrument was administered to all the students counselling practitioners during the meeting of the state chapter. About 109 students and 25 counselling practitioners responded to the instrument.

The instrument EVPCCCL was validated by experts from Counselling Psychology Department, Adamawa State University, Mubi. All the suggestions and recommendations of the validators were considered in the production of the final draft of the instrument. To determine the reliability of the EVPCCCL, it was administered to 50 students who were not part of the sample. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach statistic and a coefficient alpha reliability of 0.71 was obtained.

2.4 Method of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, Mean and standard deviation to answer research questions 1 and 2 whereas, independent t-test and Kolmogorov Smirnov two sample test were used to test the hypotheses formulated. The cut off mean for high and low responses for the items were 2.5 and above for high responses and below 2.5 for low responses.

3. Results

Research Question 1: What are the major ethical behaviours exhibited by the Nigerian Professional Counsellors?

This research question sought to find out the major ethical behaviours exhibited by the Nigerian professional practicing counselors. The response pattern is a modified four-point Likert type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with assigned values of 4, 3, 2, and 1. Negative statements were scored in the reverse order. Data which answered the research question were presented in Table 1.

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Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Responses of Students and Counsellors on the Behaviour of Professional Counsellors

S/No.	Items	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1.	Our Guidance Counsellor does not keep secrets.	325.00	2.98	0.97	High
2.	Our Guidance Counsellor segregates between tribes.	335.00	3.07	0.93	High
3.	Our Guidance Counsellor is a religious fanatic.	344.00	3.16	0.82	High
4.	Our Guidance Counsellor is always late to school.	342.00	3.14	0.89	High
5.	Our Guidance Counsellor is not always effective in handling students' problems.	307.00	2.82	0.94	High
6.	Our Guidance Counsellor does not possess good qualities of a counsellor.	345.00	3.17	0.79	High
7.	Our Guidance Counsellor does not usually administer test in order to determine students' problems.	288.00	2.64	0.91	High
8.	Our Guidance Counsellor does not like our traditional way of life.	317.00	2.91	0.93	High
9.	Our Guidance Counsellor is not respected by students and teachers.	334.00	3.06	0.85	High
10.	Our Guidance Counsellor dates students.	335.00	3.07	0.89	High
11.	Our Guidance Counsellor is highly temperamental.	328.00	3.01	0.84	High
12.	We are not introduced to our school's Guidance Counsellor.	246.00	2.26	1.00	Low
	Total	320.00	2.94	0.90	High

Results in Table 1 shows that the respondents agreed with all the items except item 12 whose mean value is below the criterion mean of 2.50 with the cluster mean of 2.94 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50, most Nigerian Professional Practicing Counsellors do not exhibit the basic ethical values cherished by the counselling profession in Nigeria. This is bound to affect the growth and development of the counselling profession.

Research Question 2: What are the personality characteristics that influence Counsellors Professional practice?

This research question sought to find out from clients and practicing Counsellors whether or not Nigerian Counsellors exhibit desirable personality characteristics that are very critical in the growth and development of the counselling profession in Nigeria. The data were presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the responses of students and
 Counsellors on Counsellors personality characteristics

S/No.	Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	He/She dresses decently	134	3.28	.721
2.	He/She is cheerful	134	3.22	.596
3.	He/She relates very well with other people	134	3.16	.764
4.	He/She is rude to students	134	3.29	.754
5.	He/She is always looking angry	134	3.25	.792
6.	He/She loves students	134	3.19	.699
7.	He/She behaves in a responsible manner	134	3.28	.621
8.	He/She possess high sense of humour	134	3.16	.681
9.	He/She is always willing to assist students to solve their problems	134	3.28	.644
10.	He/She does not speak our common language	134	3.08	.672
11.	He/She relates well with teachers and students	134	2.89	.873
12.	He/She is in good working relationship with the school authority	134	3.20	.635
13.	He/She inspires trust and confidence in his students.	134	3.15	.582
14.	He/She shows respect and care for his students	134	3.22	.618

Table 2 shows a number of personality characteristics that should be exhibited by all professional practicing Counsellors. The mean values were above the criterion mean of 2.50 and above. This therefore indicated acceptance. The respondents therefore perceived all the items as the major personality characteristics of professional Counsellors in Adamawa state.

Decent dressing, good behaviour and the willingness to assist students to solve their problems ranked very high as the major personality characteristics that are expected from every professional counsellor. This means that professional practicing Counsellors possess acceptable personality characteristics that promote the growth and development of the Nigerian counselling profession.

Research question 3: To what extent do the counsellor education programmes mounted by departments and faculties of education provide adequate training for Counsellors trainees?

This research question attempted to find out from the professional practicing Counsellors in the field whether the counsellor education curriculum designed by departments and faculties of education in Nigerian universities is adequate and relevant. The data to research question 3 were presented in Table 3.

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Table 3: Nature of Professional Training received by Professional Practicing Counsellors

S/No.	Types of Professional Training	Mean	Remark
1.	Did not offer any course in multi-cultural counselling	2.52	High
2.	No oral interview was conducted before admission	2.60	High
3.	Not exposed to culture based Psychological test	2.60	High
4.	Very competent in use of psychological test	2.16	Low
5.	Practicum exercise was not effective	3.00	High
6.	Exposed to very few counselling theories	2.60	High
7.	Few counselor educators in the department	2.44	Low
8.	Not properly taught on the various counselling techniques	3.20	High
9.	Most Counsellors are not naturally called to serve	2.52	High
10.	Most practicing Counsellors do not possess the personality characteristics of a good guidance counsellor	2.88	High
11.	Most practicing Counsellors are not effective in their work environment	2.96	High
12.	Some departments and faculties in Nigerian universities need to review their counsellor education curriculum to meet minimum standard	3.32	High
13.	Most counsellor educators do not attend CASSON annual conference	3.32	High
14.	Nigerian Peoples and Culture should be introduced in counselling training programme as compulsory course	3.56	High
Grand Mean 2.52 High			

The findings in Table 3 shows that on the whole, the entire responses yielded a grand mean of 2.82 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50 used in decision making, hence it is accepted that the counsellor education curriculum in the provision of basic knowledge and counselling skills is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the professional practicing Counsellors in the field. It is also indicated in the table that most professional practicing Counsellors do not attend annual international conferences of the Counselling Association of Nigeria to abreast themselves of the new trend in counselling which is very critical in professional growth and development.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of Counsellors' ethical behaviours of the students and practicing Counsellors in Adamawa state tertiary institutions.

The hypothesis sought to determine if a significant difference in perception exists between students and practicing professional Counsellors on Counsellors' ethical behaviours. Kolmogorov-Smirnov two samples test was used to determine the level of significant difference. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Two Samples Kolmogorov Smirnov Test of Perception of Counsellors Ethical Behaviours of the Students and Practicing Counsellors in Adamawa State Tertiary Institutions

Variable	N	Mean	SD	D	K-S	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Students	109	35.06	5.56			
Counsellors	25	30.40	5.78	0.396	2.708	.003*

*Significant, $p < 0.05$.

The result in Table 4 reveals that the computed p-value is lower than the alpha level of significance of 0.05. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis which states that students and professional practicing Counsellors differ significantly on what they consider acceptable ethical behavior that should be exhibited by all professional practitioners. The rejection of this hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis is not unexpected in view of the fact that students may not know what constitutes acceptable ethical behaviours that must be exhibited by all practicing professional Counsellors.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in perception between male and female Professional Counsellors on their ability to handle client's problems in the multi-cultural environment.

The hypothesis sought to determine whether or not male and female professional practicing Counsellors differ in their perceived ability to diagnose and handle client's problems in the multi-cultural environment. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and two samples Kolmogorov Smirnov test statistic. The data is as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of Two Samples Kolmogorov Smirnov Test of Perception between Male and Female professional Counsellors on their ability to handle client's Problems in the Multi- cultural Environment

Variable	N	Mean	SD	D	K-S	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	69	21.40	3.48			
				0.200	0.081	0.970
Female	40	20.40	4.53			

Not Significant; $p > 0.05$.

The result in Tables 5 revealed that the computed p-value is greater than the significant alpha level ($0.970 > 0.05$). The null hypothesis is hereby not rejected which means that male and female professional practicing Counsellors do not differ in their perceived professional competence in servicing cases brought to them by their clients in a multi-cultural environment.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the perception between students and Practicing Counsellors on the possession of acceptable ethical and personality characteristics by counselling practitioners

The hypothesis sought to determine if there is a significant difference in the mean of perception between students and practicing Counsellors on the possession of acceptable ethical and personality characteristics of counselling practitioners. The data in Table 6 shows the classification of respondents ($n = 134$: counselors = 25, students = 109) based on their status. The result revealed that the students have the highest mean ($\mu = 47.76$), while the Counsellors have mean of ($\mu = 44.36$). To obtain their level of perceptual differences, the independent sample t-test statistic was used to analyze the data. The result is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Summary of t-Test Analysis of the Perception between Students and Counsellors on the Possession of Acceptable Ethical and Personality Characteristics

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Counsellors	25	44.36	3.91	132	-0.438	.662
Students	109	47.76	5.01			

Not Significant; $p > 0.05$.

The result in Table 6 revealed that the computed p – value is greater than the significant alpha level of 0.05. This implies that the null hypothesis is not rejected; this means that there is no significant difference existing between students and practicing Counsellors on the possession of acceptable ethical and personality characteristics of practicing Counsellors.

4. Discussion

Research question one sought to identify the major ethical behaviours exhibited by Nigerian practicing professional counselors. The finding of this study based on the examinations of the ethical behaviours of Counsellors using means and standard deviation of responses reveal that most practicing professional Counsellors in Adamawa State do not exhibit the relevant ethical values and principles cherished by the counselling profession. The result of the analysis showed that most respondents agreed to the fact that most Counsellors do not keep secrets while others do not administer psychological tests to diagnose and treat students' problems. Confidentiality and the ability to administer and interpret psychological test are critical in the successful implementation of the guidance services in schools. Lack of this basic knowledge and skills are bound to affect the growth and development of the counselling profession in Nigeria.

This result is supported by the findings of Ibrahim (2004), Mabel (2006), and Nwoba (2011) who reported that most professionally trained Counsellors exhibited unethical behavior in the cause of performing their duties. According to the authors, truancy, laziness of counselors, poor time management and lack of confidentiality are some of the unethical and unprofessional behaviours of the Counsellors in Adamawa State. The studies (Ibrahim, 2004, Mabel, 2006, and Nwoba, 2011) also revealed that most Counsellors lack basic counseling skills to provide basic guidance services to students. This goes to show that they are ill – prepared or lack the basic knowledge and facilities such as use of psychological test for the treatment of students' behavioural and academic problems, this could likely lead to poor implementation of the school guidance programme, poor patronage and low level of professional growth and development of the counselling profession in Nigeria. Ibrahim (2010) also reported that some practicing Counsellors have problems in respect of what constitute acceptable standard of behavior to be exhibited either in the counselling relationship or social group. Each counsellor exhibits behaviours in accordance the cultural norms and values

from which they belong. The state of origin, the institutions in which they work, their training, type of degree and needs of clients lead to differences in their ethical conduct. Failure to work in this type of environment constitutes unethical practice if Counsellors are not adequately trained to work with clients of different gender, race, age, or sexual orientations.

Research question two sought to identify the major personality characteristics that influence counsellor professional practice. The result of the analysis shows that practicing Counsellors exhibit acceptable personality characteristics such as decent dressing, responsible behaviour and willingness to help students. However, these Counsellors lack the basic counselling techniques to handle students' problems. Kehinde (2011) in a study revealed that most counselors do not have a clear picture of what they are expected to do as Counsellors in schools. Many of them end up performing clerical and other administrative duties instead of implementing the school guidance services. This is bound to affect the growth and development of the counselling profession. This is because the efficacy of any counselling programme is influenced by the personal qualities and professional competence of the counsellor. The result of this study therefore has serious implications for the counsellor education programme.

Research question three sought to find out the efficacy of the counselor education programmes mounted by department and faculties of Adamawa state tertiary institutions. The study revealed that most practicing Counsellors in Adamawa state and Nigeria are handicapped in confronting some of the professional challenges arising from the inadequate curriculum contents of the counselor education programme of most Nigerian universities. The analysis and result in Table 3 indicate that in the opinion of professional practicing Counsellors in Adamawa state tertiary institutions, were exposed to few counselling theories and other critical courses during the training programme, a situation that may be responsible for poor performance in their work environments. That is why from the respondents are crying for curriculum reforms to include multi-culturalism in counseling and other relevant courses that will equip the counselor trainees to cope with the challenges of the profession in the field.

This research finding agrees with various empirical research results cited in literature; Ibrahim (2010), Saidu (2011), Awobil (2011) and Duvigurawa and Sambo (2011) have all noted that many Nigerian Counsellors are not prepared beyond the values and views of the majority culture. If they violate the norms, customs and values of the community, they may place themselves, their profession, clients and the institution to which they represent in a serious danger. Lamenting further, Saidu (2011), Awabil (2011), and Duviguraw Sambo (2011) and Omengala (2011) reported that many of these Counsellors find it difficult to operate due to poor training received. The authors also affirm that multi – culturalism which is multi – ethnic, multi – religious and multi – lingual has not acknowledged by the counseling profession and integrated into the counsellor education programme in many universities in Nigeria and Ghana. As a result of this, many practicing counselors do not possess the basic multi - cultural

knowledge and skills to practice in a pluralistic society like Nigeria. This is because multi – cultural counselling helps the counsellor to acquire the basic multi – cultural counselling skills that will help in handling clients problems in all cultural and ethnic background. These studies therefore strongly recommend the inclusion of multi – cultural counselling into the counsellor education programme as a compulsory course.

The result of the statistical testing for hypothesis one revealed that students and practicing Counsellors differ in what they perceived as acceptable ethical behavior that should be exhibited by professional Counsellors. This is not unexpected in view of the work of Mabel and Christy (2006) who revealed that many of the Counsellors publics such as teachers, students, principals and parents have a hazy, confused and blurred perception of Counsellors personality behavior and their roles as Counsellors. The professional association must redeem this confused image by turning into the labour market, well equipped counselors to handle the myriads of problems facing the Nigerian clients.

The second hypothesis focuses on the perception of male and female Counsellors' ability to diagnose and treat clients' problems. The result of the analysis revealed that male and female professional Counsellors do not differ in their ability to perceive professional competence in servicing clients' problems. In a similar study conducted by Saidu (2011) to investigate the challenges facing counselling practices in Kano state revealed that inability to diagnose clients' problems, inadequate availability of funds, poor preparation etc are some of the major problems facing professional practicing Counsellors in Kano state secondary schools. The work of Okonkwo (2011) however, contradicts this finding. Okonkwo's study revealed that professional practicing Counsellors in Anambra state possess acceptable ethical and personality characteristics and are very competent in handling students' problems.

The third hypothesis focuses on whether students and practicing Counsellors differ in their perceived ability to exhibit acceptable ethical and personality characteristics that could promote the image of counselling profession in Nigeria. The result of the analysis revealed that there is no significant difference, meaning that students and Counsellors are satisfied with the performance of school counselors. This is supported by the work of Okonkwo (2011) who expressed confidence in the performance of counselors. However, a study conducted by Saidu (2011), Duvigurawa and Sambo (2011) contradict the result of this study. The authors reported that most Nigerian Counsellors are not culturally sensitive and competent in handling clients from different ethnic and cultural environment with over 350 ethnic groups, each having its own norms, values, beliefs and language. This finding has serious implication for counsellor education programme.

4.1 Implication of findings on Counsellor Education Programmes

The findings of this study have implications for the Departments and Faculties of Education of Nigerian universities, Counselling Association of Nigeria and all practicing professional Counsellors. The study revealed that most Nigerian practicing

counsellors are ill equipped to handle the myriads of problems facing the Nigerian client. The counselling association of Nigeria in conjunction with departments and faculties of education should overhaul and enrich the counselor education programmes so that well equipped counselors in both mono – cultural and multi – cultural counselling are turned out in to the labour market. Our pluralistic society demands that counselling practitioners should be exposed to multi- cultural counselling so that they become culturally sensitive and competent in handling clients from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. If Counsellors are not aware of how their own culture influences their behavior and beliefs and the cultural experiences their clients bring into the counselling relationship, they will end up practicing culturally biased counselling which may lead to clients’ dissatisfaction.

Counsellors who trained several years must be encouraged to attend professional counselling conferences and read professional journals. The image of the counselling profession should be redeemed through the provision of effective counsellor education programmes mounted by the various universities and other institutions of higher learning. More periodic workshops and seminars should be organized for school Counsellors.

Departments and faculties of Nigerian universities should conduct oral interview for candidates intending to read counselling before admission. Only candidates who possess the basic personality characteristic that enhance the image of the profession should be admitted. The licensure board of the Counselling Association of Nigeria should issue license for only those who have offered and passed prescribed courses. Courses in psychological testing and vocational psychology should be made compulsory in all universities that are offering counselor education programme

5. Conclusion

This study revealed that the Nigerian practicing Counsellors possess the desirable personality characteristics but lack the basic knowledge and skills to be effective in handling professional task in the field. The need to introduce multi-cultural counselling into the counsellor education curriculum is imperative in order to improve performance and to qualify for certification and licensure.

Author’s Contributions

Author Sababa designed the study and made the literature searches as well as the editorial work and production of the final draft. Author Ballah developed the instrument, carried out the pilot study, administered and coded the data generated and also took charge of the financial cost of the administration of the instrument and analysis of the results. The two authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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