



## PROFESSIONALISM AMIDST BARRIERS TO ESTABLISHING COUNSELING ASSOCIATIONS

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### **Abstract:**

This study investigate the responses of counseling students on professionalism amidst barriers to establishing counseling associations it adopted the descriptive survey research using one hundred and fifty (150) counseling students as the respondents. A twenty (20) item likert scale questionnaire was designed for use in gathering data. Using one sample population t-test in analyzing the data, the result showed that ethical principles, rules and guidelines contribute to strengthening professionalism as well the attitudes of experts promote adherence as it affect specific problem situations. Cultural and religious nouns has little barrier which change with the ever growing society. It concluded that prudence and confidentiality will promote the acceptance of counseling associations at the rural areas. The research recommended among others, that counselors should propagate the counseling profession by forming smaller groups to organize programmes periodically to sensitize and create awareness at the local areas.

**Keywords:** professionalism, associations, counseling, principles and rehabilitation

### **1. Introduction**

The nature and resourcefulness of counseling as a profession is receiving broader acceptance in different facets of the society in recent times order to sustain this relevance and continually mitigate societal problems it becomes necessary to develop ethical standards to reinforce qualified services, as well provide regulations that will promote professionalism. This can be done by establishing counseling association within the immediate reach of the intending clients. The formation and counseling association at the grassroots level will provide far reaching effects to reducing social tensions, provide clients with optional interventions to shared problems and promote positive social re – orientations.

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Professional association here referred to a conglomeration of counseling psychologist, clinical psychologist, educational psychologist and a host of others. The recognition of counseling as a professional organization in Nigeria had been over forty (40) years and had gone further to establishing state chapters but with less than forty (40%) percent recognition at the local government level. The lack of this focus at the Local Government levels has drastically affect the awareness and reduce rural peoples' orientation on the numerous benefits of a counseling session to the society.

The Counseling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) has made strides in the development of ethical guidelines for the profession and such effort is expected to guide the formation of lower association at the local government levels. A major guiding tool for the formation of association lies on ethical issues as such provisions will resolve cultural, religious and social barriers. It is expected that in forming ethical guidelines discrimination against feminine dominance in the profession should be taken into consideration.

According to Achigbe, (2017) he observed that despite the level of human civilization, discrimination still exist in many forms in almost all parts of the globe, particularly on the basis of race, color, culture, creed and most significantly, sex and gender. Undermining the creation in flesh and blood, in shared history and experience and yet so different and distant in appropriation of social functions of which counseling is not an exception. At the rural levels people's perception really considers counseling as a profession in which counselors undergo training (irrespectively sex or gender) to acquire professional competence that help them to grow and develop. The acquired experience enables them to exercise freedom in deciding upon the nature of their responsibilities to their client, schools and society in general (Nwamuo, 2007). The building and development of counseling associations at rural level will promote awareness and contribute to the growth and development of counseling profession as a helping service to the society (Mkpa, 2007). To achieve this, a very solid ethical and legal foundation is needed upon which professionalism is build and strengthened. The professionals will use the ethical and legal backing in abating adolescence crises, delinquencies and academic and socially maladjusted within and outside the educational institutions as well to curtail apparent social demand for counseling services in the society. The responsibilities of the counselor viewed from an ethical, legal and moral prospective sufficiently alerts the practitioners of every critical values in the helping profession. The stark reality is that the general purpose of knowledge acquisition places central contribution to behavior modification among its recipients. It is widely accepted that education is the major change agent in human civilization across cultures and generations. But an enigma places very serious concern when the concepts of education and ethics are not woven in training and practices. This would have provided counselors with the background knowledge on the ethical nature of the counseling process with regards to issues of confidentiality, value differences with clients counselors competence, sexual relationships and dual relationship with clients. This to a great extend will reduce ethical dilemma and violations.

Succinctly, professional ethics deals with the moral philosophy or science of morality which seeks to establish guidelines by which human character and action may be judged as good or bad and either right or wrong (Nwamuo, 2007). There are two general approaches to describe ethical issues in the counseling profession; they include principles ethics and virtue ethics. Here principle refers to rules and guidelines related to specific problem situations where as virtue ethics deals with the ideal characteristics or qualities of the professionals. The counselor competence is an important ethical issue for both the development of the professionals and the wellbeing of the clients. It also lies at the center of protecting the client from potential harm and promoting the client's welfare (Kim, 2002). Generally there is no contention to the ethical and legal requirement to building professional association but overtime a review of the process bring about modification to suit changing social condition in the society and as it affect the association.

## **2. Statement of the Problems**

The increasing number of counseling related problems in the society marked a positive movement in professional counseling association. The expertise required in the specialized job of counseling will be enhanced by the educational knowledge provided in their schooling programme. In generic term education involves the professional acquisition of knowledge, the configuration of all the processes through which a person develops ability, skills, attitudes and others forms of positive behavior in making impact to the immediate society. Here education plays a key role in sustaining social peace, economical development and behavior modeling. Its benefits include promotion of good health, improve quality of life, entrenched moral vices, reduce crime tendencies and so on (Adebayo, 2012).

An offshore of these is the counselor who plays three major roles namely; preventive, curative and rehabilitation or remedial. These promote the facilitation of wise choice, decision making and resolving challenges that are related to their developmental changes in terms growths and development (Olayinka, 1999). The counselor also is a trained professional who is expected by training to have acquired the virtue of prudence needed to maintain competence. This, he displays by being plain, appropriately cautions, possess foresight and exercises good judgment. He is expected to have a good appeal to judge ethical situations, applies ethical principles and rules and act upon one's decision.

This experience is expected to bore professional leadership role in setting local counseling associations as it affect social relationship, professional attitude, protection of client information, confidentiality, client welfare, counseling relationship and relationship with other professionals.

From the above formal training on counseling ethics is essential for the counseling professional development and the integrity of the counseling profession especially at the local level. The absence of this is a worrisome issue and could have affect the development of counseling associations of the local communities, it is

therefore the focus of this paper to identify the types of modalities which will promote whims and caprices and the formation of counseling associations within the immediate reach of the intending clients.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to identify the:

- barriers and possible modalities to the formation of counseling associations at the rural areas.
- ethical principles and rules for promoting counseling practices.
- counselors' virtue in promoting professionalism

These objectives when actualized will promote the whims and caprices of the counseling practice and help reduce to the bearest minimum the social demand on various degrees of mal-adjustments in the society.

Hypothesis: The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested;

- There is no significant difference on the existence of barriers to the formation of counseling association at the local communities.
- There is no significant difference between ethical principles and rule on the promotion of counseling practices.
- There is no significant difference between counselors' virtue and the promotion of counseling profession in the rural areas.

#### **3.1 Significance of the Study**

The research effort will be of significance to promoting counseling practices and awareness to local communities. It will enable school and community heads to avail the opportunities of meeting professional experts who will profer remedial solution to the maladjusted and bring them to normally. The research work will increase society awareness campaign programmes of the counseling practice be it at the remanded home, hospitals, schools and in the reduction of social ills. It will serve as sensitization on the need for professional to promote small formation leading to the local and zonal formation of counseling association in the society. It will help examine ethical considerations on culture, training and religious tolerance in the rural areas.

#### **3.2 Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study covers rural communities in the Delta State with the aim to investigate the knowledge and professional practice and formation and professional practice and formation of professional associations among rural communities. As a result of the difficult terrain in Delta State, the researcher intends to limit the study of rural communities in the riverine areas where the awareness to counseling practices is very remote.

#### 4. Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was descriptive survey in which questionnaire were employed in collecting data from one hundred and fifty purposively sampled respondents. These respondents were counseling students of higher institutions of learning. A twenty (20) item likert it scale questionnaire was design for the study. To establish the reliability index of the instrument the test – re – test method was adopted and further subjected to spearman product moment correlation with a result of 0.74 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The data generated from the study were statistically analyses using the t – test data analysis.

#### 5. Results

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant difference on the existence of barriers to the formation of counseling associations at the local communities.

**Table 1:** Students responses to the existence of barriers to the formation of counseling associations in local communities

Variables	X	Sd	N	C-Cal	T-Table	Decision
Existence of barriers to formatting counseling association at the local communities.	112	33.10	150	6.32	2.101	Rejected (Significant)
Modalities to the formation of counseling association at the local communities.	38	17.04				

Table 1 reveals that the t-cal (6.32) is greater than the t-tabulated value of 2.101 on the significant the existence of barriers which has impade the modalities to the formation of counseling associations at the local communities. This significantly reveal the lack of awareness of counseling activities among local resident, hence the need for more advocacies and enlightenment campaign through jingles, pictorial adverts, handbills as the modalities to bridge the gap.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference between ethical principles and rules on the promotion of counseling practices in rural areas.

**Table 2:** Students responses on ethical principles and rules in promoting counseling practices of the rural areas

Variables	X	SD	N	C-Cal	T-Table	Decision
Ethical principles on specific problem situations.	54	26.22	150	1.413	3.061	Accepted Significant
Ethical guidelines of a professional counselor.	96	34.57				

The hypothesis two was accepted as the analysis reveals a lower calculation value of 1.413 to the tabulated value of 3.061. This is a reflection of the value addition which

ethical rules and guidelines contribute to professionalism. This strengthen the attitude of experts and promotes adherence as it affect specific problem situations.

Variables	X	SD	N	C-Cal	T-Table	Decision
Counselor's virtue	88	29.21		16.10	1.690	Rejected
Counseling professional	62	14.11	150			

The table reveals that the t-calc is greater than t. tabulated which implies there is the existence of significant difference, thus the hypothesis is rejected on the premise that counselors are duty bound to at all-time uphold the virtue and tenets of their profession and cannot do otherwise intentionally. This is in live with the work of Corey and Callanan (1998) which noted, counselor competence lies at the center of protecting their client from potential harm and promoting their welfare at all times.

## 6. Discussion

Considering the importance of counseling and the increase emotional and health consequence that has being of reoccurring situation in the society, people have always sort helping solutions especially from professionals. Demographic variable in similar study show the effectiveness of counseling (otherwise psychotherapies) to be eventful in solving problems of social unrest, temperament and the likes. This study revealed ethical consideration on culture, training and religious tolerance in the prevalence of establishing counseling association in the rural areas of Delta State. The analysis in hypothesis one reveal a t-calc. value of 6.32 greater than the t-tabulated value of 2.101 on the significance existence of barriers ranging from culture, confidentiality, role confusion in adequacy of information among others. It is the belief of the researcher that with proper and frequency of social orientation rural communities will embrace counseling programmes. Hypothesis two; examined ethical consideration with the result having a lower table value of 3.061 against t-calc value of 1.413 at 0.05 level of significance, the hypothesis was upheld and reveal the contribution of ethical rule and regulation to strengthening professionalism in which counseling is not an exemption. The third hypothesis was rejected as the result show a higher t-table value of 1.690 against the t-calc. value of 16.100, with significant value. It implies that professional counselors are duty bound at all time to uphold the tenets of their profession as this will promote counseling outcome in the rural communities. The study succinctly reveals the cultural expectation, values, mores, belief system to be respected by counselors and similar expert in the counseling association. Affirming the finding of this study on ethical principles in counseling (Onyama, 2007), Agbajor, 2016 held similar view on ethical disposition of the counseling profession.

## 7. Conclusion

The establishment of counseling association in rural communities requires prudence of professionalism in response to the confidence of rural dwellers. The counselor is obligated to its members and clients and respect the welfare and integrity of the local environment. Except professional draw up strategies and develop the self-will as the researcher local communities will continually remain less informed of the need to seek helping relationship even when counselor can help in mitigating their problems.

### 7.1 Recommendations

Against the background of the finding of this research effort, the following recommendations are outlined.

- That counselor should propagate the counseling profession by forming small groups and organize programmers periodically to sensitize and create the rural awareness in communities.
- Existing counseling associations should take counseling programmes to the rural communities as this will help promote counseling activities the setting up counseling association.
- Resident counselors in various communities and schools should set up counseling clubs and small groups as this will propagate counseling associations.

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