

## Teachers' Perception of Counselling Ethics in Public Secondary Schools in Zing Educational Zone of Taraba State

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigated the Perception of Counselling Ethics by Public Secondary School Teachers in Zing Education Zing of Taraba State. Two research questions were asked to guide the study and a hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 levels of significance. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 252 teachers in public secondary schools in Zing Educational Zone of Taraba State. A purposive sampling was used to select 100 respondents representing 40% of the teachers in the 22 schools in Zing Educational Zone. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Secondary Schools Teachers' Perception of Counselling Ethics Instrument" (SSTPCEI). The face and content validity was determined by an expert from Taraba State University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Foundation. The reliability coefficient (r) of 0.60 was obtained using the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient. Frequency counts and percentages-were used to answer the research questions whereas Spearman Rank correlation coefficient and t-test were used for the null hypothesis in the study at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that public secondary school teachers in this Zone had proper perception of counselling ethics. Furthermore, the finding revealed that there was no significant difference between the perceptions of counselling ethics of trained teachers and those of non-trained teachers in Zing Educational Zone of Taraba State. Based on the findings, some counselling implications were highlighted. It was recommended that in the dearth of professional counsellors, Secondary School teachers could be assigned to assist professional counsellors or even operate as career masters to perform limited counselling functions for students in the secondary schools.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Perception, Counselling, Value and Ethics.*

### Introduction

The origin of Counselling in Nigeria can be traced back to 1959 when Irish Rev Sisters started career talks in St Theresa Catholic college Oke-ado. Ibadan that yielded great results which informed its sustenance (Abubakar, Valentine, Jamilu, Fatima, 2012). The formal and official coming in of counselling into Nigerian Policy on Education in 1963 could be traced to the recommendations of educational experts that were sent to Sweden, France and the USA to study their educational system and make recommendations for Nigerian government in 1962. Part of their recommendation was that there should be at least a teacher counselor in every secondary school in Nigeria. So 1963, solid beginning was made to introduce modern guidance practices at comprehensive High School Ayetoro, in the Western Region (San. 2008). Furthermore, this led to the appointment of teachers into the counselling unit (as additional responsibilities) to carry out guidance and counselling functions. How much of the fundamentals and principles of counselling the teachers perceive was a subject of

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concern? There are rules and regulations that guide the operation of any counselling entity. Counselling ethics can be likened to a constitution of a country whether written or unwritten; the ethics could also be likened to a rudder of a ship as well as a compass of an airplane. It therefore follows that the Counselling Association of Nigeria as a professional organization in the helping industry has professional ethics that regulate the conducts of its members as encapsulated in its Certification and Licensure Policy (CALP) published in 2009.

The American Heritage Dictionary (2014) defines ethics as the general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices to be made by a person. Also, according to Legal and Ethical Issues (2013), ethics rest squarely on the shoulders of values, principles and moral trails developed out of those principles (which every counselor must strictly adhere to for the smooth conduct and transparency of counselling services). Furthermore, ethics, which, are the suggested standards of conduct based on a set of professional values and moral decision making regarding professional behavior, are usually established by a disciplined professional organization, Henry (2014) posited that ethics can be reflective of a culture, religion, the life cycle state of an organization, and other sets of belief systems. In line with above, ethics can be said to be the moral expectations, culture and values that every counsellor has to exhibit in the course of relating with his or her client whether in the office or else way. In other words, ethics are codes of conducts that guide the behaviour of counsellors.

### **The Purpose of Ethics**

According to Henry (2014), the purposes of the code of ethics are to:

- a) Clarify for its members the common code of ethics adopted and held by its members to guide their conduct
- b) Help to support the mission of the association which is to promote career development of all people over the life span
- c) Establish through the codes, the principles that help counsellors define ethical behaviour and conduct,
- d) Provide ethical guidance to helping counsellors making professional decision ethical matters especially when conflicted and
- e) Serve as a guide to both professional practitioners as well as the clients being served to understand their expectations and the limitations of the engagement. From the above it could be vividly seen that counselling ethics could be very pertinent to
  - achieve aims/objectives of counselling.
  - maintain integrity of counsellors,
  - sustain the fame of the counselling profession.
  - satisfy clients'/counselees' quest
  - smoothly run counselling programmes and sessions with less or without hitch(es)
  - attract necessary patronage
  - build mutual trust among/between counselling parties, etc. Moral Values in Counselling

### **Moral Values in Counselling**

The values our society imposes on counsellors inform the principles or ethics that form fundamental practices of counselling within the society the counsellor finds himself. Talking about values, BACP (2013) stated that the provision of contextually sensitive and appropriate services is also a fundamental ethical concern. Variations in client needs and cultural diversity differences are often

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more easily understood and responded to in terms of values. Therefore

Professional values are becoming an increasingly significant way of expressing ethical commitment. The document went further to state that the Fundamental values of counselling and psychotherapy include a commitment to:

- Respecting human rights and dignity
- Protecting the safety of clients
- Ensuring the integrity of practitioner client relationships Enhancing the quantity professional knowledge and its application
- Alleviating personal distress and suffering in fostering a sense of self that is meaningful to the person(s) concerned
- Increasing personal effectiveness
- Enhancing the quality of relationships between people
- Appreciating the variety of human experience and culture
- Striving for the fair and adequate provision of counselling and psychotherapy services

Furthermore, values represent an important way of expressing a general ethical commitment that becomes more precisely defined and action-orientated when expressed as a principle (BACP, 2013). In addition to the above BACP elucidated on some of the moral qualities that form part of the ethical practices of a good counsellor for as stated in the section below:

### Personal Moral Qualities

The Counsellor's personal moral attributes are very invaluable to clients. Many of the personal qualities considered pertinent in the provision of services has an ethical or moral component and are therefore considered as virtues or good personal qualities. Personal qualities to which counsellors and psychotherapists are strongly encouraged to aspire to acquire include:

1. **Empathy:** the ability to communicate understanding of another person's experience from that person's perspective.
2. **Sincerity:** a personal commitment to consistency between what is professed and what is done.
3. **Integrity:** commitment to being moral in dealings with others, personal straightforwardness honesty and coherence.
4. **Resilience:** the capacity to work with the client's concerns without being personally diminished.
5. **Respect:** showing appropriate esteem to others and their understanding of themselves.
6. **Humility:** the ability to assess accurately and acknowledge one's own strengths and weaknesses.
7. **Competence:** the effective deployment of the skills and knowledge needed to do what is required.
8. **Fairness:** the consistent application of appropriate criteria to inform decisions and actions.
9. **Wisdom:** possession of Sound judgment that informs practice
10. **Courage:** The capacity to act in spite of known fears, risks and uncertainty.
11. The Counselling of Nigeria (CASSON) in its Certification and Licensure Policy

(CAIP)document identified the following among others as ethics that every professional counsellor in Nigeria must observe: Certified counsellors should not accept reward for counselling with persons who are entitled to the services he is employed to render.

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**12. Confidentiality of client's information must be guaranteed at all times:** etc. (CALP, 2009). From the above, it could be seen that CALP borrowed a lot from the ethical documents of earlier counselling institutions such as American Psychological Association, American Counselling Association ACA, Responsible Uses For Standardized Testing (AMECD), The National Career Development Association (NCDA) and National Board for Certified Counsellors (NBCC).

Others includes; Counsellors must not do anything personal at the undue expense of the client, there should not be any sexual intimacy between the counsellor and the counselee, Certified counsellors must ensure that the rights of their client are always protected in the course of their interaction, Corrupt practices are to be avoided as one would avoid leprosy, Counsellors should work within the circumspect of the law of the country, Counsellors must respect the integrity of client and also promote their welfare, When a client poses danger to himself and/or to others, counsellors must take necessary action to inform potential victims and/or relevant authorities

### Statement of Problem

The dearth of trained counsellors in the educational sector especially in schools in Taraba State necessitates the deployment of trained and untrained teachers to man the counselling units. It therefore becomes necessary to ascertain whether these teachers have perception of counselling ethics or not.

### Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to ascertain the teachers' perception of counselling ethics in public secondary schools in Zing Educational Zones. Another purpose of this study was to investigate whether there was any significant difference in the perception of counselling ethics by trained and untrained public secondary School teachers in Zing Educational Zone of Taraba State.

### Research Questions

In order to meet the purpose of this study, some questions were designed to be answered in this study. The research questions were:

1. Do Secondary School teachers in Zing Educational Zone of Taraba State have perception of counselling ethics?
2. Is there any significant difference the perception of counselling ethics of trained secondary school teachers and non-trained public secondary school teachers in ting Educational zone?

### Research Hypothesis

The research hypothesis below was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between the perception of trained teachers and non-trained teachers in their perception of Counselling ethics in Secondary Schools in Zing Educational Zone o' Taraba State.

### Methodology

The study adopted survey research design. The population consisted of all teachers in public secondary schools in Zing Educational Zone of Taraba State. The sample, size of 100 respondents was used out of 252. These 100 respondents were drawn from 8 out of the 22 public secondary schools in Zing Zone using purposive sampling. The research instrument was a thirty (30) item questionnaire titled "Public Secondary Schools Teachers' Perception at Counselling Ethics Instrument" (PSSTPCEI). The face and content validity was determined by an expert from Taraba State University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Foundation. The reliability coefficient (r) of 0.39 was obtained using the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient. The questionnaire consisted of two (2) sections. Section A requested data on some demographic issues

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such as name of school, gender of respondent, qualification, teaching qualification, etc., while Section B had thirty (30) items which sought respondents' perception of counselling ethics. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages to answer the research questions on perception of counselling ethics by teachers. Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient and t-test were used to determine relationship and difference between the perception of counselling ethics by trained teachers and non-trained teachers.

### Scoring Procedures

The mean of the responses from the respondents was found and recorded against each of the perceptions. If the mean was 2.5 and above, it was accepted (P) as proper perception but where the mean was below 2.5, it was rejected (R) as wrong perception of counseling ethics

### Data Analysis

The instrument was designed with strongly agree (SA) assigned 4 points, agree (A) 3 points, disagree (D) 2 and strongly disagree (SD) was assigned 1 point. The SA, A, A and SD were multiplied by 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. There were 30 items in the instrument used for the data collection, Mean (X)  $X/N$ :  $X$  =sum of the weighted frequency;  $N$ = Total number of responses. The standard mean = 2.5

**Research Question 1:** Do public secondary school teachers in Zing Educational Zone of Taraba State have perception of counseling ethics?

**Table 1** below presents the frequencies, the percentages and the mean of teachers' perception of counseling ethics in Zing Educational Zone of Taraba State. The table below shows perceptions of teachers on 30 variables.

S/No	Variables	SA 4		A 4		D 4		SD		Mean	Remark
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	There are ethics and values guiding the operation of counselling in schools	45	48.9	44	47.8	2	2.2	1	1.1	3.37	P
2	Counselling ethics guide the behaviours of counsellors	47	54.4	36	40.1	2	2.3	3	3.4	3.44	P
3	Counselling ethics guarantee smooth operation of counselling in schools	35	38.5	50	54.9	3	3.3	3	3.3	3.29	P
4	Success of counselors depends on observation of counseling ethics among other qualities	48	53.9	32	36.0	9	10.1	0	0	3.44	P
5	Observation of counselling ethics makes counsellors responsible	42	46.7	44	48.9	3	3.3	1	1.1	3.41	P
6	In all sessions of counselling, counsellors must abide by the rules and regulations guiding counselling	58	65.9	26	29.5	4	4.4	0	0	3.54	P
7	Ethics in counselling are meant for inexperienced and unqualified counsellors	9	9.6	18	19.1	48	51.1	19	20.2	2.82	P
8	Teachers rendering guidance and counselling services in schools are also bound by ethics of counselling	39	44.8	38	43.7	6	6.9	4	4.6	3.29	P
9	Confidentiality is a needful ethics in counselling	50	58.8	25	29.4	8	9.4	2	2.4	3.45	P
10	Openness is required in counselling	50	58.8	25	29.4	8	9.4	2	2.4	3.45	P
11	Moral uprightness is an ethical issue in school counselling	47	55.3	34	40.0	4	4.7	0	0	3.51	P
12	Honesty and the integrity should be upheld by all counsellors	60	71.4	22	26.2	1	1.2	1	1.2	3.68	P

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13	Abuse of clients/students not is not allowed in counselling	53	64.6	23	28.0	4	4.9	2	2.4	3.55	P
14	Counsellors should not show ethnic, religious, gender or cultural bias against the client/Students	64	74.4	19	22.1	2	2.3	1	1.2	3.70	P
15	Teacher counsellors should seek his client/counselee before contacting third parties on counselee's private issues	36	40.4	40	44.9	11	12.4	2	2.2	3.35	P
16	Respect for student's human rights should be observed during programmes	55	63.2	29	33.3	3	3.4	0	0	3.60	P
17	The ideal culture and beliefs of the students for counselling sessions should be respected as much as is necessary	35	41.7	44	42.4	4	4.8	1	1.2	3.35	P
18	Teacher counsellors should endeavour not to hurt his/her client	51	58.0	33	37.5	3	3.4	1	1.1	3.52	P
19	Fairness and justice should be the order of the counselling sessions	51	57.9	33	37.4	4	4.5	0	0	3.53	P
20	Teacher Counsellors should not take undue advantage of the client's situation	42	47.1	39	43.8	7	7.9	1	1.1	3.37	P
21	Students should not be exploited during counselling sessions/interactions	45	51.2	39	44.8	5	5.7	2	2.3	3.55	P
22	Courage is required in counselling	46	58.2	28	35.4	4	5.1	1	1.3	3.51	P
23	A counselor do not have the right to reveal the secretes of his clients to another party without due permission from the client/student	57	67.1	23	27.1	4	4.7	1	1.2	3.89	P
24	A counselor must exhibit professionalism and competence in the discharge of his/her duties	52	59.1	30	34.1	4	4.5	2	2.3	3.50	P
25	Counsellors must as much as is within his power safeguard the life and properties of the client	39	43.3	38	42.2	9	10	4	4.44	3.24	P
26	Counsellors should be able to alleviate the distress of his clients	35	39.8	46	52.3	3	3.4	4	4.5	3.27	P
27	Counsellors should be humble	56	64.4	29	33.3	1	1.1	1	1.1	3.61	P
28	There should not be unwelcome sexual advances/touch on clients by teacher-counsellor	60	63.2	25	26.3	7	7.4	3	3.2	3.49	P
29	Counsellors should possess sound judgment in dealing with issues	48	55.2	35	40.2	3	3.4	1	1.2	3.20	P
30	A counselor should be resilient (ability to work on client's interest without being personally diminished)	37	42.5	43	49.4	5	5.7	2	2.3	3.32	P

The result from the table above showed that all the respondents have proper perception of counselling ethics as each mean calculated was above 2.5. the highest mean of 3.87 as shown by the table above, was the perception of teachers that "a counselor does not have the right to reveal the secretes of his clients to another party without due permission from the client/student". Confidential- This is very crucial and fundamental in normal counselling and this is in line with ethical of American Psychological Association Britain (BACP) and Nigeria (CASSON-CALP). The second highest was the mean score of 3.70 which revealed that the teachers could perceive that "counsellors should not show ethnic, religious, gender or cultural bias against the client/students" as one of the ethics of counselling. The lowest was the mean of 2.82 reflecting the perception that "ethics in

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counselling are meant for inexperienced and unqualified counsellors” the respondents gave the correct answer in negative by disagreeing and strongly disagreeing.

**Research Question 2:** Is there any significant difference between the perceived of counselling ethics of trained secondary school teachers and non-trained public secondary school teachers in Zing Educational Zone?

**Table 2** below shows the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient on Perception of Trained and non-Trained secondary school teachers on Counselling ethics in Zing Educational Zone of Taraba State.

Variable	Mean (x)	SD	N	$r_{ho}$ (0.05 level)	Remarks
Trained teachers	3.44	0.60	79	0.39	Low
Non-trained Teachers	3.41	1.11	21		

From the table above, it could be seen that there is no significant difference between the perception of trained teachers and that of the non-trained teachers that  $r = 0.39$  and this figure is low.

### Test of Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant different between the perception of trained teachers and non-trained teachers in their perception of counselling ethics in secondary schools in Zing Educational Zone of Tarable State.

Variables	N	Mean (X)	SD	t-value Cal	t-cri	Remarks
Trained teachers	30 (0.05)	3.44	0.60	0.12	1.70	Accepted
Non-trained teachers	30 (0.05)	3.41	1.11			

Degree of Significance  $< 0.05$

Table 3 above showed that the calculated t-value of 0.12 was less than the critical t-value of 1.70 (i.e.  $0.12 < 1.7$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted meaning the there was no significant difference in the perception of counselling ethics between the trained and non-trained teachers at 0.05 level of significance. Trained and non-trained teachers had almost the same mean on perception of counselling ethics of 3.44 and 3.41 respectively. It shows that both trained and non-trained teachers in public secondary schools in Zing Zone had proper perception of counselling ethics at almost the same level.

### Discussion

The findings in table 1 shows that public secondary school teachers in Zing Educational Zone of Taraba State had proper perception of counselling ethics and could identify those counselling ethics. The mean response per perception were well above 2.5 the theoretical mean. The perception mean for the 30 items was calculated to give 3.44. The lowest perception man was item 7 of 2.82 and was till far more than the theoretical mean of 2.5. Item 23 in table 1 shows the highest mean of 3.87. this finding was very fundamental because all document reviewed in this study emphasized the ethics of “secrecy and confidentiality” of the client’s information. Under normal circumstances client’s information should be kept in confidence and secrecy and should never be revealed to other party or parties without the express permission of the client (FACP, 2013; APA, 2012; CALP, 2009).

From table 2 above, it could be seen that the ranked correlation coefficient of 0.39 was low and positive showing that there was no significant difference between the perception of counselling ethics by both trained and non-trained public secondary school teachers in Zing Educational Zone of Taraba State.

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Furthermore, hypothesis 1 as revealed in table 3 above showing t-test result of 0.12 was accepted and that proved that trained and non-trained public secondary school teachers in Zing Educational Zone have almost the same perception of counselling ethics.

### **Counselling Implication**

Counselling units of secondary schools could be manned by teachers who have basic knowledge of counselling where there are no trained counsellors. The students should not be left on their own on the pretext of dearth of professional counsellors. The teachers in the school should serve as career masters/mistresses to handle guidance and counselling programs pending when professional counsellors would be engaged.

### **Recommendations**

1. School principals should appoint teachers as career masters/mistresses in the school where there are no professionals
2. Where there are few professional counsellors in large school, teachers within the school should be appointed as Auxiliary or para-counsellors to assist the professional counsellor(s) in the school
3. Teachers serving as career masters should be paid allowances for this additional responsibility
4. Training and retraining of teachers serving as counsellors in the secondary schools should be on-going and they should have made to go for in-service. Also, frequent workshops could be organized to expand their knowledge, functionality and effectiveness
5. Teachers on their own should give themselves to personal studying to improve themselves in the area of counselling
6. Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should use their annual international Conference as training and retraining ground for practical counselling sessions

### **Conclusion**

Having seen from this study that teachers in secondary schools had proper perception of counselling ethics, they should be engaged to assist professionals in the various schools where there are no trained counsellors in the schools, teacher(s) (outside the counselling domain) should be engaged to render limited counselling services at least in career guidance instead of allowing students to grope in career blindness.

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