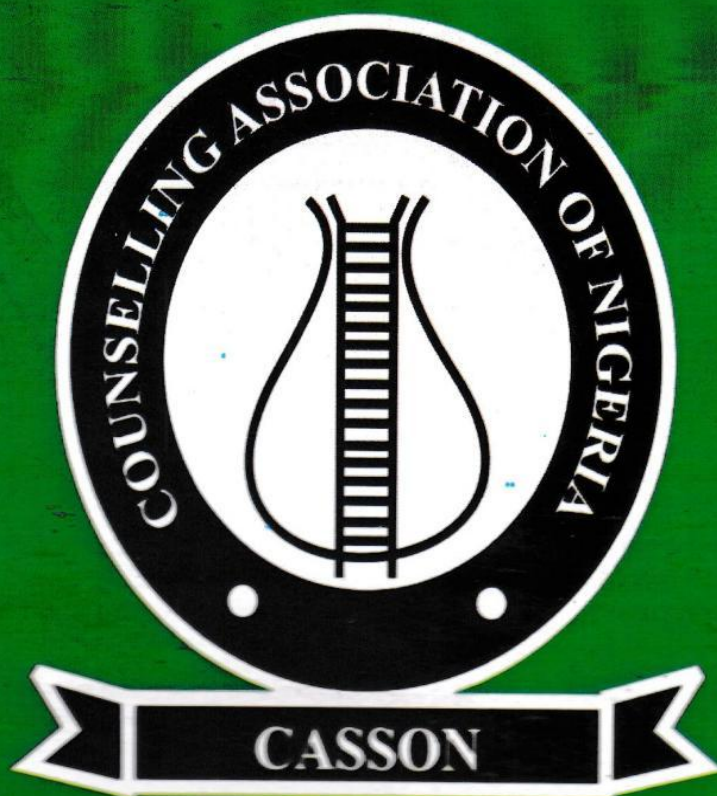


**COUNSELLING ISSUES  
ON WOMEN'S HEALTH,  
EDUCATION/EMPOWERMENT  
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
IN NIGERIA**



*Edited by*  
**Ali Mburza**

# Chapter Ten

## SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' EXPRESSED ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND PRACTICE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLORS IN UYO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

By

Gertrude A. Archibong (Ph.D)

### Introduction

As human beings we owe certain duty to ourselves, the society and our creator. Every one ought to live a "good life" beyond reproach by recognizing the limit of our freedom and liberty. Taking a critical look at the society, people lack the sincerity of mind to do what is good, what ought to be done, but rather, they tend to do those evil things that ought not to be done. Issues that bother on what kind of things are right or wrong as stated in Etuk (2003) fall within the domains of ethics. Ethics in counselling is not abstract or academic issues. It is a necessary and active thread that runs throughout every aspect of practice with the intension of acting, at all times, in the best therapeutic interest of clients as members of society. Counselling is intended to promote individual adaptability to changing life demands by helping clients to develop or enhance a variety of personal-social, coping and decision making skills or by helping clients to alter dysfunctional or undesired patterns of living. In the view of Unachukwu and Igborgbor (1991), for any occupation to be realized as a profession, it would have certain features which would qualify its professional status. Counseling has its code of conduct stipulated by Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON). Counselling profession does not seem to be very effective as one would have wished. It is based upon these that the research on Ethical issues as it affects the effectiveness of guidance and counseling practice is conducted.

### Statement of the Problem

Discipline and moral code of conduct at home and at school have diminished due to influence of technological advancement which has made the society a complex one, lacking in ethical principles. Everyone is interested in human behaviour. In school setting for instance, observation reveals that, students are above the laws, smoke, engage in sexual immorality, show no respect to teachers, write love letters in class and pass it round for their peers to read even in school where there are two functioning counsellors. Common observation in the larger society shows that, instead of an individual seeking counsel from a trained counsellor, he prefers an untrained person. In religious setting, there is this agitation now that, male pastors should not counsel female members (clients) alone for obvious reasons.

Therefore, right from the family to the larger society, one has been made to understand that, certain actions deserve blame while others deserve praise. In counselling profession, there is a code and system of ethics. Every counsellor is expected to use sound judgement when ethical problems arise in his or her work. In view of these, the researcher decided to carry out this research to examine how ethical issues have affected the effective practice of guidance and counselling. The problem in this study, therefore, was to examine the influence of ethical issues on the effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study specifically sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. to ascertain the influence of respect for the client on the effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area;
2. to examine the influence of counsellors' dress code on the effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area;
3. to determine the influence of counsellors' qualification on the effective practices of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were answered in the study:

1. How does Counsellors' respect for the client influence effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area?
2. What influence does Counsellors' dress code has on the effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area?
3. How does Counsellors' qualification influence the effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. Counsellors' respect for the client has no significant influence on the effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area.
2. Counsellors' dress code has no significant influence on the effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area.
3. Counsellors' qualification has no significant influence on the effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area.

### **Review of Related Literature**

In the view of Patterson (1980), Client-centred counselling offers a relationship in which incongruous experiences can be recognized, expressed, differentiated and assimilated, or integrated into the self. Patterson also asserted that, the individual becomes more congruent, less defensive and more realistic and objective in his or her perception, more effective in problem solving, more accepting of others – in short, the

individual's psychological adjustment is closer to the optimum. This process and the outcomes are facilitated when the counsellor manifests unconditional positive regard for the client, empathetic understanding of the client; and is successful in communicating these attitude to the client in a relationship in which the counsellor is genuine. This theory helps to reduce threat thereby freeing the client for experiencing, expressing and exploring his or her feelings.

A very important standard in the ethical principles of all counselling professions is that the counsellor respects the integrity, dignity and welfare of the clients regardless of who the client is. In order to meet the standard, counsellors must inform their clients of the purpose and nature of treatment and the client's freedom of choice regarding participation (American Psychological Association 1992). Clients should also be informed of any modifications during the course of treatment and consent obtained. The client has the right to discontinue treatment and cannot be compelled to continue. In "mandated" counselling, this standard is challenged regularly. For instance, children are referred to mandate counselling when they exhibit undesired or unacceptable behaviours in schools. Convicted felons are also ordered to participate in treatment as a condition for parole. In these instances, little or no realistic choice is offered the client as he enters counselling reluctantly as a "pretreatment induction" before eventually agreeing to treatment. The counsellor faces an ethical dilemma that has no simple solution in these cases.

In counselling, coercion is seen as both unethical and ineffective, yet the agencies of society insisted that, treatment is provided as is the case in school setting. The problems of dual allegiance arise from situations such as those stated. The counsellor has an obligation to his employer (for example, the school, prison, or court) to provide certain services that may be unwanted by the client. The counsellor should not engage in activities that are contrary to the ethical principles concerning the right of clients, even when such refusal may lead to loss of employment (American Association for Counselling and Development, 1992).

When counsellors provide counselling by means of public lectures, radio or television programmes, they should take reasonable precautions to ensure that:

- (1) The statements are based on appropriate professional counselling literature and practice;
- (2) The statements are otherwise consistent with the Code of Ethics and the standards of practice.

Counsellors should not use their professional positions to seek or receive unjustified personal gains, sexual favours, unfair advantage, or unearned goods and services. In dealing with groups, counsellors should screen prospective group counselling/therapy participants. Counsellors, to the extent possible, should select members whose needs and goal are compatible with goals of the group, who will not impede the group process,

and whose well-being will not be jeopardized by the group experience.

Clothing is an aspect of human physical appearance like other aspects of human physical appearance, it has social significance. All societies have dress code, most of which are unwritten but understood by most members of the society. Dress code has built in rules or signals indicating the message given by a person's clothing and how it is worn. The message given by dress code may indicate the person's social class, income, occupation, attitude, marital status, sexual availability and sexual orientation (Grammer, 1996). In the view of Armstrong, Hamilton and Sweeney (2006), clothes convey other social messages such as stating or claiming personal or cultural identity, establishing, maintaining or defying social group norms, and appreciating comfort and functionality. For instance, wearing expensive clothes can communicate wealth, the image of wealth, or cheaper access to quality clothing. The observer sees the resultant expensive clothes but may incorrectly perceive the extent to which these factors apply to the person observed. Clothing can convey a social message even if none is intended. If the receiver's code of interpretation differs from the sender's code of communication, misinterpretation follows. Dress codes may be enforced, by private entities, usually, imposing a particular requirement for entry into a private space. In the traditional Nigerian society, the way an individual dresses, tells how he should be addressed. From the head to toe, a counsellor should be well kempt and moderately dressed.

A female counsellor should have her hair well-made and not elaborately made hair that portrays her as an irresponsible person. The cloth should be clean, ironed not necessarily expensive wears. The jewelries should be moderate while shoes should be well fitted and comfortable. It should not be too high to an extent that, the gait of the individual is affected. Moderate make up should be applied, not applying makeup that makes one look like a masquerade. The male should have their hair cut, ironed shirt and trousers with their tie to go with it. Or can appear in native if he feels okay in that. Shoes should be well polished. To the researcher, having a dress code for the counsellors does not affect the practice of the profession in any way. This is because, even in the profession that has stipulated dress code, the professional may adhere to the dress code, but lack the competence of how to handle a client. She is at the same time in support of counsellors dressing decently so as to be held in high esteem by the clients.

Qualification and practice in counselling is defined in terms of formal education, professional training, supervised experience in the knowledge and techniques necessary to affect desired change. The counsellor's awareness of ethical and practice guidelines for the delivery of specific counselling services is critical, as in knowledge and understanding of the laws that govern one's practice. Counsellors should be able to show evidence that they are maintaining and enhancing their professional competence through various forms of continuing education. Using outdated assessment or treatment techniques indicates that, the counsellor is behaving incompetently and thus,

unethically (Pope and Vasquez, 1991). Counsellors must limit their practice to their demonstrated areas of competence as defined by verified training and experience in the extensive array of settings in which professional services are provided.

Competent professional services includes counsellor's sensitivity to his/her own implicit biases and to overcoming stereotypic thinking and value judgments based on gender, race, age, or sexual orientations. When extending services beyond the range of their usual practice, counsellors must obtain pertinent training or appropriate supervision. In areas where there is little or no established opportunity to gain such experiences, empirical validation and discussion of treatment options with experience colleagues is required. In the course of new problems may arise that differ dramatically from those presented by the client at the outset of treatment. For example, a client may have requested career counselling, but later reveal that, he or she is a substance abuser. In these situations, the counsellor must decide whether through consultation and or supervision he or she can provide the best treatment for the client's problem or whether the client should be referred to a specialist in the particular area of concern.

To practice competently, counsellors must monitor their own psychological health so that personal distress or dysfunction does not impair their ability to provide adequate services. Under most professional ethics codes, personal problems do not excuse incompetence, and thus, unethical behaviour. Counsellors need to be alert to signs of fatigue or burn out that may interfere with professional effectiveness and be aware that the work of counselling itself may sometimes produce stress that may temporarily impair the quality of services. Counselors should refrain from undertaking professional activities when their personal problems are likely to lead to inadequate service or harm and should seek assistance for such problems at an early stage.

Counsellors can also take reasonable steps to seek out peer supervision to evaluate their efficiency. Professional counselor who do not follow ethical and legal statutes related to the profession can be sued in civil action for failing to act in good faith with clients or for not taking due care for the welfare of their clients. Corey, Corey and Callanan (1988) pointed out that most frequent malpractice suits to include failure to respect client privacy, violation of confidentiality, failure to consult or refer when a client problem goes beyond capabilities, failure to provide informed consent, misrepresenting professional competence, failure to take due precautions with suicidal clients, failure to warn others about violent clients and libelous and slanderous statements in public.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the ex-post facto research design. This design is effective when the events have taken place and data are already in existence. It is systematic empirical study in which the researcher does not in any way control or manipulates independent variables because the situation for study has already existed. The

population of this study consisted of all senior secondary students in Uyo Local Government Area, during the 2016/2017 school year. The population size consisted of 5,900 students as shown by the statistics division of State Secondary Education Board. The sample of this study consisted of 600 senior secondary students who were selected through stratified random sampling technique. 40% (240) was taken from SS1, 35% (210) was taken from SS2 while 25% (150) was taken from SS3. This was so because in schools, students tends to be more at the base and reduces as they advanced higher (Education Pyramid).

A researcher developed instrument titled "Ethical Issues and Counselling Effectiveness School Questionnaire" (EICEQ) were used in collecting data. The items were divided into two parts: part "A" required demographic data of respondents. Part "B" on the other hand, was further sectioned into A, B, C, D, E, F and each bore relevant statements covering the variables of interest. All the items were subjected to face and content validation in order to ensure that the various items in the instrument were relevant to the problem of the study, had a general relatedness to the various research questions and hypotheses formulated for this study. This was to ensure clarity and avoid ambiguity. The reliability of the research instrument, EICEQ was arrived at, through the test re-test method. The test was carried out on 50 students who were not part of the sample used for the study. The first and the second test on the 50 students took an interval of two weeks. A test re-test reliability coefficient was calculated and the result was 0.89. This value was considered high enough for the instrument to be viewed as reliable. The three research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation for each variable and dependent t-test was used for hypotheses testing.

### Decision Rule

In answering the research questions, the benchmark was that, when the mean score falls within 3.5 and 4.0, the researcher concluded that, there was a great influence; but when the mean score was below the range, the researcher concluded that, there was little or no influence. Also, in testing hypothesis, calculated t-values were compared with the critical t-value at .05 level of significance and at 599 degree of freedom. Where the former was greater than the latter, the null hypothesis was rejected or otherwise retained.

Research Question 1: What influence does the counsellor's respect for the client have on the effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area?

**Table 1: Counsellor's Respect for the Client and Effective Guidance and Counselling Practice**

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
Counselor's Qualification	600	3.79	1.65	Great
Influence Effective Guidance and Counselling Practice	600	3.03	1.21	

Table 1 reveals that, counsellor's respect for the client and effective practice of guidance and counselling show mean scores of 3.79 and 3.03, respectively. As observed from the decision rule, it is observed that the mean score of counsellor's respect for the client falls within 3.5 and 4.0, showing that, counsellor's respect for the client has a great influence on effective practice of guidance and counselling in schools. This implies that counsellors' respect for the client is a determinant to effective practice of guidance and counselling in schools.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does counsellor's dress code influence effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area?

**Table 2: Counselor's Dress Code and Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling**

Practice				
Variable	N	X	SD	Remark
Counselor's Dress Code	600	3.67	1.43	Great Influence
Effective Guidance and Counselling Practice		600	3.03	1.25

Table 2 reveals that counsellor's dress code and effective practice of guidance and counselling show mean score of 3.67 and 3.03, respectively. From the decision rule, it is observed that the mean score of counsellor's dress code falls within 3.5 and 4.0 showing that counsellor's dress code has great influence on effective practice of guidance and counselling. This implies that, the way the counselor dresses in schools determines the effectiveness of guidance and counselling practice.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does counsellor's qualification influence the effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area.

**Table 3: Counselor's Qualification and Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling**

Practice				
Variable	N	X	SD	Remark
Counselor's Qualification	600	3.92	1.29	Great
Influence Effective Guidance and Counselling Practice		600	3.03	1.26

Table 3 reveals that counsellor qualification and effective practice guidance and counselling show mean scores of 3.92 and 3.03, respectively. From the decision rule, it is observed that the mean score of counsellor's qualification falls within 3.5 and 4.0, showing that counsellor's qualification has a great influence on effective practice of guidance and counselling in schools. This implies that effective practice of guidance and counselling is determined by counsellor's qualification.

**Hypothesis 1:** Counsellors respect for the client has no significant influence on the



effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area.

**Table 4: t-test Analysis of Counsellor's Respect for Clients' Influence on Effective Practice of Guidance and Counselling**

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Calculated	Critical	Df	Decision
				t-value	t-value		
Counselor's Respect for the Clients.	600	3.79	1.21	9.67	1.65	599	S
Effective Practice of Guidance and Counselling	600	3.03	1.21				

Significant at  $P > .05$ ,  $df = 599$ ;  $r\text{-crit} = 1.96$

Table 4 reveals that the calculated t-value of 9.67 exceeds the critical value of 1.96 at the degree of freedom of 599 and at .05 level of significance. Hence null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained. This implies that the more school counsellors show respect for the clients, the greater the practice of guidance and counselling will be effective.

**Hypothesis 2:** Counsellor's dress code has no significant influence on the effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area.

**Table 5: t-test Analysis of Counsellor's Dress Code Influence and Effective Practice of Guidance and Counselling**

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Calculated	Critical	Df	Decision
				t-value	t-value		
Counselor's Dress Code	600	3.67	1.43	5.18	1.96	599	S
Effective Practice of Guidance and Counselling	600	3.03	1.25				

Significant at  $P > .05$ ,  $df = 599$ ;  $r\text{-crit} = 1.96$

Table 5 shows that the calculated value of 5.18 exceeds the critical value of 1.96 at the degree of freedom of 599 and at .05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained. This implies that, dress code of school Counsellors play a significant role in determining the effectiveness of guidance and counselling in schools.

**Hypothesis 3:** Counsellor's qualification has no significant influence on the effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area.

**Table 6: t-test Analysis of Counselor's Dress Code Influence and Effective Practice of Guidance and Counselling**

Group	N	X	SD	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value	Df	Decision
Counselor's Qualification	600	3.92	1.29	10.9	1.96	599	S
Effective practice of Guidance and Counselling	600	3.03					

Significant at  $P > .05$ ,  $df = 599$ ;  $t\text{-crit} = 1.96$

Result in Table 6 reveals that, the calculated t-value of 10.9 exceeds the critical value of 1.96 and at .05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained. This implies that, the kind of qualification obtained by the school counsellors determines the effectiveness of guidance and counselling in schools.

### Discussion of Findings

Test of hypothesis 1 shows that, there is a significant influence of counsellor's respect for the client on effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. This finding is in line with the finding of the study conducted by the American Psychological Association (1992), that, regardless of who the client is, it is ethical for counsellors to respect the integrity, dignity and welfare of the client. In counselling, coercion is seen as both unethical and ineffective. The counsellor should inform clients of the purpose, nature of treatment and respect the clients' freedom of choice, regarding participation. Also, Berlily and Golden (2000) added that, the clear intent of showing respect for the client is that, counsellor does not engage in activities that are contrary to the ethical principles concerning the rights of clients. Based on the discussion, it can be seen that, there is a significant influence of counsellor's respect for the client on effective practice of guidance and counselling.

Test of hypothesis 2 shows that, there is a significant influence of counsellor's dress code on effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. This finding is in tandem with the finding of Armstrong, Hamilton and Sweeney (2006), who found that, dressing, like other aspects of human physical appearance, has social significance. The authors added that, a counsellor should be decently and moderately dressed to show how responsible he is. If it is in the school setting, the school children tend to emulate the counsellor not knowing whether

what the counsellor does, in terms of dressing, is what the society upholds. The researcher is not ignorant of the fact that, an individual may be decently dressed, but act or behave irresponsibly. The point is that, the counsellor, for example in the school setting where learning takes place should do the right thing always for the student to learn.

Test of hypothesis 3 shows that there is a significant influence of counsellor's qualification on effective practice of guidance and counselling in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. This finding is in consonance with the study conducted by Pope and Vasquez (1991), who found that counsellors must limit their practice to their demonstrated areas of competence as defined by verifiable training and experience in the extensive array of settings in which professional services are provided. The authors added that, counsellors should undergo the stipulated training or counselling education of that State before venturing to practice to avoid being sued in civil action for incompetence. Adejola (2008) also found that, professional competence is a vital ingredient for the public to have confidence in the judgment of professional. This is so because; competence is the hallmark of professionalism.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the finding of the study, it is concluded that, there is a significant influence of Counsellor's respect for the client, dress code of the counsellor and counsellor's qualification on the effective practice of guidance and counselling in public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the result of the findings, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should monitor the standards and guidelines set up by her and make sure the counsellor has the recommended qualifications before practicing and should be licensed.
2. She should also monitor the ethical behavior of professional counsellors with clients to prevent emotional damage to clients by the development of ethical codes which will help clarify the professional's responsibilities to the clients and society.
3. Counsellors must not attempt to counsel individuals who have problems that require knowledge or skills beyond their qualification.
4. Government should employ trained counsellors and send to schools.
5. Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should organize a compulsory development course annually for members. This will keep counsellors in check to see where he needs to improve.

## References

- Adejola, A. (2008). *Becoming outstanding in your profession*. Abuja. Rainbow Publishers.
- American Association for Counselling and Development (1992). *Ethical standards for counselors*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- American Psychological Association (1990). *Guidelines for providers of psychological services to ethnically and culturally diverse population*. Washington, D.C: Author.
- Armstrong A.; Hamilton, D and Sweeney, R. (2006). Sexual assault on campus: A multi-level, integrative approach to party rape. *Social problems*, 53-54.
- Berlihy, B., and Golden, L. (2000). *Ethical standards casebook (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. Alexandria VA: AACCS Press.
- Corey, G., Corey, M, and Callanan, P. (1988). *Issues and ethics in the helping professions (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*. Pacific grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Etuk, U. (2003). *An invitation to philosophy*. Uyo: Minders Publishers.
- Grammer, K. (1996). The human mating game: the battle of the sexes and the war of signals. Paper presented at the human behaviour and evolution society annual conference, Northeastern University, Evanston.
- Patterson, C. H. (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). (1980). *Theories of counselling and psychotherapy*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Pope, K. and Vasquez, M. (1991). *Ethics in psychotherapy and counseling: A practical guide for psychologists*. San Francisco: Jossey-ba
- Unachukwu, G. and Igborbor, G. (1991). *Guidance and counseling: A realistic approach*. Owerri: International Universit