

## **ROLES OF COUNSELLORS IN PROMOTING NATIONAL INTEGRATION AS VIEWED BY COUNSELLORS IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*In Nigeria, there are issues of insecurity, disintegration, lawlessness and heightened corruption among others. Issues of this nature need the role of counsellors when stakeholders are formulating policies for national integration. Hence, it is on this premise that this study investigated the role of counsellors in promoting National integration in Nigeria. The research design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey type. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in selecting the respondents that participated in the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 460 respondents for the study. The instrument used in gathering the required data was a self-developed questionnaire titled "Role of Counsellors in Promoting National Integration Questionnaire" (RCNIQ). Three null hypotheses were generated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance using t-test statistical tool. The result obtained revealed that there was significant difference in the role of counsellors in promoting National integration based on gender, educational qualification and length of years in service. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that more school counsellors should enlighten the students on the need for unity and integration among Nigerians. Seminars and workshops should be organized by counsellors in collaboration with the government, Non-Governmental Organizations and other stakeholders in order to discuss and tackle contemporary issues on National integration and stability.*

**Key Words:** *Counsellors, National Integration, Stability, Advocacy*

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### **Introduction**

Counsellors are trained therapists who engage in the preventive and curative intervention programmes. The counsellor and the client cooperate and collaborate to find solutions to problems. Adeoye (2004) defined counselling as a specialty in the field of psychology whose practitioners assist clients to improve their well-being, alleviate distress, resolve crisis and increase their ability to be creative, innovative and make appropriate decisions. It is clear that developing countries are faced with lots of crisis that threaten their

unity and socio-political stability (Akwara *et al.*, 2001), Onifade (2013) defined national integration as the process of unifying a society which tends to make it harmonious in all things. According to the researcher a country is well integrated when there is no violence and the allocation of resources are evenly distributed. Since the return of democracy the craze to amass wealth by the politicians has been the major cause of violence and national disintegration in Nigeria. Adeleye (2014) reported that the Civil war of 1967-1970 was believed to have been fought to

keep Nigeria as one country, but the consequences of that war has led to disintegration.

The issue of *Boko haram* insurgency is a pointer to disunity among the various religious organizations in the country. The insurgents engaged in killings and abductions. Ethno-religious conflict is a major potent factor for disintegration in Nigeria. Salawu (2010) defined ethno-religious conflict as a relationship in which members of one ethnic or religious group and another multi-ethnic and multi-religious is characterized by lack of cordiality. The revealed cases of corrupt governors showed the inadequacies in our political scene. The lack of dedicated and charismatic leader has deterred the progress of the country (Adeleye, 2014). The major problem is the inability of our political leaders to consider ways of promoting unity and co-existence among the various tribes in Nigeria. Militants in the Niger Delta have continuously demanded for some certain privileges which when denied ended in insurgence, security threat and further disintegration (Onifade, 2013). Wanogho (2011) stated that the activities of the Islamic terrorist group, *Boko Haram* and their global connections with ISIS (International terrorists) has become a concern among Nigerians. The social restiveness of our youth and militancy are great challenges to national integration and peaceful co-existence in the country. Onifade (2013) observed that Nigerian's efforts at achieving national integration might not be realized. Adeleye (2014) noted that like South Africa, there is a need for more National conferences. Campbell (2012) suggested that the way forward is for the government to consciously and deliberately deemphasize racism, ethnicity, religious bigotry, and cultural segregation.

Iyaji (2000) advocated for national integration as a policy in order to promote state building.

### ***Roles of Counsellors in Promoting National Integration***

Sababa and Domiva (2012) has observed that the survival of Nigeria as a nation depends largely on our degree of tolerance not only in economic, social and political stability but to a large extent, on the ability of every citizen to possess some measure of common understanding, attitudes, beliefs, skills and purposes. These attributes can be inculcated in youths very early in their educational development. Thus, the importance of guidance and counseling in this respect cannot be over-emphasized. Olorungbemi (2012) mentioned that the government should expedite action to legally enact law that backs up the counseling profession; this is because the trained counsellor can help to ensure effective national unity.

Passer and Smith (2007) noted that human behavior is environmentally controlled. The behaviorist explained that behavior are learnt and can be unlearned. Counselors can help to develop new skills, encourage peaceful co-existence among various parties, improve communication and negotiation skills at the same time modify maladaptive behavior. According to Agbakwuru, and Opara (2013) the counselor can promote national integration and peaceful co-existence by identifying the problems militating against this process. They can set goals and select techniques that will be useful in each community. The counsellor, through the assistance of Counsellor Association of Nigeria (CASSON) can move from one community to another where there are problems engaging in enlightenment programmes on the need for national stability and integration. Enlightenment

campaign by the counsellors in seminars and workshop can emphasize on the gains of national stability and integration.

Sokari (2006) emphasized that effective use of information is necessary for people's liberation from ignorance, misconception and national disability. The application of rational emotive therapeutic process of Albert Ellis can help change the thoughts of many Nigerians who engage in acts that continually encourage disintegration. Counselors can restructure the thought pattern of the upcoming youths by discouraging sectionalism, violence and disintegration (Idzua and Anande, 2012). Group therapy, modeling, use of reinforcement can also be used by school counsellors to promote stability and sense of national integration among the youths (Ekoja, 2009).

#### ***Statement of Problem***

Nigeria is confronted with myriads of challenges such as problem national disintegration, ethnic politics, religious and racial cleavages. These internal contradictions have led to religious and ethnic crisis (Akwaru *et al.*, 2001 Onifade, 2013) observed that efforts at achieving national integration have not been realized. Thus, the integration crisis is manifested in every sector within the country. Efforts made by the government to find solution to disintegration through the national conference were inconclusive. Salawu (2010) noted that poverty and ineffective governance have further increased ethnic divisions. The springing up of various ethnic and regional militants and terror merchandises are evidences of problems and disunity among the different tribes in Nigeria. The national disintegration crisis in Nigeria is revealed in ethnic conflicts, youth restiveness and militancy.

Agbakwuru and Opara (2013) worked on ethnic prejudice and the problem of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria, Onifade (2013) wrote extensively on national integration in Nigeria, while Adeyemi (2006) looked at ethno-political religious crisis on Nigeria women and children. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, none has worked on roles of counsellors in promoting national integration. Owing to the gaps identified above, the research study investigated the roles of counsellors in promoting National integration in Nigeria,

#### ***Purpose of the study***

The purpose of the study was to examine the roles of counsellors in promoting national integration as viewed by counsellors in Nigeria. The study intended to find out the influence of variables such as gender, educational qualification and years in service on the roles of counsellors in promoting National integration in Nigeria. This study will be of benefit to the government, students and educational providers.

#### ***Research Questions***

1. What is the major role of counsellors in promoting national integration as viewed by counsellors in Nigeria?
2. Is there any significant difference in the role of counsellors in promoting national integration as viewed by counsellors in Nigeria on the basis of gender?
3. Is there any significant difference in the role of counsellors in promoting national integration as viewed by counsellors in Nigeria on the basis of educational qualification?
4. Is there any significant difference in the role of counsellors in promoting national integration as viewed by counsellors in Nigeria on the basis of years of service?

### **Research Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference in the role of counsellors in promoting national integration as viewed by counsellors in Nigeria on basis of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the role of counsellors in promoting national integration as viewed by counsellors in Nigeria on the basis of educational qualification.
3. There is no significant difference in the role of counsellors in promoting national integration as viewed by counsellors in Nigeria on the basis of years of service.

### **Methodology**

The research design used for this study was the descriptive survey method. The target population of the study consisted of all professional trained counselors in Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in selecting the respondents that participated in the study. At the first stage, a cluster of six geo-political zones was considered. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to select five out of the six geopolitical zones based on population and location. Two states were randomly selected in each of the five geopolitical zones. As such, 46 practicing school counsellors were purposively selected in each of the states. This makes a total of 460 respondents. The major instrument was tagged “Roles of Counsellors in National Integration Questionnaire (RCNLQ)”. Items in the questionnaire were derived from information obtained from the review of related literature. The instrument had two sections. Section A dealt with the demographic data of the respondents while

Section B consisted of items on the role of counselors in National Integration. The 4-point Likert Type Scale response format was adopted for use on Section B as thus: Strongly Agree: 4 points; Agree: 3 points; Disagree: 2 points; and Strongly Disagree: 1point.

In order to ascertain the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was given to four experts to check for the content validity. The suggestion of these experts was considered in the final draft of this questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was established using test-retest method within an interval of four weeks. The instrument was administered on 20 primary school counsellors in Ilorin metropolis. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to compute the correlation co-efficient of the instrument. A reliability index of 0.68 was obtained. Hence the instrument was deemed statistically reliable.

### **Results**

#### **Demographic Data**

This section presents the results of data obtained from the respondents in frequency counts and percentages.

Table 1 indicates that 460 respondents participated in the study out of which, 276 (60%) of the respondents were males, while 184 (40%) of the respondents were females. On educational qualification, 368 (80%) of the respondents have first degree, while 92 (20%) of the respondents were having a postgraduate degree. The table also shows that 345 (75%) of the respondents have spent between 1 – 10 years, while 115 (25%) have spent between 11 – 20 years in service.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Based on Personal Data

Personal Data	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	276	60.0
Female	184	40.0
Total	460	100.0
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
First Degree	368	80.0
Postgraduate	92	20.0
Total	460	100.0
<b>Years of Service</b>		
1 – 10 years	345	75.0
11 – 20 years	115	25.0
Above 20 years	-	-
Total	460	100.0

**Research Question One:** What is the major role of counsellors in promoting national integration as viewed by counsellors in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Rank Order on the Role of Counsellors in National Integration

Item No.	Counsellor's role in National integration include:	Mean	Rank
1	advocacy visits/trips	3.05	1 <sup>st</sup>
9	behaviour modification and adjustment	3.00	2 <sup>nd</sup>
7	Rehabilitation	2.85	3 <sup>rd</sup>
15	organizing seminars/workshops on how to tackle contemporary issues	2.75	4 <sup>th</sup>
14	inculcating conflict resolution skills	2.62	5 <sup>th</sup>
10	awakening the spirit of reconciliation among the youth	2.60	6 <sup>th</sup>
3	assertive training	2.57	7 <sup>th</sup>
13	reduction of deviancy among in-school adolescents	2.55	8 <sup>th</sup>
2	encouraging the spirit tolerance among various ethnic groups	2.54	9 <sup>th</sup>
11	helping people of all ages improve on their communication skills	2.52	10 <sup>th</sup>
4	teaching of negotiation skills to people of all age groups	2.51	11 <sup>th</sup>
5	community counselling for awareness and attainment of uniform goals	2.49	12 <sup>th</sup>
8	cognitive restructuring of clients with psychological concerns	2.47	13 <sup>th</sup>
12	developing clients coping strategies to problems	2.42	14 <sup>th</sup>
6	dialoging with aggrieved groups	2.38	15 <sup>th</sup>

Table 2 shows that items 1, 9 and 7 (“Counsellor’s role in National integration include advocacy visits/trips”; “behaviour modification and adjustment”; “rehabilitation”) with mean scores of 3.05, 3.00 and 2.85 ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>. while ranked last is Item 6 (“Counsellor’s role in National integration include dialoging with aggrieved groups”) with mean score of 2.38. Since eleven out of the fifteen items have mean scores that are above the mid-

mean score of 2.50, then it can be said that majority of the respondents attested that counsellors have a role in National Integration.

**Hypotheses Testing**

Three null hypotheses were generated and as well tested for this study. The hypotheses were tested using t-test statistical methods at 0.05 level of significance.

**Hypothesis One:** *There is no significant difference in the role of counsellors in National integration as viewed by counsellors in Nigeria based on gender*

Table 3: t-test Showing the Role of Counsellors in National Integration as viewed by Counsellors in Nigeria Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
Male	276	49.08	5.64	458	10.51*	1.96
Female	184	44.25	3.23			

\*Significant, p<0.05

Table 3 shows a calculated t-value of 10.51 and a critical t-value of 1.96. The calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value. The hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the role of counsellors in National

integration as viewed by counsellors in Nigeria based on gender.

**Hypothesis Two:** *There is no significant difference in the role of counsellors in National integration as viewed counselors in Nigeria based on educational qualification*

Table 4: t-test on the Role of Counsellors in National Integration as viewed by Counsellors in Nigeria Based on Educational Qualification

Edu. Qualification	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
First Degree	368	47.87	5.10	458	6.00*	1.96
Postgraduate	92	44.25	5.47			

\*Significant, p<0.05

Table 4 shows a calculated t-value of 6.00 and a critical t-value of 1.96. The calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value. The hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the role of counsellors in National integration as viewed by counsellors in

Nigeria State based on educational qualification.

**Hypothesis Three:** *There is no significant difference in the role of counsellors in National integration as viewed by counsellors in Nigeria based on years of service*

Table 5: t-test on the Role of Counsellors in National Integration as viewed by Counsellors in Nigeria Based on Years of Service

Years of Service	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
1 – 10 years	345	48.26	4.04	458	8.26*	1.96
11 – 20 years	115	43.80	7.19			

\*Significant, p<0.05

Table 5 shows a calculated t-value of 8.26 and a critical t-value of 1.96. The calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value. The hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the role of counsellors in National integration as viewed by counsellors in based on years of service.

## Discussion

The study revealed that the major roles of counselors in national integration include advocacy visits. Advocacy visit can be source of enlightenment on the need of national integration. Advocacy visit affords the counsellors to organize community counselling for awareness and

attainment of national stability (Agbakwuru and Opara, 2013). Male and female counsellors differed in their opinion on the roles of counsellors in national integration. It has been observed that gender have influence on perceptions especially on topical issues of national relevance. However, Adeleye (2014) noted that Nigerians are not convenient with the current disunity and instability in the country. Awoyemi (2012) recommended the need for private and public counselling practices as a solution to the multidimensional dis-unity confronting Nigerians.

The educational qualification of the respondents influenced their views. Counseling services are provided in a range of ways depending on the counsellors level of training (Bukoye *et al.*, 2012). It is expected that the views of a degree holder as it relates to national stability and integration will be different from their counterparts with higher degrees. In the discharge of their responsibilities as counsellors in issues of national integration, Akinyemi (2010) emphasized that the contemporary Nigeria society with different challenges of instability and disunity needs qualified, competent and certified counsellors to assist the government in taking informed decisions.

Respondents also differed based on the years of service. Onifade (2013) observed that the efforts of the government at achieving national integration could be difficult. Wanogho (2011) explained that through personnel efforts, Martin Luther was able to deemphasized racism, ethnicity, religion, cultural affiliation, and all the potential bottle necks, in order to achieve peaceful co-existence. This he did by organizing lectures, seminars, workshop, and rallies and without regards

to race, ethnic divide, cultural and religious affiliation. In achieving national integration history could repeat itself if these process are followed. Adeoye (2004) confidently expressed that the experience of a counsellor counts in releasing valid and useful information that will bring about useful adjustment. In doing this, counsellors, also organize seminars, lectures, *in situ* training, train the trainer, workshop, etc as a form of enlightenment.

#### **Implication for Counselors**

The counselling association, as a matter of urgency must ensure that legal recognition is given to counselling profession in Nigerian. This will enable counsellors to contribute their quota towards national integration. Awoyemi (2012) pointed out that the absence of enabling framework in form of a degree or act of parliament is one of the greatest challenges confronting Counselling profession.

#### **Recommendation**

Counselling Association (CASSON) should visit areas of national crisis in order to provide counseling services. The federal government should give a legal backing to counseling profession to encourage active participation in national integration. Also, counselling education should be made compulsory at secondary school level. This will allow the students to be well equipped with skills that are relevant to national integration. School counsellors should enlighten the students on the need for unity and integration among Nigerians. Seminars and workshops should be organized by counsellors in collaboration with the government, Non-Governmental Organizations and other stakeholders in order to discuss and tackle contemporary issues on National integration and stability.

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