

**FACTORS INFLUENCING CLIENTS' DISPOSITION TO SELF-DISCLOSURE DURING
COUNSELLING SESSION AMONG JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN
ANIOCHA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA. ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA**

By

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ABSTRACT

This study empirically analyzes the factors influencing clients' disposition to self-disclosure during counselling sessions among junior secondary school students in Nigeria. The population of the study were male and female of 8 selected Junior Secondary Schools in Anaocha LGA of Anambra State, the study selected a sample size of 400 respondents as a representative of the study population, and the study used a purposive sampling technique to randomly select the respondents of this study. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis (MANOVA) were used to analyze the data. The study found a significant relationship among outcomes expectations variables, emotional openness and attitudes towards self-disclosure during counseling sessions among the students. This study concludes that the outcomes expectations variables such as stigma tolerance, anticipated risk, social stigma, anticipated utility, perceived social support and emotional openness have negatively influenced students' attitudes towards self-disclosure during counseling sessions. Therefore, this study recommends that government should put forward several Multicultural Competencies to reduce the menace of low self-disclosure in the counseling units. The study also recommends that, government and the stakeholders in the private sectors as well as the Non-governmental Organizations should intensify efforts to improve counselors-students ratios across all the Junior Secondary Schools in the study location.

Keywords: *Attitude towards self-disclosure, emotional openness, guidance and counseling sessions, outcome expectations variables.*

Introduction

Counseling is an important and developmental tool in nature. It is a vital tool in modifying maladaptive behaviours as well as assisting individuals to overcome their different problems; such problems could be educationally, vocationally, or socio-personally oriented. The enormity of its importance probably account for its recognition by the Federal Government of Nigeria and its subsequent inclusion in the Nigeria National Policy on Education (NNPE, 1977: pg 53).

In view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects, and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counselors shall be appointed in post-primary institutions. Since qualified personnel in this category are scarce, government shall continue to make provisions for the training of interested teachers in guidance and counseling. Guidance and counseling shall also feature in teacher education programmes. Proprietors of schools shall provide guidance and counselors in adequate number in each primary and post-primary schools.

The inclusion of counselling in the school system by the Federal Government of Nigeria is geared towards curbing challenges of learners in relation to their problems, be it development educationally, socially, vocationally, and psychologically among others. The training and employment of counsellors to schools is to help in moldings maladaptive behaviours of learners.

A counsellor is a trained mental professional who aims to create a confidential relationship with people in distress so they can safely express their thoughts and feelings and make sense of painful or confusing

experiences. This process allows people to find themselves the best way to manage problems, make changes in their lives and often the symptoms (Sheu & Sedlacek, 2017; Sue & Sue, 2018).

A counsellor is a trained mental professional who aims to create a confidential relationship with people in distress so they can safely express their thoughts and feelings and make sense of painful or confusing experiences. This process allows people to find themselves the best way to manage problems, make changes in their lives and often the symptoms dissipate.

However, talking too much about ourselves early in a relationship may not facilitate the development of friendship because too much disclosure might be viewed as being insecure. As a result, self-disclosure may lead to rejection because of not being liked or accepted (Steinberg, 2019). Nevertheless, self-disclosure is subject to various issues and factors. A number of factors influence when to disclose and when not to disclose. These factors include stigma tolerance, anticipated risks, social stigma, and anticipated utility and perceived social supports.

The need for counseling services among the junior secondary school students in Sub-Saharan African Countries is well documented in the counseling literature (Baysden, 2018; Davis, 2019; Pandit, 2018). For many students, this period represents the first major transition and adjustment in familiar support and resources (Baysden, 2018). Coupled with novel decisions and challenges, this period also epitomizes a time of identity exploration (Marcia & Martins, 2017), transition into more adult roles, responsibilities (Levinson, 2018), more concrete career choice, and development (Super & Arthur, 2018).

The Ministry of education (2019) reports that 2, 617,556 students were admitted into Junior Secondary Schools across the public and private schools in Nigeria in which majority are from the Eastern part of the country. Anaocha Local Government Area of Anambara State has remained the host of the highest percentage of these students for the past three years especially the Federal Unity Schools. The growing numbers of these populations suggest a need to address factors influencing the dispositions of these students to self-disclosure during counseling sessions.

Although the junior secondary school students may be in great need of professional counseling to help deal with these stressors, researches contend that they are less likely to seek professional counseling and more apt to reveal their emotional problems to counselors during counseling sessions (Baysden & Badmus, 2016). Studies (Leong & Sedlacek, 2019; Anderson & Myer, 2019) reveals that even when students disclose themselves during counseling sessions, they don't give the counselor full details of the emotional problems they are going through and they remain more likely to secede than their counterparts in other parts of the Eastern part of the country.

Consequently, during this study's pilot survey, the researcher interacted with the counsellors posted to the junior secondary schools in Anaocha LGA of Anambara State. The outcomes of the pilot survey was quite revealing because when the researcher interacted with the students to investigate how freely, often/frequently they disclose their personal feelings or problems with their counselors during counseling sessions. During the discussion, the researcher found that a good number of the students express unwillingness to disclose their problems with the school counsellors. The reasons for that centre around the counsellors and the counselling environment.

Low stigma tolerance, high expectation of social stigma, high-anticipated risks and high expectation of utility of the information divulge to a counselor may lead to low self-disclosure among the junior secondary students. This may also have negative effect on students' academic performance, increase the rate of drop-out among students. It may also contributes to an increase in substance abuse, suicide ideology, academic problems, somatic symptoms, decreased self-esteem, and interpersonal and familial problems among other problems.

In view, of the aforementioned problems, this paper seeks to provide answer to the research question below.

What is the coefficient of correlation among outcomes expectations variables and the attitudes of junior secondary schools students towards self-disclosure during counseling sessions in Anaocha Local Government Area of Anambara State?

2.1 Conceptual Review

Self-disclosure

Cozby, Andrew, Freeman and Dorren (2018) conceptualize self-disclosure as "any information about himself which Person A communicates verbally to Person B". This broad definition sets these criteria: (i) self-disclosure must contain personal information about Person A, (ii) the information is verbally communicated to a target Person B, and (iii) the information must be verbally communicated by the discloser. The definition proposed by Worthy, Gary and Kahn (2016) places further restrictions on what is self-disclosure. They defined self-disclosure as "that which occurs when A knowingly communicates to B information about A which is unknown and is not otherwise available to B". Therefore, following this formulation, the criteria of intentionality and privacy were became part of the operational definition. Goodstein and Reinecker (2018) considered still another element to be an important parameter of self-disclosure. Pointing out that such aspects of the self as feelings, values, ideas, and experiences are more central or important to the individual, they contended that self-disclosure should be limited to the "intentional revealing of these more central aspects of the self". Combining the elements offered by these writers, there are six criteria for self-disclosure

- first, it contains personal information about the discloser.
- Second, the information is verbally communicated by the discloser.
- Third, the information is intentionally communicated.
- Fourth, the information is private.
- Fifth, it deals with some aspect of himself or herself which the discloser considers important.

Therefore, self-disclosure is defined as verbally communicated information about herself or himself which is important to him or her (centrality) and which would ordinarily be private rather than public information (intimacy).

Empirical Reviews on Attitudes towards Self-disclosure

Hanson, Gulack, Haman and Aragon (2018) qualitatively researched 18 clients using grounded theory and found self-disclosure to have both a positive and a negative effect both on the clients and the counselors' privacy.

Audet and Everall (2019) used a phenomenological methodology to qualitatively study nine participants and found that self-disclosure had both facilitative and hindering effects. Audet (2018) found that self-disclosure can blur the therapeutic boundaries. However, when it is used skilfully it can enhance the relationship. Likewise Bottrill, Pistrang, Barker, and Worrell (2019) used phenomenology to qualitatively study 14 trainee clinical psychologists and determined that working out one's approach to self-disclosure is a challenge or trainee therapists and that support is often required to master the skill.

Levitt et al. (2019), using a naturalistic methodology, qualitatively examined therapist self-disclosure within 52 two-therapy dyads and found both positive and negative results. Self-disclosure that humanized the therapist seemed to have a more positive affect than disclosure that expressed encouragement. Self-disclosure that highlighted similarity with the therapist seemed to have a more positive impact than disclosure that failed to convey either similarity or dissimilarity.

Knox, Hess, Petersen, and Hill (2018) qualitatively studied 13 adult clients in therapy, through phenomenology, and found self-disclosure to have a positive effect on discussing their important personal issues. This was in the context of the therapists being perceived by the clients as intending to normalize or reassure them and consisted of their provision of non-current information.

Burkard, Knox, Groen, Perez, and Hess (2019) qualitatively researched 11 European American psychotherapists' self-disclosure in cross-cultural settings phenomenologically. The results were positive when the therapists shared their own views on racist and oppressive attitudes, with the intention of enhancing the relationship.

Andersen and Anderson (2018) used multiple regression analysis and granger causality to assessed the factors that influence clients' disposition to self-disclosure during counseling sessions using self-disclosure and the demographic variables related to a therapist's use or non-use of self-disclosure. The researchers surveyed (Andersen & Anderson, 2018). Their results indicates that counselors used self-disclosure with their clients and their disclosures increased with therapy experience. Specifically, counselors with one year or less therapy experience disclosed less than therapists with 2-5 years' experience or 10+ years' experience (Heneretty& Levitt, 2017; Andersen & Anderson, 2018). Also, Andersen and Anderson found that counselors prefer using self-disclosures that reveal their emotional reactions to client's behavior when the goal of the disclosure was to help the client understand how others perceive them. Counselors used positive affective responses the most frequently with clients but fantasies, images, and negative affective statements were also popular counselor self-disclosures (Andersen & Anderson, 2018). They also concluded that counselor self-disclosures about past or present weaknesses were not frequently shared with clients and they theorize these disclosures were not shared frequently because they were personal and they damage the counselor's "expert role"

Methodology

Following the studies of Aromashodun (2016); Bolanle (2018) and Aderibigbe *et al.* (2017) this study used a purposive sampling technique to randomly select respondents from 8 sampled junior secondary schools in Anaocha LGA of Anambara State. This study selected a sample size of 400 respondents comprising 200 female and 200 male students from the eight secondary schools in the study locations. In each of the schools, the researcher randomly sampled 50 students from each of the JSS II class given it a total of 400 students which constituted the sample size. The target population for this study were the Junior Secondary School Students (which comprises male and female) in Anaocha LGA of Anambara State.

The analysis of the data collected from the field in order to test the validity of data begins with the descriptive statistics of the socio-demographic background of the respondents, correlation analysis of the variables of outcome expectations, emotional openness and attitudes towards self-disclosure in the locations.

This study used the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to analyze the relationship among variables for outcome expectations and emotional openness and attitudes towards self-disclosure among junior secondary school pupils from the study locations. The dependent variables is attitudes towards self-disclosure while the variables for outcome expectations and emotional openness were the independent variables. Therefore, this section begins with the analysis of the diagnostic test of the outcomes expectations variables and socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents This section presents the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents which include gender (that is, male and female), age, religion affiliations and ethnicity. The table below depicts the frequencies and percentages of the socio-demographic background of the respondents.

Table 4.1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender (N 399)		
Male	185	46.4
Female	214	53.6
Age		
10-13	290	72.7
12-14	100	25.0
13-15	9	2.3
Religion Affiliations		
Catholic	350	87.7
Anglican	20	5.0
Baptist	24	6.0
Others	5	1.3
Ethnicity (sociocultural background)		
Igbo	340	85.2
Yoruba	39	9.8
Hausa	16	4.0
Others	4	1.0

Source: (Field Survey, 2021)

Table 1 shows that a total of 46.5% of the respondents were male while 53.6% were female. This means that the population were fairly distributed among genders. The table further shows that 72.7% of the respondents constitute the age bracket of 10-13 years while 25.0% constitute the age bracket of 12-14 years and 2.3% proportion of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 13-15 respectively.

Table 4.2: Relationships between the independent variables and attitudes towards self-disclosure

Effect	Value	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Pillai's Trace	.053	*4.53	6.00	399	.000

Source: (Field Survey, 2021)*p<.01

Analyses of variances (ANOVA) on each independent variable were conducted as follow-up tests to the MANOVA. Using the Tukey Method, each ANOVA was tested at the .01 level. The ANOVA on the following independent variables were significant: Stigma Tolerance [F (1, 399) =12.18, p=.001], Anticipated Utility [F (1,399) =7.35, p=.003]. The following dependent variables were also statistically significant; Level of Emotional Openness [F (1,399) =.13, p=.02]; Anticipated Risk [F (1,399) =.01, p=.01] and Perceived Social Support [F (1, 399) =.295, p=.000].

Table 4.3: Tests of Between-Subjects of Dependent and Independent Variables

	INDV	SS	df1	F	Sig.
ATSDS	EO	6.21	1	.13	.001
	ST	*88.38	1	12.18	.000
	AR	10.34	1	.83	.000

EO=Emotional Openness

ST= Stigma Tolerance

AR= Anticipated Risks

AU= Anticipated Utility

SS= Perceived Social Support

ATSDS = Attitudes towards self-disclosure

The results in the table above suggests that predictor of stigma tolerance, anticipated utility, anticipated risk, perceived social support and emotional openness are statistically significant in predicting pupils of junior secondary schools attitudes towards self-disclosure during counseling sessions.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis of the factors influencing clients' disposition to self-disclosure during counseling sessions.

This section presents the analysis of the data collected from the field in order to test the validity of the study hypothesis. Therefore, the section begins with correlation analysis of the variables of interest.

Table 4.3: Means and Standard Deviations of Outcome Expectation Variables

Variables	Mean for Male	SD for Male	Mean for female	SD for Female	N	P-value
Emotional openness	29.80	6.94	30.02	7.2	399	0.000
Stigma tolerance	10.75	2.72	11.59	3.3	399	0.001
Social stigma	5.80	2.89	18.23	4.60	399	0.000
Anticipated Risk	13.65	3.53	13.36	3.40	399	0.001
Anticipated Utility	13.84	3.06	13.10	2.50	399	0.000
Social Support	59.36	16.62	59.41	17.30	399	0.001
ATSD	80.20	10.19	77.00	8.45	399	0.001

Source: (Field Survey, 2021)

*** Outcomes expectations variables are significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels.*

The table above shows that stigma tolerance for male students had the mean and standard deviation of 10.75 and 2.72 while female students had the mean and standard deviation of 11.59 and 3.3. Also, for social stigma, the male students had the mean of 5.80 and standard deviation of 2.89 while the female students had the mean and standard deviation of 11.59 and 3.3.

Further, for anticipated risk, the male students had the mean and standard deviation of 13.65 and 3.53 while the female students had the mean of 13.36 and standard deviation of 3.40. In addition, for anticipated utility, the male students had the mean and standard deviation of 13.84 and 3.06 while the female students had the mean of 13.10 and standard deviation of 2.50.

Meanwhile, for social support, the mean students had the mean of 59.36 with the standard deviation of 16.62 whereas the female students had the mean and standard deviation of 59.41 and 17.30.

This suggests that while the girls sample has a greater perception of stigma associated with disclosing self during counseling sessions compared to boys they also reported lower levels of social support and

high levels of emotional openness. This result is in line with the studies of Adegbite (2015); Bamidele (2016) and Mantel *et al.* (2012).

Table 4.4: Correlations Matrix Among Outcomes Expectation Variables and Attitude Towards Self-Disclosure

		EO	ST	AR	AU	SS	ATSDS
EO	Pearson Correlation	1	.303	.420	.264	.124	-.579**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.195	.066	.261	.602	.008
	N	399	399	399	399	399	399
ST	Pearson Correlation	.303	1	-.592**	.439	-.612**	-.609**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.195		.006	.053	.004	.004
	N	399	399	399	399	399	399
AR	Pearson Correlation	.420	-.592**	1	-.643**	-.513*	-.695**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.066	.006		.002	.021	.001
	N	399	399	399	399	399	399
AU	Pearson Correlation	.264	.439	-.643**	1	-.639**	-.555*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.261	.053	.002		.002	.011
	N	399	399	399	399	399	399
PSS	Pearson Correlation	.124	-.612**	-.513*	-.639**	1	-.565**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.602	.004	.021	.002		.009
	N	399	399	399	399	399	399
ATSDS	Pearson Correlation	-.579*	-.609**	-.695**	-.555*	-.565**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.004	.001	.011	.009	
	N	399	399	399	399	399	399

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

EO=Emotional Openness

ST= Stigma Tolerance

AR= Anticipated Risks

AU= Anticipated Utility

PSS= Perceived Social Support

ATSDS = Attitudes towards self-disclosure.

The result of the correlation matrix in table 4 reveals a significant relationship amongst each of the surrogates of outcomes expectation variables, emotional openness and attitude towards self-disclosure in the study location. With an R- value of -0.58, -0.60, -0.70, -0.56, 0.57 and -1 shows that a strong negative relationship exist among EO, ST; AR; AU; SS and ATSDS respectively. This also implies that social tolerance, emotional openness, anticipated risk, anticipated utility and perceived social support have negatively correlated with attitudes towards self-disclosure among the students. This result is in line with the study of Ayua and Ariwodola (2018), Audet and Overall (2019). .By implication the correlation matrix result shows that social tolerance, emotional openness, perceived social support,

anticipated risk, anticipated utility and social stigma have significantly reduced junior secondary school students' attitudes towards self-disclosure during counseling sessions.

5. Summary and Conclusion

Following the result obtained, it was found that female students have low attitudes towards self-disclosure due to low level of emotional openness compared to the male students. This study concludes that a low level of emotional openness, stigma tolerance, social stigma, anticipated risk, anticipated utility and perceived social support have negatively influenced the attitudes towards self-disclosure among junior secondary school students during counseling sessions. The fear of emotions and experiencing of pains negatively influence junior secondary school students towards self-disclosure during counseling sessions.

6. Recommendation

Following the results of the empirical findings in this survey thus far, this study recommends that: Highly qualified and trained employees are a critical component of any effective organization. The success of junior secondary school counseling centers, therefore, depends on the quality of the staff. Junior secondary school counseling programs need to invest in the continuous professional development of their staff to ensure sustained competence in dealing with students from different cultural backgrounds.

In an effort to facilitate the cultural competence of counselors, government, stakeholders and non-governmental organizations should enroll all guidance and counseling teachers at all levels in the Association for Multicultural Counseling Development (AMCD), put forward several Multicultural Competencies that they deemed necessary for every counselor.

This study also recommends that the government and the stakeholders in the private sectors as well as the Non-governmental Organizations should intensify efforts to increase the number of guidance and counseling teachers across all the Secondary Schools in Anaocha Local Government Area of Anambara State in order to meet up with the international standard.

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