

# INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY ACADEMIC RESEARCH JOURNAL (IMARJ)



ISSN: 2616-0889



**VOL 1, ISSUE 2, JULY, 2016**

**A Publication of** Optimal Education Resources.

[editor.imarj@gmail.com](mailto:editor.imarj@gmail.com)

## BLENDING MODERN AND TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO COUNSELING IN NIGERIA

**Dr. Ikoro, Stanley Ibekwe,**  
Department of Educational Foundations  
Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo.  
Ebonyi State, Nigeria

### Abstract

This paper examined blending modern and traditional approach to counseling in Nigeria. Guidance is the process of a dynamic interpersonal relationship that is prepared to influence the person's attitude and follow-up behaviour. While Guidance counseling is the integral components in the field of education system. It is needed and essentials in all aspects of life and occupations. Need to orient the individual on the present and fulltime condition as to guide his/her decision in attaining the goals. The counselor should be trained, to be computer and internet compliant and the use of social media such as Whatsapp, Twitter, You tube, Tik – talk, instagram and likes. The use of these platforms/social media will help the counselor to reach out to his/her client by chatting and discussing on a agreed scheduled date and time on their issues and challenges. Also the counseling procedure can be formulated to the client ahead of time schedule. Also the use of programme modeled video clips will also make for effective counseling. The procedure for indigenous counseling should be categorized and properly documented. Some obnoxious aspects can be expunged. Some traditional cultures should be considered, for instance, a man and a woman who are not husband and wife, cannot sit down face to face and look eye ball to eye ball. The Elderlies and parents should take up the age-long roles by active counseling and guiding the young ones, especially at the present seemingly moral decadence and collapsed systemic societal values.

**Keywords:** Modern counseling, Traditional counseling, and Approach to Counseling

### Introduction

Guidance is the process of a dynamic interpersonal relationship that is prepared to influence the person's attitude and follow-up behaviour. Guidance counseling is the integral components in the field of education system. It is needed and essentials in all aspects of life and occupations. Need to orient the individual on the present and full time condition as to guide his/her decision in attaining the goals. The contemporary complex life calls for guidance and counseling for the individual to cope, develop, advance and achieve a productive life/wellbeing. More so, when there is the feeling of uncertainty on how to survive bad government, causing anxiety and disaffections in the individual like the issue of unemployment.

Guidance and counseling is needed for people to cope with developmental stages experiences that are not pleasant. Therefore students need help to overcome them and achieve self integration and fulfillment. The need to assist parents towards proper development of their children, by making them to understand the individual differences of their

children and adopting various methods to meet their needs and development. Also to identify problem areas of students in different domains, and for adult and the aged. It is also needed for the identification of the individual's potentials, the family and the society through psychological test.

It as well helps students to act autonomously mature and responsible manner (students gain self esteem and self motivation). It also provides resiliency among people and equally strengthen the resiliency of students that are confronted with multiplicity of problems. It improves individual's self esteem, helps the counselee to evaluate their awareness regarding their needs, educational, vocational and personal – social.

Furthermore, it help the individual to be flexible enough to make a behavioural change and cultivate openers for change (that is adjusting to solve one's problem). It helps/assist individual to enhance their decision – making ability and trust their own decision. It deals with improve personal effectiveness like, time management, anger

management and self control. It makes client adopt adjustment in various areas like home, university, and work places.

The counselor should be trained, to be computer and internet compliant and the use of social media such as Whatsapp, Twitter, You tube, Tik – talk, instagram and likes.

The use of these platforms/social media will help the counselor to reach out to his/her client by chatting and discussing on a agreed scheduled date and time on their issues and challenges. Also the counseling procedure can be formulated to the client ahead of time schedule. Also the use of programme modeled video clips will also make for effective counseling.

**Traditional counseling** is basically seen as the indigenous or traditional practices that help people, in order to achieve self-satisfaction and for proper adjustment in all dimensions. It is as old as man on earth, and had existed from one generation to the other.

Gustad in Ngluka-Ozo (2015) suggested a definition of counseling which included three key elements. He say that counseling is a learning oriented process, carried on in a sample, on to one social environment, in which a Counselor, professionally competent in relevant psychological skills and knowledge, seeks to assist the client by methods appropriate to the latter's needs and within the context of the total personnel program. He helps the client to learn more about himself, to learn how to put such understanding into effect in relation to more clearly perceived realistically defined goals to the end that the client may become a happier and more productive member of his society. In lay terms, Counseling can be described as a face to face relationship, having goals to help a client to learn or acquire new skills which will enable them to cope and adjust to life situation. The locus is to help a person reach maximum fulfillment or potential and to become fully functioning as a person.

Man, from prehistoric times, has been having challenges and solving them. Equally, Nigerians in the traditional set-up before the advent of formalized guidance and counseling, had problems and they were solving them through what Iwama (2003) called traditional guidance. Traditional counseling

was seen as any type of assistance given to somebody in need. Their needs were personal, social, vocational or traditional education. The counselors then were those who had experiences that accumulated as a result of age, heritage and practice.

Bulus in Otta (2011) stated that indigenous counseling is basically seen by people as the indigenous practices that help them in order to achieve self-satisfaction and for proper adjustment in all dimensions. Here, the implication is that people must search for assistance to overcome unfavourable situations they encounter. Iwuama (2003) observed that the African traditional counseling and psychotherapy practitioners may not have any theoretical basis for their practices but they meet the conditions for counseling and psychotherapy to result in behavioural change.

Mankinde in Iwuama (2000) concluded that the beauty of the indigenous African approach to counseling is that it is not initiated, fashioned and concretized by a lone theorist like the Rogerian, Freudian, Adlerian, RET and others. He stated further that the approach metamorphosed from concerns of Africans for people in need or in problems. He further stated that prominent among the practitioners of the indigenous counseling were the Babalawo of the Yoruba land, Obozi of the Igala and TIV ethnic group, Dibia or Ogbafa in Igbo land, Gua-pa among the Kofyar of Plateau State, Uzenakpo among the Ibibios. Other classes of effective participants in the indigenous counseling include the elders, imams, priests, teachers, title holders and friends in the Nigeria setting.

Iwuama (2000) further highlighted some problems encountered or suffered by the African traditional counseling practice thus:

- (a) Most of the practitioners were illiterate and could not organize or produce written documents.
- (b) The apartheid attitude of the developed world towards anything African was full of resentment. They felt that good things could rarely come from Africans.
- © Another major blockade to the development of the African indigenous counseling was the unfortunate attitude of the Africans who also felt that anything African was inferior to the

foreign ones.

- (d) However, it has been observed that despite the above mentioned militating factors, the status of African indigenous counseling has improved significantly over the years.

### Basic Assumptions

Iwuama (2000) asserted that the African traditional counseling is built on the following basic philosophies.

1. That a typical African community is a family irrespective of any social difference.
2. That as a family, the welfare of individuals is a collective responsibility.
3. That in community/family, the members are prone to problems which could be vocational, personal-social or educational in nature.
4. That the behaviour of the individuals within the society should conform to the acceptable values, norms, beliefs, philosophies and ethics of the society.
5. That deviant behaviours exhibited by any member attract sanctions, reproof, and counseling for possible modification.
6. That the experiences, skills and exposures of the elders, priests, balalowos, friends, imams and even parents are significant credentials to quality them for rendering the services.

### Nature of Man

Otta (2011) attested to the fact that man is predisposed to operant and respondent conditioning and so needs help in order to attend to his problems through process of counseling and psychotherapy. She went further to explain that the individuals who visit traditional counselors are regarded as worried people or persons with deep emotional problems, those who seek natural powers or people who need to be healed of their infirmities. It is therefore pertinent to note that indigenous counseling is premised on behaviour modification and positive mental health.

### Nature of Disorder

Human beings are social and continuously interact with their environment. In the Nigerian context, life patterns of the people are dependent upon the norms and mores of the society or culture of the people. Communalism is practiced giving rise to the system

where people show great concern for others both in the period of conformity or deviation from the societal norms. It is therefore pertinent to note that those individuals who deviate from the social norms (accepted way of life) exhibit behaviour disorder which must attract the attention of the traditional counseling practitioners for necessary modification using techniques of divination, proverbs, folktale, recitation or offering of sacrifices.

### Counseling process

The training and methods of the indigenous Counselors are adequate and their philosophy and practice have much in common with western psychotherapy (Otta 2011). She further highlighted that the Indigenous practice include the use of psychological checks and balances which include African poetry, music and dance, cognomen, does and religious therapy. In addition, the Nigeria indigenous Counselors use local language (Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Efik, etc) which indicate proverbs, idioms, lyrics and aphorisms in dealing with their clients. Iwuama (2000) in the same vein asserted that as the counseling process between the client and the African practitioner continues, the practitioner employs words, music, phrases lyrics, aphorisms etc on the client to enable him understand his problems or self and seek ways of resolving conflict areas of life. He is helped to actualize himself just as in the western type of counseling.

### Techniques

The aim of counseling is to help individual toward overcoming obstacles to their personal growth, wherever these may be encountered and toward achieving optimum development of their personal resources (Arbukie in Nduoka-Ozo, 201). Corroborating the above Adugbo in Iwuama (2000) observed that a major influential factor of traditional counseling and psychotherapy is that elders or any other practitioners are regarded as authority figures and sources of wisdom. It should be noted that such traditional Counselors in some cases, resort to making consultations with their gods, spirits and other supernatural powers to identify their clients' problems. He further said that some notable techniques in the African traditional counseling include: advising, divination, proverbs, folklore recitation and sacrifices. This is in consonance with the ideas of Otta (2011).



### **Applicability**

African traditional counseling has presently gained high degree of applicability especially here in Nigeria. As the indigenous medicine has been recognized as a partner to modern medicine, the indigenous counseling can be utilized along side of exotic counseling where it is absolutely necessary and should be adopted with caution. Otta (2011) and Iwuama (2000) also observed that African traditional counseling and psychotherapy practitioners are aware of the efficacy of words, chants, tokens, proverbs, songs, incantations, folklore, divinations among others in helping members of the society. The indigenous Counselors are aware that these techniques have links with certain principles of nature and wisely use them to bring about psychological and social relief of their clients. As a matter of fact, it is evident that traditional counseling approach finds applicability in most problem situations in the Nigerian and African society since it is premised on the people's way of life and their efforts for survival.

### **Critiques**

The traditional counseling approach has both merits and demerits:

#### **Advantages include:**

1. As a result of their knowledge, experience and skills, the traditional African counseling practitioners know when to invite clients for counseling.
2. The practitioners of this approach have deep knowledge of their clients and their environment and therefore approach their problem with sincerity, empathy and understanding.
3. The words, proverbs, folktales, aphorisms, etc used in the local setting serve as good means of communication and they make clients feel at home.
4. The various techniques and skills employed by the practitioners in the counseling process make for social tranquility.
5. The approach is easily adapted to the environmental circumstances and need of clients. In the same vein, it could be specifically useful for special problems.
6. Use of native language makes it good.

#### **Disadvantages**

1. Acculturation has permeated deep into the

lives of African people or communities consequent upon this, individual tastes and societal values of the modern African community are gradually assuming a new dimension.

2. The technological situation of our modern society may pose problem situations that may not be compatible with the traditional counseling approach.
3. Again, observations have it that the rate of youthful delinquency in our modern society is high as a result of the obvious rejection or resentment to the services of the parents, teachers, priests and many other African traditional counselors.

### **Concussion**

Traditional counseling is basically seen as the indigenous or traditional practices that help people, in order to achieve self-satisfaction and for proper adjustment in all dimensions. It is as old as man on earth, and had existed through many generations. It could be perceived as a type of assistance rendered to a person with problems or challenges using traditional methods. Equally, the traditional counseling has to do with helping the individual with issues of mental health and other life problems based on their related diverse cultural backgrounds of indigenous clients/students. The practitioners are native doctors, Elders, priests, imams etc. Indigenous counseling is rooted intimately within indigenous epistemologies, world views, cultures and traditions. They are aware of the efficacy of words, chants, tokens, proverbs, songs, incantations, folklore, divinations among others in helping members of the society. The indigenous Counselors, are aware that these techniques have links with certain principles of nature and wisely use them to bring about psychological and social relief of their clients. As a matter of fact, it is evident that traditional counseling approach finds applicability in most problem situations in the Nigerian and African society since it is premised on the people's way of life and their survival.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations on blending the modern and traditional counseling.**

The counselor should be trained, to be computer and internet compliant and the use of social media such as Whatsapp, Twitter, You tube, Tik – talk, instagram and likes. The use of these platforms/social media

will help the counselor to reach out to his/her client by chatting and discussing on a agreed scheduled date and time on their issues and challenges. Also the counseling procedure can be formulated to the client ahead of time schedule. Also the use of programme modeled video clips will also make for effective counseling.

The procedure for indigenous counseling should be categorized and properly documented. Some obnoxious aspects can be expunged. Some traditional cultures should be considered, for instance, a man and a woman who are not husband and wife, cannot sit down face to face and look eye ball to eye ball. The Elderlies and parents should take up the age-long roles by active counseling and guiding the young ones, especially at the present seemingly moral decadence and collapsed systemic societal values.

## References

- Nduka – Ozo, S.N. (2015). Principles, Ethics, Theory and Techniques of Guidance and Counseling. Enugu: Immaculate Publications Ltd.
- Otta, F.E (2011). Theory of Counselling and and Psychotherapy: Applicability in Nigerian Society. Umuahia: Beb-ElMaryygold Communications
- Victor, K.S, Owen N, Kimani C, (2016). The role of guidance and Counseling in Enhancing Students Discipline. Journal of Education and Practice, 7(13)1 – 10.
- Yusuf S, Kamihi, O.M and Jamiu M.S, (2015). Improving Guidance and counseling services for effective service delivery in Nigeria Secondary Schools. Journal of multicultural studies in Guidance and Counseling 3(1)14 – 25.