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# **BARRIERS TO SELF DISCLOSURE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ANKPA EDUCATIONAL ZONE OF KOGI STATE**

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By

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## **Abstract**

*This study investigated the barriers to self disclosure among secondary school students in Ankpa Educational Zone of Kogi State. A descriptive survey was used. The population comprised of 2,500 senior secondary students in SS III in the area of study. The stratified and random sampling techniques were used to select a total of 500 students for the study. The instrument is a 20 item self developed questionnaire. It was validated and reliability coefficient calculated yielded .86. One research question and four hypotheses guided the study. Data were analyzed using means, standard deviation and t-test statistics at .05 alpha level of significance. Results showed that ethnic considerations, environment, language and personality factors are all significant variables as barriers to self disclosure in counselling while a significant difference exists between family orientation and ethnicity. Recommendations were made which include sensitization and mass education of clients not to allow other socio-cultural milieu family orientations to overshadow their need for self disclosure which is a crucial ingredient for effective counselling.*

Professional counselling has come of age in Nigeria. It has permeated all the nook and crannies of the society especially in the educational sector. Akinade (2001) averred that counselling is a two-way professional interaction between a trained therapist called a counsellor and one more individual called a clientele who cannot on their own resolve normal everyday problems in any of educational vocational and socio-

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personal aspects of their lives. To Iwuama (1999) counselling is aiding an individual to explore and participate in his/her own development towards becoming a self reliant and fulfilled person. The hallmark of these definitions surmises that counselling is meant for self development and self understanding to bring about a fulfilled and happy personality.

In realization of the above, the Federal Ministry of Education National Policy on Education (2009) reviewed edition stated that:

*In view o the apparent ignorance of many young people about carrier prospects and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, carrier officers and counselors shall be appointed in educational institutions. Government shall continue to make provision for the training of teachers on guidance and counselling (p.50).*

Today, there is hardly any secondary school in Ankpa Educational zone without either a professionally or at least a career officer, a trained counsellor for the provision of counselling services.

However, central to a successful counselling session is “Self disclosure” which professionals call “therapeutic paradox” self disclosure is the decision of the client to reveal information about him/herself that is very germane to a counselling situation. Imoukhome (1989) defines self disclosure as the willingness of an individual to let another person know what he/she thinks, feels and wants. To Okobiah (1992), self disclosure is making known someone’s feelings, reactions or uncovering someone’s feeling or reactions to situations or persons. In summary, self disclosure is about opening up, self revelation and verbal communication of one’s feeling desires and pent up emotions without reservations.

Ker (2006) outlines the following ways in which self disclosure is important in counselling;

1. Enhancing the client’s cooperation
2. Decreases client’s anxiety and alienation
3. Inculcating intimacy and warmth between the counsellor and the client
4. Helping to increase the client’s trust in the counsellor
5. Showing the counsellor’s understanding of what the client is trying to convey
6. Helping to address the client’s concern about some aspects or the counsellor such as appearance and behaviour
7. Sustaining a more egalitarian relationship or advancing client autonomy

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8. Helping to narrow the gap between the counsellor and the client and helping to increase the counsellor's sense of self.

The self is one the most significant parameters in counseling. No wonder then that self disclosure has attracted a lot of theories but for this paper that of social penetration is adopted. This theory used the onion model of personality. According to this theory, an onion has four layers which include:

- i. The surface
- ii. Peripheral
- iii. Intermediate
- iv. Central layer. (Farber, 2006)

Each of these layers are tangentially analogous to the process involved in self disclosure.

- i. The surface – This is meant for information that is clearly visible like sex, race and age
- ii. The peripheral – This information is usually during casual discussions and gradually one's name, occupation is revealed.
- iii. The intermediate – This is the type of information that is not ordinarily revealed to everyone except a selected few. It is personal but not secret
- iv. Central level – information here is discussed with caution and it is private as the information is disclosed, the layers of the onion are further peeled. The more information comes from the core of the onion, the greater is the development of the relationship.

As a client totally releases him/herself a better insight is revealed to the counselor for a more realistic and lasting counseling intervention. A counsellor undoubtedly desires a positive change in the life of a counselee but this becomes a mirage if there is no in-depth knowledge of the counselee's problems which could be used in the counselling relationship. This paper, therefore, is an attempt to find out the barriers to self disclosure among secondary school students in Ankpa Educational Zone of Kogi State.

### **Statement of Problem**

In Nigeria today, there is an upsurge in school population and Ankpa Educational Zone is not an exception. According to Eyanro (2004) curriculum in schools have become diversified, there are a lot of complexities and changing trends with respect to fashion and communication both old and new. There are lots of academic problems in schools – poor study habits, poor knowledge of vocational courses, truancy, absenteeism equally there are problems of interpersonal relationship within the school community

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and the society at large. Pupils need to acquire skills attitudes, values that are decorous. Counseling services therefore becomes imperative. Among secondary school students today, there are rampant case of unwanted pregnancies, poor academic work, various adjustment problems which has led to cases of drop-outs (Mallum & Alaezi, 2000). This case is a global phenomenon confronting the educational industry worldwide (Mohsin, Aslam, Aslam and Bashir, 2004). Partick (2012) remarked that over 85% of the criminal activities perpetrated in Nigeria are done by youths who dropped out of school. This has become a very serious concern and suggests that the Nigerian educational system needs a very serious attention. Exam malpractices has been soaring higher and higher especially in Ankpa Educational Zone. Solutions to these problems are part of the services rendered by counseling but most clients are always in hiding as they do not honestly self disclose. This is the crux of the matter. A clear picture into the root of these problems will certainly enable the counselor to nip them in the bud. The object of this study, therefore, is to survey some of the existing barriers of self disclosure among secondary school students in Ankpa Education Zone.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to identify and ascertain the barriers to self disclosure among secondary school students in Ankpa educational zone. Specifically, the study intends to ascertain whether;

- i. There is significant difference between family orientation and ethnicity as barriers to self disclosure.
- ii. There is significant difference between language and environment as barriers to self disclosure
- iii. There is significant difference between personality and religion as barriers to self disclosure
- iv. There is significant difference between religion and family orientation as barriers to self disclosure.

#### **Significance of the Study**

The finding of this study is expected to provide empirical data on the barriers to self disclosure in counseling. It will be of immense help to practicing counselors, educational administrators and the educational system as a whole.

#### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were posed for the study:

- a. Is ethnicity a significant barrier to students self disclosure
- b. Is environment a significant barrier to students self disclosure
- c. Is language a significant barrier to students self disclosure

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- d. Is personality a significant barrier to students self disclosure
- e. Family orientation a significant barrier to students self disclosure
- f. Is religion a significant barrier to students self disclosure.

### **Research Hypothesis**

1. There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of family orientation and ethnicity as barriers to self disclosures
2. There is no significant difference between the mean response score of language and environment as barriers to self disclosure
3. There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of personality and religion as barriers to self disclosure
4. There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of religion and family orientation as barriers to self disclosure.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive survey research. It was carried out in Ankpa Educational Zone of Kogi state. The population consists of 2,500 secondary students in SS II of this zone. The stratified and random sampling techniques were used to select a total of 500 students used for the study from 10 schools.

A self-developed instrument referred to as ‘Barriers to Self Disclosure Questionnaire’ (BSDQ) was employed to collect relevant data. The instrument was validated by experts in measurement, and Educational Psychology the BSDQ consisted of five main variables, which includes family orientation, ethnicity, language, environment, personality and religion. There were twenty (20) main items in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire used a modified 4 point rating scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. They are weighted 4321 for all positively worded items respectively. A test-retest reliability of the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.86 which shows that the instrument is reliable. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the help of research assistants who are teachers of those schools. The same method was adopted for the retrieval. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to address the research questions, t-test was used to test the hypotheses at .05 alpha level of significance. For the research questions a mean score between 2.50 and above was accepted as significant while mean scores below 2.50 was in significant. That is, any scores below 2.50 was rejected and declared as insignificant factor to self-disclosure.

**Results**

Research question one

Are these factors: (family, ethnicity, religion, personality, language, environment) factors significant as barriers to self disclosure?

**Table one**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Family	3.57	.07095	Significant
Ethnicity	3.16	.208	Significant
Religion	3.77	.060	Significant
Personality	3.60	.101	Significant
Language	3.31	.127	Significant
Environment	3.32	.049	Significant

From the results above, all the means of the factors to self disclosure are above 2.50 and therefore accepted as significant factors to self disclosure.

**Hypotheses Testing**

HO<sub>1</sub> There is no significant difference in the mean response scores between family orientation and ethnicity as barriers to self disclosure.

**Table II: t-test Analysis between Family and Ethnicity**

	$\bar{X}$	Cal. t value	df	Critical t value	Decision
Family/ethnicity	.41000	2.814	1	.107	Significant

From table (II) calculated t (2.84) is greater than table value t-critical (.107) at .05 level of significance. Therefore the hypothesis is rejected, that is, a significant difference exists between family orientation and ethnicity as factors to self disclosure.

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HO<sub>2</sub> There is no significant difference in the mean response scores between family orientation and religion as barriers to self disclosure.

**Table III: t-test Analysis between Family Orientation and Religion**

	$\bar{X}$	Cal. t value	df	Critical t value	Decision
Family orientation/religion	.1966	-8.42	1	.014	Not significant

The results in table III shows that cal. t (-8.29) is less than t-critical t-value at .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, that is, there is no significant difference in the mean response scores between family orientation and religion as barriers to self disclosure.

HO<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean response scores of personality and religion as barriers to self disclosure.

**Table IV: t-test Analysis between Personality and Religion**

	$\bar{X}$	Cal. t value	df	Critical t value	Decision
Religion/personality	-2120	.752	1	.002	Significant

Table 4 above shows that t-value (-7.52) is less than critical value (.002) at .05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. That is, there is no significant difference between personality and religion as barriers to self disclosure.

HO<sub>4</sub> There is no significant difference in mean response scores between language and environment as barriers to self disclosure.

**Table V: t-test Analysis between Language and Environment**

	$\bar{X}$	Cal. t value	df	Critical t value	Decision
Environment/language	-0150	.120	1	.92	Not Significant

Table 5 above shows that the calculated  $t$  (-120) at .05 level of significance is less than the table value (.92). Therefore the hypothesis is accepted. That is, there is no significant difference between language and environment as barriers to self disclosure.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The results of hypothesis one shows that a significant difference exists between family orientation and ethnicity as barriers to self disclosure in counseling. The mean response scores of family orientation is 3.57 while that of ethnicity is 3.16, calculated  $t$  (2.84) is greater than critical  $t$ -value (1.07) at 0.05 level of significance. According to Idowu (1985) the Nigerian client has been described as family – oriented. Therefore to disclosure personal information to a counselor becomes a difficulty by a prospective client. It is at times seen as a sign of weakness. The socio-cultural system of Nigeria that is based on suspicion and external loans of control and attribution pattern of one another equally, supportive of this finding. Right from home, the child's is taught to respect elders, not to talk when elders are talking and to respect authority figures who are the only people to offer advice which are guidance-based on their own experience Ker, (2006). Therefore, clients from Ankpa Education Zone are equally not an exception.

The family is like a social identity. They have a feeling of similarity and have beliefs which are convictions that group are aware that they share and consider as defining their unity. An ethnic group is a group where members share similar socio-cultural and linguistic characteristics distinct from those shared from members of other groups. They are mere social formations distinguished by the communal characteristics of their boundaries; a collection of families make up a tribe and testifies the survival capacity of an ethnic group. The family is the first agent of socialization where the family interest is more sacrosanct than those of other segments of the society and therefore that the family orientation has higher mean that of ethnic group is not a surprise.

Hypothesis two shows that no significant difference exists between family orientation and religion. According to Ker (2006), in traditional therapy in both the diagnostic and ceremonial stages, the client is expected to be relatively passive he takes a passively expectant and hopeful attitude towards the native practitioner. He may be directed to accept herbal portions, answer questions about the nature of document and about possible causes. All curative procedures, insight in to the causes of the problem and all curative powers lie with the practitioner, not with the client. This tend to conflict with the basis of formal counseling that emphasis self help and independence. This negates the modern counseling approach that requires the input of the client. A child born into a particular family naturally keys in to whatever socialization pattern exist in



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the family. He/she finds him/herself automatically indoctrinated. He/she accepts whatever the family holds as their values without questioning and hence a significance difference does not exist between family orientation and religion.

The results in hypothesis three revealed that no a significant difference exists between personality and religion personality here implies empathy, knowledge, values, inward and outward dispositions. That is, distinctive thoughts, emotions and behaviours that characterized the way an individual adapts to the world (Santrock, 2001), values are equally represented in religious dispositions and what is valued is a representation of one's personality. It can therefore be generalized that the personality disposition of the respondents are insignificant as barriers and they all may disclose the same way in counselling.

Hypothesis four shows that no significant difference exists between language and environment as barriers to self disclosure. Although the two factors are barriers to self disclosure. A spoken language is one of the features of an environment. A language does not exist in a vacuum. It exists within an environment. Therefore that there is no significant between, them is justifiable. A communication pattern and the environment where it is predominant have commonality. When a client expresses him/herself in a language he/she understands, he will be comfortable and in a neat, non-interfering quite and conducive environment.

### **Summary of Findings**

1. Family orientation, ethnicity, language, environment, personality and religions are all significant factors to self disclosure in counseling
2. A significant difference exists between family orientation and ethnicity as barriers to self disclosure
3. There is no significant difference between family orientation and religion as barriers to self disclosure
4. There is no significant different between personality and religion as barriers to self disclosure in counseling
5. There is no significant difference between language and environment as barriers to self disclosure in counseling.

Based on the above, the following recommendations are made;

1. Clients should be encouraged not to allow family orientation and cultural hindrances to overshadow their need for self disclosure so as to get the best of their counseling needs.

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2. Religion brings a positive change in one's life and so in counseling clients should be advised not to allow religion inclination to dissuade them from getting an objective and un-obstructive counseling intervention
3. Counselors are advised to present themselves in a pleasing way, be emphatic, be well informed and hold values that are equally sacrosanct to the client as this could engender pleasing counseling sessions and positive behavioural outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

It is hoped that if these recommendations are employed by helping practitioners, better results would be attained in counselling sessions which culminates in fulfilling individuals.

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