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Assessment of the creativity potential of counsellors in secondary schools in Anambra State

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The study assessed the creative potentials of counsellors in secondary schools in Anambra State. Five research questions guided the study. The participants were 241 counsellors in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Nicholas Holt creative test was used for data collection. The data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, percentages and Pearson's Correlation. The result of the study revealed that the creativity level of counsellors is low. The findings also showed that female counsellors have higher scores on creativity than males, and counsellors in the urban schools there high level of creativity then those in the rural schools. Furthermore, the study revealed that a low negative correlation exist between counsellors creativity and age. It was also found that there is a negligible positive correlation between counsellors' creativity and years of experience. It was recommended among others that institution of higher learning should include relevant course on creativity in the curricular of counsellor educators.

Keywords: Creativity, Potential, Counsellor.

INTRODUCTION

A country's greatest asset in the 21st century no longer depends on tangible asset but on the creative minds of its people to produce innovation and useful solutions to complex problems facing the society. As such, the cultivation of creativity in people is essential for preparing them to meet the challenges they and their communities are facing.

Creativity is the ability to produce work that is both novel and appropriate (Sawyer 2006). Almada, Prieto, Ferrando, Oliveira and Ferrandiz (2008) viewed creativity as the skills required for generating ideas and products that are novel, high in quality and suitable to the task at hand. In general sense, creativity is divergent thinking and flexible problem solving (Dornyei, 2005).

Creative potentials refer to a broad set of variables that participate in generating creative product (Piffer, 2012). Creative cognition and creative personality are subsets of one's creative potentials (Piffer, 2012). Many people in the society are stuck in non-productive ideas or patterns. Unless they learn to break out of self-defeating patterns, they will probably not enjoy life or be as productive as they should be. Counsellors have a role to play in helping such individuals develop more creative ideas and behavioural patterns.

To achieve this, counsellors themselves need to be creative. However, Gladding (2011) noted that many counsellors do not understand what creativity is or how they can use creativity in counselling. For these counsellors, creativity is like the weather. They talk about it, some study it but they feel helpless to do anything about it. Yet counselling is a discipline that incorporates creativity.

Although many studies have been conducted on creativity, most of them were on the creativity level of

teachers (Davidovitch & Milgram 2006; Milter, 2009, Chartton, 2009, Kurnaz, 2011; Nyet, 2013), some investigated gender differences and creativity (Baer, 1997; Palaniappan, 2007; Charyton & Snelbecker, 2007; Wang, 2011) while others examined the relationship between creativity and academic achievement (Noari, 2002; Kafuman, 2004; Chamorrow & Premuzk, 2006; Olatoye, Akintunde & Yakasai, 2010). However, no study has been done on creative potentials of counsellors in secondary schools in Anambra State. This study was carried out to fill the gap in knowledge. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions.

1. What is the creativity level of school counsellors in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. Is school counsellors' creativity level dependent on their gender?
3. Is school counsellors' creativity level dependent on their school location?
4. What is the relationship between school counsellors' creativity and their age?
5. What is the relationship between school counsellors' creativity and their years of experience?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creativity is increasingly recognised as a valuable asset for individuals in their daily problem solving and their professional careers that contributed to personal and societal development (Lubert, Zenasni & Barbot, 2013). Creativity is that characteristic of human behaviour that provides one with capacity to produce works that are novel, appropriate and socially valued (Kerr & Gaglordi, 2006; Sawyer, 2006; Stenberg & Lubert, 1996). Plucker, Beghetto and Dow (2004, p. 90) defined creativity as "the interaction among aptitude, process, and environment by which an individual or group produces a perceptible product that is both novel and useful as defined within a social context". Maitinez (2000) added that a person's ability to produce work that is new and culturally significant requires skills and attitudes embedded in creative intelligence. Torrance (1966) saw creativity as a process of becoming sensitive to problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, disharmonies and so on. He continued that the process includes original ideas, a different point of view, breaking out of mould, recombine ideas or seeing new relationships among ideas. Hence, creativity emphasizes the individual's ability to create new ideas. Felman, Cziksentmihalyi and Gardner (1994) defined creativity as "the achievement of something remarkable and new, something which transforms and changes a field of endeavour in a significant way…the kind of things that people that change the world". Others like Kirton (2003) believe that creativity is related to adapting, developing on finding a novel application to an existing product. Weinberg (2005) emphasized that creativity needs had work. It is a process which is original and valuable.

Creativity is grounded in the ways people develop their individual potentials and personal interests. It involves the using of imagination and inventiveness to solve a problem, create a new product or approach a challenge from a new perspective. Creative potential is a latent ability to produce original adaptive work which is part of an individual "human capital" (Welberg, 1988). It results from a person's unique combination of resources coming into play in creative work, including aspect of motivation, cognition and personality (Lubart, 1999; Lubart, Zenasni & Barbot, 2013).

Creativity which is the ability to foster something novel or useful is an integral part of counselling. Every counselling session unique and requires counsellors to meet it with practicality and newness. Counsellors can use proven theories, techniques and method based on research, while still be willing to top into out creative side and play out hunches and intentions (Gladding, 2011).

Citing (Sikszentmihalyi, 1997) Gladding (2011, p.3) proposes that counsellors like every other creative individual should possess the following characteristics: should be flexible and open to new ideas, have wide range of interests, curiosity and energy: possess vivid imaginations and a sense of playfulness, tolerant in regard to ambiguity, are committed to work hard and concentrate on tasks, are comfortable with charge, are hand working and persistent, are divergent in their thinking, thoroughly understand their field or discipline, and are inspired to produce novel work.

Further, Kottler and Hecker (2002) noted that the central role of convergent and divergent thinking and intuition are other important components of creative process of counselling. These three capacities involve the combination of the three major components of creativity in counselling – person, process and product. This implies that creative counselling is the combination of the unique personalities involved in counselling, the process of counselling (the way in which growth occurs which involves novel, original or imaginative methods), and the product of counselling.

Creativity must be used wisely, actively and productively if more clients are going to be helped. When so done, creativity can help counsellors and clients avoid non-productive behaviours. Counsellors client can then more on the constructive actions that promote mental health and well-being, (Gladding, 2011, p.7).

Previous studies have investigated on creative level of teachers (Davidovitch & Milgram, 2006; Sahin, 2010, Kurnaz, 2011; Catingoz, 2002, Nyet, 2013; Miller, 2007; Charlton, 2009; Yusuf, 2009). Davidovitch and Milgram (2006) carried out a study on creative thinking as predictor of teacher's effectiveness in 58 college instructors, they found out that the level of creativity of teachers is moderate. The study also found that there is no significant relation between levels of creativity of

teachers and gender, age and experience. Sahin (2010) found that sex, marital status, seniority, profession and partner's profession did not affect creativity in elementary school teachers. Kurnaz (2011) found that creativity of teachers was low and not significantly associated with sex, marital status, location, type of duty, seniority or employing institution. Nyer (2013) found that majority of primary science teachers have a moderate level of creative thinking and only a handful of them were creative. The results also revealed that the primary school teachers were able to generate large numbers of ideas with different categories at one particular time, but their ideas were mostly neither unique nor novel.

It is clear from literature that studies which investigated gender differences and creativity seem to be characterized by contradictory results. Palanippan (2000) examined 101 males and 69 females in order to consider gender differences in creativity. He found out that males achieved higher scores on the instrument creative test. On the contrary, Wang (2011) conducted a study in Taiwan and United States in order to examine the gender differences in creativity in these two nations. He found that in Taiwan, female student teachers showed higher scores of creativity than males. But in the United States, no significant gender differences were found between males and females and their level of creativity.

Moreso, (Baer, 1999) found that females are more creative that males. Charyton, Basham and Elliott (2008) found that the level of creativity between males and females is the same but they concluded that most renowned creative individuals are usually male. In another study by Chusmir (1986), no significant differences were found between males and females and their level of creativity. In furthermore, Naderi & Tengku-Aizab (2008) found no gender difference on creativity test as the whole. However, the findings revealed gender differences in subscales score. Females scored higher than males in the initiative factor, while males scored higher than females in the environmental sensitivity factor.

Although many studies have been conducted on creative level of teachers, (Nyet, 2013; Kurnaz, 2011; Aizab, 2008; Chusmir, 1986; Palanippan 2000), but no studies have been done on creative potentials of counsellors in secondary schools in Anambra state. This study was carried out to fill the gap.

METHOD

Participants

The participants for the study are 241 counsellors in public secondary schools in Anambra state. The mean age of the participants was 43.2 years with standard deviation of 7.1, while the mean years of experience was 10.4 years with a standard deviation of 5.3. Males represent 16.6% (n=40) while females represent 83.4% (n=201). 58.5 % (n=141) participants from urban schools while 41.5% (n=100) from rural schools.

Instrument

In order to assess the creative potentials of counsellors, Nicholas Holt Creative Test (NHCT) was adopted. NHCT is a 29-item scale developed by Nicholas Holt to measure the level of creativity of an individual in the area of fluency, originality, flexibility and elaboration of traits. The scale ranged from 29 - 145 with a scale average of 87. Higher score on this scale means higher creativity potential while lower score mean lower creativity potential

The content validity of NHCT was established by a small expert panel; two lecturers in Guidance and Counselling and two experts in item construction. All of them agree that the components are relevant. Minor revisions were made to some of the items in the test. Furthermore, concurrent validity was established using the correlation between NHCT and Runco Ideation Behaviour (RIBS). The results were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient. The correlation coefficients were 0.84 and 0.79 respectively. This indicated that the instrument has high concurrent validity.

The reliability of NHCT was established by Olatoye, Akintunde and Yakasi (2010). Through a test re-test method, they found reliability co-efficient of 0.88. Considering the cultural differences, NHCT was pilot tested on 30 practising Counsellors in secondary schools in En.ugu state. The reliability was calculated using Cronbach Alpha. A reliability co-efficient of 0.84 was obtained. This indicates that the instrument has good reliability and can be used for the study.

Participants rated the level of their agreement to proposed statements on a five-point scale which ranged from "1" to "5". The five options were 1-"not so true to me"; 2- "not true to me"; 3- "averagely true to me"; 4- "true of me" and 5- "fully true of me".

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire on Nicolas Holt Creativity Test (NHCT) was administered to the participants by the researcher and two research assistants who were properly briefed and trained for the study. This was to enable them be familiar with the modalities for administering the instrument in an appropriate and effective way. It was necessary to use research assistants to make sure that the actual respondents for whom the instrument was meant were those that completed them. The permission of the principals was sought and obtained before the instrument was administered to the participants. The researcher and the

assistants explained the purpose of the research to the respondents and assured them of confidentiality of their responses. Explanation was given to the respondents about the importance of their frankness and objectivity in their response to the questionnaire. They were given opportunities to ask questions in order to reduce anxiety and subjectivity which may interfere with the result. Twenty minutes were given to answer to questions.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data obtained. Mean, standard deviation, percentages and Pearson's Correlation were used to answer the research questions.

Table 1 shows the creativity level of school counsellors. The mean score of 65.15 is less than the scale average of 87. This indicates that the creativity level of school counsellors in public secondary schools in Anambra state is low.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the creativity level of school counsellors in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean score on the creativity level of school counsellors

	N	Mean	SD
Creativity Level	241	65.15	12.86

Research Question Two: Is school counsellors' creativity level dependent on their gender?

Table 2: Percentage difference in counsellors' creativity level based on gender

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Creativity Level	High	8 (13.3%)	52 (86.7%)	60 (100.0%)
	Low	32 (17.7%)	149 82.3%)	181 (100.0%)
Total		40 (16.6%)	201 (83.4%)	241 (100.0%)

The analysis in Table 2 shows the percentage difference between male and female counsellors' creativity level. The analysis indicates that 73.4 percent more of female counsellors are of high creativity level than male counsellors. This high percentage difference shows that school counsellors' creativity level is dependent on gender.

Research Question Three: Is school counsellors' creativity level dependent on their school location?

Table 3: Percentage difference in counsellors' creativity level based on location

		Location		Total
		Urban	Rural	
Creativity Level	High	38 (63.3%)	22 (36.7%)	60 (100.0%)
	Low	103 (56.9%)	78 (43.1%)	181 (100.0%)
Total		141 (58.5%)	100 (41.5%)	241 (100.0%)

Table 3 shows the percentage difference between the creativity levels of counsellors based on their location. The analysis indicates that 26.6 percent more of counsellors in urban schools are of high creativity level than their counterparts in the rural schools. This percentage difference suggests that school counsellors' creativity level is dependent on their school location.

Research Question Four: What is the relationship between school counsellors' creativity and their age?

The Table 4 shows that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, r. (241) = -.245. This indicates a low negative correlation exist between school counsellors' creativity and their age.

Table 4: Pearson's Correlation between school counsellors' creativity and their age

	N	Creativity	Age	Decision
Creativity	241	1	-.245**	Negative
Age	241	-.245**	1	

*Significant

Research Question five: What is the relationship between school counsellors' creativity and their years of experience?

Table 5: Pearson's Correlation between school counsellors' creativity and their years of experience

	N	Creativity	Years of Experience	Decision
Creativity	241	1	.101	Positive
Years of Experience	241	.101	1	

The analysis in Table 5 shows that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, r. (241) = .101. This shows that there is a negligible positive correlation between school counsellors' creativity and their years of experience.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that the creativity level of counsellors is low. This finding lends support to the work of Kurnaz (2011) who reported low level of creativity among teachers. On the contrary, Davidovita and Milgram (2006) and Nyet (2013) reported moderate level of creativity among teachers. This finding may be because there is no course about creativity in the curriculum of counsellor educators. Creative potentials can be seen in everybody but it depends on the kind of training received. Considering that a country greatest asset depends on the creative mind to produce innovative and useful solution to problems facing the society, it becomes imperative to enhance the creativity level of counsellors because it will help them to restructure ideas that are novel and useful.

The result of this study showed that counsellors' creativity level is dependent on gender. Female counsellors have higher scores on creativity than male counsellors. This result supports the finding of Wang (2011) who found that female showed higher scores on creativity than male teachers. On the contrary, Palanippan (2000) found that males achieved higher scores on level of creativity than female teachers. However, Charyton, Basham and Elliot (2008), Beer and Kaufman (2008) reported no gender difference in the level of creativity, but they concluded that most renowned creative individuals are usually males. One possible explanation for the male lower score in creativity may be their disbelief in their ability. Females tend to overestimate their abilities while males tend to underestimate their abilities, since creative potential was measured through self-report in this study, the findings is in line with this pattern.

Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed that school counsellors' creativity level is dependent on their school location. Counsellors in the urban schools are of high creativity level than their counterparts in the rural schools. The findings of this study are in consonance with the study of Olibie and Akudolu (2009) who showed that teachers in urban areas have higher creativity scores than those in the rural areas.

The result of this study showed a low negative correlation between school counsellors' creativity and age. The negative correlation between counsellors' creativity and age is surprising. This is because it contradicts the findings of Davidovitch and Milgram (2006) who found significant correlation between level of creativity of teachers and age.

The findings of this study revealed that there is a negligible positive correlation between counsellors' level of creativity and their years or experience. This implies that as years of experience increases, the level of creativity is likely to increase. This finding is in contrary to the work of Davidovitch and Milgram (2006) who found that there is no significant correlation between levels of creativity of teachers and years of experience.

CONCLUSION

Creativity which is the ability to foster something new and useful is an integral part of counselling. The importance of fostering creativity in clients is that through the creative processes, clients are freed to gain insights, implement choices and thus make changes. The main aim of the study is to assess creative potentials of counsellors in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study revealed that the creative potentials of counsellors are low. The findings of the study also showed that creative level of counsellors is dependent on gender and location. Furthermore, the result showed that a low negative correlation exist between counsellors creativity and age. It was also found that there is negligible positive correlation between counsellors' creativity and years of experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Ministry of Education should organize workshops and seminars for counsellors to enhance their creative potentials. This is because if counsellors do not have high level of creative potentials and do not use creative strategies, their clients cannot be trained to be creative.
2. Institution of higher learning should include relevant courses on creativity in curricular of counsellor educators. They should organize awareness training courses for counsellors on creative thinking.
3. Counsellors should be motivated to apply techniques which promote creative thinking skills of the client. In order to apply the creative thinking, clients need a

framework to find themselves in a position where they should produce new ideas.

4. Stimulations and electronic games depending on creativity should be introduced to schools and universities.

Limitations of the Study

The author acknowledges inherent limitations in this study. First, the study was carried out in public schools in Anambra State using counsellors in secondary schools. This may not be representative of all the counsellors in Nigeria. Therefore, an attempt to generalize these results should be done with caution. It is important in future to repeat the study on a larger population of counsellors to reduce any sampling error and determine if these findings are consistent among the national population of counsellors.

Furthermore, the nature of self-report measures used in this study may include some possible sources of bias. For instance, participants may report the data based on selective memory or may have social desirability tendencies to exaggerate or understate their responses.

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