



## **Professional Counsellors Need for Licensure for Practicing Counseling in Rivers State**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study investigated Professional Counsellors need for Licensure for practicing counselling in Rivers State. The design used for this study was descriptive survey, using comparative analytic method. The population of this study consisted Public and Private Counsellors, including Pastoral Counsellors in Rivers State, making a total of 230 male and female counsellors. The entire population was used for the study, as purposive sampling. The instrument used for this investigation was the “COUNSELLORS LICENSURE NEED ASSESSMENT SCALE” (CLNAS), consisting 13 items. A weighted mean of 2.50 was used to accept the research questions. A reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained, using test-retest method. Three research questions, and three Null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The independent t-test statistic was used to test the three Null hypotheses at 0.05 significance level. The three null hypotheses were accepted. Three recommendations were made: Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) and newly formed Association of Professional Counselling in Nigeria (APROCON) should endeavour to work together in persuading the states and federal legislature to pass bill on licensure requirements for practicing counsellors in Nigeria. A standardized body like, Council for Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programs (CAREP) in U.S.A, should be established in Nigeria. All states in Nigeria should have licensure to practice, such as, the LPC in U.S.A.

**Keywords:** Professional counselling, Licensure, Counselling Associations

### **INTRODUCTION**

Professional Counsellor is one who renders counselling service in diverse settings with different kinds of people with various backgrounds, ethnicity and multicultural dimensions. Counsellors assist clients with personal social, vocational/career, and educational counselling. Professional Counsellors are not only trained to treat psychological problems, but also, intervene in preventing mental problems in diverse population.

There are several counselling specializations, such as: School Counselling, College Counselling, Rehabilitation Counselling, Clinical Mental Health Counselling, Marriage and Family Counselling, and other allied helping professions (Enford, Hays, Croquette, and Miller 2011). In the United States of America, there are several professional organizations, to mention, but few. They are as follows: American Association of State Counselling Board (AASCB), American College Counselling Association (ACCA), American Counsellor Association (ACA), American Mental Health Counsellors Association (AMHCA), American Rehabilitation Counselling Association (ARCA), and American School Counsellor Association (ASCA). These associations work in their diverse specializations, helping clients overcome daily life challenges (Gladding, 1988).

In Nigeria, Guidance and Counselling is a new developing area in counselling relationship. Presently, Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) and Association of Professional Counsellors in Nigeria (APROCON) are the only known Counselling Associations in Nigeria.

There is little or no professional ethical guidelines for practicing Counsellors in Public and Private settings, as was practiced in U.S.A, and other developed Countries. Presently, in Nigeria, there is no

regulatory body for state and national certifications, and licensures for professional counsellors in Public and Private Sectors. The system is rather “free for all” counselling relationships.

Then, **What is Licensure?** Wheeler and Bertram 2008; ACA 2012; Sweeney 1995; Bradley 1995; Remley and Herlhy 2007 advanced that counselling licensure is a legal sanction to validate who can practice counselling within the eyes of the law in any given state, U.S.A. Most of the states in U.S.A. recognized the Licensed Professional Counsellor (LPC) for public and private practice. The academic requirements of LPC is masters degree in guidance and counselling, counselling psychology, or any related areas, as approved by the Council for Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programmes (CAREP.), CAREP accreditation ensures that academic training meet professional standards for professional licensure requirements to unify the professional identity of counsellors.

Similarly, in Taiwan, Counselling licensure is a relatively new phenomenon being introduced in 2001. Chang and Bhat (2013). They further indicated that counsellor licensure is one means by which high standards of professionalism and ethics are maintained by professional counsellors; by so doing, clients are often protected. In other words, by setting minimum standards, licensure protects clients from being counselled by untrained and incompetent service providers.

Peiling and Sullivan (2006) upheld that licensure enhances the professionalization of the field of counselling, as well as, its image and reputation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the need for licensure to practice counselling in Nigeria.

### **Statement of Problem**

In Nigeria, there is no guidelines for counselling, leading to “free for all” practice. Should counselling as a profession continue to be free for all, without licensure? Unfortunately, that is the predicament counsellors found themselves, presently in Nigeria. Therefore, it is incumbent for this researcher to investigate the need for licensure to practice counselling in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent, male and female bachelor degree holders in counselling, need licensure for practicing counselling in Rivers State?
2. To what extent, male and female masters degree holders in counselling need licensure for practicing counselling in Rivers State?
3. To what extend, male and female doctorate degree holders in counselling need licensure for practicing counselling in Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study at 0.05 level of significance.

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** Male and female bachelor degree holders in counselling do not differ significantly in their need for licensure to practice counselling in Rivers State.

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** Male and female masters degree holders in counselling do not differ significantly in their need for licensure to practice counselling in Rivers State.

**HO<sub>3</sub>:** Male and female doctorate degree holders in counselling do not differ significantly in their need for licensure to practice counselling in Rivers State.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The design adopted for this study is descriptive survey, using comparative analytic method. The t-test statistic was used to test the comparative groups for analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

### **Population and Sample of the Study**

The population of the study consisted of all public and private counsellors, including Pastoral Counsellors in Rivers State, making a total of 230 male and female counsellors. A purposive sampling method was used. That is, the entire population was utilized for the study, since the population was considered small to select a sizeable sample, which will be representative of the population. The breakdown of the sample size was: 130 (57%) Bachelor, 70 (30%) masters, and doctorate 30 (13%) respectively.

**Instrumentation**

The instrument utilized for this investigation was the “**COUNSELLORS LICENSURE NEED ASSESSMENT SCALE**” (CLNAS). The instrument (CLNAS) consisted of 13 items, on a Likert Scale, ranging 4 – 1 (SA 4, A3, D2, SD1). A weighted average of 2.5 was used to accept the research questions.

**Validation of the Instrument**

The instrument was validated by three experts in Measurement and Evaluation, in the Faculty of Education. Who ascertained the face and content validity of the instrument. Test-retest method was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the entire instrument. A reliability coefficient 0.75 was obtained.

**RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** *To what extent, male and female bachelor degree holders in counseling need licensure for practicing counseling in Rivers State?*

**Table 1: Mean analysis of male and female bachelor degree holders licensure need for counselling.**

Questionnaire/Items	Male	Female	Decision
• Licensure is required for counsellor	3.97	3,94	Accepted
• Licensure tests my competency	3.41	3.38	Accepted
• Licensure prevents quacks	3.60	3.64	Accepted
• Licensure protects the counsellor	3.85	3.74	Accepted
• Licensure protects the client	3.00	3.15	Accepted
• Licensure promotes professionalism	3.89	3,92	Accepted
• Licensure is back by law	3.95	3.91	Accepted
• Licensure is standardization	3.15	3.17	Accepted
• Licensure puts confidence in me	3.00	3.06	Accepted
• Licensure is proof of effectiveness	3.60	3.60	Accepted
• Licensure will improve my earning	3.96	3.98	Accepted
• Licensure encourages flexibility	3.07	3.11	Accepted
• Licensure encourages professional ethics	3.82	3.84	Accepted

In table 1, Male and female bachelor level couesllors demonstrated in their responses on “CLNAS” higher mean scores, indicating higher need for licensure above the cut of mean point of 2.50, respectively.

**Research Question 2:** *To what extent, male and female Master’s degree holders in counselling need licensure for counselling in Rivers State?*

**Table 2: Mean analysis of male and female Master’s degree holders licensure need for counselling.**

Questionnaire Items	Male	Female	Decision
• Licensure is required for counsellors	3.90	3.94	Accepted
• Licensure test my competency	3.46	3.40	Accepted
• Licensure prevents quacks	3.71	3.82	Accepted
• Licensure protects the counsellor	3.90	3.94	Accepted
• Licensure promotes professionalism	3.40	3.50	Accepted
• Licensure is back by law	3.88	3.90	Accepted
• Licensure is standardized	3.90	3.92	Accepted
• Licensure puts confidence in me	3.15	3.19	Accepted
• Licensure is a proof of effectiveness	3.07	3.10	Accepted
• Licensure will improve my earing power	3.64	3.61	Accepted
• Licensure encourages flexibility	3.92	3.90	Accepted
• Licensure encourages professional ethics	3.85	3.78	Accepted

In table 2, Male and female Masters level counsellors demonstrated in their responses on “CLNAS” higher mean scores, revealing burning need for licensure above the 2.50 cut off mean rating.

**Research question 3:** *To what extent, Male and female doctorate degree holders in counselling need licensure for counselling in Rivers State?*

**Table 3: Mean analysis of male and female doctorate degree holders licensure need for counselling.**

Questionnaire Items	Male	Female	Decision
• Licensure is required for counsellors	3.93	3.94	Accepted
• Licensure tests my competency	3.50	3.45	Accepted
• Licensure prevents quacks	3.77	3.89	Accepted
• Licensure protects the counsellor	3.90	3.95	Accepted
• Licensure promotes professionalism	3.52	3.64	Accepted
• Licensure is back by law	3.87	3.93	Accepted
• Licensure is standardized	3.96	3.94	Accepted
• Licensure puts confidence in me	3.18	3.22	Accepted
• Licensure is a proof of effectiveness	3.09	3.25	Accepted
• Licensure will Improve my earning power	3.70	3.68	Accepted
• Licensure encourages flexibility	3.96	3.92	Accepted
• Licensure encourages professional ethnics	3.88	3.86	Accepted

In table 3, Male and female doctorate level counsellors demonstrated in their responses on “CLNAS”, higher mean scores, showing that doctorate level counsellors are in great need for licensure, as mean responses were higher than the mean cut off point of 2.50.

**Hypothesis I:** Male and female bachelor degree holders in counselling do not differ significantly in their need for licensure to practice counselling in Rivers State.

**Table 4: The t-test analysis of the mean of male and female bachelor degree holders responses for licensure to practice counselling.**

Variable	Respondent	Mean	N	DF	P	t-cal.	t-crit.	Dec
Bachelor degree holders	Male	46.27	65	128	0.05	1.45	1.96	Non sig
	Female	46.44	65					

The data in table 4 showed that, the calculated t-value 1.45 is less than the critical value 1.96, at 128 degree of freedom. Mean scores of male 46.27, and female 46.41, respectively. Therefore, HO<sub>1</sub> is accepted.

**Hypothesis 2:** Male and female Master’s degree holders in counselling do not differ significantly in their need for licensure to practice counselling in Rivers State.

**Table 5:** The t-test analysis of the mean of male and female master’s degree holder’s responses for licensure to practice counselling

Variable	Respondent	Mean	N	DF	P	t-cal.	t-crit.	Dec
Master’s degree holders	Male	43.78	35	68	0.05	1.35	1.98	Non sig
	Female	44.0	35					

The data in table 5 showed that, the calculated t-value 1.35 is less than critical value 1.98, at 68 degree of freedom. Mean scores of male 43.78, and female 44.0, respectively. Therefore, HO<sub>2</sub> is accepted.

**Hypothesis 3:** Male and female doctorate degree holders in counselling, do not differ significantly in their need for licensure to practice counselling in Rivers State.

**Table 6: The t-test analysis of the mean of male and female doctorate degree holder's response for licensure to practice counselling**

Variable	Respondent	Mean	N	DF	P	t-cal.	t-crit.	Dec
Doctorate degree holders	Male	44.26	15	28	0.05	1.43	2.048	Non sig
	Female	44.67	15					

The data in table 6 showed that the calculated t-value 1.43 is less than the critical value 2.048 , at 28 degree of freedom. Mean scores of male 44.26, and female 44.67, respectively.

## DISCUSSION

Bachelor degree holders in counselling, both male and female, demonstrated their burning need for licensure was evidence by their respective mean scores, male 46.27, and female 46.44 respectively. These scores revealed that, all questionnaire items on the "CLNAS" was seen as high need base for licensure to practice counselling among counsellors in Rivers State. There was no significant difference on the need base of both male and female counsellors.

Similarly, master degree holders in counselling, both male and female, indicated high need for licensure to practice counselling, was demonstrated by the high mean scores, male 43.78, female 44.0, respectively. There was no significant difference on the need base of both male and female counsellors.

In addition, doctorate degree holders in counselling, both male and female, demonstrated their high need for licensure by responding to the questionnaire "CLNAS" items with mean scores 44.26 for male, and 44.67 for female. There was no significant difference between male and female on their need base for licensure to practice counselling among counsellors in Rivers State. These findings are in support of the importance of licensure in the various scholars opinions: Enford, etal. 2011; Gladding, 1988; Wheeler and Bertram, 2008; ACA, 2012; Remley and Herlihy, 2007; Chang and Bhat, 2013.

## CONCLUSION

Conclusion on this investigations were based on the findings. These are as follows:

1. Male and female bachelor degree holders in counselling do not differ significantly in their need for licensure to practice counselling in Rivers State.
2. Male and female Master's degree holders in counselling do not differ significantly in their need for licensure to practice counselling in Rivers State.
3. Male and female doctorate degree holders in counselling do not differ significantly in their need for licensure to practice counselling in Rivers State.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) and newly formed Association of Professional Counselling in Nigeria (APROCON) should endeavour to work together in persuading the states and federal legislature to pass bill on licensure requirements for practicing counselling in Nigeria.
2. A standardized body like, council for Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programs (CAREP) in U.S.A, should be established in Nigeria.
3. All states in Nigeria should have licensure to practice, such as, the LPC in U.S.A.

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