Genuineness In Client Centered Psychotherapy:  
It’s Relevance To The Nigerian Society During  
The Convid-19 Global Pandemic

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Abstract  
In this paper, the concept of genuineness, as expressed by Carl Rogers in Client-Centered Psychotherapy, is the platform on which efforts of some Nigerian citizens and governments to curb the spread of corona virus (COVID-19) is discussed. The genuineness in seeing COVID-19 as real, the political goodwill, the sincerity in administering the COVID-19 funds, in carrying out the internationally mapped out measures to contain the virus, and in the distribution of the palliatives to cushion the adverse effects of the lockdown, are questioned. A call for attitudinal change on the part of the concerned citizenry and the governments are therefore made.

Key words: Genuineness, Client-Centered Psychotherapy, Corona Virus (COVID-19), Nigeria.

Introduction  
Genuineness remains an important condition for a good insight into the authenticity of life variability, especially regarding psychological well-being. Changeability is one oblivious reality of life and most times fundamental to the incongruence faced by many (Crowell, 2016). As humans grow and develop in the biological and psychological domain, lots of challenges are experienced consequent to the inherent changes accompanying these developments. Genuineness is a vital ingredient applied in creating an enabling atmosphere for individuals to gain superior insights into their challenges in a psychotherapeutic engagement. In problem solving, it can be said that clear insights into the indices of human challenges are essential to the effective management and/or helpful in sorting life predicaments or changes successfully. Genuineness is perceived as the unadulterated and congruent external display of an individual’s actual internally recognized values, beliefs, emotions, and other perceptions of themselves including the world they exist in (Crowell, 2016).

In psychotherapy, assiduous efforts are made through the application of psychological methods that helps a person change behavior and overcome problems in desired ways (APA, 2016). When individuals enter therapy, they are in a state of incongruence, meaning there is a difference between how they see
themselves and reality (Lietaer, 2001). But through the reflection of genuineness by the therapist, the individual tends to find reasons to be genuine to his or herself and by extension other persons around. Psychotherapy aims to improve an individual’s well-being and mental health, to resolve or mitigate troublesome behaviors, beliefs, compulsions, thoughts, or emotions, and to improve relationships and social skills (Grafanaki, & McLeod, 2002).

As a behavioral healing principle or condition, genuineness should be prized highly, cultured and promoted at all cost and by any well-meaning government or institution with the goal of behavioral harmony. This highlights the necessity of creating enabling environment for such social services as psychotherapy to thrive, since it is bound to eliciting genuineness from individuals and society.

It is therefore unarguable that genuineness is a useful tool for survival in the face of the current Corona Virus (Covid-19) pandemic, where many persons have become confused, traumatized, anxious, fearful, and many other emotionally disturbing conditions experienced by many in the Nigerian society. Thus, psychotherapy, principled in genuineness, has been shown to be helpful in reaching the etiology of the individual’s emotional and behavioral challenges and key to positive thinking (Karlsson, 2011).

In Nigeria, the imposition of total lockdown across the country, as measure to inhibit the spread of the Corona virus (Covid-19) pandemic has forced millions of people to stay at home, restricting their mobility and pushing them to increase screen time (Adebajo, 2020).

Corona virus is a spherical or pleomorphic, single stranded, enveloped RNA and covered with club shaped glycoprotein. Corona viruses are of four sub- types such as Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta Corona virus. Each of the sub-types of Corona viruses have many serotypes. Some of them affect human while others affect animals such as pigs, birds, cats, mice and dogs (ICTV, 2020).

The adverse situation created by Covid-19 has led many to call on Nigerian and African leaders to adapt their Corona virus response measures to the realities on the ground (Adebajo, 2020). But the measures applied by the Nigerian government seem to lack sensitivity and sincerity and seem not to be truly survival oriented. As these measures such as: shutdown of economy without proven palliatives, sensitization of the masses, payment of wages/salaries in some part of the country, establishment of Covid-19 intervention team/committee without strict follow-up on their actions and activities, setting up of Covid-19 quarantine centers with no sensitization program involving mental health workers to work against phobia and stigmatization (BBC News, 2020), tend to reflect the proven survival narrative of a typical Nigerian society in the face of outbreaks. This situation can be described as lacking genuineness in content and intent.

However, this work expresses the need for the Nigerian society to adopt and domesticate her own model for the fight against Corona virus to the unique Nigerian personality, culture, social construct, belief system etc, as it attempts to reflect the relevance of genuineness in the Nigeria society in the ongoing global covid-19 pandemic.
Since the first index confirmed case relating to the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria on 27 February 2020 when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus, caused by SARS-CoV-2 (Olurounbi, 2020), the Nigeria society has continued to be in panic and confusion as the pandemic expresses itself in bereavement for those who have lost their dear ones to the virus and phobia for socialization as the government tries to clamp down on social gathering in other to foster social distancing as prescribed by World Health Organization. As precautionary measures adopted against the spread of the virus are being implemented, there has been increase in assaults and molestations by Covid-19 law enforcement agents across many settlements in Nigeria. According to health ministry data, Covid-19 law enforcers have killed 18 people in Nigeria since lockdowns began on 30 March 2020 (BBC News, 2020). Another overt impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria is hunger and starvation. Unlike many other countries going through the shock of Covid-19 pandemic, the Nigerian society seems not to have an accurate data of palliatives intervention to help masses cushion the terrible effects of the pandemic (Adebajo, 2020). Consequently, many persons have become financially bankrupt, since meeting survival needs like food, health care, accommodation bills (house rent, water supply bill, electricity bill has become a problem. This asks the question of sincerity and genuineness in the attitude of the Nigerian government towards properly addressing the problem of Covid-19 pandemic.

**Background to the concept of Genuineness**

The person-centered approach was developed from the concepts of humanistic psychology. The humanistic approach “views people as capable and autonomous, with the ability to resolve their difficulties, realize their potential, and change their lives in positive ways” (Seligman, 2006). Rogers (1942), advanced an approach to psychotherapy and counseling that, at the time (1940s–1960s), was considered extremely radical if not revolutionary. Carl Rogers emphasized the humanistic perspective as well as ensuring therapeutic relationships with clients promote self-esteem, and actualization in their life, and help them to use their strengths (Seligman, 2006).

The theory is described as non-directive. This concept moved away from the idea that the therapist was the expert and towards a theory that trusted the innate tendency of human beings to find fulfillment of their personal potentials. An important part of this theory is that, in a particular psychological environment, the fulfillment of personal potentials includes sociability, the need to be with other human beings and a desire to know and be known by other people. It also includes being open to experience, being trusting and trustworthy, being curious about the world, being creative and compassionate. The psychological environment described by Rogers was one where a person felt free from threat, both physically and psychologically. This environment could be achieved when being in a relationship with a person who was deeply understanding (empathic), accepting (having unconditional positive regard) and genuine (congruent) (Wendera, *et al* 2008).
The psychotherapists in this approach works to understand an individual’s experience from their point of view. The psychotherapist must positively value the client as a person in all aspects of their humanity, while aiming to be open and genuine as another human being. This is vital to helping an individual feel accepted and better understands their own feelings, essentially helping them to reconnect with their inner values and sense of self-worth. This connection with their inner resources enables them to find their own way to move forward. The work of the therapist, therefore, is to facilitate this by creating an enabling environment for client to find the solution to his or her problems. The therapist does not try directing the client or offering solutions. Roger’s proposition was that, any relationship possessing the conditions, would produce psychological change within the client, irrespective of whichever psychological approach was employed.

Genuineness or Congruence requires the therapist to be transparent about his or her feelings and thoughts. He or she does not present an aloof professional facade, but is present and transparent to the client in the sense that, he or she expresses feelings and thoughts that he or she actually experiences rather than those he or she thinks. This will help the client open up. In this regard, the therapist may, sometimes, share his or her personal experiences with the client. The aim of this is to make the client comfortable enough to become genuine and fully express him or herself (Rogers, 1959).

Genuineness and its relevance to the Nigerian society amidst the Covid-19 global pandemic

Many people in some Nigerian societies are said not to be genuine. They are fraudulent, untruthful, deceitful, untrustworthy and unreliable. What of the so called “419” people, the scammers, fraudsters etc. Even in this period of Covid-19 pandemic, the Nigerian society can be said to witnessing manifold levels and forms of insincerity.

Many individuals and even some church leaders are denying the reality of Covid-19 (Adebayo, 2020; Jideonwo, 2020). They are not genuinely spreading the news that putting on face mask, washing/sanitizing hands often, and maintaining social/physical distancing would assist in curing the spread of the virus.

However, with all these opposing trait to genuineness, it can be said that many religious leaders in Nigeria have need to review their value system by adopting the principle of genuineness in modifying their cognition and personality so as to front more sincere and helpful paradigm that can enable the government and masses survive the Covid-19 pandemic or any other pandemic in later times.

Similarly, some Nigerian political activities point to traces of insensitivity, insincerity, manipulations, unaccountability, dishonesty, greed, fraud and other manner of spurious behavioral tendencies to lack in genuineness and fair play for everyone. Some evidence to lack of genuineness in the political activities/system during the pandemic includes:


2. Insincerity in the disbursement of Covid-19 funds by the Federal and state governments.

3. Inconsistent/conflicting information on the causes (etiology and precursor) of Covid-19 pandemic.

4. Inconsistent/conflicting information on the outbreak statistic/update.


6. Dissatisfaction of the masses in quantity, quality, and manner of palliatives distributed to cushion the adverse effects of the lockdown on poor people.

7. Disbelieves in figures of infected individuals as posited by Nigeria Centre for Diseases Control (NCDC).

Finally, an observation on attitude of masses to the covid-19 pandemic in the Nigerian, especial with regards to commitment and adherence to precautionary measures setup by the governments, reveals huge dishonesty and lack of corporation. In as much as the governments make some efforts to orientate and enlighten the masses on the alarming dangers implicated with the pandemic, it is noticed that many persons seem to show little or no commitment to the directives of the governments against the spread of the virus. This is made visible by the large scale of poor commitment by many individuals in adherence to wearing of face mask, the stay at home bill, regular washing of hands, and social distancing. This predisposition can be classified as dishonest in the sense that many of these individuals who decline government directives, do so merely to frustrate the efforts of the government; and not necessarily because they doubt the information projected by the government about the pandemic.

However, it has been established with all these traits of insincerity, selfishness, dishonesty, fraud / scamming found in some Nigerians during the pandemic, that there is huge lack of genuineness found many Nigerians with respect to curbing the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. When genuineness is a seldom character within the government of a given society, the citizens see that as a model. When one is not genuine to him/herself, he/she cannot be genuine to the environment. Not being genuine leads to many psychological problems. Durda (2017) posits that genuineness (authenticity) is closely connected to mental health and significantly contributes to it. Therefore, genuineness in Client Centered Therapy has vital a role to play among such societies that are said to be fraudulent, corrupt, inconsiderate especially, during a pandemic situation like the Covid-19.

**Conclusion**

Genuineness, as used in Client Centered Psychotherapy, provided a platform on which to question and discuss genuineness of the part of some Nigerian citizens and governments with respect to controlling the spread of Covid-19 global pandemic. The genuineness and sincerity in seeing the virus as real; the genuine goodwill in political, in social and financial efforts in controlling the virus are questioned. Attitudinal change in the entire populace both on the part of some citizenry and
some government in Nigeria are therefore called for.

**References**


