Assessment of Availability and Utilization of Technology Based Counselling Among Counsellors in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was centered on assessing the availability and utilization of technology based counselling among counsellors in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions were raised to be answered. Literature was reviewed according to the variables of the study. The descriptive survey study was adopted for the study with a stratified and purposive sampling technique to select a total of 43 professionally trained counsellors in the study area.. The instrument for data collection was the 'Availability and utilization of technology based counselling scale '(AUTBCS). The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha statistical analysis, and reliability indices of..85, and .84 were obtained for the two clusters. Data for the research questions were answered using percentage, mean, and standard deviation, and the result facilities like computer systems and CD ROMS were adequate in the universities while facilities like internet connections web browser, internet telephony, Java, chart rooms and graphic editors are not available in the school and that these facilities are not widely used in counselling among counsellors in the area. It was recommended that facilities that encourages technology based counselling should be provided order to help in facilitation of technology based counselling
Key words: ICT Availability, utilization , counsellors, Technology based counselling , etc.

Introduction

The world has become global that there is nothing that is done today without the presence of information and communication technology (ICT). ICT have become a veritable tool especially in education where a lot of activities are carried out. ICT presence in education has made a lot of activities that hitherto out with stress reduced drastically. One of such area is that of counselling. Technology have permeated into the activities of counselling that was carried out in offices or in a traditional way can be carried out irrespective of distances. Elleven and Allen, (2004) noted that the growth of using technology created opportunities for counsellors to provide online counselling as an alternative technique to traditional counselling

According to Manhal-Baugus, (2001); Tate, Jackvony & Wing,(2003), Maples & Han, (2008); Suler, (2000) various terms have been used to describe technology based counselling. These include cyber therapy or cyber counselling, online or Internet based counselling, e-mail web counselling among others. Sequel to this, various definitions have been given to technology based counselling. Accruing to Parker (2013), online counselling is a type of technology based counselling in which counsellors and clients are not in the office setting and there is distance between them. According to Bloom in Brain (2008) saw it as online distance counselling where counsellors and clients use electronic resources to communicate. Alleman (2002) stated that online counselling is an ongoing, text-based, technological interaction between counsellor and clients, which aims to

improve the client's behavioural and psychological wellbeing. Another definition of online counselling is a therapy which is not restricted with therapy, may also contain consultation, psycho education for the purpose of behavioural and mental improvement, pursued by licensed counsellors through phone, e-mail, synchronous chat, and video-conferencing. As it is seen, there are numerous definitions and different forms of technology based counselling.

Many scholars have stated that online counselling is important in that it helps in breaking distances that would have been created by the location and accessibility. For example, Pomerantz, (2002) noted that there is ease of access because online counselling can be done any time of the day. Also, people who have problems in accessing counselling services because of illness, disabilities or transportation problems, who have social phobias or who have anxiety to be seen by a counsellor can access counselling programmes without necessarily meeting face to face with the counsellor. The second advantage is the therapeutic power of writing. Because writing is a therapeutic tool, it is thought that the client may be more honest and easy to self-disclose (Walker, 2007).They may easily say what they really want to say because of the equal relationship between counselor and client.

However, others have identified the negative aspect of the utilization of technology based counselling. Loss of human interaction is the first and most important disadvantage. Because of lack of non-verbal cues, counsellors may not understand or feel what the client feels or they miss when the client cries therefore counsellors may not empathize with the client. People of low socio economic status may not have access to the facilities easily since it involves facilities like a good phone and data to initiate communication. Some villages may not have Internet or frequent power failure may cause loss of internet. Thus, it is hard to reach all people. Sometimes people who have limited knowledge of using internet or people who are very slow to write on computer may not reach out for online counselling services (Maples & Han, 2008). Sometimes technological problems related mail non-delivery (Griffiths, 2001) or camera problems (Maples & Han, 2008) might happen. Lastly, it may be difficult to respond to crisis through online counselling.
However, these facilities appear to be very insufficient in most universities for counselling activities.

According to Hilary (2008), most of the school do not have counselling facilities that are used for traditional counselling and then, facilities like smartphone, video conferencing facilities, and chart rooms among others that are relevant in counselling people even at distant places.   In Europe and America, a vast majority of students now study in schools and classrooms with computers and some form of Internet access (Yasamin, 2007). Biggs (2008) also observes that access to computers and the Internet has increased rapidly during the past decade. Virtually all schools in Europe and America have internet access in at least one location, More so most classrooms have internet access. The researcher observed that by 2001, an estimated 99 percent of public schools and 87 percent of instructional rooms had Internet connections. On the part of

Spencer (2000), E-learning covers a broad set of applications and processes; including web-based learning, computer based learning, virtual classrooms and digital collaboration.

Anyamene (2012) carried out a study on availability and use of information and communications technology resources for counselling university students in South East States, Nigeria. The study investigated the extent of availability and use of information communication technology resources for counselling university students in south east universities, in Nigeria. The respondents comprise 10,800 students drawn from the nine universities in the south eastern, Nigeria. A test re-test method of reliability was used and a reliability co-efficient of 0.81 was obtained. Percentage and mean scores were used for data analysis. The results indicate that information communication technology (ICT) facilities for counselling are limited in the universities in the south east states, Nigeria. The results also indicate that the level of Information Communication Technology is very low. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that government should make available ICT facilities in counselling laboratories in all universities in other to help facilitate counselling and learning

Bastemur, (2014) carried out a study on technology based counselling: perspectives of Turkish counsellors' perspectives about using Internet for counselling purposes in their professional life. The questionnaire was prepared by the researchers based on literature review and experts' opinion. It was sent to counsellors via e-mail, 542 counsellors returned the questionnaire. Findings were analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Counsellors' perspectives about online counselling were also examined by content analysis. Results indicated that counsellors have positive perspectives about online counselling and think that it is applicable to Turkey, but they need more information about online counselling

In another study on utilization of e-counselling in career information dissemination among undergraduate's students of Federal Universities in South Eastern Nigeria by Omeje, Eze, and Egeonu (2016); three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study consisted of 36 guidance counsellors and 64,997 undergraduates of the federal universities in South East Nigeria. The sample consisted of 1,036 participants. This is made up of all the 36 guidance counsellors in the federal universities in South East Nigeria, and 1,000 undergraduates randomly selected from the various universities. In each university, 200 undergraduates made up of 100 males and 100 females were randomly selected using balloting by replacement. All the guidance counsellors were used due to smallness in number. The instrument for data collection was the E-Counselling Career Information Dissemination Questionnaire (E-CCIDQ). The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha statistical analysis, and reliability indices of .91, .85, and .84 were obtained for the three clusters. Data for the research questions were answered using percentage, mean, and standard deviation, while the null hypotheses were analyzed using *t* test statistics tested at the .05 level of significance.

The research findings revealed that the universities in South Eastern of Nigeria have e-counselling facilities and the students are very aware of e-counselling opportunities in the universities. Also, the counsellors and undergraduates to a high extent utilize e-counselling in career information dissemination. The following questions were raised to guide the study

i.   What are the available technology based-counselling facilities for counselling in universities in Cross River State?

ii.   How are these technology based-counselling facilities utilized among counsellors in in universities in Cross River State?

Methodology

The descriptive survey study was adopted for the study with a stratified and purposive sampling technique to select a total of 43 professionally trained counsellors in the study area. The instrument for data collection was the 'Availability and utilization of technology based counselling scale '(AUTBCS).The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha statistical analysis, and reliability indices of 0.85, and 0.84 were obtained for the two clusters. Data for the research questions were answered using percentage, mean, and standard deviation, and the result is presented on the following tables:

Results and Discussion

Research question one

What are the available technology based-counselling facilities for counselling in universities in Cross River State? The research question is a one variable topic and to answer, it simple percentages were used and the result is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Simple percentages analysis of counsellor's responses to the availability of technology based facilities in universities in Cross River State.

SN/No	Items	Yes	%	No	%
A	Availability of technology based counselling facilities				
1	Computer system	42	97.67	1	2.33
2	Cellular phone	24	55.83	19	44.17
3	CD-ROM	40	93.03	33	6.97
4	Internet connection		25.58	32	74.41
		11			
5	Web browser		2326	33	76.74

		10			
6	Internet telephony	10	23.26	33	76.74
7	Java	2	4.65	41	95.34
8	chart rooms	0	0.00	43	100.00
9	Graphic editor	0	0.00	43	100.00

The result in Table 1 showed that the responses of counsellors to facilities like computer systems and CD ROMS were adequate in the universities while facilities like internet connections web browser, internet telephony, Java, chart rooms and graphic editors are not available in the school. This is showed in the percentage responses of those who responded no to the items as shown in table 1.

Research question two

How are these technology based counselling facilities utilized among counsellors in Universities in Cross River State? The research question is a one variable topic and to answer, it simple percentages were used and the result is presented in Table 2

The result in Table 2 showed the responses of counsellors to the utilization of technology based counselling. The result showed that none of these facilities is widely used in counselling among counsellors in the area. The percentage of those who responded to the items ranged from 72% for cellular phone to 100%for graphic editors and java.

Table 2: Simple percentages analysis of counsellor's responses to the utilization of technology based facilities in universities in cross river state.

S/N	Items	Yes	%	No	%
A	Utilization of technology based counselling Facilities				
1	Computer system	4	9.31	39	90.69
2	Cellular phone	12	27.91	31	72.09
3	CD-ROM	5	11.63	38	88.37
4	Internet connection	7	16.28	36	83.72
5	Web browser	3	6.98	40	93.02
6	Internet telephony	3	6.98	40	93.02
7	Java	0	0.00	43	100.00
8	chart rooms	1	2.33	42	97.67
9	Graphic editor	0	0.00	43	100.00

Discussion of findings

The result for question one showed that facilities like computer systems and Compact Disck Read Only Memoery were adequate in the universities while facilities like internet connections web browser, internet telephony, Java, chart rooms and graphic editors are not available in the school. This could possibly be due to the fact that most of the facilities that are supposed to be used in the counselling labs are not provided by the school management and the finances required to obtain this facilities are often not available for counsellors to obtain these facilities. More so, it could also be due to the fact that most counsellors may have not requested these facilities. The findings were in line with that of Adeoloke (2015) that carried out a study on availability and utilization of ICT in counselling therapies in Ogun State. The result of the study showed that availability of facilities for counselling therapy is very low and limited in the universities in Ogun state.

Result from research question two showed that none of these facilities are widely used in counselling among counsellors in the area. This could be due to the fact that most of the facilities for technology based counselling are not available and even if they do, the skills that would facilitate the utilization of those facilities are low. Most of the counsellors do not have smart phone or cellular phones that facilitate the utilization of counselling on line. Where this is invoked, most of them prefer the traditional counselling activities to online counselling since the skills are not there and facilities to utilize may be inadequate. The result of the study is in line with that of Tilat (2007) whose assessment of utilization of web counselling in secondary school is Kenya found that the level of utilization of web counselling is low among counsellors.

Conclusion and recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that availability and utilization of technology based counselling is inadequate in universities in Cross River State. It was therefore recommended that facilities that encourages technology based counselling should be provided in order to help in facilitation of technology based counselling

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