

Guidance Counsellors' Lived Experiences Of The Use Of Technological Tools In School Counseling Practices In Ikenne Lga, Ogun State, Nigeria

AYODELE Kolawole Olanrewaju^{1*}, ADEOYE, Ayodele O.², OSSAI-OPUTE Chinedu Sandra³, OBIANENUE Olusola Aishat⁴, EKWEANUA Jane Chiamaka⁵

^{1*}School of Education and Humanities, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, ayodelek@babcock.edu.ng

²School of Education and Humanities Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, adeoyea@babcock.edu.ng

³Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria. oputesandra@gmail.com

⁴School of Education and Humanities Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State. olusolaobianenue@gmail.com

⁵School of Education and Humanities Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, ekweanuj@babcock.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

Utilization of ICT for effective delivery of vital education services such as Guidance and counselling, which is a fundamental aspect of sustainable education process; seems not to have been sufficiently studied; school counsellors who have the strong desire to regularly use ICT in counselling students are not doing so due to challenges or barriers. Thus, this study assessed the lived-experiences of guidance counsellors on the use of technological tools in school counselling practices in Ikenne LGA, Ogun State. This study adopted a qualitative approach, which made use of convenience sampling with a sample of 20 guidance counsellors. Data were collected through individual, in-depth, phenomenological interviews and field notes. Thematic coding was utilised to analyse the collected data, and literature was reviewed to support the findings. Moreover, measures to ensure trustworthiness and ethical principles were applied throughout the research process. Four themes were identified: Knowledge and use of ICT tools in counselling practice, privacy and confidentiality, usage of ICT for counselling communication, and challenges. The study concluded that there is generally high use of ICT by counsellors in counselling practice in enhancing counseling process while there is willingness for ICT knowledge advancement. It was also found out that the usage of ICT for counselling communication was high. It is recommended that it is the responsibility of every counsellor to consider and address the ethical concerns surrounding the use of the internet to provide adequate and quality counselling services.

Keywords: counselling practices, guidance counsellors, lived experiences, secondary school, technological tools

Introduction

School counselors have a complex and vital role in fostering students' intellectual, social, emotional, and personal development. As advocates, mentors, and facilitators, school counselors play a vital role in promoting learners' general wellbeing and academic performance (Reese, 2021). School counselors help students make plans for their education and develop goals for their studies (Reese, 2021). They assist students in making informed course selections, comprehending graduation requirements, and creating long-term academic plans.

Counselors help students evaluate their interests, skills, and future goals in order to provide career advise (Peterson, 2019). Career assessments and information about different career routes, institutions, and vocational programs are among the services they provide (Peterson, 2019). They partner with students who might be having academic difficulties to create plans for academic support, such tutoring or extra materials. Individual and group counseling sessions are provided by school counselors to help students with their emotional and personal issues (Ayodele et al., 2022). They assist pupils in managing stress, coping skills, and challenges such as peer pressure, bullying, and family issues (Ayodele et al., 2022). They offer direction on cultivating social skills, such as empathy, collaboration, and clear communication, to improve students' capacity to engage in constructive interactions with others.

Additionally, school counselors are essential in recognizing and managing mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and emotional crises in students (King-White, 2019). When needed, they direct pupils to mental health specialists. Counselors promote emotional resilience and mental health by assisting students in comprehending and controlling their emotions (King-White, 2019). Counselors ensure the safety and well-being of students by offering crisis intervention and support in emergency situations (Pincus et al., 2020). Counsellors collaborate with parents and families to address students' academic and personal needs (Grothaus & Cole, 2010). They also work closely with teachers to create a supportive learning environment, adapting teaching strategies to meet students' needs (Grothaus & Cole, 2010). Additionally, they advocate for students' rights and needs within the school system, ensuring that students have access to appropriate resources and support (King-White, 2019).

Technology integration and the development of school counseling have fundamentally changed how counselors assist children. This dynamic evolution has adjusted to the evolving needs of students as well as technological breakthroughs. It all began with school counseling in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At first, the main objective of school counseling was vocational counseling, which helped students choose their careers (Historical Development, 2021). Early counselors frequently provided minimal academic and career counseling services in a disjointed way. Technology has been significantly incorporated into school counseling methods in the twenty-first century (Van Horn & Myrick, 2001). In times of crisis or when students are unable to physically visit the counseling office, counselors have embraced internet platforms to offer remote counseling services (Tuna & Avci, 2023). To evaluate student requirements and monitor progress, technology is utilized for data gathering, management, and analysis.

Virtual college fairs, job tests, and advice for students considering post-secondary alternatives are all provided by counselors using technology (Dabbagh et al., 2019). Counselors can provide kids with digital resources made possible by technology, like interactive job exploration tools, mental health applications, and instructional websites. To more effectively connect with children, parents, and teachers, counselors use digital communication tools (Jaber & Al-Hroub, 2023). Artificial intelligence for individualized counseling support and data analytics to customize interventions are two examples of the technology that is expected to be progressively integrated into school counseling in the future (Götzl et al., 2022). In order to provide holistic support that takes into account students' academic, personal, social, and emotional needs, school counselors will keep evolving to meet those needs.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the development of school counseling and the incorporation of technology in the Nigerian setting. According to Okoye and Arimonu (2016), these advancements are essential because Nigeria, like many other nations, presents particular educational possibilities and difficulties.. Nigeria's population is diverse, with gaps and needs in education. Technology integration reduces educational inequities and guarantees that all students, regardless of geography, have access to counseling support by enabling school counselors to reach out to underserved and rural places (Gizaw et al., 2022).

There is a dearth of certified counselors in Nigeria, particularly in rural regions (Okoye & Arimonu, 2016). By making remote counseling services possible, technology helps close this gap and guarantees that students in far-flung areas may receive high-quality counseling and advice. One of the world's greatest youth populations is found in Nigeria (Dabbagh et al., 2019). The need for efficient school counseling services is growing along with this population. Counselors can effectively handle more cases and offer more students timely support with the aid of technology (Mason et al., 2018). With high levels of technology literacy, Nigerian students are becoming more and more like digital natives (Lateef, 2020). Students' digital competences are met when technology is included into counseling, which makes the process more relatable and interesting for them.

For students who are struggling emotionally, technology-enabled counseling services can provide resources, early intervention, and prompt mental health help (Boydell et al., 2014). Data-driven decision-making has potential benefits for Nigeria's educational system. Counsellors and educational policymakers can find trends, places for improvement, and where resources are most required by using technology to make data collecting and analysis easier (Dubé & Wen, 2022). Thus, there is the need to assess the experiences of guidance counsellors on the use of technological tools in school counselling practices in Ikenne LGA, Ogun State

Research Questions

1. How knowledgeable are guidance counsellors on the use of ICT for counselling practices?
2. What are the ICT platforms used for e-counselling by guidance counsellors in their counselling practices?
3. What are the potential ethical considerations in using e-counselling by guidance counsellors?
4. To what extent do guidance counsellors make use of ICT tools for counselling communication?
5. What are the challenges that guidance counsellors encounter when adopting technology in their counselling roles in Ikenne LGA?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This study adopted a research design, which was a qualitative approach whereby interviews was utilized to investigate the guidance counsellors' lived experiences of the use of technological tools in school counseling practices in Ikenne LGA, Ogun State. This design was adopted for this study because it will provide comprehensive information on the variables of interest (the use of technological tools in school counseling practices) through primary sourcing of data.

Participants: This qualitative study involved the use convenience sampling method in selecting a sample size of 20 guidance counsellors In qualitative research, the sample size is influenced by the process of saturation. Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted that for phenomenological studies, a sample size between 20-30 participants should be enough to meet the saturation criterion. Thus, the researcher plans to have a sample size of 20 teachers. The sample size of 20 teachers is considered adequate because this study has adopted a qualitative methods alone.

Instrument: This study adopted the use of a structured in-depth interview. The interview was recorded via audio-tape in a face-to-face setting for twenty to thirty minutes in English. All the proposed participants were given freewill to express themselves and share their views on the major variables of this study based on the interview guide.

Procedures for Data Collection: Permission was sought from the selected schools in order to conduct data collection. After permission must have been granted, the informed consent forms were distributed to all guidance counsellors who agree to participate in one to one interviews. They then had the options of contacting the researcher indicating their willingness to participate. Participants were told that the purpose of the research is to assess and document their understanding of the use of technological tools in school counseling practices.

One to one face-to-face interviews were conducted. The individual interviews took about 30 minutes. During the individual interviews, participants were asked to answer questions about their experiences with the use of technological tools in school counseling practices.

To access the participants understanding of the use of technological tools in school counseling practices, the researcher mapped the challenges and match each of these concerns with appropriate resources available within the participants. Doing this, the researcher gathered all the themes arising from the discussions that is providing direction for formulation of the use of technological tools in school counseling practices. Equally, in this engagement, the researcher assessed and identified the leading voices from the participants. Proceedings from this step, were carefully audio-recorded, transcribed and presented to the participants for further observation and comments to reflect the aim of the study.

Data Analysis Plan: The qualitative data of this study was analysed using thematic analysis consistent with Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014).

RESULTS

Table 1: Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Sub-Themes
Knowledge and use of ICT tools in counselling practice	Knowledge
	ICT platforms used for counselling
	Enhancing counseling process with ICT
	Willingness for ICT knowledge advancement
privacy and confidentiality	ICT and privacy
	Potential ethical considerations
Usage of ICT for counselling communication	ICT and counselling communication
	ICT and client engagement
Challenges	Concerns for ICT usage in Counselling
	Overcoming barriers to accessing counseling services

Theme One: Knowledge and use of ICT tools in counselling practice: The first four engagement questions that propel this study are on knowledge and use of ICT tools in counselling practice.

Knowledge and comfortability using technology in counseling practice

The participants were asked during the interview about their knowledge and use of ICT tools in counselling practice. All of them consented that they were knowledgeable and comfortable using technology in their counseling practice. The excerpts of the interview are shown below:

I'm comfortable using technology in my practice! I see it as a valuable tool that can enhance the therapeutic process in many ways. While I believe there's no substitute for face-to-face interaction in some cases, technology offers flexibility and accessibility that can benefit many clients.

Technology is actually very important in counseling. It also makes Counseling affordable because if you look at the cost of transportation right now clients can just stay at the comfort of their home and then receive psychological help, so, it makes it accessible and affordable for clients to use.

I'm very comfortable using technology in my counseling practice. It allows me to connect with clients in new and convenient ways also makes me keep to time.

I am comfortable using technology in my counseling practice and recognize its potential benefits.

I'm pretty comfortable using technology in my counseling practice. It's a very helpful tool!

I'm actually very comfortable using technology in my counseling practice. Because it makes work easier and faster.

I feel very comfortable using technology in my counseling practice. It's become an essential part of the process.

ICT tools/platform used for counseling sessions: The aspect of the knowledge measuring the specific technology tools or platforms being used in counseling sessions by the counsellors revealed various tools such as video conferencing, skype, Google meet, whatsapp, and Telegram. These are even expressed in almost all their responses as shown below.

I primarily use secure video conferencing platforms for online sessions. These platforms allow for real-time interaction and a sense of connection, which is important for building rapport. Additionally, I sometimes utilize online scheduling tools and communication platforms to facilitate communication outside of sessions.

I have experience using various platforms such as video conferencing software, online therapy platforms, and secure messaging systems for asynchronous communication with clients.

I have used various technology tools and platforms in counseling sessions, such as video conferencing platforms, secure messaging apps, and online therapy platforms.

I've used various technology tools and platforms, like skype, Google meet and even WhatsApp, software and online therapy platforms. This helps connect and follow up with my clients.

The platform I use are; zoom , Google meet (phone)video call and also WhatsApp. All this platform helps counselors connect with the client.

The platform I use are; zoom and Google meet and (phone)video call all this enables me to reach out to my clients when they're not reachable it also will follow up of the client all this platform makes it easier to work.

I've used various technology tools and platforms, like skype , Google meet and even WhatsApp, software and online therapy platforms. This helps connect and follow up with my clients.

Enhancing counseling process with ICT: The third sub-theme is on enhancing counselling process with the use ICT. The participants were asked to respond to the question: "How do you see technology enhancing the counseling process?". Some of the excerpts are shown below:

Technology offers several advantages. Firstly, it allows me to reach clients who might face geographical limitations or transportation difficulties. Secondly, it provides flexibility for clients with busy schedules who can access sessions remotely. Technology can also be a helpful tool for shy or anxious clients who might feel more comfortable expressing themselves initially through text-based communication.

I believe technology can greatly enhance the counseling process by increasing accessibility for clients who may have difficulty attending in-person sessions, providing more flexibility in scheduling, and offering a range of therapeutic tools such as virtual reality exposure therapy or interactive worksheets. As I mentioned technology enhanced this by making our work easier and also open are eyes of how to use more platforms to improve counseling.

I believe technology can greatly enhance the counseling process by increasing accessibility for clients who may have difficulty attending in-person sessions, providing more flexibility in scheduling, and offering a range of therapeutic tools such as virtual reality exposure therapy or interactive worksheets.

Technology enhances the counseling process by increasing accessibility and convenience for clients. It allows for flexible scheduling, remote sessions, and access to resources and self-help tools.

Technology can enhance counseling by making it more accessible, reachable it helps both counselor and client reduce costs it also makes reach materials online without much stress. So it enhance a lot .

Technology has really broken the regular rules and traditions by simplifying counseling practices so it has enhanced counseling by reducing cost for both the counselors and clients.

Technology has really broken the regular rules and traditions by simplifying counseling practices so it has enhanced counseling by reducing cost for both the counselors and clients.it helps me reach clients without much stress.

Willingness for ICT knowledge advancement: The participants of this study were asked "What training or support would you like to receive to further enhance your use of technology in counseling?" All the participants consented the need for more training and this was shown in their willingness for ICT knowledge advancement. The summary of their responses are shown below.

I'm always open to receiving training and support to improve my use of technology in counseling because we learn every day and technology improves and grows so I will have to move along with increasing knowledge technology to improve my counseling skills to stand out because I believe that knowledge is power.

Ongoing training on best practices for technology use in counseling would be valuable. This could include learning about new platforms, staying updated on security protocols, and exploring ways to effectively utilize technology for different therapeutic approaches.

To further enhance my use of technology in counseling, I would appreciate additional training on emerging tools and platforms, as well as ongoing support for troubleshooting technical issues.

I would appreciate training and support to stay updated on the latest technology tools and platforms. Continuous learning helps me provide the best possible counseling experience for my clients.

I'm always open to receiving training and support to improve my use of technology in counseling because we learn every day and technology improves and grows so I will have to move along with increasing knowledge technology to improve my counseling skills to stand out because I believe that knowledge is power.

I am willing to learn more about technology to improve my skills learning new things help you grow in technology like wise counsel too because no knowledge goes to waste.

Of course, I am willing to learn more about technology to improve my skills and adding knowledge of how make use of new platforms doing this will help me grow in my field.

Theme Two: Privacy and confidentiality in counselling with the use of ICT

ICT and privacy: In counseling, confidentiality and privacy create a safe space where clients can discuss sensitive topics knowing that their counsellor will not repeat or misuse what they discuss outside of the counseling room. One of the things that sets counseling apart from other types of relationships is the counsellor's ethical obligation to uphold confidentiality within certain bounds. It was reported that all the participants in this study upheld the counselling ethical issues as much as possible. This was reflected in all their comments as shown in some of the excerpts below.

I prioritize client privacy and confidentiality because is one of a big thing in counseling, if not careful it lead to the client private information to be linked so to ensure that make that nobody is around while counseling online and I make sure that I lock my app if I'm making use of chat session by doing this it secure the privacy of your client.

To address this, I utilize encrypted platforms for communication and file sharing.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, I adhere to ethical guidelines and use secure and encrypted platforms. I also educate clients on privacy measures and obtain informed consent for using technology in counseling.

I take client privacy and confidentiality seriously. I use secure platforms and take necessary precautions to protect client information.

I take client privacy and confidentiality seriously. I use secure platforms and take necessary precautions to protect client information. Also before I start sessions online I make sure we both stay in peaceful place to avoid distractions and interference form family members.

Protecting client privacy and confidentiality is a top priority. I use secure platforms, encryption, and follow best practices to safeguard client information.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, I adhere to ethical guidelines and use secure and encrypted platforms. I also educate clients on privacy measures and obtain informed consent for using technology in counseling.

Potential ethical considerations: In order to communicate honestly and freely about their concerns, it is crucial for a client seeking therapy to have a sense of trust with their counselor. Deeper examination of experiences that feel especially challenging or embarrassing may be made possible by the counsellor's assurance that their thoughts, feelings, and stories can be confided in. This safety promotes the development of deeper relationships and makes therapy work easier. Therefore, the participants in this study have shared their experiences on how potential ethical considerations could be considered when using technology in counseling. It could be inferred from this study that such issues are understanding the limitations of online therapy, use of informed consent, confidentiality maintenance, demonstrating empathy, and building rapport. Some of the excerpts are recorded below:

Ethical considerations are crucial. Informed consent is essential, and I ensure clients understand the limitations of online therapy, such as the potential for technical difficulties or privacy breaches. Additionally, I maintain clear boundaries regarding communication outside of scheduled sessions and make sure clients know how to reach me in case of an emergency.

Addressing ethical considerations when using technology involves ensuring informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, protecting client data, and regularly evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of the technology used in counseling.

Ethical considerations are important, and I address them by obtaining informed consent, protecting client data, and regularly evaluating the technology I use.

Ethical considerations are important, and I address them by obtaining informed consent, protecting client data, and regularly evaluating the technology I use.

Ethical considerations are crucial when using technology in counseling. I address them by obtaining informed consent, ensuring secure platforms, maintaining confidentiality, and regularly reviewing and updating my practices to align with ethical guidelines.

When using technology in counseling, we need to address ethical considerations. This means getting informed consent, keeping client information confidential, protecting their data, and regularly assessing the technology we use. It's all about making sure we're doing things right and putting our clients first!

While using technology the same ethical considerations still stands when online some of them are maintaining confidentiality, demonstrating Empathy ,building rapport ect all this still stands when using technology In counseling.

Theme Three: Usage of ICT for counselling communication

ICT and counselling communication: The use of ICT in guidance and counseling is the provision of e-counseling services. E-counseling is the provision of counseling services via electronic devices namely telephone, the internet, radio, and television. This can be done through sending text messages, making phone calls, video calls, and one-way guidance

services like blogs, radio, and television. ICT use is effective in providing information service, which is one of the seven guidance services. Video calls on the other hand can provide a personal feel. Some of the excerpts from this study are:

An example of using technology to facilitate communication with clients is utilizing a secure messaging app for asynchronous communication, allowing clients to share thoughts, reflections, or questions outside of session time.

I've used technology to facilitate communication with clients through secure messaging apps for ongoing support between sessions.

I've used technology to facilitate communication with clients through secure messaging apps for ongoing support between sessions. All this provides good communication between you and client and a fellow up is very important.

One example of using technology to facilitate communication is through secure messaging apps. It allows clients to reach out between sessions, ask questions, and receive support when needed.

An example of using technology to facilitate communication with clients is making sure the app for communicating to your clients is safe this enables the client to freely speak their minds out and be comfortable while expressing their thoughts.

I once had a client who was hesitant about starting therapy due to social anxiety. Using a secure online platform allowed them to feel more comfortable opening up during the initial sessions. As their trust grew, we were able to transition to in-person sessions when they felt ready.

One example of using technology to facilitate communication with clients is through video conferencing. It allows for face-to-face interactions even when clients cannot physically come to the office.

ICT and client engagement: Using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for client engagement in counselling process is important, and could create programs for psychological intervention, evaluation, orientation and specialized counseling, as a means of prevention. The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to deliver psychological services has been emerging as an effective way of increasing individual access to mental health promotion, prevention, and treatment. These are equally revealed in their excerpts.

Client engagement can vary. Some clients who are initially hesitant about online therapy find themselves quite comfortable and engaged in the virtual setting. However, it's true that building rapport can take a bit longer virtually compared to in-person sessions. I find that utilizing clear communication strategies and being extra attentive to verbal and nonverbal cues helps bridge that gap.

Client engagement may vary when using technology compared to traditional counseling methods. Some clients may feel more comfortable expressing themselves through writing or find it easier to open up in an online setting. However, it is essential to be mindful of potential limitations and adapt the approach accordingly.

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Yeah, I've noticed that client engagement can be different with technology. Some clients find it easier to express themselves online or feel more comfortable in that setting.

Yes, there can be differences in client engagement when using technology compared to traditional counseling methods. Some clients may feel more comfortable expressing themselves online, while others may prefer face-to-face interactions. When using technology for counseling, client engagement can be different. Some clients feel more comfortable expressing themselves in writing or online. It's important to be aware of any limitations and adjust our approach accordingly.

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Theme: ICT Challenges in Counselling

Concerns for ICT usage in Counselling: Communication between individuals has become easier thanks to information and communication technology, which has also given people more opportunity to learn and share knowledge. Every area of human knowledge is grabbing hold of this growing opportunity as statistics demonstrate an increase in the number of people with access to the Internet. Challenges abound with these opportunities, though. It is also the case in the counseling field. The following excerpts were received from the participants of this study,

Challenges can include technical issues, network issues for example in this day and time in Nigeria we experience bad network issues so it prevents from having an easy flow conversation with clients. ensuring client privacy, and potential limitations in building rapport.

While technology offers many benefits, I have encountered challenges such as technical difficulties or connectivity issues. It's important to have backup plans and alternative communication methods in place to address these concerns.

While technology brings advantages, it can also present challenges. These may include technical difficulties, ensuring client privacy and confidentiality, and addressing potential limitations in building rapport and non-verbal communication cues.

Yeah, there can be some challenges and concerns when using technology in counseling, like technical issues or ensuring client privacy.

Yeah, there can be some challenges and concerns when using technology in counseling, like technical issues or ensuring client privacy. This one of the biggest challenges I face with using technology either the client doesn't know how to operate their system it comes an issue for but the counselor and client.

Absolutely, there have been some challenges and concerns when using technology in counseling. Technical glitches, internet connectivity issues, and ensuring secure and confidential communication are some of the common ones.

While technology offers many benefits, I have encountered challenges such as technical difficulties or connectivity issues. It's important to have backup plans and alternative communication methods in place to address these concerns.

Overcoming barriers to accessing counseling services: Now that information and communication technology (ICT) is here to stay, it can facilitate more in-person communication between people regardless of distance, time zones, location, convenience, or intervals between messages. Thus, the respondents of the study were asked to mention what could be done to overcome barriers to accessing e-counseling.

Technology can help overcome barriers to counseling by offering easy access to counseling services for everyone that needs it help, technology breaks barriers in counseling in this way i did group counseling on zoom this clients are from different backgrounds so what it does bring people together to learn from oneself which is a very good for the clients and the counselor.

Technology can be a game-changer for overcoming barriers to accessing counseling. It allows clients in remote locations or with limited mobility to connect with a therapist. Additionally, online platforms can offer more affordable therapy options, making mental health services more accessible to a wider range of clients.

Technology can help overcome barriers to accessing counseling services by providing remote options for individuals who may have limited mobility, live in remote areas, or face time constraints. It can also reduce stigma associated with seeking counseling by offering more discreet and convenient options.

Technology can help overcome barriers to accessing counseling services by offering remote options and reducing stigma around seeking help.

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Technology can be a game-changer in overcoming barriers to accessing counseling services. It offers remote counseling options, eliminates geographical limitations, and can reduce stigma for those seeking help.

Technology can help overcome barriers to accessing counseling services by providing remote options for individuals who may have limited mobility, live in remote areas, or face time constraints. It can also reduce stigma associated with seeking counseling by offering more discreet and convenient options.

Discussion of Findings

The outcome of this study has shown that the participants had adequate knowledge of ICT and various platforms that can be used for counselling. Additionally, it was revealed that all the participants have utilised ICT in one way or the other in enhancing counselling process, while they have high will for advancement in e-counselling. This result implies that knowledge is key to advancement and improvement. There is also a high degree of similarity between the tools most frequently used and the resources that counsellors most recommend to their clients (e.g., telephone calls, whatsapp calls and video, video conferences, social networks, and apps). This study is in tandem with the findings of Foon, Zainudin, Yusop and Wan (2020) who found that guidance counsellors were knowledgeable and showed positive intention to apply e-counselling in schools only when e-counselling facilities were provided, lack of competence in technical skill seemed to outweigh their intention to use e-counselling. Also, the finding of Okpechi et al. (2018) is in support of the outcome of first theme of this current study. They indicated that the awareness and knowledge of e-learning resources by trainee counsellors was generally high.

E-counselling privacy and potential ethical considerations is the focus of the second theme. Online counseling ethics provide the moral code of conduct that counselors and clients follow in remote psychological counseling. They embody a system of value judgments and behavioral concepts that integrate virtual and real situations and connect both parties. Online counseling ethics play an important role in standardizing counselors' behavior and protecting clients' interests. Therefore, this study found out that the participants upheld the counselling ethical issues as much as possible in their e-counselling issue. It was discovered further that potential ethical considerations for e-counseling should be on the understanding the limitations of online therapy, use of informed consent, confidentiality maintenance, demonstrating empathy, and building rapport. This corroborate the findings of Kotsopoulou et al (2015) whose findings highlighted several salient ethical dimensions of e-therapy, including competence, credentialing, informed consent, exceptions to confidentiality, privacy, and security limits. This is equally supported by the findings of Olanrewaju (2020).

Communication in counselling involves the exchange of information between individuals through a system of symbols, signs, or behaviors. Communicating may be non-verbal or verbal. However, outcome of this finding revealed that the participants in the study to an extent have used ICT for counselling communication and client engagement. This study is in tandem with the findings of Omeje and Nkiru (2019) whose results showed that information and communication

technology has enhanced counseling and that client has benefited maximally from information and communication technology through the use of interviewing skills by counselor in resolving client's problems, the counsellor's use of ICT for treatment decision making on client's problem, for record keeping of clients' data and in dissemination and publications of counseling information. Lateef (2020) noted that integrating technology into counselling aligns with the digital competencies, making the counselling process more engaging and relatable for them. Technology-enabled counselling services equally offer timely mental health support, early intervention, and resources for client dealing with emotional challenges (Boydell *et al.*, 2014)

Communication between individuals has become easier thanks to information and communication technology, which has also given people more opportunity to learn and share knowledge. Every area of human knowledge is grabbing hold of this growing opportunity as statistics demonstrate an increase in the number of people with access to the Internet. Challenges abound with these opportunities. Therefore, this study revealed the participants equally faced challenges in the use of ICT for counselling. These include internet connectivity issues, software problem, power shortage, ensuring secure and confidential communication. This is tandem with the findings of Okoh (2018) that revealed that the use of computers in counselling has not yet taken root in Nigeria, Nigerian counsellors lack the requisite technological skills needed to employ ICT in counselling. Above all, there is lack of relevant ICT facilities in most parts of Nigeria, thereby making ICT use in counselling impossible. Ukwueze (2018) study showed that most of the modern social media platforms for e-counselling are not available for use. He found out that there are challenges that face the utilization of e-counselling platforms, which include inadequate power supply and lack of ICT facilities.

Conclusion

This study has been able to assess the guidance counsellors' lived experiences of the use of technological tools in school counseling practices in Ikenne LGA, Ogun State. The study concludes that there is generally high use of ICT by counsellors in counselling practice and enhancing counseling process with ICT while there is willingness for ICT knowledge advancement. It was also found out that the usage of ICT for counselling communication was high.

Recommendations

The current work has contributed to the understanding of that impact in the practice of counselling and psychotherapy, in close relation with the use of ICTs. Awareness of these changes can guide future professional practice by allowing the replication of the best practices and experiences shared by the counselling. It can also help to overcome the main difficulties and limitations experienced by guiding future training in this area, stimulating the creation of guidelines for ICT-based professional practice in different countries, and of measures to promote knowledge of and adherence to these guidelines that are becoming increasingly available.

It is the responsibility of every counsellor to consider and address the ethical concerns surrounding the use of the internet to provide counselling services. However, equally importantly, associations must ensure that their guidelines for ethical use of the internet for online counselling are keeping up with the ever-changing advances in technology, and work to improve compliance by their members to meet minimum standards, in order to ensure the safety of both clients and counsellors in this era of online counselling.

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