

Preface

Given the new paradigms in education, which vary between developed and developing nations, guidance and counselling services in the modern global-village world requires regular evaluation and re-engineering. While some practitioners adopt face-to-face interaction in their model of knowledge delivery, sharing and evaluation, some adopt largely distance learning models; others combine the two models in varying proportions. The imperative of online guidance and counselling services cannot be ignored in many nations as a result of an acute shortage of personnel to provide face-to-face counselling services.

For a healthy all-round development of learners regardless of the models of classroom interaction experienced, the role of self-regulated guidance and counselling services he/she can experience needs to be regularly revisited. It is expedient for online counselling to take cognizance of clients' characteristics (such as their diverse races, genders, counselling needs, cultural and social backgrounds) if effective therapeutic intervention is to be achieved.

This book aims to present and explain current findings in online guidance and counselling interactions with the view to helping practitioners improve on their practices and to help counsellors-in-training to take in the intricacies of online therapeutic intervention. It will also help in charting a course of developing online guidance and counselling in the developing areas of the world where poverty, corruption and illiteracy is still rife.

The overall objectives and mission of the publication are targeted at re-engineering online guidance and counselling to cater to busy and mobile individuals, students and other clients from poor and deprived areas of the world, cultural influence on obtaining counselling services, and online guidance and counselling as a panacea for international crises and troubled regions of the world. The book will also focus on how the developed world can use online guidance and counselling to promote peace, cooperation and democracy in countries far away from them without the risk of threat to sovereignty.

The book presents reports and findings from cutting edge research in diverse areas and exposes research findings concerning human psychology during online guidance and counselling interactions. It is also a course supplement book in counsellor education, online counselling, education for liberation, assistive mental health and psychiatry. In addition, it will be a unique resource for the researchers, scholars and distance education professionals and lifelong learners. The book will also be a welcome addition to academic libraries' collections in online education, distance education, guidance and counselling as well as other online interaction areas.

Consequently, the book is organized in a logical format designed to enhance the understanding of online guidance and counselling theories and practice thus:

Chapter One, titled "The Provision of Online Counselling for Young People" presents the findings of a pilot study designed to study the behaviour of secondary schools students in online counselling interaction at Queensland secondary school. The pilot study provided the students with anonymous live-

time counselling from the school counsellor (via a secure chat room) to students through the school's website. The chapter also presented the school counsellors' attitude to online counselling in course of the pilot study.

Chapter Two is titled "Faceless Counselling: Trend of Technological Development," and it describes online counselling as "faceless" emphasising on the findings that counselling clients may disclose more information when they find that their identities seems to be protected. It presents basic information on online counselling focussing primarily on the criticisms commonly levelled against online counselling—loss of verbal and nonverbal cues. It also suggested ways by which these cues can be brought into an online counselling interaction and ensure that effective counselling relationship still take place.

Chapter Three is titled "Communicating Emotions through the Internet," describing the concepts of emotion and communication as they occur particularly on the internet. The chapter also analyses the importance of emotion in any counselling relationship and how this can be imported into the online counselling relationship. It goes further to describe factors which are associated with emotional communications on the internet and their advantages, the relationship between personality variables and emotional communication through the Internet as well as criticisms commonly levelled against the process of communicating emotions through the internet.

Chapter Four is about ethical issues in online counselling. Greater attention is now being given to ethical issues in many aspects of human endeavour. This chapter addresses ethical issues and concerns for counsellors conducting online counselling as well as the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach. Since the use of the Internet allows for global use of counselling services, this chapter, among others, examined various ethical standards to counselling that have been established across the world and to this end, guidelines created by several countries' professional associations are reviewed. Practical issues, including the training that may be necessary for counsellors to engage in this counselling mode were also addressed.

Chapter Five, titled "Intimacy and Relational Communication in Online Counselling," presents the importance of intimacy and relational communication in online guidance and counselling. The chapter posits that apart from acquiring necessary skills needed in becoming a professional counsellor, an online counsellor needs to acquire some level of proficiency in communication technologies especially in the areas of handling computers and effective use of the internet. Also, such a counsellor should be well equipped with principles of effective communication. Not only that he/she should be well familiar with some of the internet languages often referred to as 'net lingo' and some emotional icons often referred to as 'emoticons' in order for him/her to establish and promote intimacy and relational communication in an online counselling relationship.

Chapter Six is titled "Reaching out across the Virtual Divide: An Empirical Review of Text-Based Therapeutic Online Relationships." This chapter presents the result of a review on research earlier conducted in online counselling. It posited that text-based online therapy interventions have been used for more than a decade, but no comprehensive review of the effects on the alliance have been conducted. It therefore collected empirical articles published up to December 2008 that examine the alliance of text-based online therapy and involved clients who were treated by therapists through various psychological interventions for a variety of problems. The findings of this review suggest that online text therapists are able to meaningfully connect with their clients. Limitations of the findings and directions for future research are discussed.

Chapter Seven explores the use of online counselling interactions to improve medicine use among people living with HIV/AIDS. The chapter posits that online interactivity is not commonly employed by patients and healthcare professionals to solve medicine use-related problems in spite of the many advantages it offers. Many patients are yet to explore the various possibilities available online to receive counselling about the medicines they use. The chapter discusses patient counselling in pharmacy practice and medicine use adherence in relation to the challenges of chronically-ill patients. It highlights the plight of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in addition to the burden of stigmatisation and how online counselling could assist in coping with the challenges. The chapter also identifies the communication skills required by the pharmacist for successful online counselling. It concludes that this mode of communication holds attractive prospect for the patients in meeting their medicine information needs and for the pharmacists in providing medicine information adequately.

Chapter Eight is titled “The Evolution of Guidelines for Online Counselling and Psychotherapy: The Development of Ethical Practice.” The chapter presents practitioners’ research effort in developing an ethical framework for use in Britain. Some issues the authors have found to be of particular importance are highlighted with reference to particular publications as exemplars of the ongoing development of ethical practice in this field. Changes in ethical guidelines produced by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) are examined to elucidate the evolution in ethical thinking and practice that has been necessitated by the continual rapid development of technological applications relevant to mental health care that have typified the field. The chapter ends with a look to the advent of web 2.0 philosophies and the need for practitioners to remain constantly vigilant with regard to their work.

Chapter Nine discusses the process of enhancing helper-helpee therapeutic relationship and clienteles’ desirable change in online counselling. This chapter examines some counselling strategies that can enhance effective therapeutic relationship between the counsellor and the client thereby bringing about clienteles’ desirable change. The basic ingredients that could bring about successful one-on-one counselling process such as structuring, empathy and other counsellor’s characteristics are also found as appropriate procedures in online counselling option. Further, self-disclosure strategy between counsellor and counsellee especially at early stage whereby the counsellor reveals his/her level of expertise and status before the counselling contract would increase the commitment level of the client and able to surmount his challenges early.

Chapter Ten is titled “Online Counselling for Children and Young People: Using Technology to Address the Millennium Development Goals in Kenya.” The central thesis of this chapter has three main components. The chapter proposes that online counselling can be of benefit to Kenyan children and young people in providing access to psychological help and support. Furthermore, specific technological support can be developed to provide opportunities for Kenyan children and young people to derive the same benefits as those in countries in which youth online counselling has already become established. Secondly, it outlines the potential possessed by online counselling to address four of the eight United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Finally, the chapter reflects on how technology can support online counselling for use with Kenyan children and young people so that it can be utilized to meet its full potential. In particular, appropriate technological advances need to occur to enable those in remote areas to benefit, thus providing the infrastructure for online counselling to become a realistic means of supporting Kenyan children and young people in other areas of the world.

Chapter Eleven, titled “Equipping the Online Counsellors-in-Training: Between Theory and Practice,” presents the technical requirements in effective online guidance and counselling interactions. The chapter addresses the training aspects of equipping the counsellor in training for online counselling. It explores the understanding of online counselling by practitioners and clients alike, discovering personal theory, use for supervision of counsellors-in-training, available and accessible technologies, ethics and competency issues. It also discusses the challenges of online counselling and makes suggestions for the furtherance of the counselling process.

Chapter Twelve discusses the role of technology in supervising counsellors and play therapists. This chapter explores the possibilities of using technology to support counselling supervision in Africa, with a focus on Kenya, where the cost, both in time as well as financially, can mean that counselling supervision is not accessed as regularly as it perhaps should be. The purpose and nature of counselling supervision is examined and the challenges that therapists face in accessing it are reported. Through an evaluation of the literature relating to the effectiveness of technology in supporting counselling supervision, drawing on the authors’ experience of telephone supervision and the views of practising counsellors and play therapists, recommendations are made regarding its use.

Chapter Thirteen is titled “Self-Disclosure in Online Counselling.” The chapter posits that counselling involves a series of skills and strategies along with the therapeutic approach. Self-disclosure is sometimes used in order to help build and deepen the therapeutic relationship. This paper focuses on self-disclosure as a useful strategy for sharing information with others in web mediated contexts. In many counselling situations, considerable benefit may stem from the online counsellor / counsellee mutual self-disclosure. The anonymity of the interaction seems to facilitate a sense of personal freedom and privacy that frees the client to talk to the counsellor with a sense of personal safety and security. These benefits notwithstanding, a number of challenges and ethical issues are involved in self-disclosure in online counselling and these should be taken into consideration by stakeholders.

Chapter Fourteen, titled “The Challenges of Online Counselling in a Developing Country,” presents the challenges commonly faced by developing countries, particularly Nigeria in course of online counselling interaction. It therefore outlines the challenges which may hinder online counselling in Nigeria, such as technical know-how, counselling environment in terms of privacy and security, the problem of invisibility and anonymity, and the ethical issues of practice. It concludes that online counselling is a possibility in Nigeria and other developing countries if certain pertinent issues are taken care of.

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