

EVALUATION OF COUNSELLORS' CHALLENGES IN USING ICT FACILITIES FOR COUNSELLING IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY-ABUJA

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Abstract

This study evaluated the challenges faced by counsellors in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities for counselling in senior secondary schools within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. A descriptive research design was employed, with a population of 144 counsellors purposively selected from public senior secondary schools. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire and analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that counsellors faced several ICT-related challenges, including lack of internet connectivity, irregular power supply, inadequate training, limited access to personal computers, high maintenance costs, and lack of sponsorship for professional development. The study further established significant differences in the challenges faced by counsellors based on gender, school location, and counselling experience, with female and rural-based counsellors experiencing greater barriers. Recommendations made included that government should address the challenges by providing steady power supply and internet connectivity in the schools for students, counsellors and other teachers to access freely. Female counsellors should be motivated to improve their ICT knowledge and skills this will bridge the gender gaps in term of knowledge, skills and ICT applications between the male and female counsellors and all Guidance Counsellors regardless of their years of counselling experience should embrace the use of ICT in counselling.

Key words: Challenges, Guidance Counsellor, Digital Literacy, Gender, School location, years of experience

Introduction

The world has gone digital in all aspects, making the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education increasingly important. ICT has transformed teaching, learning, and counselling by creating interactive, engaging, and efficient processes (NTI, 2016).

In the context of school counselling, ICT enhances service delivery, improves students' access to information, and supports their academic, career, social, and personal development. Digital literacy and competence are therefore essential for counsellors to deliver high-quality guidance programmes (Popoola, Ibraheem, & Yusuf, 2023).

Cuban (2000) in Mustapha, Abdullahi and Kolo (2014) stressed that educational reform efforts must consider counsellors' ICT skills. With ICT knowledge, counsellors can access information, communicate effectively, and utilize platforms such as WhatsApp, Google Meet, and Google Classroom for counselling purposes.

ICT reduces stress, saves time, and maximizes output (Amagbara, 2022). It provides students with opportunities to acquire relevant life and career skills, while

also equipping counsellors with tools for effective information sharing (Davis & Tearle, 1999). ICT can serve as a tool, an alternative to traditional methods, or an agent of change, thereby extending access to guidance services beyond physical limitations (Oye et al., 2012).

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, has invested in ICT infrastructure, with schools being equipped with computers, internet connectivity, and ICT centres. However, the extent to which counsellors effectively utilize ICT remains constrained by challenges ranging from technical issues and inadequate training to poor infrastructure and policy gaps.

However, the extent to which school counsellors can effectively utilize ICT could be affected due to various challenges in the deployment of ICT for counselling. These challenges can range from technical issues and lack of training to concerns about client confidentiality and the digital divide. This study aimed to explore the challenges faced by counsellors in using ICT in senior secondary schools in FCT Abuja, with a view to identifying potential solutions and strategies for improvement.

Statement of the Problem

The rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed various professions, including counselling. ICT has become an integral part of modern counselling practices, enhancing the delivery of services and increasing accessibility.

Government senior secondary schools in FCT are equipped with computers and some of them are connected to the internet, this was done to make teaching and learning easier and up to date. Counsellors are expected to use ICT facilities in these schools for effective service delivery, be able to attend to more clients and save time. This will enable the counsellors to attend to their students/clients even when situations make it difficult to have a face-to-face interaction. If these facilities made available by the government are not put to maximum use, then the vision of government would not be realizable and would mean waste of resources. This study therefore was conducted to evaluate the challenges faced by counsellors in senior secondary schools in FCT in deploying ICT in rendering their services.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to evaluate counsellors' challenges in using ICT in senior secondary schools in FCT-Abuja in this digital era. Specifically, objectives of the study are to:

1. Find out the challenges faced by guidance counsellors in the use of ICT facilities in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.
2. Find out whether the challenges faced by the guidance counsellors in use of ICT facilities vary due to the school location.
3. Find out whether the challenges faced by the guidance counsellors in use of ICT facilities vary due to the gender.
4. Find out whether challenges faced by the guidance counsellors in use of ICT facilities vary due to the counselling experience.

Research Questions

- vii. What are the challenges faced by guidance counsellors in the use of ICT facilities in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?

- viii. Do the challenges faced by the guidance counsellors in use of ICT facilities vary due to the school location?
- ix. Do the challenges faced by the guidance counsellors in use of ICT facilities vary due to the school gender?
- x. Do the challenges faced by the guidance counsellors in use of ICT facilities vary due to the counselling experience?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the in the guidance counsellor's challenges faced in use of ICT facilities due to the school location.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the guidance counsellor's level of knowledge, extent of utilization and challenges faced in use of ICT facilities due to gender.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the in the guidance counsellor's challenges faced in use of ICT facilities due to the counselling experience.

Methodology

The method adopted for this study was a descriptive research design. In this design according to Osuala and Ihekweba (2020) data are usually collected, organized, analyzed and described as they exist in natural setting without interfering with them.

The population of the study comprised of all the counsellors in public senior secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory. The researchers used purposive sampling technique to select all the 144 guidance counsellors in all the senior secondary schools located in the Federal Capital Territory for the study because the population was small.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. It was made up of two sections A and B. Section A elicited personal information while section B was made up of 7 items based on the challenges faced in deploying ICT in counselling. The respondents were expected to respond to four-point modified Likert Scale in form of strongly disagree (4-points), disagree (3-points), agree (2-points) and strongly agree (1-point). The instrument was validated by two experts in measurement in the Faculty of Education in the University of Abuja. This was done to establish the face and content validity of the instrument. The researchers used test-retest method to ascertain the instrument's reliability. The same instrument was given twice within a period of two weeks to fifteen counsellors from private senior secondary schools in the FCT who were not part of the population of the study. A reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained and considered as adequate. The researchers and two research assistants distributed copies of the questionnaires, the research assistants were given some training and orientation on the purpose and the nature of the study, and how to distribute, collect and handle the retrieved copies of the questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed by using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The research questions were answered by using frequency, percentages mean and standard deviation. Inferential statics was employed to test the hypotheses. Hypotheses one was tested with t-test while hypothesis two was tested with ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance

Results

One research question was answered in this section. The other three research questions were translated to null hypotheses and tested in the appropriate section. The

decision rule was based on the midpoint of 2.5 where mean equal to and above 2.5 is considered as agree while mean below 2.5 are considered as disagree.

Research Question One: What are the challenges faced by guidance counsellors in the use of ICT facilities in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?

Table 1: Challenges Faced in use of ICT Facilities in Counselling

N= 144

S/No	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Lack of internet connectivity in most secondary schools for teachers/counsellor's free access	3.45	0.74	Agree
2	Lack of sponsorship to international conferences to expose counsellors the use of ICT	3.52	0.78	Agree
3	Lack of technology training of counsellors	3.40	0.80	Agree
4	Lack of sincere commitment to guidance counsellor's development in the use of ICTs by the government	3.01	1.03	Agree
5	Lack of personal computers in most guidance offices	3.44	0.82	Agree
6	High maintenance costs of ICTs equipment	3.06	0.98	Agree
7	Lack of full steady power supply for ICTs operations	3.58	0.81	Agree

Sectional Mean/Std. Dev. = 3.35/0.88

The analysis on Table 1 reveals the challenges faced by guidance counsellors in the use of ICT facilities for counselling among guidance counsellors in FCT, Abuja. The responses show agreement with all items. The sectional mean of 3.35 which is above the midpoint of 2.5 provides basis for the conclusion that the guidance counsellors in the FCT are confronted by challenges such as lack of internet connectivity, lack of personal computers, lack of sponsorship to conferences, poor power supply as well as students' indifference to use of ICT.

Testing of hypotheses

- There is no significant difference in the in the guidance counsellors challenges faced in use of ICT facilities due to the school location.

Table 2: t-Test on Difference in Challenges of ICT Use in Counselling due to School Location

Challenges in ICT Use by School Location	Number	Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Decision
Rural	50	3.38	0.341	1.999	142	.048	significant
Urban	94	3.17	0.673				

The analysis on Table 2 was carried out to determine whether guidance counsellors from rural and urban schools differed significantly in their challenges faced in use of ICT facilities. A significant value of .048 (less than the 0.05 level of significance) shows that there is significant difference. The hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that there is significant difference between rural and urban school guidance counsellors in the challenges of use of ICT facilities for counselling. The rural school counsellors (mean = 3.38) appeared to face more challenges than their urban school counterparts (mean = 3.17).

- There is no significant difference in the guidance counsellor's challenges faced in use of ICT facilities due to gender.

Table 3: t-Test on Difference in Challenges of ICT Use in Counselling due to Gender

Challenges in ICT Use by Gender	Number	Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Decision
Male	51	3.05	0.683	-	142	.003	Significant
Female	93	3.35	0.499	2.994			

The analysis on Table 3 was carried out to determine whether male and female guidance counsellors differed significantly in the challenges faced in use of ICT facilities. A significant value of .003 (less than the 0.05 level of significance) also shows that there is significant difference. The hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that there is significant difference between male and female guidance counsellors in the challenges of use of ICT facilities for counselling. The female counsellors appeared to face more challenges than their male counterparts.

- There is no significant difference in the in the guidance counsellor's challenges faced in use of ICT facilities due to the counselling experience.

Table 4: One-way ANOVA for Difference in Challenges of ICT use in Counselling due to Counselling Experience

Variables	Counselling Experience	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Challenges of ICT use	Between Groups	5.751	3	1.917	6.191	.001	Significant
	Within Groups	43.349	40	0.310			
	Total	49.100	43				

The analysis on Table 4 was carried out to determine whether guidance counsellors differed significantly in the challenges faced in use of ICT facilities due to their counselling experiences. A significant value of .001 (less than the 0.05 level of significance) shows that there is significant difference. The hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that there is significant difference in guidance counsellors' challenges in the use of ICT facilities for counselling with respect to their years of counselling experience.

Discussion of Findings

The study was conducted to find out the challenges faced by counsellors in senior secondary schools in FCT in using ICT facilities for counselling. The findings in table one revealed that the guidance counsellors agreed that all the listed items like lack of internet connectivity in most secondary schools, lack of technology training of counsellors, lack of full steady power supply for ICTs operations among others are hindering ICT utilization in FCT secondary schools. This finding corresponded with the results in the study carried by Anyamene, Nwokolo and Anyachebelu (2012) where the respondents accepted that the major problems that affect the use of information technology facilities in the universities in south Eastern Nigeria, include inadequate telecommunication, lack of stand by generators, constant power failure, limited number of computers, and lack of internet provider in school. The result showed that lack of these facilities affected the implementation of ICT in counselling. Supporting this, Audu. Ohunene and Jacob (2021) concluded that inadequate funding of guidance and counselling units, inadequate ICT facilities, poor computer literacy of counselors, unstable power supply, high cost of ICT, poor implementation of ICT policies and unstable internet services were identified as the challenges militating against effective use of ICT for delivery of guidance and counselling in Nigerian public secondary schools.

Significant difference exists between male and female guidance counsellors in the challenges faced in the use of ICT facilities for counselling. The female counsellors seemed to face more challenges than their male counterparts in using ICTs. As noted by Sanda and Kurfi (2013), there are several issues related to the above factor as it affects women. Women generally tend to have more limited direct access than men to information and they are even restricted to accessing the Internet in some countries including due to culture and religion. They cited The African Gender Institute (2003) which stated that in some societies there is disapproval of women's request to overnight browsing in a public cybercafé especially married woman. There is role conflict with the women's expectations as wives, as mothers, and as workers or full-time housewives. In other words, women have problems of time given their multiple roles and heavy domestic responsibilities. Their leisure hours are few and the centers may not be open when women can visit them.

The study also found significant difference in the challenges faced by the counsellors in deploying ICT for counselling based on school location. The researchers are of the opinion that schools located in rural area lack modern amenities needed to run ICT facilities. This is contrary to the findings of Nwadike and Effanga (2024) whose study findings indicated no significant difference between the responses of urban and rural teachers regarding the factors hindering ICT usage for career choice. In addition, the study of Oraegbunam (2009) found no significant difference in the mean scores of urban and rural based counsellors pointing to the fact that locality is not a significant factor in ICT application in counselling practice.

The ANOVA revealed that a significant difference exists in challenges faced in the utilization of ICT in counselling services due to years of experience. Since use of ICT in counselling is relatively new, it appears that those who spent many years in counselling might not have been familiar with this changing trend in ICT as compared to young counsellors who are believed to be familiar with the modern trends in ICT might have accounted for the difference. Alternatively, the older counsellors may be reluctant to change their mode of services delivery.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the challenges faced by counsellors in using ICT facilities in rendering services in senior secondary schools in FCT Abuja. It revealed that despite the availability of ICT facilities in some secondary schools within the FCT, counsellors face significant challenges in their effective use. These challenges include lack of internet connectivity, irregular power supply, inadequate training, limited access to personal computers, and high maintenance costs. Findings further showed that counsellors' experiences of these challenges differ by gender, school location, and years of counselling experience, with female and rural-based counsellors being the most disadvantaged.

The study concluded that effective integration of ICT in counselling requires deliberate efforts from government, school authorities, and stakeholders to address infrastructural deficits, provide consistent training, and ensure equitable access to ICT resources.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study;-

- xi. The challenges faced by FCT counsellors in using ICT for counselling should be addressed by the relevant stakeholders. These include steady power supply and internet connectivity in the schools for students, counsellors and other teachers to access freely.
- xii. The government should attend to the challenges faced by guidance counsellors in rural areas, this would help them improve on their level of ICT knowledge and usage.
- xiii. Female counsellors should be motivated to improve their ICT knowledge and skills this will bridge the gender gaps in term of knowledge, skills and ICT applications between the male and female counsellors.
- xiv. All Guidance Counsellors regardless of their years of counselling experience should embrace the use of ICT in counselling.

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