



Student Counsellors' Perception of the Benefits of Social Media Usage ... Arowolo (2021)

Student Counsellors' Perception of the Benefits of Social Media Usage in Guidance and Counselling Services in Federal University Kashere

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Abstract

The study investigated the perception of undergraduate student Counsellor – in – training on the benefits of social media in guidance and counseling services. Three research questions guided the study. The descriptive Survey design was used in the study. The population of the study consisted of all the students in Guidance and Counseling unit of Educational Foundations Department, Faculty of Education, Federal University Kashere, Gombe State. A sample size of 150 students were selected using purposive and random sampling techniques. A structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled: “Social media as a Tool for Guidance and Counselling (SMTGC) was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity. The reliability was ascertained by test – retest method with a coefficient of .82. Three research questions were raised and analyzed with the use of frequency counts and percentages. Result revealed that majority of the counsellor trainees agreed that social media aid effective Guidance Counselling services and that the use of internet and other social media should be made available to the counsellor trainees in Nigerian Universities. It was concluded that the use of social media enhances effectiveness of counseling practices. It was recommended that the use of social media should be included in the Guidance and Counseling programme.

Keywords: Social Media, Guidance and Counseling, Student Counsellors



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Introduction

The importance of social media as means of communication cannot be over emphasized because information is the foundation on which the counsellor builds his services. Idowu and Esere (2007) opined that communication consists of transmitting information from one person to another. There is growing needs for counselling services all over the world and Nigeria in particular. Many of the psychological problems require very effective and efficient approach which requires the use of modern computer devices in resolving or providing quick professional reactions. The world today has become one global village. it is therefore very necessary to provide guidance counsellors with training needs in social media. It's no secret that social media has taken over the internet and consumes a lot of people's lives. It has advanced and grown so much over the past few years that the majority of businesses and organization have a Facebook, a Twitter, Blog, and or LinkedIn profile. Many companies even implement these tools into their websites so that visitors can get more connected to the company and join in on the conversation. The counselling profession has been affected greatly by these advances in technology.

Social media according to the Wikipedia (2020) dictionary is the interactive computer mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career, interests, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. Merriam-Webster (2019) defined social media as forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and micro-blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content. Social networks include: Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook messenger, Instagram, e-mail, webchat, twitter, OQ, QZone, Weibo. Traditionally, counsellors obtain information about a client through face-to-face communication. Social networking sites such as Facebook create an environment that can foster in-depth self-disclosure, therefore becoming a source of vital information in understanding the client's behaviour, as well as a more intimate depiction of what the client is experiencing Krasnova, et al, (2010). DeLambo et.al (2011) opined that online interactions during counselling sessions could be used not only to gain further insights into their thoughts and behaviours but also as feed back for the course of the therapeutic process Information Communication Technology (ICT) in which social media are inclusive can be used in Guidance and Counseling as medium for the interaction between a counsellor and a client as well as a resource in the decision-making process (Watts & Offer, 2006). ICT tools used in information, device, and guidance as:- e-mail, chat, news-group, Website, SMS (text messaging), telephone, software (i.e. CD-ROM and Computer programs) and video (Watts & Offer, 2006). A study carried out in US as reported by Boase,et al (2006) that email in particular allows people to get help from their social networks. Cane-Hurd of Americans acknowledge that the internet had played an important or crucial role in helping them deal with at least one major life decision in the past two years.

Counseling has been defined in various ways. Gladding (2013) defines it as professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals. Burks and Steftbre in McLeod (2009) conceptualized counseling as a professional relationship between a trained counselor and a student. The relationship may also involve more than two persons designed to understand and clarify their views their life space, to learn to reach their self-determined goals through well informed choices and through resolution of problems of an emotional and interpersonal nature. Okoroji, et al, (2015) defined counseling as a means of providing educational services to the students to help them solve their study needs. The assistance is not limited to educational challenges but extended to issues bothering on vocational, personal-social, recreational, and emotional challenges. Eremie (2019) defines counseling as the process whereby a person (counselee) enters a helping relationship with professional qualified counselor to help the counselee in making choices and decisions leading to desirable development and growth throughout the life span.

Akinniyi (2006) defined ICT as the use of any equipment or interconnected subsystem of equipment to convert, store, protect, process, transmit, and retrieve information. Adesope and Adebayo



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(2007) defined ICT as a term used to describe the tools and process to access, retrieve, store, organize, manipulate, produce, present, and exchange information by electronic and other automated means. Bakac and Akbay (2011) described ICT as all types of technology that facilitate communication and the processing and transmission of information by electronic means (radio, Television set, Telephone, Computers, CD-ROMs, and internet). Counseling has been practiced in Nigeria and the rest of African countries for long time. counseling service has been done mostly in face to face form where the counselor and client are in physical contact during counseling session because it is believed that eye contact makes counseling more effective.

In this 21st Century, ICT tools have drastically changed that global economy and the way people communicate (Olaleye, 2014). Counselors are not to be excluded in this all-important development. ICT which include social media has significantly transformed various spheres of human life. It also has potential to transform counseling practices for effective educational service delivery, Maduabum (2004) and Okebukola (1992) as cited by Olagoke (2011) reiterated that Information and Communication Technology must be made available to teachers, counselors, and students. This point necessitates the need for a paradigm shift in delivering counseling services in the Nigerian society. In modern day counseling, there is need to employ computer based counseling. This means using electronic services, or means when counselors and clients are in separate or remote locations. Such electronic means include, according to Morris (2002) are: e-mail, fax, telephone, voice mail, video conferences, web messages and instant message. Young (2001) advised:

If you are counsellor, learn all you can about the internet and what students Do there. Talk to students about their online activities, ask them questions about what they get out of it, go online yourself to see what chat lines are and interactive online games look like in action. During intake interviews with students reporting depression and anxiety, make sure you inquire about their internet habits (P. 189).

The rapid development of Information and Communication Technology in this 21st century through various social media, has turned the whole world into a global village. Counselling is a helping profession whereby someone (client/counselee) who is troubled in one form or the other, emotionally, academically needs the assistance of a counsellor through interaction so as to be able to solve his or her problem. This counselling interaction traditionally is done face to face individually or in group. With the advent of various social media, on line counseling can be done without seeing the client face to face. Guidance and counselling services can be made available to clients in different locations all over the world. Thus, this study examined the importance of social media in counseling as perceived by the University undergraduate students in Guidance and counselling.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study:

1. To find out how often student counsellors use social media in counseling services.
2. To find out the factors that prevent students from using social media in counseling services.
3. To determine the benefits to be derived by using social services.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How often do student counsellors use social media in counseling services?
2. What are the factors hindering student counsellors from using social media?
3. What are the benefits to be derived by using social media in Guidance and counselling services?

Methodology

This is a descriptive survey. This is considered appropriate because it focused on the observation and perception of existing situation. It involved the use of questionnaire and generalizing the results of the sample to population from which inferences were drawn. The population consisted of



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all students at Federal University Kashere, Gombe State. The target population is made up of all undergraduate students in the Guidance and Counselling unit in the Department of Educational Foundations of the University. There are 595 students in Levels I – IV in Guidance and Counseling Unit. 150 Students were selected by purposive and simple random Sampling techniques, made of 90 males and 60 females. The 60 females were selected from levels I-IV so also the 90 males, so that the samples can be full representative of the students in the University. The instrument is made of questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire consisted of two sections A and B. Section A made of demographic information about the respondents. Section B contained 20 items on the use of Social media such as internet, computer, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, SMS in Guidance and Counseling. The responses are based on 4-Likert type scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

The face validity was ascertained by experts in Guidance and Counseling and Test and Measurement of the Department of Educational Foundations who gave their facial appraisal. For the content Validity, the experts examined the items in the questionnaire which were restructured accordingly. The reliability was done by means of test-retest method. A pilot testing was conducted using 20 students of Federal College of Education Gombe who were undergoing Degree programme in Guidance and Counselling on two occasions at two weeks interval. A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained. The instrument was personally administered by the researchers in the Lecture rooms during the students' free periods. Students that unable to complete the questionnaire on the spot submitted the next day. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed by frequency counts and percentages for the research questions. Data on strongly agree and agree were calculated under agree. While strongly disagree and disagree were calculated under disagree (F= Frequency of respondents; % = Percentage of respondents).

Results

Research Question 1:

How often do student counsellors use social media?

Table 1: Use of social media for counselling by student counsellor

SN	Items	AGREE		DISAGREE	
		F	%	F	%
1	I always search the internet for my course materials	90	60	60	40
2	Poor internet services on the on the campus discourages me on searching	95	63	55	37
3	Most of the laptops and desktops in the ICT and computer rooms in my University are not functioning well	80	53	70	47
4	Non availability of sources of power for charging of laptops and phones Prevent from assessing internet on the campus	70	47	80	53
5	I don't have laptops or handsets for browsing on the internet	80	53	70	47

In Table 1, 90 of the respondents which represented 60% agreed that they always search for course materials on the internet, while 60 (40%) disagreed. 95(63%) agreed that poor internet facilities on the University campus prevented them from obtaining information from the social media. 80 of the (53%) students agreed that they do not often use the social media for information gathering because of the non -functioning of the equipment in the computer and ICT rooms while 70 (47%) disagreed. 70 (47%) of the respondent agreed that non availability of sources of power for charging their laptops and handsets prevented them from seeking information from the social media, while 80 (53%) disagreed.

Research Question 2:

What are the factors preventing the student counselors from using the social media?



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Table 2: Factors hindering the use of social media by student counsellors

S/N	ITEM	AGREE		DISAGRE	
		F	%	F	%
1	Counselling through the social media is cost effective	95	63	55	37
2	Poor internet services on the on the campus discourages me for searching Materials for my course on the social media	85	57	65	43
3	Most of the laptops and desktops in the ICT and computer rooms in my Universities are not functioning well	80	53	70	47
4	Non availability of sources of power for charging of laptops and phones prevent me from assessing internet on the campus	70	47	80	53

From the items in Table 2, 95(63%) out of the 150 student counselors agreed that counseling through the social media is cost effective. Poor internet services within the university campus prevent students from assessing course materials as agreed by 85 (57%) of them while 65 (43%) disagreed. Non- functioning of equipment in the ICT and computer rooms discouraged students from visiting the social media as agreed by 80 (53%) of them while 70 (47%) disagreed.

Research Question Three

What are the benefits of social media to Guidance and Counselling services?

Table3: Benefits of social media to counselling

S/N	ITEM	AGREE		DISAGRE	
		F	%	F	%
1.	Many clients benefit from counselling through the social media than face to Counseling.	139	93	11	7
2.	Communication through the social media is easier than the face to face Counseling	125	93	25	7
3.	e-mail, WhatsApp and others provide free environment for counselling	80	53	70	47
4.	Counselling through the social media can be done anywhere and at anytime	110	73	40	27
5.	Some people may be uncomfortable with the face to face counseling because of social phobia	100	67	50	33
6.	There is paucity of counsellors in schools and social media counselling will give a wider coverage than face-to -face	95	63	45	37
7.	Social media can help to improve an individual's sense of connectivity	120	80	30	20

The responses of students from Table 3 show that 139 (93%) agreed that there many benefits derived from counselling from the social media than face to face counseling while 11 (07%) disagreed. 125(93%) of the respondents agreed that communication through the social media is easier than through face to face while 25(7%) disagreed. give a wider coverage while 45 (37%) disagreed. Social media help to improve an individual's sense of connectivity as agreed by 120 (80%) of respondents while 30 (20%) disagreed.

Discussion of Findings

The result from research question one revealed the frequency of the visits of student counselor to social media. Student counsellors often visit social media for their course materials and also seek help to solve their socio-personal problems. This is in agreement with the findings of Wellman and Raine (2006) that social media such as e-mail allow clients to get help from the counsellors who have created sites on their different websites. They affirmed that one-third of Americans acknowledged that internet had played an important or crucial role in helping them dealing with at least one major life



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decision. Similarly, this research finding is in agreement with Krasnova et al (2010) that counsellors create their own sites on social media that clients often visit for in depth self- disclosure.

Findings from research question two revealed factors that hindered students' visit to social media. Most of these hindering factors are as a result of poor infrastructural facilities prevalent in the university campuses, such as lack of sources of power and non- functioning of equipment. This may be due to the fact that most public Universities are poorly funded. The poor funding and lack of basic infrastructural facilities was one of the basic reasons for the prolonged strikes embarked upon by the academic staff of Nigeria Universities. (ASUU). Findings from research question three that revealed the benefits derived by student counsellors in using social media is in line with Griffiths et.al (2006) which stated that the use of confidentiality protocols and anonymity features makes online psychological research simpler and facilitate health care surveys by reducing the stigma that is often associated with completing such questionnaires. The benefits agreed with the observation of Kolmes (2010) that clients in the comfort of their own chosen location have the opportunity to search and contact a therapist and work in resolving life and relationship issues, unhindered by barriers related to geography, guilt, shame and stigma. The view of Postel et.al (2008) that therapists are able to create and provide follow up programmes and protocols that can be sent out to people daily, weekly or monthly via text, audio, or video, as alternative to face-to-face therapy. Osarenren et.al (2019) also opined that there is a growing awareness of the use of cellular phones and their associated text messages, e-mail, WhatsApp, and many people are becoming more computer literate and they concluded that there is therefore the need for e-counselling as people suffer time constraint during face to face counselling. In line with the study, Shallcross (2011) suggests that face book can be a great avenue for counsellors to advertise their services and connect with potential clients, where they can share helpful information.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of data and findings of the study, it is concluded that student counsellors have positive attitude towards the use of social media in counseling after realizing the various benefits but there are hindrances preventing the full utilization of social media by students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made for proper utilization of social media by student counsellors.

1. Use of social media in counseling services should be included in the guidance counselling curriculum.
2. Efforts should be geared by the university that internet services be available for students' utilization at all time.
3. The equipment in the university's ICT (Information and communication centre) and computer centres should be updated and made functioning for effective utilization of the students.

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