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Research Article

Digitizing counselling practice: A study of student values and challenges associated with traditional face-to-face counselling and e-counselling modes

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It is common knowledge that face-to-face counselling is practiced in every country. Conversely, e-counselling is offered in many countries even though some experts disagree with its effectiveness and ethicality. The study, thus, purposed to gain a deeper understanding of students' values and challenges of face-to-face and e-counselling in Ghanaian universities. Therefore, a cross-sectional survey design was adopted. A standardized instrument: Online and Face-to-face Counselling Attitudes Scales, and a Satisfaction Questionnaire were adapted for the data collection. T-test and multiple linear regression were used to analyse data set from 384 students. Findings revealed that although technological devices are largely accessible, students value face-to-face counselling than e-counselling. However, their inclination to e-counselling cannot be overlooked. Also, there was no significant difference in students' values to e-counselling for gender. Again, the male students value face-to-face counselling more as compared to female students. The multiple regression revealed that values of face-to-face and e-counselling predicated satisfaction to face-to-face and e-counselling respectively. It is recommended that university counselling practitioners should enhance the use of face-to-face counselling and train in e-counselling so that students will be offered options in counselling services.

Keywords: E-counselling; Face-to-face counselling; Satisfaction; Values; Challenges

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1. Introduction

As a distinct profession, counselling has variedly developed from the 20th century. Its relationship is by dynamism and purposefulness. Thus, its procedures vary with the nature of a counsellee needs. However, mutual participation between the counsellor and the client that focus on self-classification and self-determination is a hallmark (Bedu-Addo, 2016; Corey, 1977).

Counselling is a one-to-one helping relationship that focuses upon an individual's growth, achievement, problem-solving and decision-making needs (Corey, 1977; Gibson & Mitchel, 1995; Hodges, 2016). During the tribal era, people cluster to share their dreams, aspirations and experiences, family members help with advice, parents counsel their children and grandparents, and other family elders offer the wisdom of their years (Bedu-Addo, 2016; Chiboola, 2019). Scholastically, Psychoanalysis and its derivatives played a role in counselling development

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(Hoffman, 2017; Jerry et al., 2014; Nystul, 1993; Sacco, 2013). Counselling was a post-second world war residue intervention to strengthen school guidance programmes and train school counsellors in the United States. Nonetheless, in Ghana, the core of counselling precedes from 1954 (Bedu-Addo, 2016; Buku, 2016; Taylor & Buku, 2003; University of Cape Coast, 2017).

Overwhelming patronage of ICT and an increasing rate of people seeking help online has compelled counsellors to resort to the use of technology to assist clients in solving their problems. The technology revolution has caught on with counselling practice with the emergence of e-counselling. The spread of e-counselling is not surprising given the pervasive nature of technology in both young and old (Amos et al., 2020; Awabil & Akosah, 2018; Tannous, 2017).

1.1. Counselling Accessibility

Stigma and the location of a counselling centre are hindrances to the accessibility of face-to-face counselling among students on campuses (Hanley et al., 2017; Wong et al., 2018). However, technology has become a common asset in enhancing incredible learning on university campuses. Therefore, the internet is accessible to all campus dwellers for various learning and learning support activities, including the accessibility of e-counselling. Nonetheless, many students, including those with varied forms of disabilities, are not privy to or have little knowledge of the use of online chatting platforms for counselling. A setback that might pose a problem to e-counselling in the university is accessibility to the internet. Money, weak internet and geographical location are factors that inhibit students' access to the internet on university campuses (Amos et al., 2020; Barak & Grohol, 2011; Reynolds et al., 2016).

1.2. Values and Challenges of Face-to-Face and E-counselling

Research has indicated that clients derive value (benefit) and challenges to both face-to-face and e-counselling. Face to face, a client-focused disciplined act, and a direct contact therapeutic relationship (Charles, 2019; Wong et al., 2018; Zainudin & Yusop, 2018), is effective in allowing a therapist to access cues such as the counsellee whole self: body language, eye contact, etc. that may assess the counsellee issues (Ntshuntshe et al., 2016). E-counselling is a therapeutic intervention that occurs through telecommunication technologies (Awabil & Clifford, 2018; Hanley et al., 2017; Kolog et al., 2014; Sosialita, 2019; Zeren, 2015). Access to e-counselling has increased with time (Richards, 2009; Zainudin & Yusop, 2018). More clients accessed e-counselling services than face-to-face counselling (Ahmad et al., 2010; Kupczynski et al., 2017; Zeren, 2015). Flexibility and time, access to clients, and a proven record of its effectiveness with cognitive behavioural therapy are merits of using technology in counselling (Reynolds et al., 2016; Kennedy, 2008; Stiles-Shields et al., 2014). Invariably, both face-to-face and e-counselling are equally patronised and mainly based on the presenting issues (Hanley et al., 2017; Tannous, 2017).

Face-to-face counselling does explore more of clients' feelings and non-verbal cues. It is also time-consuming. Other challenges of face-to-face counselling are lack of human factor, lack of amenities, social stigma for people with special needs and others (Griffiths & Cooper, 2003; Hanley et al., 2017; Mallen et al., 2003; Rochlen & O'Brien, 2002; Wong et al., 2018; Zainudin & Yusop, 2018).

Non-verbal cues, loss of human factor, lack of technology device usage skill, time delay and technology failures are limitations associated with e-counselling (Bac & Kocab, 2019; Rodda et al., 2015; Shiller, 2009). Online counselling opponents postulate that e-counselling reduces therapeutic alliance (Bac & Kocab, 2019; Cook & Doyle, 2002; Hanley & Reynolds, 2009; Lovejoy et al., 2009; Reynolds et al., 2016). Factually, e-counselling is easily accessible to only those who have access to technological devices for communication and the internet (Barnett, 2005; Maples & Han, 2008). Nonetheless, breakdown of equipment or inconsistency in internet access and insufficient time allowed per counselling session are limitations (Bacıoğlu & Kocabıyık, 2019; Dowling & Rickwood, 2014; King et al., 2006; Shiller, 2009; Uzoekwe et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2018). Judicious use of time in e-counselling contrast face-to-face counselling whereby counsellors assist clients in a short time (King et al., 2006; Shiller, 2009; Young, 2005). Reports indicate that clients were more satisfied with

online treatment than face-to-face treatment (Leibert & Archer, 2006). Another study reported no significant difference in face-to-face and online client's satisfaction (Murphy et al., 2009).

1.3. Relationship and Differences in Values and Challenges of Face-to-Face and E-counselling

Empirical studies on e-counselling revealed a statistically significant difference in the level of participation of clients in face-to-face and e-counselling. Clients were generally inclined or satisfied with the online counselling than a face-to-face mode of counselling (Cipolletta & Mocellin, 2016; Dowling, 2015; Leibert & Archer Jr., 2006; Murphy et al., 2009; Richards & Viganó, 2013; Skinner & Latchford, 2006). Other studies proved non-significant differences in the use of both face-to-face and e-counselling (Kupczynski et al., 2017; Mallen et al., 2003; Zeren, 2015). These studies admit that though clients may show some inclination to one particular mode, there was no statistical difference to ascertain a distinct dislike or acceptance for a mode. The receding revelation suggests that clients did find the two modalities beneficial in helping to solve their issues (Skinner & Latchford, 2006; Stiles-Shields et al., 2014).

1.4. Difference in Gender regarding Face-to-face and e-Counselling

It is a belief that men have a flair for technology as compared to women. It is also a belief that women may attend counselling in times of crisis than their male counterparts. The reason is that men generally deal with their problems individually (Burnham-Smith, 1996; Rochlen & O'Brien, 2002). But do these notions hold in this study with supporting literature? Studies reveal that females expressed a degree of value about face-to-face than their male counterparts. A reason is that the males may be more familiar with the devices or technological processes than the females. Again, male relationships affect their counselling therapeutic relationship (Burnham-Smith, 1996; Rochlen et al., 2004). On the contrary, studies have also proved that online clients are mainly females and receive short term interventions (Chester & Glass, 2006; Leibert & Archer, 2006). Further, both genders expressed roughly equivalent ratings to their perceived discomfort to face-to-face than their values and comfort in online counselling (Rochlen, Land et al., 2004).

2. The Rationale

According to Suler (2004), some factors make online counselling an issue for practice. These are dissociation, anonymity, invisibility and asynchronicity. These create an ambiguous relationship between the counsellor and client (Suler, 2004). Likewise, Bloom (1998), Hanley et al., (2017) and Hanley (2021) mentioned that some practitioners argue about the ethicality and authenticity of online counselling. Zeren (2015) identified that clients' problems and satisfaction with face-to-face counselling are similar to that of e-counselling. Invariably, though online and face-to-face differ in their assessments, the two modalities are not different in their ability to bring about a change (Murphy et al., 2009).

In Ghana, university students have the potential to practice e-counselling because they showed both positive and negative attitudes towards it (Awabil & Akosah, 2018). However, the unavailability of online counselling handles for students, lack of technological gadgets and poor internet connection hinder them from seeking online help from a counsellor. Besides, their inexperience in technology usage and personal problems that they don't want to share also prevent them from seeking e-counselling help.

For face-to-face counselling, students' busy schedules, tight academic calendars and loads of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities often distract them from frequently visiting the counselling centre to honour appointments. They also sometimes have personal issues with some face-to-face counsellors. Aside, counselling centres and settings are unattractive to them. Finally, some students lack the physical, psychological or emotional ability to honour a face-to-face appointment with a counsellor.

It is therefore prudent to understand student values and challenges associated with traditional and e-counselling modes in Ghana. That will add theoretical and empirical value, knowledge and information to enhance the effective delivery of e-counselling. The following hypotheses thus

guided the study: (1) There is a statistically significant difference in students' gender regarding face-to-face and e-counselling. (2) There is a statistically significant difference in students' values and satisfaction with face-to-face and e-counselling, and (3) Students' satisfaction with counselling depends on the value they place on face-to-face and e-counselling.

3. Method

3.1. Study Design

A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed to generalize the sample to the population. The cross-sectional design inferred respondents' characteristics, perceptions and attitudes (Bernstein et al., 2008; Creswell, 2009; Salmona et al., 2020). The design was appropriate for the study because the study aimed at obtaining a current prevalence of student values and challenges associated with traditional face-to-face counselling and e-counselling modes by taking a cross-section of the population. The design was also relatively cost effective as it allows the study to collect data from the study population only once.

3.2. Participants

A stratified random sampling method was employed in selecting 384 students from three universities in Ghana. Coolican (2014) and Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling frame determination was employed in selecting the students for the study. A sample size of 98, 164, and 122 respondents were selected in each of the three universities.

There were 60.2% (231) of male students and 39.8% (153) of female students among the participants in the study. In all, a total of 384 students took part in the study. Whiles 66.4% (255) of them fall between the ages of 16-25, 29.9% (115) are between 26-35 years. Moreover, 3.4% (13) were between the ages of 36-45 years. 0.3% (1) were between 46-55. The younger ones outnumber the older ones, which are typical of a university setting. Also, the demographic details show that 19.3% (74) of the students prefer e-counselling. Furthermore, 80.7% (310) of the students prefer to undergo face-to-face counselling

3.3. Instrumentation

A close-ended questionnaire that enabled generalizations beyond the sample to the population was employed. The questionnaire was an adaptation of Rochlen, Beretvas et al. (2004) online and face-to-face counselling attitudes scales (OCAS & FCAS) and a satisfaction questionnaire from the Oxford Brooks University Counselling Centre (Oxford Brooks University, 2012). The questionnaire used a 6-point Likert-type scale from *1=Strongly* disagree to *6=Strongly agree*. Excluding demographic items, the following themes emerged from the factor analysis of the questionnaire: (1) Values of face-to-face counselling (five items), (2) Challenges to face-to-face counselling (five items), (3) Values of online counselling (five items), (4) Challenges of online counselling (five items), (5) Client satisfaction with face-to-face counselling (six items), (6) Client satisfaction with online counselling (six items), The direction of scoring was that the higher a respondent's score, the better the value to online or face-to-face counselling, and the lower the respondent's score, the less severe the challenges to online and face-to-face counselling. The reliability coefficient score was .82 for the Ghanaian respondents.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The various universities permitted the collection of data on their campuses. The data collection was in three days: each day for a university. Students were briefed on the purpose of the research. Their consents and responses were also sought. These processes were repeated in all three institutions by visiting lecture halls. In a three-phase analysis, a variety of data analytical techniques were employed to justify the representativeness of the characteristics of the samples in the study. Test of differences was done on hypotheses one and two and for hypothesis three, a multiple linear regression using the forced entry method projected factors and explained

relationships among the factors. Using the criterion of the assumptions that data should be normally distributed for both skewness and kurtosis in a parametric test (Ofori & Dampson, 2011); the study found that the majority of the variables were normally distributed. Only four of the variables gave cause for concern. As a result of the abnormality of the four items, they were excluded from further analysis.

4. Results

The following results constituted the questionnaire analysis of differences in student values and challenges associated with traditional face-to-face counselling and e-counselling. The analysis brings to bare findings associated with the aims of the study.

4.1. Hypothesis One - There is a statistically significant difference in students' gender regarding face-to-face and e-counselling

Table 1 presents the findings of research hypothesis one independent sample t-test on values and challenges of face-to-face and e-counselling on gender.

Table 1
Summary statistics and independent samples t-test on values and challenges of face-to-face and e-counselling on gender

	Status	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
A	Male	231	4.48	1.15	2.25	382	0.03
	Female	153	4.20	1.21			
B	Male	231	3.52	1.17	−0.25	382	0.08
	Female	153	3.55	1.14			
C	Male	231	3.51	1.27	1.53	382	0.13
	Female	153	3.30	1.37			
D	Male	231	3.32	1.25	-0.34	382	0.73
	Female	153	3.37	1.15			

Note. A – Values of face-to-face counselling; B - Challenges of face-to-face counselling; C – Calues of e-counselling; D – Challenges of e-counselling

Research hypothesis one shows that there is a statistically significant difference in students' gender regarding face-to-face and e-counselling. Table one presents the results of the independent-samples t-test performed on values and challenges regarding face-to-face and e-counselling modes in detail. Comparison of the mean scores of both genders suggests that the scores from the males were higher (mean = 4.48) than that of the females (mean = 4.20). Independent-samples t-test performed to ascertain the significant difference between the two mean scores revealed a statistically significant difference between males and females (t = 2.25, df = 382, p = 0.03). The revelation implies that the male students' value face-to-face counselling more than that of the female students.

Similarly, to ascertain the differences in challenges to face-to-face counselling, an independent-samples t-test was conducted. The test revealed no statistically significant difference between the males and females scores on challenges they perceived to encounter during face-to-face counselling (t = −0.25, df = 382, p = 0.08; 2-tailed). It also revealed that females mean scores were higher (mean = 3.55) than that of the males' scores (mean = 3.52). This result is not surprising as female students' values for face-to-face counselling was significantly lower than that of the males as can be seen in Table 1 (t = 2.25, df = 382, p = 0.03).

Table 1, on the other hand, reports the results of the values students do perceive about e-counselling. The results showed that the males mean scores (mean = 3.51) was higher than that of the females (mean = 3.30). The independent-samples t-test performed to ascertain the statistical significance indicates there was no statistically significant difference (t = 1.53, df = 382, p = 0.13). This result implies that though there was no statistically significant difference, the males value e-counselling than the females. The result was not different from that of challenges with e-

counselling. This can also be seen in table one as the mean scores of the females (mean = 3.37) was higher than that of the males (mean = 3.32). Again, there was no statistically significant difference between the two means (t = −0.34, df = 382, *p* = 0.73).

From the description given, it is evident that the males' values to both face-to-face and e-counselling were higher than the females though the values to face-to-face counselling show a statistically significant difference. On the other hand, the females may appear to encounter challenges to face-to-face counselling and e-counselling even though there were no statistically significant differences.

4.2. Hypothesis Two - There is a statistically significant difference in students' values and satisfaction to face-to-face and e-counselling

Table 2 presents the findings of research hypothesis two on paired sampled t-test on values and satisfaction to face-to-face and e-counselling.

Table 2
Summary statistics and paired samples t-test on values and satisfaction to face-to-face and e-counselling

	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Values						
Values to face-to-face counselling	384	4.37	1.18	−10.45	383	0.00
Values to e-counselling	384	3.43	1.31			
Satisfaction						
Satisfaction to face-to-face counselling	384	4.30	1.14	−9.36	383	0.00
Satisfaction to e-counselling	384	3.47	1.32			

Research hypothesis two predicted that there was a statistically significant difference in students' values and satisfaction to face-to-face and e-counselling. Table 2 presents the results of the paired-samples t-test performed on the hypothesis. Comparisons of the mean values from the two conditions or modes (face-to-face and e-counselling) would suggest that values to face-to-face were higher (mean = 4.37) than that of the values' to e-counselling (mean = 3.43). A paired-samples t-test conducted to test whether the difference in mean values was statistically significant revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the means between values to face-to-face counselling and e-counselling (t = −10.45, df = 383, *p* = 0.00). This testifies that students may value the use of face-to-face counselling more than e-counselling. However, the mean score (3.43) suggests that on the average, the students may patronise e-counselling. The results of perceived satisfaction with face-to-face and e-counselling were not surprising when taken the results of their values to face-to-face and e-counselling into consideration. As shown in table 2, the mean scores of their satisfaction to face-to-face were more (mean = 4.30) than that of e-counselling (mean = 3.47). Again, the paired samples t-test suggests that there was a statistically significant difference between the two means (t = −9.36, df = 383, *p* = 0.00).

4.3. Hypothesis Three - Students' satisfaction with counselling depends on the value they place on face-to-face and e-counselling

Table three presents the findings of research Hypothesis three on values and challenges to face-to-face counselling and e-counselling regressed on satisfaction to face-to-face and e-counselling.

A Regression analysis using the forced entry method was performed to assess the relative contribution of the values and challenges of both face-to-face and e-counselling modes in the projection of the extent to which the students will gain satisfaction in face-to-face and e-counselling. Table three displays unstandardized (b) and standardized (beta) regression coefficients, the multiple correlation coefficients (R), adjusted R^2 and the value of t and its associated p-value for each variable that entered into the equation. As shown in the table, values to face-to-face and challenges to face-to-face counselling collectively explained 26% (adjusted R^2 = 0.26) of the variance in satisfaction gained in face-to-face counselling. This suggests that the

Table 3

A Multiple linear regression of values and challenges to face-to-face and e-counselling, on satisfaction to face-to-face and e-counselling

	b	Beta	R	R²	T	Sig (t)
Constant	1.88				6.89	0.00
Values to face-to-face counselling	0.51	0.52			11.69	0.00
Challenges to face-to-face counselling	0.06	0.06			1.36	0.18
			0.52	0.26		
Constant	1.27				6.15	0.00
Values to e-counselling	0.71	0.71			19.36	0.00
Challenges to e-counselling	−0.07	-0.06			−1.71	0.09
			0.72	0.52		

Note. Dependent variables are satisfaction to face-to-face counselling and satisfaction to e-counselling, respectively.

regression model was not a bad predictor of satisfaction gained during face-to-face counselling. Also, values to face-to-face counselling explained the bulk of the variance (beta = 0.52, t = 11.69, $p < 0.01$) and was the only predictor of satisfaction in face-to-face counselling. As can be seen in table three, challenges to face-to-face counselling was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level though it contributed to the prediction of satisfaction in face-to-face counselling.

In summary, the values of face-to-face counselling emerged as a single predictor or projector to satisfaction to face-to-face counselling. On the same note, values to e-counselling were the only predictor of the satisfaction gained during e-counselling. That also explained the bulk of the variance in e-counselling satisfaction (beta = 0.71, t = 19.36, $p < 0.01$). On the contrary, challenges to e-counselling was not significant. As shown in Table three, values to e-counselling and the challenges to e-counselling collectively explained 52% (adjusted $R^2 = 0.52$) of the variance in e-counselling satisfaction. This revelation also suggests that the present regression model is a good predictor of e-counselling satisfaction.

From the results in table three, the merits, the values and the joys obtained if students engage in either face-to-face or e-counselling modes will go a long way to predict their satisfaction since the regression model predicted 26% and 52% for face-to-face and e-counselling. Other factors would have also contributed to the untested prediction.

5. Discussion

The difference in gender regarding values to face-to-face counselling showed that there was a significant difference between the male and female students regarding their values to face-to-face counselling. The males seem to value face-to-face counselling more than the females. Nonetheless, there was no significant sex difference regarding their challenges to face-to-face counselling, though the females had more challenges compared to the males. Based on the literature, it is surprising that males' value face-to-face counselling more than females. This is because it may be expected that females who are more vocal and outspoken will easily prefer face-to-face counselling to their male counterparts.

Reasons for this disparity may be that majority of the males in this study may perceive face-to-face as a more appropriate method to address their issues. It is also perceived that though males do not voice their issues in public, they may have emotional issues bothering them, which they wish somebody might give them a listening ear. However, their egoistic personality will not allow them to make it known. Because of that, this study may be an avenue to alert practitioners of males' ability to deal with their issues by consulting with counsellors. This may be a reason why majority of them are inclined to face-to-face counselling. This finding is consistent with Wong and Rochlen (2005), who found that men with low restrictive emotionality expressed favouritism to face-to-face counselling though they did not decline to use e-counselling. The present's findings consistency with Wong and Rochlen (2005) finding does not mean that the male students had emotional issues which were not included in this study; but then, it may be that the male students

deem it more appropriate to choose face-to-face counselling since they believe that will be the best mode to address their issues as compared to the females.

Another probable reason may be the fact that presently, many females may have other means of resolving their issues and one of them may be with the use of e-counselling since a lot more females may have access to technological devices. This is consistent with (Chester & Glass, 2006; Leibert & Archer Jr., 2006) who found that online clients are mainly females since they are usually found surfing online and using social media often. Again, a likely reason for fewer females wanting to access face-to-face may be because traditionally, it is known that females have various avenues to settle their personal and social issues which may not necessarily be counselling.

For instance, in Ghana, females are mostly found in churches and other solution-based areas for their problems to be solved. This implies that seeing a professional counsellor is just one of their modes of solving problems as compared to the males who may find a trusted and discrete person to channel their grievances. Though (Burnham-Smith, 1996b; Rochlen & O'Brien, 2002) reported that men are conditioned to deal with their problems individually, this finding disproves the idea by showing that males may deal with such problems individually by confiding in a professional counsellor. It would be emphasized that though males are significantly inclined to face-to-face counselling than females, it does not mean that females will not access face-to-face counselling.

Again, with the students, there was no significant difference in gender regarding values to e-counselling. The male students' scores were rated higher than that of the females. It is not strange in this respect since it is believed that skills in the use of technological devices will motivate them to quickly patronise e-counselling as compared to the female students (Rochlen, Land et al., 2004).

Similarly, there was no significant difference in gender regarding students' challenges to e-counselling. The insignificant difference between values to e-counselling yielded the same for their challenges. As reported by Glasheen et al., (2016) and Rochlen, Beretvas et al. (2004), since both male and female students' ratings in this study are similar, it may imply that their perceptions of e-counselling may be less striking.

The paired sample t-test performed showed that there was a significant difference between the values of face-to-face counselling and values of e-counselling. Again, it is not surprising that such a result was found. This is because the significant difference came about as a result of values of face-to-face counselling having a much higher score than values to e-counselling. That is to be expected. This may be because students may be familiar to face-to-face counselling more than e-counselling. Though just a few of the students have accessed face-to-face counselling before, most of them have a fair idea of what goes on when it comes to counselling. More so, as noted previously, in our culture or tradition, when somebody wants to know more about a person and also to show respect and value, it is expedient that one meets the person face-to-face so each party can make a fair assessment of each other and to amicably resolve issues (Parpelli, 2016).

In literature, it has been noted that there is about 127% penetration of mobile phones in Ghana (Dowuona, 2016). To confirm this, about 99.2% (381) of the students sampled used technological devices with the mobile phone as the most used device. This implies that most of the students have access to technology. Nevertheless, a tangible reason to give for their trust to use face-to-face counselling more than e-counselling is with their access to the internet. Because of that, some researchers are of the perception that internet delays, skills in the use of technology and technological failures are some of the setbacks that prevent people from using e-counselling (Dowling & Rickwood, 2014, 2015; Manhal-Baugus, 2001; Shiller, 2009).

Regarding satisfaction to face-to-face counselling and satisfaction to e-counselling, the paired-samples t-test performed showed that there was a significant difference between satisfaction to face-to-face and satisfaction to e-counselling among students. This supports the previous findings of students preferring or valuing face-to-face more than valuing e-counselling. Students' responses have proved that they prefer face-to-face counselling to e-counselling. This may be mainly because of the various factors or reasons previously stipulated on their value of face-to-face counselling

than values of e-counselling (Ajagbawa & Associates, 2014; Canadian Psychological Association, 2017; American Psychological Association, 1979; Psychology Society of South Africa, 2007).

However, it would be pointed out that though students preferred or valued face-to-face counselling and intend to be satisfied when they undergo face-to-face counselling, it would be reiterated that averagely, students appear to value and are satisfied with e-counselling. It is also not surprising that values to face-to-face counselling and values to e-counselling predicted satisfaction to face-to-face counselling and satisfaction to e-counselling, respectively.

It would be expected that when one gives credence to something, it means that their respect and value to it is very high. Therefore, students having satisfaction in both face-to-face counselling and e-counselling is much to be expected. Again, the multiple regression ascertained that values and challenges to face-to-face counselling collectively explained 26% of their variance in satisfaction to face-to-face counselling with values to face-to-face counselling showing a significant variance. This then points to the fact that truly, Values being assigned to face-to-face counselling will certainly result in satisfaction.

On the part of e-counselling, the values and challenges collectively explained 52% of their variance and values to e-counselling significantly predicted satisfaction in e-counselling. The results are evidence that the intention of students to use both face-to-face and e-counselling is much to be desired. Research indicates that clients were satisfied with either face-to-face or e-counselling after meeting the counsellors in either mode (Leibert & Archer, 2006; Murphy et al., 2009). The exception was that some were more satisfied with a particular mode than others.

Findings again indicated that most of the students and counsellors' value face-to-face counselling more though some also do value e-counselling. Again, their values, either in face-to-face or e-counselling, have implications for their satisfaction. This means that if students are introduced to any of the modes of counselling (face-to-face or e-counselling), they may find better ways of working around it to attain their satisfaction in the therapeutic alliance.

The study's revelation that there is no significant difference in gender regarding students' values to e-counselling suggests that young people irrespective of their sex or gender, are ready to use technology to enhance their lives.

Students' value to face-to-face or e-counselling may increase their satisfaction as evidently shown in the present study. This implies that none of the modes should be taken for granted. This is because exposing students to any of the modes will help ease accessibility to counselling. Education and awareness creation will decrease the lack of understanding and improve accessibility to counselling in our universities and country.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

It would be reiterated that the use of e-counselling in our universities is not an idea that should be relegated to the background. This study was, therefore, essential to compare the values and challenges associated with face-to-face counselling and e-counselling in universities. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that: Students and counsellors do value both face-to-face and e-counselling, but they are more inclined to face-to-face counselling. Also, the more students and counsellors' value either face-to-face or e-counselling approaches, the more they become satisfied with the approaches. Again, students' values to e-counselling showed no significant difference in gender. However, it appears that e-counselling is valued by students. The following recommendations were, therefore, made considering the study:

➢ Gender should not be a stereotyped by students in the use of both face-to-face and e-counselling. Counsellors should use appropriate counselling modes to resolve issues of clients without placing emphasis on gender.

➢ The university counselling centres should be placed at appropriate locations to prevent clients from being stigmatized. Additionally, small unit centres should be created on campus where students can have easy access to counselling when in need of it.

- ➢ Furthermore, university counsellors should organise orientation for students on stigmatization. This will enable students to recognise that counselling does not mean one is mentally retarded. They should see the wisdom in asking for help, and they should also realize they are not alone.
- ➢ Counsellors need to be abreast with the values and challenges associated with face-to-face and e-counselling. Regulators need to introduce policies and train counsellors on the modern usage of technology. Eventually, there is a propensity to restructure the approach to face-to-face counselling.
- ➢ With the support of university management, counsellors should endeavour to continually train themselves in both face-to-face and e-counselling therapy to identify proper ways of handling situations in these modes to bring about satisfaction in the counselling process and also enable them to orient all students in the use of e-counselling and face-to-face counselling.
- ➢ Again, university management should introduce counselling technological devices to both counsellors and students to make e-counselling more accessible.
- ➢ Stakeholders in counselling need to embark on a massive public engagement campaign to educate and promote e-counselling in addition to face-to-face counselling, especially in Africa.

7. Limitations

This research suffers from some certain limitations. First, the researcher could not control specific university settings and differences in technological availability for participants in the three universities. Second, the OCAS and FCAS have limited data regarding its validity and reliability since it has not been widely used by researchers. So, their comparison with other studies was limited. Finally, though the study was in universities with similar characteristics, it was assumed that racial or ethnic diversity among students and counsellors would bring about some limitations.

8. Suggestions for Future Research

The study was limited to only three public institutions in the Southern part of the country (Ghana). Future research should look at public universities in the northern sector. Also, future research should look at private universities since a survey proved that some private universities have introduced e-counselling in their system. Furthermore, researchers who will study the phenomena should use a proportionate sample size of the independent variables, to generalization of the results. Finally, researchers can use a controlled study group to ascertain students value to either face-to-face or e-counselling.

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