

REVOLUTION IN EDUCATION

AN EMERGENCY CALL FROM

THE COVID - 19 CRISIS



ST. JOSEPH COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Vaikalipatti

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ONLINE COUNSELLING-A VALUABLE PROFESSIONAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELLING SERVICE

Introduction

Counselling refers to professional services provided to an individual who is facing a problem and needs help to overcome the problem. Counselling is an important educational tool in shaping students [6]. Counselling is considered to be an integral and central part of the guidance. The process of counselling helps an individual find solution to a problem and also helps in the overall development of an individual. According to Willey and Andrew, 'Counselling involves two individuals one seeking help and other a professionally trained person helped solved problems to orient and direct him towards a goal. Counselling is a learning process where a counsellor helps an individuals to understand their environment [3]. Thus, counselling has emerged as a two-way process that involves two individuals and mutual cooperation between them. The three main activities that makeup counselling include the following:

- **Informing:** Informing is an activity where the counselor gives information to the client or the person needing help.
- **Advising :** Advising entails the counselor suggesting the right course of action that must be taken to solve the problem.

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- **Counselling:** Counselling involves helping the client understand his needs and providing the necessary helps that the client can make the right decision.

The Need for Counselling for Students

Counselling services in schools and colleges need to be administered to meet the administrative and educational needs of the students.

- Counselling helps in the overall development of the student.
- It ensures that the students make proper career choices.
- It facilitates the students in their vocational development.
- It motivates the fresh graduates to carve a niche for themselves in society.
- Guidance and counselling services are necessary to help students face the situations of life and adjust to their environment physically, mentally as well as emotionally.
- It motivates students from weaker sections of the society to perform well at the educational and vocational levels.
- It help students to plan and achieve educational goals and explore [5].
- It encourages the students to make the right decisions in case of confusion and turmoil.
- To prevent wastage and stagnation of educational and vocational resources.

- To identify the students who need special help and assistance.
- Counselling ensures that students spend their leisure time and time spent outside the classroom in a productive manner.
- Promote respect for individual strengths and weakness [6].
- It helps to minimize discipline among students.

Online Counselling

Online counselling is the provision of professional mental health counselling services through the Internet. Online therapy, also known as e-therapy, e-counselling, teletherapy, or cyber-counselling, involves providing mental health services and support. The practice of counselling is typically considered to involve the counsellor and client sharing the same space[1]. It gives various opportunity to speak to a therapist, counsellor or analyst online, without having to meet them face to face[8]. It is a good solution for people who need counselling but cannot get to a therapist's office or those who prefer to keep in contact at a distance from wherever they are. Online counselling can provide a valuable service to people if they require therapeutic help but have shied away from it before due to either emotional or practical reasons[21]. The goal of counselling is to alleviate the distress, anxiety, and concerns that clients can present. Counselling attempts to return a client to pre-crisis functioning and in doing so build on a client's strengths and help improve overall functioning[14]. Using synchronous chat, asynchronous e-mail, videoconferencing, and self-directed programmes. Online counselling positively evaluated working alliance

helpfulness, and impact and report client improvement and satisfaction [17]. Online counselling can be given to the people for the following reasons.

Alcoholism	Dysfunctional families	Marriage problems
Alternative Medicine	Family issues	Massage Therapy
Anxiety	Family Medicine	Natural Medicine
Career Coaching	Grief Help	Nutritional Advice
Chemical dependence	Healthy relationships	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
Chiropractic Questions	Life Transition	Relationship problems
Codependence	Love addiction	Spiritual Guidance
Depression	Low self-esteem issues	Substance abuse

Online counselling is kind of professional assistance provided to those requiring counselling for mental health distress through Internet or in simple words counselling - online student support services. They are also known as counselling webinars, Cyber counselling and cyber learning, E-walk-in counselling, email counselling, online communication with an academic counselor. Online counselling service can be offered through Chat room assistance, Email, Live calls, Message boards, Online chat, Telephone, Text messaging, Video and voice Conferencing. Telepsychology is a form of counselling which are given through online. Various forms of online counselling are Web counselling, E counselling E-therapy and Internet counselling.

History of online counselling

Development of E-Therapy from 1972-2002, almost as soon as the Internet was invented, its potential for psychotherapeutic communication was apparent [23].

1972	Stanford and UCLA stimulated psychotherapy session
1986	Ezra of Cornell university offer online mental health care
1995	Therapist John Grohol established a public mental health publication and forum
1995	David sommers first created online therapy using email
2000	Online therapy became more popular and widepread
2012	Roni frank launched Talkspace an online therapy

Why online counselling

Online counselling has become increasingly popular. Students who are miles away from such assistance. The following are the reason why we need online counselling [21].

- **Physical hurdles** – It reduces traveling for counselling purposes.
- **Lack of time** – People are busy with their office work so unable to see a counselor or therapist on time.

- **Agrophobia or social anxiety** – Numerous phobias and mental health issues may prevent the client from traveling or spending time in new environments.
- **Shyness or embarrassment** – Clients prefer to keep their counselling sessions online and remote because it feels more confidential and discreet.

Technology in online counselling

Email, chat, video-conferencing, and text messaging or short message system (SMS) as widely used e-counselling tools in counselling sessions [18]. Following are the few technologies used in online counselling.

Counselling games	Email	Instant messaging and chat	Video conferencing
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Counselling games: Digitizing a real-life situation in the form of the game is currently an important tool to sensitize and expose students to the realities of life. Bada (2013) describes games as a set of activities that involves one or more players who have goals, constraints, payoffs, and consequence. Students may have perceived winning as the motivational factor, but games are usually meant to carry a message or to educate.

Email: Electronic mail, widely known as email, is a form of communication transmitted electronically using computers. Zamani (2009) points out that email is an ideal platform or medium for people with different time schedules, providing an opportunity for introspective responses. It is tremendously faster than all previous means of communication, for instance sending

letters using the traditional postal system. It is therefore not surprising that email has been widely adopted by a large section of the world's population as their preferred means of communication.

Instant messaging and chat: Instant messaging and chat are communication technologies that use text-based communication [6]. The communication often involves two or more people over the Internet or other related networks. Instant messaging (IM) is a private network communication between two users, whereas a chat session is the network communication between two or more users [6]. Chat provides virtual group sessions for chatting and permits more than one person for information sharing or counselling services. Counsellors could virtually engage students into counselling with the intent of providing group or individual counselling.

Video conferencing : Down (2009) described video-conferencing as a method of conferencing between two or more locations where both sound and vision are transmitted and received. The platform allows simultaneous interactive communication between users. Optional sources include still images and / or moving sequences from a video recorder, a DVD, or a PC[4].

Difference between face-to-face counselling and online counselling[19].

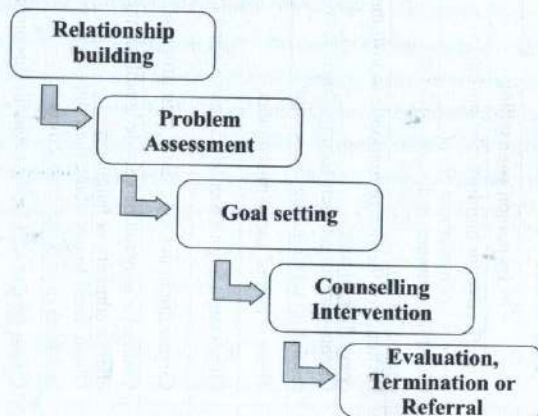
	In-person counselling	Online counselling
1.	It is effective for building relationship between counselor and client.	Effective sometimes more effective than in-person counselling.
2.	Client has-minutes to discuss with the counsellor.	Unlimited amounts of time to detail his story through mail.
3.	Difficult for the sick or immobile to visit the counsellor on time.	It is accessible to homebound and ailing persons.
4.	Clients may forget their feeling, discussion and resolution taken during the session.	Clients are able to save writings regarding their feelings, resolutions, and commitments.
5.	There is risk of social misconduct.	There is less potential for social misconduct.
6.	Clients might forget a counselor's guidance and advice.	Clients are able to save counselor's guidance and advice, if it is in writing.
7.	Clients might not see clearly their progress.	Saved text is a testament to a client's treatment progress.
8.	Counselor may not be knowledgeable of the client's ethnicity or language.	Clients can select a counselor knowledgeable of their ethnicity and language.
9.	Client needs to overcome their apprehensions and fears of seeking counselling.	Feeling more anonymous, clients with apprehensions and fears are more likely to seek counselling.
10.	Clients need to wait for the counsellor appointment.	A counselor is always available.

Types of E-Counselling

- **E-Therapy**- In these, therapists work with the clients without any time boundaries.
- **E-Clinics** : Large group practice sites, where many therapists offer services; less individualized but good security.
- **Advice** - In this therapists respond in-depth to a one-time inquiry.
- **Private practices** - Individual attention to the person is given in these practices.

Steps Involved in Online Counselling

The following are the steps involved to organize counselling process



Step-1- Relationship Building - This involves building a relationship with the clients to explore issues. The first interview is very important because it will help the counsellor to understand about his client.

Step-2- Problem assessment- this step involves the collection and classification of information about the client's life situation and the reason for seeking counselling.

Step-3- Goal setting – it involves making a commitment to a set of conditions, to a course of an outcome.

Step-4- Counselling intervention- the counsellor may use a person-centered approach or behavioral approach attempts to initiate the activities that help clients to alter their behaviors.

Step-5- Evaluation- Counselling process will have to be conducted with sensitivity with the client knowing that it will have to end. Smooth termination of the counselling and evaluation must be done to check the perhaps the client is referred to for further action.

Medical uses and Effectiveness of Online Counselling

- **Mental health**-online therapy can be used for students' anxiety disorder treatment. It helps to alleviate the distress, anxiety, or concern experiences.
- **Nutrition counselling** - Online counselling can be given for the people imbalance in blood lipids, blood sugar regulation and other health conditions make it easier to manage when using nutritional approaches. Smoking cessation-video and telephone counselling help people to stop smoking[25].

Interaction between mental health professionals and consumers on the Internet may be divided into four types. Two types of interaction take place entirely via the Internet, while others combine Internet communication with in-person treatment.

1. **E - therapy** - It was first coined by John Grohol, In this communication takes place via the Internet.
2. **Mental health advice** - psychotherapists respond to one question in depth, again with communication taking place solely via the Internet.
3. **Adjunct services** - psychotherapists use Internet communication to supplement traditional, in-person treatment.
4. **Behavioral tele health and telepsychiatry** - mental health professionals (typically psychiatrists) use sophisticated videoconferencing systems to work with patients in remote locations, as an extension of traditional clinic or hospital care.

E - Therapy vs. Mental Health Advice

It is the process of interacting with a therapist online in an *ongoing series of conversations over time*. It means deciding to explore deep thoughts and feelings and share them with someone who cares and who will listen and try to help. E-therapist will work to form a "therapeutic alliance". Since 1995, most e-therapists have been individual private practitioners. The phenomenal growth of the Internet in general, and the e-therapy industry in particular, led to the appearance of large "dot-com" e-therapy sites where many therapists are available. These large e-therapy Clinics all have several characteristics:

- They use state-of-the-art online security to protect the confidentiality of communication between you and your therapist
- They have robust e-commerce setups for billing, such as you might see on e-shopping websites
- All therapists on the site have had their professional credentials thoroughly screened by the e-clinic

As pointed out by numerous academics, e-therapy does not encompass public forums, blogs, or group emails. Instead, a therapist gets actively involved with a client to form a continuous, professional counselling relationship through communications that are [12].

- **Synchronous** – taking place at the same time, e.g., live chat;
- **Asynchronous** – taking place back and forth over a while, e.g. email; or
- A combination of both.

When it comes to specific treatments, internet-delivered cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) can be further divided into two categories.

- **Guided therapy** – in which a counselor supports the client with a CBT intervention; and
- **Unguided therapy** – which is more akin to self-help CBT with zero therapist support.

Effectiveness of Online Counselling

Online therapy is growing rapidly. WWW is very useful in obtaining information about mental health, including specifics on disorders, medication, and treatment. The effectiveness of online counselling is as follows [22].

- **Accessibility**- Online counselling is easily accessible to everyone even in remote areas.
- **Affordability**- It is more economical and affordable for both the therapist and the client.
- **Convenience**-Online counselling is very flexible and convenient as it gives an opportunity to both the therapist and the client to have the counselling session according to their preferred range of timings.
- **Social stigma** - It is more comfort and privacy as there is no need for the client to visit the counselling center.
- **Anonymity** - It allows the clients to communicate more openly without any concerns for the bias of race, gender, age, size, or physical appearance.
- **Variant forms of communication**- Communication through the internet is mostly in written forms like chats, emails, and instant messaging services. A written record is also useful for the client to have a reference point in future discussion, review, and to assess his change and progress[22].

Disadvantages

Online counselling has also been criticized in terms of its absence of verbal and nonverbal cues, difficulties in maintaining confidentiality and security, overall effectiveness, technological difficulties, and in its limits of being able to guarantee the therapist's credibility.

Absence of verbal and non-verbal communication

- Verbal and nonverbal interactions are considered essential for gauging what the client is feeling and for

identifying the discrepancies or incongruences between verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Online counselling has been criticized for lacking such important elements of the micro-skills of counselling. Online therapy does not give an indication of characteristics such as voice tone, facial expression, body language, and eye contact.

- **Confidentiality and security**-With online therapy the security of the client's records and information could be jeopardized and confidentiality is at greater risk of being inappropriately breached given the written nature of the medium.
- **Effectiveness** - The lack of face-to-face interaction could increase the risk of misdiagnosis by the therapist. It is inappropriate in the diagnosis of clinical issues such as chronic depression and psychotic.
- **Technological difficulties** - Lack of computer skills and knowledge, especially if the communication setting involves installing and learning new software and/or hardware may disrupt the session.
- **Therapist credibility** - The exploitation of inexperienced individuals pretending to be bonafide counsellors. Thus it is important to refer young people to credit counselling services such as Lifeline, Kids Helpline, and headspace.
- **Ethical issues** - attention will have to be given to the construction of legal and ethical codes. Particularly because the internet surpasses state and international borders, there are many legal and regulatory concerns[20].

Conclusion

Counselling is a process of helping individuals to gain self-understanding. It creates a professional relationship between the counsellor and a client. Online counselling has become a true gift of modern technology to the new generation. It has emerged as a completely new array in counselling.

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