

## The Use of Information Technology in Counselling: A Review

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Received: February 14, 2019

Accepted: March 26, 2019

**ABSTRACT:** *Information Technology (IT) is a universally accepted educational instrument designed to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational system. Computers are used for instruction as well as for learning in the school system. An increasing variety of courses both " traditional "and " open ended" is available for teachers and pupils teaching and studying different subjects offered by schools and empirical evidence indicates that well planned and suitable courses contributes positively to the cognitive and affective needs of students.*

*However, in addition to the utilisation of IT for teaching and learning, computers can be effectively used for educational counseling process. The effectiveness of diagnostic reports to parents and teachers, statistical data analysis, cataloguing the case studies (important function carried out by school counsellors) can be significantly improved through the use of IT . It is suggested that educational counsellors investigate the possibility of routinely utilizing the school computer in their work in order to improve counsellor effectiveness and efficiency.*

**Key Words:** *Information Technology, Educational Counselling, School Faculty Consultation*

### INTRODUCTION

Information Technology (IT) is the use of computers to store, retrieve, transmit and manipulate data or information often in the context of a business or other enterprise. It is considered to be a subset of information and communication technology (ICT) . The term is commonly used as a synonym for computers and computer networks, but it also encompasses other information distribution technologies, such as television and telephones.

Counselling Psychology is a psychological speciality that encompasses research and applied work in several broad domains: counseling process and outcome; supervision and training; career development and counseling; and prevention and health. Some unifying themes among counselling psychologists include a focus on assets and strengths, person- environment interaction educational and career development, brief interactions and a focus on intact personalities.

IT is a universally accepted educational instrument designed to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational system. Computers are used for instruction as well as learning in the school system.

### Computers and Education

Robinson declared that it is now commonly accepted that computers should play a central role in education. Computers can serve as a vehicle for improvement in learning. Many studies report that students who study with the help of computer assisted instruction did units more rapidly and accurately than their counterparts who studied the same subject by traditional and older established teaching methods.

### Computers and Counselling

Counselling is a field in education which specializes in the concern for the individuals well being, needs and development. Computers can prove to be effective tool. Though computer assisted counselling can encounter initial resistance but after familiarization and proven effectiveness counsellors will readily utilize computer processed information.

It is a device which can store large amount of information and retrieval is possible. It increases the accuracy of the efficiency of counsellor, record keeping is easy and counseling related simulations are possible.

**Computer assisted testing (CAT)** in counselling and therapy is becoming increasingly common due to dramatic improvements in cost effectiveness and increased counsellor familiarity with computer applications. The assumption underlying the use of CAT is that the effectiveness of counselling is improved by allocating repetitive computational and instructional task to the computer , thus allowing counsellors to more fully focus on interpersonal task , such as helping clients understand the role of testing in counselling and helping clients integrate the self knowledge obtained in testing into a concrete plan for behaviour

change.

Computers are integral part of counselling. Uses of computer technology :-

- Business and administrative management
  - a) Management of the finances of a practice.
  - b) Administrative management through practice management software
    - 1) Appointments and scheduling
    - 2) Record keeping and documentation
    - 3) Tracking of client information .
  - c) The benefits include increased organisation and time efficiency and decrease in space needed to store files
- Management of Client Records  
Software programs are now available to :
  - 1) Manage client records and documentation.
  - 2) Assist in case of conceptualization.
  - 3) Treatment planning.
- Resources to aid client
  - a) E-mails which can aid in correspondence.
  - b) Web searches and internet sites can provide client with additional information on a problem.
  - c) Internet job searches- employment counselors can expand clients job searches by searching on the internet.
- Psychological Testing  
The benefits of computerized testing include :
  - 1) Less tedious for clients to complete
  - 2) Analysis and feedback from computer software is almost instantaneous.
  - 3) Results are compared with population norms quickly.
  - 4) Counsellors can track changes in clients performance overtime.
- Online (Internet) counselling :  
Online counselling involves asynchronous and synchronous distance interactions among counsellors and clients using email, chat and videoconferencing features of the internet to communicate.
  - a) Accessibility to counselling for those in remote areas or do not have adequate transportation.
  - b) Convenience: The client do not have to leave home.
  - c) Disinhibition: The anonymity of the internet allows some clients to share more freely.

#### **Potential Limitations of Computer Assisted Testing:**

Computer assisted testing can limit, as well as enhance, test administrations and interpretations. Computer administration influence the nature of test results in some cases. Scoring errors represent another potential limitation for CAT. Most (1987) noted that the "The computer itself does not contribute error, but the complex nature of computer programming and the difficulty involved in reading computer programs or code makes it easy to make program errors which are difficult to find ". Ethical concerns also exists about counsellor misuse of computer based test interpretation (CBTI) . Unqualified counselors may be more likely to use CBTI reports to compensate for a lack of training and experience. By using CBTI to replace rather than supplement counselor judgement, counselor become more dependent on the potentially dubious validity of some CBTI software and are less likely to integrate data from valid CBTI reports effectively with other sources of client data due to their lack of background knowledge.

#### **Conclusion :**

The use of CAT can either enhance or limit the effectiveness of testing in counselling and therapy. Many studies support the use of technology in counselling.

Lynne Shallcross (2011) found that sometimes the client feels comfortable in texting rather than talking in person. Nathan Gehlert (2014) is of the opinion that with growing popularity of social media a counselor should reach them through this medium. It also helps the client to connect with members of the community who are not already clients. Dee Anna Nagel (2009) says online therapy delivered via technology is very effective. It allows the practitioner to reach a larger client base, including clients who live in rural environments those who have disabilities or have social phobias.

Katherine Cabaniss (2001) study indicates that counsellors are using a large variety of CRT tools (Computer Related Technology) tools including word processor, spread sheets, a variety of software programs email and other web related tools to assist them in over half of job related tasks.

Krug (1993) reported that computer assisted testing can enhance test administration, scoring, interpretation and integration due to reduced computational errors.

### Recommendations:

Technical competencies for counsellor: Recommended Guidelines

- 1) Be able to use productively software to develop web pages, group presentation, letters and reports.
- 2) Be able to use such audio visual equipment as video recorders, audio recorders, projector equipment.
- 3) Be able to use computerized statistical packages.
- 4) Be able to use computerized testing, diagnostic and career decision making programs with clients.
- 5) Be knowledgeable of the legal and ethical codes which relate to counselling services via the internet.
- 6) Be knowledgeable of the strengths and weaknesses of counselling services provided via the internet.
- 7) Be able to use the internet for finding and using continuing education opportunities in counselling.
- 8) Be able to carefully select and effectively implement valid software that is subsequently evaluated in terms of service delivery Impact.

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