



**Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and  
Communication Skills in Counselling Services in the 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century**

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**Abstract**

The knowledge and skills experienced by professional counsellors are the requisite 'Information Communication Technology' (ICT knowledge and skills) every professional counsellor must have to make for easy counselling services. In counselling discipline, communication skills entails the systematic processes of making available essential packages of data, documents, books, verbal, non-verbal or written communication to individuals or groups (clients) who find them to be useful in their lives. Hence the paper focused on the communication and meaning of counselling, some characteristics of communication, verbal communication and non-verbal communication were highlighted. Ways of improving intra-personal and interpersonal communication. The paper also examined the counselling model of communication technology to enhancing counselling practice such as the use of movie clips, video conference opportunity, video tapes, video CD, CD-Rom, Flash Drives, television facilities, network of intercom, services, films among others and found out that the application of this communication technology is indispensable for an effective counselling. In the light of the above, the paper recommended among others, an effective deployment of modern communication facilities in counselling, training for counselling practitioners in utilization of modern communication technology and emphasis on the use of the skills and ICT in counselling and among others. It concludes by calling for a more use of verbal and non-verbal techniques with ICT knowledge in counselling skills to add more value to the Guidance and Counselling programme as it was observed by the researcher among others.

*Keywords: communication, ICT, skills counselling, 21<sup>st</sup> century*

**Introduction**

The need to operate in accordance with global order and standards makes counselling communication skill an indispensable standard for the 21<sup>st</sup> century counselling in Nigeria. Communication is the process by which messages are exchanged between people through a common set of symbols, usually language or signs (Thomas, 2003). The main ingredient for a successful guidance and counselling programme is communication. It is the pivot on which counselling practices are rested. Communication is so important that without it, no work is done. Similarly, communication is either fully achieved or communication has not taken place at all. Indeed, communication skills put order into any human interaction. The counsellor must know how to communicate with clients of all ages, background, and experiences.

Okon (1982) observed that regardless of the setting or nature of the helping relationship, the personal values or beliefs of the person involved and the theoretical orientation of the professional helper, the underlying prerequisite skill is effective communication. According to Ipaye (1983), every counselling act is a communication act.

The term Counselling refers to a process involving a professionally trained individual in the application of psychological principles and practices in assisting individuals and groups to cope with their life adjustment needs in the society. These needs are mostly recurrent in nature as well as their associated difficulties in different areas of human endeavour such as education, vocational or career, marriage and family life, personal and social development needs, economic needs, and so on. This is the enabling circumstance that often calls for help from counsellors where the individual potential for decision making appear to be inadequate (Okorodudu, 2010).

There, counsellors as helpers and human resource builders, usually trying to improve on their services. These they often do through the application of modern technology within the framework of their professional ethical standards to systematically assist their clients to develop skills, knowledge and competences, for coping more effectively with their various types of problems. It is this desire for quality service delivery that leads to evidence-based counselling outcomes in the behavioural sciences. This is the common desire among counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and other professional helpers like medical doctors, gynaecologists, health workers, nurses, et-cetera, which has motivated the application of new technological skills and knowledge in their professional practices.

Every counselling act which is essentially the relationship set up by the transmission of stimuli and the evocation of response is a communication act. The technique of structuring or initiating a counselling relationship is basically an act of opening up a counselling relationship with the clients. Anyone who is keenly interested in helping other people knows that it is essential to take great care to establish, enhance and maintain good communication. In counselling, particularly, the quality and effectiveness of the relationship formed greatly depends upon the nature of the communication process. The general purpose of counselling which is to assist people of all ages in a variety of settings to make choices, make changes and reduce personal confusion concerning their work and so on cannot be conducted through communication that are usually heard in ordinary social conversation.

Communication could be verbal or non-verbal. In helping process especially, some non-verbal communication acts could be more potent, more effective and more therapeutic than even other verbal communication could be verbal or non-verbal. In helping process especially, some non-verbal communication act could be more portent. More effective and more therapeutic than even other verbal communication acts.

A counsellor can easily use non- verbal communication by facial expression, posture, gesture and so on in his approach to clients (Ipaye, 1995) cited in ( Ogbodo, 2017).

### **Communication**

Communication is the process by which one person (or a group) shares and imparts information to another person (or group) so that both people (is groups) clearly understand one another. At all levels in the organisation, among and between executives, managers, staff, personnel, supervisors, foremen and employees, the communicative processes are continuously in action, conveying information, ideas, attitude and feelings of individuals or groups of individuals. (Sodangi 2015)

### **Process of Communication**

According to Sodangi, (2015) there must be a source of the message, which is the originator, and the destination, which is the receiver. The parties concerned must understand each other through the appropriate and familiar symbolic codes as well as ensure a free flow of messages with the view of achieving the desired goals of communication. Communication can be viewed as a process because it is a continuous phenomenon. It involves an initiator who responds to stimuli and encodes or formulates a message. This is passed through a channel to a receiver who decodes the meaning attached to the message received. The receiver then prepares as a reply, known as feedback, which he sends to the original sender. This receiver thus becomes the sender while the original sender becomes the new receiver. This completes the communication process.

### **Counselling Skills**

It was observed by the researcher that most of the Counsellors in the school setting don't use special skills to encourage their clients, and as such most of their clients lost hope or confident in their Counsellors. Hence the researcher will want to emphasise the use of special skills such as verbal and non- verbal skills with ICT to enable them do proper counselling. Therefore the researcher defined the skills as a learned ability to perform an activity or task that may be motor or cognitive. It could also be something that is done with expertise and dexterity and that often leads to successful performance. Akinade (2015) defined counselling skills as special abilities, counsellors acquire, possess and use in their profession. Lauver & Harvey in Kolo (2013) also said that "skills are needed to perform intentionally, sensitively and creatively in the counsellor's role so that the client's goals are met."

Counselling skills are those endowments in the professional counsellor who he uses to help his client understand and solve his problem. In other words, they are natural talent, ability or quality inherent in the professional counsellor which he uses in helping his clients.

These qualities (skills) are acquired by counsellors in training during micro counselling experience or pre-practicum to build up their personal characteristics as counsellors. The counsellor educator teaches, demonstrates, makes counsellors in training role play, observes and criticises these skills exhibited by counsellors and clients. Skills are derived from diverse techniques. They often help counsellors to perform their functions properly, reveal their expertise and experience. Skills often improve with practice. We often hear statements such as the surgeon performs the operation with skilful dexterity or the counsellor skilfully assists the couples in conflict in resolving their marital problems. Skills can be seen as the technical aspect of particular techniques. Skills are quite specific and they assist successful operation of technique. Succinctly put, they are tips counsellors use to keep counselling process going. For example, cognitive restructuring is a technique in counselling but questioning or paraphrasing are skills that can be applied during the use of cognitive restructuring (Odoenelam 2016).

Counselling skills include among others rapport, listening and attending, understanding, structuring skills, trustworthiness, respect, questioning, probing, exploring, discussion, responding, arguments, dialogue, greeting, encouragement, reflection, assurance, interpreting, clarification, confrontation, restatement, concretizing, catharsis, self-disclosure, immediacy, homework and others.

### **Communication in Counselling**

Communication is the process whereby we convey ideas opinion, attitudes, feelings, sentiments, beliefs or impressions to others. Communication is the key to interpersonal understanding. The sine qua non of effective communication is deeply tied up with the ideas of give and take in a two way manner. The quality and effectiveness of the relationship formed depends greatly upon the nature of the communication process. Communication is very crucial and people communicate whenever they interact (Akinade 2015).

### **Verbal Communication**

Verbal communication involves verbal expression associated with speeches and language manipulation in such a way that the person communicating (communicator) and the person receiving the communication (the communicated) understand themselves. In other words, it consists of the use of language or speech, words spoken not written. Language or speech sound carries only a small part of the information that people transmit among one another in their daily interaction. Speech transmits information not only through what we say but also through how we say it. Verbal communication also involves the use of typed or written materials. It is worthy to note that in verbal communication, the counsellor should manipulate his voice so as to be communicable to the

counselee. The language of counselling communication should be simple and easily understandable without for example, resorting to a dictionary of languages usage.

When using verbal communication, counsellor should endeavour to use body language support, like facial grimace and management, eye contact, appropriate reflections, active and attentive listening. Verbal communications include: dialogue, questioning, probing, discussion, responding, confronting etc. (Akinade 2015).

### **Non Verbal Communication**

This is an embodiment of body language and gestures used in communication in the counselling process. Hassan (2014). Body languages and gestures are very effective means of communication and very lucidly epitomize the statements often used that “action speaks louder than words”. Hassan (2014), in that non-verbal behaviour can be used either as an emblem to signify some things as an illustration to explain what has been said or as an effort to show one’s emotional disposition etc. Non-verbal cues emitted by a client are a rich source of information. It is one aspect of communication that seems to be under less conscious control. It can usually be trusted as a valid indicator of the client’s state. These body gestures/languages include facial movements, encouraging smile, eye contacts, warm handshake, provision of comfortable chair and other relevant activities. Response to physical cues includes questions or statements intended to increase the client’s awareness. Technology in counselling therefore is the systematic application of the psychological principles of counselling or organised knowledge of guidance and counselling principles towards the provision of practical assistance to clients in resolving their life’s adjustment problems in the modern and post-modern world.

### **Some Characteristics of Communication**

According to Ipaye (1995) interaction is an important aspect of communication and transaction from the core of interaction. The two interaction and transactions presuppose a non-static, on-going, changing and dynamic station, in the sense, communication can be regarded as a dynamic process, constantly taking new shape, changing along lines, which are constant with the immediate expectation and past experiences of the communicating parties. When this process changes too rapidly, forcefully or even if the changes are consistent with individuals’ immediate expectations, and past experiences, some disequilibrium is achieved. Communication, apart from being dynamic, is irreversible. Once a status is made, or a communicative act takes place, it cannot be reclaimed, unsaid or undone or take it back. A Yoruba ( a major ethic group in Nigeria) adage says “words are like eggs, once dropped can never be retrieved as a whole again, in cases where one says sorry or verbalizes a withdrawal of the statement, the message is already being stored and can only be retrieved to fit into a

scheme later. Another characteristic of communication process, people, the environment and the message form the web in the ensuring transaction.

Communication as said earlier is interactive, requiring a reciprocal influence on the part of those communicating. Whenever a person is sending a message and another person is listening (receiving the message) the sender often looks at the face and body of the listener who is sending conscious and unconscious non-verbal messages. If the listener (the person decoding the message) the sender may repeat or give additional information. The listeners' reactions, whether he is attentive, understanding or confused, approved or disapproved, usually cause the sender to alter the message. This reciprocal interaction is circular.

Problems of communication are the inability to make ourselves understood, the inability to understand others, the failure to hear beyond the words or hear with our eyes. It is possible for one not to communicate effectively. This creates problems in dealing with ourselves in terms of intrapsychic messages in dealing with others. Some body's inability to understand others stems partly from our perception of others, the actual event perceived and how someone interpret it. At times the problems may come as a result of the types of social economic background and/or differences in the experiences of those people communicating.

Another source of communication is semantic. These could also mean ambiguities; these are words which can mean different things to different people at different times. There are some statements that are also times/place situation and specific. Another strong source of communication problems is our system of ego-defence (that is emotional, attitudinal factors and so on) ego-defence includes emotional, attitudinal factors and so on, ego-defence mechanism are designed to shield for individual from inner reality and threat. They enable the individual to avoid threatening relationship and whenever it is not possible, the defensive person becomes hostile towards other (Ipaye, 1995). No matter how mild, defence mechanisms affects someone perception or the other person, events or situation. Every act of counsellor can therefore help a great deal in shaping the counsellor's perception.

### **Verbal Communication and Non-Verbal Communication**

Most non-verbal cues acts are verbal communication. Any simple statement followed by a captivating smile, an affectionate laugh or radiant face will be decoded differently from any statement followed by a sarcastic laugh or tantalizing expression. Mortensen (1972) discusses four different non-verbal clusters of cues that really help our understanding of the ways in which non-verbal cues act as communication. For instance, "a speaker who exhibits confidence deceive his hearers into forming the impression that his statement is edible, while the one who fidgets is nervous, defensive and

uncertain, creates a totally different impression about his “statement” (Ipaye, 1995). Examples of effect are cheerfulness, fear, elation, distress, fear, anger, sorrow and contempt.

The second non-verbal cluster of cues discussed by Mortenser (1972) is verbal communication and body movement. Whatever form of gesticulations that accompany whatever someone says or does tell its own tale about that person’s communication. Body movement in some cases may be incongruent with verbalizations, in which case verbal communication is produced. The author equally discussed the verbal communicative role of the eyes-contacts. Eyes receive and give message as well as exchange feelings. With our eyes, we express dominance, sincerity, involvement, guilt, feeling and various attitudes towards others.

Verbal Communication according to the author can be on the basis of referring to a person’s past actions or statements, or to expectations about the receiver’s future behaviour. Non-verbal (non-word, non-vocal) communication includes kinetics i.e. the way people communicate through body movements and gestures such as a raised eyebrow, a medical blow pinch or a shift in posture, while the phonetic signals of speech are sounds we hear, kinetic signals are motions we see and feel. Our facial expressions, mode of dressing, gesticulation, show of effect. Some researchers have hinted that non-verbal communication may carry up to two thirds of the communication that transpires between people. Most often we are not aware of the message our body sends while we are talking or interacting with others.

Non-verbal communication contributes to the meaning of the message a communicator is trying to get across and they serve as sources of information about the internal emotive state of the speaker. They reveal the way a communication could be interpreted as well as the interacting perception of himself and of others. In counselling, non-verbal communication can be an important indicator of the status of interpersonal relationships. As the client talks about his problems in relation to the people with whom he deals, his non-verbal cues, which are usually beyond concealment or manipulation, gives out information on his inner feelings about the person. Defiance on the client’s face or derision, dry lips or quivering, a sharp look at the mention of someone, and so on, are all cues that tell their own tale about the relationship between the counselee and other people or events. A trained helper should thus be sensitive to non-verbal cues because such sensitivity is one of the easiest avenues to empathy. It is also an important means of improving our understanding of others and developing relationships. There is no aspect of non-verbal movement or body motion, or what is described as kinetics (that is gestures, facial expressions, posture, and eye behaviour) is accidental or meaningless in communication but each has significance with the large context of behaviour. One can avoid non-verbal communication.

Before a counsellor rushes out to look at people’s faces and observe their kinetics, the counsellor needs to pay attention to two simple but important points. First, facial expressions, which are facially

defined patterns of expression carrying messages are thus learnt or are socialised into them. The second point extends from the first.

The meaning of eye behaviour, facial cues, and so on, is to be found within the context in which it takes place. For example, a frown may mean “trying to do hard thinking and remember a fact, or refusal to cooperate or an attempt to hide an inner pleasure or show some pain. Also, a smile on someone’s face may indicate pleasure, success, or dominance. So a counsellor should be able to interpret a cue within the context in which it is given and on the basis of the contextual cues available for comparison. The counsellor should help the client to analyse not only his own non-verbal cues and messages but also the non-verbal cues of other people the counsellor deals with or those that are a source of problem to the counsellor and then get the client to relate this to his own of eye behaviours, shifting body position, punctuating hand movements, eyebrow movements, lip, tongue and even leg motions are all meaningful and counsellors should be able to translate them within a given context. Another type of non-verbal clues that are very common is Baton signals which are series of hand movements we make while talking. Another one is Gaze behaviour, which is the way we look at others while talking or when we meet.

Someone can only look towards a person or away from him, and the accompanying social expressions signals which mood is involved in the look. In addition to three major moods of love, anger, and fear identified by some researchers, is the jealous look, signifying jealousy or envy, the challenge look, challenging the other person without signs of hostility, the question and answer look, asking a question or answering one, the information seeking look and the complaint-lodging look. The white of the eyes assumes different positions in each of the above and the accompanying facial expressions help to clarify their intent.

Another type of non-verbal communication is the tactile experience, that is, the frequent body contact that the child receives up to the age of weaning. This is the messaging and frequent touching during child-rearing which is not just a physiological exercise aiding physiological or biological maturation, prepares the child for interpretation of non-verbal communication. For example, through the mother’s soothing touch, the child learns early, to respond to verbal and non-verbal communication. The quality and effectiveness of a counselling relationship depend mainly on the nature of communication process that take place. Counselling focus on helping the individual to re-discover himself through a process of self-understanding and self-awareness, and to find a meaning in life and living by exposing him to reality. To be able to achieve this, an individual needs to be helped in order to create meaning within himself and getting him to learn how to share meaningfully with others. When an individual is able to create meaning within self, which is to accept himself. The next comes sharing meaning with others. The extent to which people are able to

convey their thoughts and feelings to each other forms and important aspect of interactions. Nearly all everyday act of the counsellor hangs on communication and the kinetics.

Recurrent and common non-verbal acts like nodding the head, eye contact and various forms of eye behaviours, shifting body position, punctuating hand movements, eyebrow movements, lip, tongue and even leg motions are all meaningful and counsellors should be able to translate them within a given context.

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interpersonal communication. It means making the other person feel that you are feeling with him, and attempting to see things from his points of view. It emphasizes communicative ability. The counsellor can communicate empathy to the client by the way he talks to him, relate with him and listen to him.

Genuineness is the base for the entire helping process. It refers to the degree to which one person is functionally integrated in the context of his relationship with another in such a way that there is no conflict or inconsistency between his experience, his awareness and his overt communication is his congruence in the relationship. Most of the counsellors' activities that have been found to relate to effective counselling have their basis in communication empathy, positive regard, acceptance, supportive comments, reflecting feelings, confrontation, clarification, interpretation, information giving and a host of others.

### **Communication in Counselling**

Communication in Counselling comprises verbal and non-verbal. Verbal communication is the spoken words while non-verbal includes physical gestures, eye contact, tone of voice, facial expression, and proximity, among others. The counsellor should therefore be aware of and sensitive to verbal and non-verbal cues since they often reveal some messages that are not verbalized. The counsellor should be able to know how to send, receive and interpret non-verbal communication and gestures used in the counselling process. Belkin (1980) identified two criteria of good communication. The first is the ability to anticipate the effects that words would have on a client and to know, before saying them, the inferences and denotations of the words used and the message transmitted. The counsellor called the second criterion-Consonance. According to him, every conversation is conducted at two levels. The first level which Belkin called the level of content is the audible level of communication; that is the level that the client hears. The other, the level of intent is the level of meanings and implications, of connotations and inferences. This is the level that the client feels.

### **Communication Skills**

Communication Skills in counselling include listening, questioning/ interviewing, interpretation, reflection and silence. Listening and questioning skills in communication shall be discussed in this here.

### **Listening Skills**

An important aspect of communication in counselling is the willingness of the counsellor to listen patiently to what the client has to say. Listening is the ability to hear accurately what the other

person is saying. It involves hearing the words, receiving the sounds and understanding their meaning. It entails being sensitive to the vocal cues of the speaker and observing body movements and taking all these into account. A counsellor who is a good listener is able to pick all the verbal and non-verbal messages sent and at the same time listens to his or her own inner feelings regarding the meaning of the message being sent by the client.

Listening therefore takes place between the counsellor and the clients and within the counsellor. This is particularly important in counselling adolescents in the secondary schools. Adolescents often complain of not being listened to by adults. If they fail to get full attention during the counselling process, they can easily be turned off.

Listening skills centre on the following attributes:

- a. willing to listen
- b. clearly hearing the message
- c. interpreting the meaning (the speaker's not only the hearer's)
- d. evaluating carefully, suspending judgment but assessing value and usefulness of words spoken
- e. responding accurately.

The counsellor must be involved in

1. **Active listening-** This involves (a) paying close attention to the client
  - a. exhibiting a belief that what the client has to say is of value
  - b. setting aside the personality of the speaker while listening to what he or she has to say.

Some physical postures that demonstrate active listening are:

- encouraging the client with nods and eye contacts
- appropriate facial expression
- a related body posture
- a slight forward lean

Non-verbal or physical expression gives the impression that the counsellor is listening. This does not mean that the entire above have to be expressed before listening is perceived but some of them have to be present to indicate that the counsellor is listening

## 2. **Empathic listening**

This is structured listening and questioning technique which helps in relationship development and enhancement.

It goes beyond active listening

It is necessary here to point out some characteristics of poor listening.

**A poor listener:**

- a. is selective in listening and so may not listen to important items – once clients perceive this, they censor what they say.
- b. interrupts the client: the constant interrupter is not listening but planning his/her own interruption which discourages clients from talking and breaks the flow of thought and words.
- c. is easily distracted by external factors such as light, heat, cold and noise- this can also become a distraction for the client
- d. overreacts to speakers' manner of speaking etc. rather than what is said.
- e. is lazy and so makes no effort to absorb different information.

**Questioning/Interviewing Skills**

Questioning is one of the commonest techniques used by the counsellor. It indicates the counsellor's desire to seek further information. Questions posed by the counsellor should be straight forward, clear and precise. Asking the right questions at the right time, is at the heart of effective communication and information exchange.

**Common questioning techniques and their uses**

**1. Open Question**

This asks the respondent for his or her knowledge, opinion or feelings e.g. “tell me, what happened?” “What, how, when, would you say/state etc.”

Open questions are good for developing open conversation and for finding out more details.

**2. Close Question**

A closed question usually elicits a single word answer e.g. Are you thirsty?

Close questions are good frame setting e.g. “are you happy staying with your aunt?”

They are also good for concluding discussions or making decisions.

A misplaced closed question can kill a conversation and result in an awkward silence so it is best to avoid closed questions when the session is in full course.

**3. Funnel Questions**

This involves starting with general questions and then coming in with a point in each answer and asking more details at each level. Funnel questions are good for finding out more details about specific points and gaining the interest of and increasing the confidence of the client.

**4. Probing Questions**

These are also used for finding out more details. It may be necessary to use the word “exactly” e.g. what exactly do you mean by...?

It is good gaining clarification out of people who are trying to avoid saying something.

## **5. Leading Questions**

These involve giving people a choice between options. It is good for getting the answer you want, while making the client feels that he had a choice. Leading questions are best used in terminating a counselling session e.g. “When do we meet again?”

The counsellor wants to terminate the session but gives the client the choice of suggesting another date. Other skills for terminating an interview or counselling session include:

- (a) Constant look at the wristwatch to make the client aware that the counsellor is getting ready to terminate the session.
- (b) Placing palms on the table as if to stand up.
- © standing up.
- (d) Giving an Assignment to the Client.

## **Ways of improving Intra-Personal and Interpersonal Communication**

i. Through listening: The first major step in helping an individual to improve his communication is to get him to learn and acquire the skills of listening. That is, to learn how to fix attention to the speaker, his posture, lips, eyes, the tilt of his head, finger movements, tone of voice, pauses, silence and various non-verbal leakages. That is, the individual need to ‘hear’ the verbal - communication of the speaker. To listen also means that the individual have to take note of his own reaction as the counsellor processes the words within the context in which they come.

Counselees can be helped to acquire the skill of using their eyes and mind to go beyond listening and listening between the lines. When one trains himself to listen to others, one is equally getting involved with him and developing a caring attitude and some feeling for him. The counselee need to learn the skill of listening analytically, for understanding the structure of a message, to analyse whether statements are logical and for using the message as the basis for decision making. The skill of listening objectively is equally important, to know when a counsellor has some bias already about the speaker or topic.

i. Communication takes place at two levels: context and at the relationship level. The context level is anchored on semantics while the relational level involves power. There are four specific power roles in communication. These are superior power relationships, inferior power relationships, ambiguous ones and variable ones. Only the first one which is the superior power relationship concerns the counsellors. This power relationship refers to situations where definite line of

authority, either formally established or conventional, exist between interactions in a communication transaction, as in parent-child, teacher-pupil employer- employees, master-servant relationships. A communication gap is created when someone listens to the words but not the message.

- ii. Through communication game, one can help individuals to improve communication. Different types of games can be designed for group, individual or dyadic use. This could be followed up with the use of symbols and signs language, starting with straightforward and simple statements, all done non-verbally and then round off by getting participants when they could discuss with.
- iii. Another important way of helping individuals to improve his communication is through role play. Various situations, conditions and interactions that can lead to conflicts, problems and so on between adolescents and authority figures are identified and the adolescents are encouraged to role play them after which the participants discuss the various roles in terms of authenticity, genuineness, reality, appropriate role functioning etc.
- iv. The use of case study: Case studies based on various intentional situations which are used for group discussion.
- v. Perl's slot seat can be used and the individual alternates his own roles and those of a named significant others.
- vi. Another way of helping individuals to improve communication is through Ellis's Rational Emotive imagery. That is to help the individual on his own to create "imageries" of communication situations or interactions that have just happened or are yet to take place and to react positively or negatively to them.
- vii. Through concentrative activities a counselee concentrates on specific aspects of communication- especially in dyadic, triadic or group formation (Ipaye, 1995).

### **Modern Counselling Skills**

There is an exponential increase in the use of new information in technology application in counselling. The emergence of websites, e-mails, graphic representation of data or information, movie clips, Video conferencing and so on, have all contributed immensely to effective instructions and counselling services in and out school settings. According to Witty, (2003) the WWW and email are an increasingly important communication and information tool. The author however noted that people including teachers and counsellors need to practice to build up expertise in both using the technology and interpreting (value adding) to information they access by Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In other words, there are many areas of counselling activities

where many of the new information technologies are found to be very useful to the clients and the counselling professionals.

In the training of counsellor and during counselling professional practice opportunities, information technologies have been put into effective use. For instance, in counsellor education training, some of the following information technologies have been found credibly good for enhancing counselling practices.

1. The use of movie clips by counsellors in facilitating the learning process could make the physical learning environment and psychosocial learning environment more stimulating.
2. The movie clips can also be used for illustrating or teaching direct counselling skills in the laboratory environment or during counselling practicum exercise.
3. The provision of Video conference opportunity has been useful to professional counsellors in promoting effective communication and interaction with learners, clients or counselees across cultures and different geographical areas.
4. The provision of video tapes, video CD, CD-ROM, flash drives, television facilities, one way mirror equipment, video camera, cassette recorders, network of intercom services, films and film stripes, etc. in the counselling laboratory can be used in practising counsellors, students on practicum training exercise, and counsellor trainees who are trying to improve on their counselling skills and competences.
5. In modern counselling outreach, information technology websites can be created to enable counsellor trainees, clients, students, and practising counsellor or therapists to search for information in their respective areas of counselling interests and information needs.
6. Information storage facilities such as graphic software packages which include power points, hard graphics etc. can be used to present large information and also for encouraging skill development in counselling training and professional practices.
7. Information technology can assist counsellors in the provision of vocational counselling, occupational counselling and career counselling information thereby enhancing the counsellor's effective and efficient services
8. Information Technology enables the counsellor to have access to a large array of data from the Internet and / or obtain Software that may be useful in assisting clients' development of coping skills and adequate knowledge for adjustment in their different areas of human endeavours (Okorodudu, 2010).

The term counselling refers to a process involving a professionally trained individual in the application of psychological principles and practices in assisting individuals and groups to cope with their life adjustment needs in the society. These needs are mostly recurrent in nature as well as their associated difficulties in different areas of human endeavour such as

education, vocational or career, marriage and family life, personal and social development needs, economic needs, and so on. This is the enabling circumstance that often calls for help from counsellors where the individual potential assets for decision making appear to be inadequate (Okorodudu, 2010). There, counsellors as helpers and human resource builders, usually try to improve on their services. These they often do through the application of modern technology within the framework of their professional ethical standards to systematically assist their clients to develop skills, knowledge and competences, for coping more effectively with their various types of problems.

It is this desire for quality service delivery that leads to evidence-based counselling outcomes in the behavioural sciences. This is the common desire among counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and other professional helpers like medical doctors, gynaecologists, health workers, nurses, et-cetera, which has motivated the application of new technological skills and knowledge in their professional practices.

#### **Some Issues in Communication which the Counsellor Must Note**

1. The counsellor must be in social contact with the clients.
2. The counsellor must want to communicate
3. The client should be addressed by name. Addressing the client by name gives him or her assurance that the counsellor is relating to him or her as a person and not as an unidentified member of a group.
4. It is better to risk familiarity than to be seen as remote.
5. The best way to empower others is to impart information along with delegated authority to make decisions and act on information given
6. The counsellor must not rush into advising but should allow the facts to unfold for the client to take decisions on his/her own. Finally, the counsellor must note that clients communicate with others about him or her. Their impression could encourage or discourage prospective clients. (Salawu and Abdulkadir, 2011)

#### **Recommendations**

Based on the discussion in this paper, the following recommendations are:

1. Counsellors have a key responsibility for their professional development they must realise that self-motivation and interest are the main things for success in professionalism to and value to their skills in communication.
2. Government should sponsor professional counsellors for seminars, workshop and conferences to obtain more knowledge in communication skills.

3. The professional counsellors should communicate through a variety of social media such as twitter, Facebook, Skype, Yahoo, Messenger, Linkedin, Skills page, whatsapp, among others. In a single handset they could have over 100 applications.
4. They should be familiar with the internet (the world- wide web), the search engines, many software applications online and offline, hardware.
5. Counsellors ought to be masters of the art in the use of ICT considering that the clients they are counselling are “digital natives”, born into the information Computer Technology (ICT).
  6. Counsellors should always update their knowledge in different communication skills to stand out among other professional in the world of digital in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
  7. Counsellors should use e-mail to communicate their client.

## **Conclusion**

The paper has touched on the key features of the meanings of communication, the meaning of counselling, communication skills in counselling, some characteristics of communication, the verbal communication and non-verbal communication, ways of improving intra- personal and inter- personal communication. Some issues in communication skills which the professional counsellors must be carefully in handle. The paper also addressed the emergence of websites, e-mails, graphic, video conferencing and so. It further discussed the details of Counselling skills modern for counselling skills clients and transmitting a message to large group. The use of these skills is very crucial to the success of the counselling. In the light of the above, it can be concluded that the application of modern communication technology and skill in counselling has the capacity to impact tremendously on counselling.

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