
The Place Of a Professional Counsellor For Economic Stability: The Counsellor And The Techniques In Counselling

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Abstract

This paper examined the place of a professional counsellor for economic stability and the techniques of counselling. Counselling is a professional assistance given to a client experiencing problems which could be emotional/psychological, insecurity of some sort etc. Professional counselling help to provide guidance by helping people navigate their life challenges like stress, anxiety, job loss, career problem and downturn on business and its impact on family. The paper outlined the counselling formats like face-to-face session, Individual/Group session, online, telephone sessions etc. the types of counselling were not left out, which are career counselling, psychodynamic, person-centered, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), existential and non-directive (Gestalt) therapy. The techniques of counselling were discussed like open stage, exploration stage, goal setting, intervention (confrontation / restatement) and ending stage. The counsellor in counselling process is a person as a person who uses some techniques of counselling to assist clients with various difficulties/challenges to understand how to overcome them. The paper also discussed the use of silence, empathy, responding and catharsis, the scope of counseling was not left out that is people with depression, anxiety disorder, anger management, substance abuse, emotional instability among others. The paper went further to discuss the qualities of a good counsellor, which are, being able to establish good communication skills, genuine, patient, good listener, empathetic, non-judgmental, confidential, appreciating diversity etc. In conclusion, a professional counsellor must possess the skills and competencies expected, to be able and qualified to handle various issues in the counselling relationships.

Keywords: Counselling, Counsellor, Economic Stability, Professional Counsellor, Counselling Techniques.

Introduction

Counselling is a talk therapy that gives a person the opportunity, space and chance to talk about their problems and how they feel in a friendly, conducive and confidential environment. As a therapy of its own, it can be used to help people with emotional,

psychological and mental health conditions like: Depression, anxiety, substance/drug misuse, borderline personality disorder (BPD), obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia, long-term illnesses, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) etc. Counselling involves talking about worst, difficult and painful feelings and emotions, it helps in dealing with as well as overcome emotional issues that makes them feel uncomfortable (Syed, 2017). The counsellor therefore, proffer support by respecting the clients views and help find their own insights into understanding their own problems through counselling sessions because many peoples identities are wrapped up in their business, careers and jobs, when they lose their jobs, businesses or career they feel a corresponding loss of control and purpose in their lives..

Counsellors should be experienced professionally qualified, since counselling involves talking about sensitive issues and revealing personal thoughts and feelings (EC-Council University, 2022). The roots of counselling services are traceable to the work of Frank Parson in the USA after the Second World War to alleviate the Post-War Trauma experienced by victims and the effect of joblessness that devastated the Americans during the economic downturn of those years and the profession is deeply embedded in vocational/career guidance (Atinuke, 2021). Frank Parson is referred to as the ‘Father of Guidance Movement’ who worked with young people by helping them make decisions concerning their vocations and is best known for establishing Boston’s Vocational Bureau in 1908 and for the publication of his book: *Choosing a Vocation* in 1909 (Gladding, 2004). Counselling is a way of enabling choice or change and of reducing confusion; it does not involve giving advice or directing a client to take a particular course of action, but an activity that takes place when someone who is troubled invites and allows another person to enter into a particular kind of relationship with them.

Concept of Counselling

Counselling is a professional assistance given by the counsellor to a client known as a counselee experiencing problems that affect him/her (Osaro, 2021). There are a number of counselling definitions but we will look at (Denga, 2004) describing counselling service as a personalized dialogue, interview or interaction between the client experiencing personal problem and the counsellor who ties to render help. While (Uzoeshi, 2013) defined counselling service as a process in which an individual who is helpless (client) is assisted by a professional counsellor to overcome his/her helplessness through information, interaction, decision making in a conducive environment. Counselling falls under the umbrella term “talking therapies” which allows people to discuss their problems and any difficult feeling/challenges they encounter.

According to the National Policy on Counselling (2018), Counselling is a professional assistance given to a normal person who is experiencing difficulties and problems in life. While (Okechuwu, 2014) explained counselling as that process which takes places in a one to one relationship between an individual troubled with problems he/she cannot cope alone and a professional worker whose training and experience have qualified him/her to help others find solution to various types of personal difficulties. Counselling is a personalized professional relationship between an adjusted professional and others, who are maladjusted. The professional essence in a

counselling relationship is to bring the unadjusted individual back to emotional or psychological equilibriums.

Counselling is a problem oriented interaction process with the aim of increasing learning and changing behaviour. Counselling does not come in a cookie-cutter format but in sessions generally tailored towards the individuals. Counselling helps individuals who are generally normal to eliminate frustrations and obstacles that hinder development. Counselling service also aim to promote self-understanding, self-development through binary or group relationships, decision-making, self-understanding and environmental knowledge (Okumu, 2020).

Concept of Economic Stability

No nation suffering from insecurity and economic instability can think of any meaningful and sustainable development because economic stability improve the quality of life without compromising the future generations. Economic stability/security is essential to every nation to help her populace grow up in a stable environment. The cause of poverty in every human environment is the opposite of prosperity which breeds social unrest, when the rule of law truncate in a society that has all the means, abundance and terms of opportunities to its citizens then it is possible to undo injustice to its citizens (Okirigwe, 2021). Economic stability is a situation where the economy is equilibrium and when at equilibrium everyone is glad to buy sell, given the prevailing market price. It is a peaceful state of economy where there is neither waste nor scarcity of goods or services. This kind of stability has eluded the Nigerian economy for a long period of time or no redemption in sight (Oluwole, 2022). Economic stability allows people the ability to access resources essential to life, including quality affordable housing, financial resources, access to transportation, employment /work environment, food and a job that provides a stable, living wage. While instability include unemployment rates, housing and food insecurity and poverty rates (Healthy People 2020 Social Determinants of Health Organizing Framework, SDOH).

Considering the importance of stability to economic growth to mental health of the people, there's need for counsellors in every sector to attend to individual challenges in life because of psychological and behavioural responses which can increase the chances of being protected from physical and healthy exploration of the social environment. The essence of counselling in economic stability/insecurity is to assist the individual to understand their environment and to play the expected roles that could lead to peace, stability, harmony and cope with the conflict, tension, anxiety, doubt, depression, and confusion associated with economic instability (Adikwu, 2021).

There is always flexibility within this type of therapy which allows for a variety of counselling formats like:

1. **Face-to-Face Session:** This is one of the most popular therapy that provides an opportunity for one to react to any emotions that arise there and then. It is usually a person-to-person relationship aimed at helping the client understand and articulate their views on living space and learn to achieve their goals through meaningful informed choices and solving emotional or interpersonal problems.
2. **Individual/Group Session:** This is either seeing a counsellor by oneself or in group with people experiencing similar issues, it can be helpful if one want to

discuss issues with people going through similar problems and gain outside support.

3. **Telephone Counselling:** This is an alternative to face to face counselling. It involves talking to your counsellor over the phone instead of in person maybe due to busy schedule and tends to be more flexible and potentially reduce waiting list times.
4. **Online Counselling:** Some people prefer to speak to their counsellor remotely, using video call or emailing their counsellor instead. Video calling removes barrier of distance, allowing you to choose a counsellor regardless of location and from a safe space.
5. **Using a Specialized Computer Programme:** This is the use of computer to deliver some aspects of behavioural treatment directly to clients via interaction with a computer program or delivered via the Internet.

Types of Counselling

1. **Humanistic or Person-Centred Therapy:** This is focused on the person, not the problem. The goal is for the client to achieve greater independence by allowing the client to better cope with any current and future problems they may face. This requires the counsellor's genuineness or congruence, trust and emphatic understanding. That is being able to sense the feelings experienced by the client and communicate in a way that captures the client's emotion.
2. **Psychodynamic Therapy:** Is an approach that involves facilitation and a deeper understanding of one's emotions and other mental processes. It works to help people gain greater insight into how they feel, think and act. It also works on improving their relationships with other people and achieving their goals. This approach or therapy also works to help people to better understand some of the unconscious motivations that sometimes influence reasoning.(Kendra, 2021). It can be helpful in dealing with mental or emotional distress, self-reflection, social anxiety disorder, psychological disorder, depression, eating disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and emotional growth. It is often less frequent and shorter in duration.
3. **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT):** This is the combination of both cognitive and behavioural therapy in order to tackle the thought process and the resulting behaviour. It is a practical therapy that aims to break down problems into smaller, more manageable issues and also useful for those with more specific problems as it addresses each emotion separately. This therapy has been found to help a number of mental illnesses like eating disorder, substance abuse disorder and anxiety personality disorder etc (Osaro, 2021).
4. **Existential Therapy:** Is a counselling that does not place emphasis on past events like some other therapies. The existential counselling uses the past as insight. A tool to promote freedom and assertiveness, to realizing that one is not defined by their history nor destined to have a particular future but a breakthrough that offers liberation. It is a therapy that aims to explore 'meaning' and 'reality' in a more philosophical sense and how it is experienced by an individual.
5. **Non-Directive Therapy (Gestalt):** This therapy focuses strongly on self-awareness and on what is happening from one moment to the next. The here-and-now believes that self-awareness is the key to personal growth as well as developing full potential. It recognizes that sometimes negative thought can block self-awareness and behaviour that can leave people feeling dissatisfied and

unhappy. This therapy therefore, help people learn to accept and trust in their feelings and experiences to alleviate distress.

The Counsellor

The counsellor is a person who is a trained professional involved in counselling by giving advice on various difficulties/challenges on e.g. academic matters, vocational issues, and personal relationships. Counselling process as a dialogue between the counsellor and a client, it's also a co-operative process as said earlier where the trained professional helps an individual called a client or a counsellee to identify sources of difficulties or problem that he/she is experiencing. Counselling is a two way process, the counsellor can help the counsellee if he/she cooperates with the counsellor and opens up to him/her (Counsellor), otherwise counselling becomes a difficult task. However, there are certain techniques of counselling that can be followed and adopted as per the need of the situation with the counsellee. In the process of counselling, the counsellor uses some techniques of counselling to assist the client understand issues that concern him/her (Maciver, 2012).

Techniques of Counselling

1. Opening Stage: This is one of the most important aspects of counselling interaction with the client. At this stage, both the client and the counsellor get to know each other. It involves creating a rapport. At this state the counsellor builds a good relationship through acceptance, welcoming the client, offering a seat and making some pleasant statements to make the client relax and have confidence in the counsellor. The statement must reflect observation made by the counsellor e.g. if the client is sad, unhappy or moody. Creating rapport includes self-disclosure which assists the counsellor to relate better and build trust into the client.

2. Exploring State: At this stage the counsellor begins to understand the client by exploring the past and current concerns of your client through setting goals and expectations to achieve. This stage enables the counsellor to isolate and identify the problem/understanding the client by demonstrating it verbally and non-verbally. Under this stage are:

(a)**Empathy**– As the client starts talking about his/her past experiences, the counsellor listens carefully and empathizes with the client by putting his/herself in the shoes of the client. Experiencing the client's problem and the way it captures his/her emotions. This feeling and understanding is much more than sympathy, such as "I understand how you fell", "I perceive what you are going through", "I know you are pained", etc.

(b) **Silence:** Silence in counselling allows the client to speak on their issues without interruption and enables the client space to process their thoughts/feelings without distraction, giving the client control of the content, pace and objectives. The listening, sitting with them in silence facilitates the counselling process.

The Use of Silence

- Encourages clients self-exploration
- Enables the client carry on with the conversation
- Enables counsellor to re-collect his/her thoughts

- Provides natural ending to the discussion
- Enables the client to remember events, assess and values
- Space for the client to recover from emotions.
- Space for the feelings to be natured and developed.

(c) Responding: Responding in counselling implies that the counsellor's attention is focused on the client's feeling and verbal expression at all times by offering a nod of the head while listening, using um, uh, then, what happened, ok etc. these positive responding will motivate and encourage the client. Responding to content and responding to feelings implies that the counsellor responds and reacts to the client's whole problem and client's feelings especially on emotional issues.

(d) Catharsis: This can be experienced in many ways. Is a Greek word "Katharsis" meaning cleansing the body or purification. In counselling it means expression of pent-up emotion by the client, caused by sadness or happiness through weeping during a counselling session and sometimes a client may burst out laughing. He/she is cleansing the mind or body. "This is a therapy". The counsellor's response will be to empathize with the client in any of these ways "I understand how you feel" "I know it hurts", I know you will overcome this problem etc.

3. **Goal Setting Stage:** This goal setting stage is very important to the success of counselling. It involves commitment to a set of condition that is a course of action or an outcome. Goals are the results or outcomes that client wants to achieve at the end of counselling. Setting goals help the counsellor and the client determine what can and what cannot be accomplished through counselling. It helps the client identify with the counsellor specific ways to resolve the problems and course of action to be taken.

4. **Intervention Stage:** At this stage the counsellor offers comprehensive care to the client in order to modify damaged or unhealthy behaviour.

a) **Confrontation:** In counselling, confrontation is an attempt that the counsellor use to bring about awareness in the client on something he/her may have avoided or overlooked that is, when the client's statement is not consistent and the counsellor is confronting the client to do what is right.

b) **Restatement:** This technique is used in counselling to describe the client's statement such as verbal and non-verbal expressions by repeating the client's statement in your own words. This indicates that the counsellor understands what the client has said by capturing the essence of the client's statement. This rudimentary function is to provide an opportunity for clarification.

5. **The Ending Stage:** This can be called the 'Affirmation'. It is important for empowering the counsellor and encouragement to carry out the plan of action in counselling. This stage includes stating clearly and strongly the progress a client has made towards achieving a goal. However, every counselling session should end by giving the client a hope and healing. It also involves words of well-done and appreciation to the client and wave goodbye in a friendly manner.

Scope of Counselling

Clients are encouraged to meet with a counsellor if they are facing the following common problems

- a. Stress

- b. Difficulty Adjusting to Life
- c. Lack of self-Confidence or Low Self-Esteem
- d. Self-Injury
- e. Anger Management
- f. Isolation/Loneliness
- g. Depression/Apathy
- h. Gender Identity Confusion
- i. Alcohol or Drug/Substance Use
- j. Relationship Abuse
- k. Eating or Sleeping Disorder
- l. Sexual Assault/Rape Abuse
- m. Difficulty making Decisions
- n. Suicidal Thoughts
- o. Grief/Loss
- p. Family Issues
- q. Academic Performance
- r. Anxiety Disorder

The Qualities of a Good Counsellor

There are soft skills and interpersonal skills of a counsellor that will go a long way to excel in counselling. According to Ikon institutes (2018) among others are:

1. **Communication Skills:** Communication skills play a key role in a relationship with the clients. A counsellor should know how to set boundaries, communicate ideas, and provide guidance without harshness or condemnation. Counsellor's communication skill should help clients understand that they can trust you to listen and provide expert advice.
2. **Patience:** Patience is a critical trait as a counsellor because you will encounter clients who struggle to make progress or decision that do not benefit them. As a counsellor, you must have the patience to work them through their struggles so that they can find their way to a healthier life.
3. **Confidence:** Counsellors must be confident in the services they provide and how to help the client, by providing him/her with a clear guidance and assistance. A counsellor should always learn about some latest breakthroughs in the field. Confidence does not mean knowing everything there is to know but understanding how to help your clients with a plan and have confidence in your understanding.
4. **Non-Judgmental:** The counsellor should bear in mind that clients have in the past made choices that they do not agree with. However, it is not about letting them know what they have done wrong. Instead, the counsellor should focus on leading the client towards a future where they feel confident and empowered enough to make positive changes for themselves and as well feel comfortable being open.
6. **Observant:** As a counsellor, you will encounter situations where the client might not tell you the entire truth. Your power of observation can help you fill in the gaps and find way to better help your clients. Learning how to read body-language-like signs of struggling with substance abuse, indications of domestic abuse etc, can provide valuable insight into your client. It will help you guide the conversations and treatment plans to help them in the most effective way possible.

7. **Listening Skills:** Knowing how to sit and really listen to what your client has to say can help to establish trust and understanding between the counsellor and the client. It enables the client to relax, share their thoughts, emotions and experiences. The information gained as a good listener can help to better understand your client and determine his/her treatment path.
8. **Trust:** A counsellor should know that a client that comes to you is struggling in some way-such as relationship with others, mental illness, emotional/psychological issues, substance misuse etc. therefore the client have to know that the person they choose to open up to is worthy of their trust. As a counsellor, you need to let your client know they can trust you by using good listening skill, creating a welcoming environment, demonstrate your dedication to help them and also demonstrate confidentiality, that you prioritize them most.
9. **Respectful:** A counsellor, need to focus on showing your clients that you respect them as a person. A person with mental health challenges like anxiety or depression can be ashamed to speak up. As a counsellor, you can prevent that embarrassment through your response to such situation and demonstrate respect, regardless of the person's mistake. This can help guide them to overcome their shame.
10. **Acceptance:** A counsellor should demonstrate an open and accepting attitude towards their clients. A counsellor should be aware and understand that their client have experienced some form of stress and trauma but as an effective counsellor, you accept your client as they are without discrimination and help them to heal.
11. **Self-Awareness:** A good counsellor should be well aware of his/her own struggles. When dealing with common sources of trauma or stress, the issues your clients struggle with may also be issues you have intimate experience with, either personally or through someone you know. As a counsellor, you must have the self-awareness on how to separate your own experiences and use it to strengthen your own practice rather than becoming a hindrance.
12. **Appreciating Diversity:** A counsellor will encounter clients from all works of life, from variety of different backgrounds, culturally, ethnically and socio-economically, differences in gender expression and identification as well as sexuality etc. As a counsellor, you must embrace and welcome diversity, being appreciative of this diversity will help you to be open and accepting each client and give them the attention they deserve.
13. **Empathy:** Finally, a good counsellor must be empathetic while boundaries are important. The counsellor should let their clients know they are compassionate and empathic to their situation. They should demonstrate their dedication to guide them through their struggles, so that they can find their way to a healthier situation. A counsellor needs to put themselves in the shoes of their client, understanding the situation from their own point of view. Therefore as a good counsellor you have the chance to change people's lives by helping them navigate the challenges they face and equip them with the tools they need to move forward. In harnessing these important traits as part of your training, you will find out that you can greatly increase the effectiveness of your practice and the bond formed with the clients.

Challenges in Counselling

The process of counselling which entails building and maintaining ideal relationship between the client and the counsellor is a task not devoid of challenges. Some of which are as follows:

- 1. Environment:** This refers to the surrounding of the client and counsellor which consist of the availability of physical facilities such as offices, furniture, and psychological test materials etc. Counselling process should be carried out in a social environment that is threat-free, relaxed and serene setting to enhance the client's positive response and actualize full potentials.
- 2. Client's Resistance:** It is hard to build rapport when the client is not willing to open up, this hesitance could be as a result of guilt, shyness, embarrassment or skeptical about counselling. When a client manifests or expresses unwillingness to change as the helping relationship progresses, it is characterized as opposition on the part of the client to talk to the counsellor about certain or on any topic during the therapy (Effiom & Effiom, 2021).
- 3. Lack of Trust from the Client:** During counselling session, the counsellor may encounter rude, hostile clients who express lack of trust in the ability of the counsellor to solve their problems. They can deliberately skip appointments, become unyielding and disregard the counsellor through verbal expressions and behaviours examples of uncooperativeness (Clay, 2017).
- 4. Setting Relationship Limits:** This relationship is meaningful in the sense that it is personal and relevant to the counsellee who is troubled, lacks self-worth and needs help and counsellor who has knowledge and experience attributes that gives hope to the troubled client. For example, there might be a rule against physical contact in the office. However, if a client is crying uncontrollably, counsellor's instinct might be to hug the client to express empathy and understanding. The counsellor cannot do that because of relationship limits.
- 5. Setting Personal Judgments Aside:** The counsellor must be able to recognize that the client is a unique individual from all kinds of background, religious values, political stances with dignity, point of views, cultural norms, worth and rights to make choices notwithstanding the counsellors perception (Effiom, 2015). This implies that for the counselling process to be effective, the counsellor must set aside his/her beliefs, religious views, values, political stance and respect the client's view.

Conclusion

This topic discussed the place of a professional counsellor: the counsellor and the techniques of counselling, explaining the skills and competencies expected from a professional counsellor in handling various issues in the counselling relationship. The counselling process includes also the counselling formats, stages, types and qualities of a good counsellor. Counselling services facilitate self-development and understanding through one-on-one or group relationships by assisting individuals to make self-analysis, using their personality traits, interest, capabilities, abilities, achievements etc as criteria for taking actions and decisions to improve their well-being. The scope and challenges of counselling process were outlined and how the effectiveness of any counselling process lies with the counsellor; building good rapport, being empathic, listening, building trust and confidentiality.

Setting limits, setting aside personal judgments and having a conducive environment for counselling session.

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