

Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy as Determinants of ICT Competence among Professional Counselors in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigated emotional Intelligence and self-efficacy as determinants of ICT Competence among Professional Counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria. A descriptive research design of survey type was used. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested to ascertain the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. Three instruments: The emotional intelligence scale with a reliability index of 0.68; the General Self-Efficacy Scale with a 0.74 reliability coefficient; and the ICT skill scale with a 0.83 reliability coefficient were adapted for the study. The target population were all 230 professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria. A Purposive sampling technique was used to select 120 professional counsellors in Kwara State as respondents. Data collected was analyzed using inferential statistical tools of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) to test the relationship between variables of the study at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings show that there was a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and ICT competence among professional counsellors in Kwara State. The study concluded that emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are strong determinants of ICT competency but self-efficacy is stronger among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria. Hence, it was recommended among others that the university management should equip the counselling units with modern ICT tools like radio recording machines, and computers with Internet facilities to ensure professional counsellors' high emotional intelligence and maximum self-efficacy which could facilitate effective integration of ICT for the provision of counselling services to students and staff.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, ICT Competence, Professional Counsellors, Self-efficacy.

Abstrak. Penelitian ini menyelidiki Kecerdasan emosional dan efikasi diri sebagai penentu Kompetensi TIK di kalangan Konselor Profesional di Negara Bagian Kwara, Nigeria. Desain penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif jenis survei. Dua hipotesis nol dirumuskan dan diuji untuk memastikan hubungan antara variabel independen dan variabel dependen. Tiga instrumen: Skala kecerdasan emosional dengan indeks reliabilitas 0,68; Skala Efikasi Diri Umum dengan koefisien reliabilitas 0,74; dan skala keterampilan TIK dengan koefisien reliabilitas 0,83 diadaptasi untuk penelitian ini. Populasi sasarannya adalah 230 konselor profesional di Negara Bagian Kwara, Nigeria. Teknik purposive sampling digunakan untuk memilih 120 konselor profesional di Negara Bagian Kwara sebagai responden. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis menggunakan alat statistik inferensial Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefisien (PPMC) untuk menguji hubungan antar variabel penelitian pada tingkat signifikansi 0,05. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa terdapat hubungan positif yang signifikan antara kecerdasan emosional, efikasi diri dan kompetensi TIK pada konselor profesional di Negara Bagian Kwara. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kecerdasan emosional dan efikasi diri merupakan faktor penentu yang kuat terhadap kompetensi TIK, namun efikasi diri lebih kuat pada konselor profesional di Negara Bagian Kwara, Nigeria. Oleh karena itu, direkomendasikan antara lain bahwa manajemen universitas harus melengkapi unit konseling dengan alat TIK modern seperti mesin perekam radio, dan komputer dengan fasilitas Internet untuk memastikan kecerdasan emosional yang tinggi dan efikasi diri maksimal

yang dapat memfasilitasi integrasi TIK yang efektif dari konselor profesional. Untuk pemberian layanan konseling kepada mahasiswa dan staf.

Kata Kunci: Kecerdasan Emosional, Kompetensi TIK, Konselor Profesional, Efikasi Diri.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are crucial in the field of professional counselling, as they enable counsellors to effectively utilize Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for delivering high-quality services and engaging with clients. Emotional intelligence involves recognizing, understanding, and managing one's own emotions and those of others. It helps counsellors develop strong interpersonal relationships, empathize effectively, and navigate complex emotional situations with sensitivity and insight. High levels of emotional intelligence enable counsellors to handle the stress and emotional demands of their profession, demonstrating greater resilience, maintaining perspective, and reducing burnout and compassion fatigue. This long-term energy and motivation enable them to deliver consistent and effective counselling services to clients. Albert Bandura's concept of self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to accomplish a task or achieve a specific goal.

In the context of ICT competence among professional counsellors, self-efficacy plays a critical role in shaping attitudes, behaviours, and performance outcomes. Counsellors with high levels of self-efficacy in ICT are more likely to approach technological challenges with confidence and optimism, persist in the face of setbacks, and actively seek out opportunities for learning and skill development. Self-efficacious counsellors are more inclined to set ambitious goals for professional growth, take proactive steps to enhance their ICT skills and knowledge and adapt to technological advancements in the field. Their strong sense of mastery and accomplishment reinforces their motivation and commitment to continuous improvement. In essence, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are tangible assets that empower professional counsellors to excel in their use of ICT and deliver exceptional services to their clients.

The advent of information communication technology has influenced the ways and manners of doing things, it has brought a tremendous change in all sectors of the economy including the educational sector. Information communication technology is modern electrical or electronic gadgets such as computers, the Internet, radio, television, electronic projectors, flash drives, DVDs, smartphones, and social media platforms like WhatsApp among others which facilitate the counselling process. Among the benefits of ICT in education include time-saving, easy access to educative materials, e-learning platforms, and sharing of academic information and research findings among others. Consequently, counselling plays the most important role in the achievement of stated educational goals and objectives by helping students who are confronted with various concerns such as academic, social, personal and psychological challenges which impact their effective learning in and outside the school environment. It is the role of the professional counsellor to rise to the occasion by identifying such students and providing adequate alternatives to resolve the problem on time so that the students would be brought back to normal life and function more effectively.

All over the world, ICT has been deployed to provide counselling services to students or clients. Tetri and Juujärvi (2022) observed that in the care professions, innovations of digital services being put in place to assist clients are on the increase and these services allow and require clients to play a more active role in caring for their health and well-being. Hopper (2021) describes self-efficacy as the individual's confidence and ability to complete a task to attain a goal. According to Lopez-Garrido (2020), self-efficacy is an individual sense which provides the background for motivation, personal attainment and welfare. On the contrary, low self-efficacy hinders the capability and belief system of counsellors to integrate ICT tools in the counselling process. On

the other hand, emotional intelligence is another factor which may determine the ICT competence of an individual. Rocha and Santo (2015) referred to emotional intelligence as the ability to monitor individual personal and other peoples' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information. Several studies have revealed the determining power of these two concepts (emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) in ICT competence.

Tetri and Juujärvi (2022) found that Internet self-efficacy and proxy efficacy predicted the intention to use digital health and social care services. Similarly, Alias (2021) found positive factors of computer self-efficacy and online self-efficacy among undergraduate students. Abdillah et al. (2020) discovered that school counsellors adopted the use of ICT during school from home during the 2019 coronavirus. Also, Guven (2016) showed a positive relationship between the attitudes of participants and emotional intelligence. The other finding was that the attitudes of university students towards ICT and media use in learning English varied significantly according to their gender and departments. Hatlevik et al (2018) showed a positive relationship between computers and information literacy. On the relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Graduate (2018) noted that emotional intelligence is the measure of an individual's abilities to recognise and manage their emotions, and the emotions of other people, both individually and in groups while Joseph et al. (2015) discovered correlation of job performance and emotional intelligence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-efficacy of Professional Counsellors and Their Relationship with the Use of ICT in Counselling

Self-efficacy is necessary for tackling new technological challenges. Broadly, self-efficacy is a personal ability that allows one to cope with stressful conditions or carry out a given task (Bandura, 1977). Hence, those who have low self-efficacy may lack the adequate interest and initiative to acquire the ICT competencies required for learning and improving their performance, most especially the counsellors, thereby reducing their use (Elstad & Christophersen, 2017). On the contrary, high self-efficacy requires stronger self-confidence when ICTs must be used in counselling. So, the more continually professional counsellors use ICTs, the stronger their self-efficacy regarding their use will be (Rohatgi et al., 2016). Teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy are confident that they can influence the motivation of their students, and thereby, their performances (Guo et al., 2012; Zee et al., 2016). This also may apply to professional counsellors, with a strong sense of self-efficacy are self-assured that they can impact the motivation of their students or clients. Similarly, a counsellor's sense of self-efficacy can also be a determinant of their job performance, commitment, and satisfaction (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016).

Therefore, if future professional counsellors' beliefs about their self-efficacy in counselling are positive, it is more likely that their future performance will be competent (Elstad & Christophersen, 2017). Thus, stronger self-efficacy can lead to feeling motivated and to an increased use of ICTs. The acceptance model of technology shows that counsellor self-efficacy largely determines the possibility of their using ICTs in their professional counselling job. Specifically, professional counsellors' beliefs about their digital competencies, how easy they think access is, their use in counselling, and their perceived usefulness are directly involved in the use of ICTs in counselling as indicated for the teachers in education and their teaching (Antonietti, 2022). Predispositions related to personality and emotions cause people to cope with everyday situations differently. It has been demonstrated that emotional intelligence is associated with coping strategies that promote well-being, decrease psychological distress, and control negative emotions (Qualter & Gallagher, 2018; Keefer, 2018; Jurado, 2022). That is emotional intelligence, which

refers to self-perceptions and dispositions related to emotions, can help cope satisfactorily with stressful situations.

Professional Counsellor's Emotional Intelligence and the Use of ICT in Counselling

To achieve professional excellence, professional counsellors must be able to successfully manage the accumulation of emotions and work-related stress in line with the use of appropriate information and communication technology (ICT). Those with higher levels of emotional intelligence are better able to cope with emotionally charged and highly stressful work situations (Zhao et al., 2021). In addition, the use of technology in counselling can be challenging, arousing counsellors' negative feelings towards their jobs. Effectively managing these emotions is vital to maintaining performance, and equally impacts professional counsellors' sense of self-efficacy, promoting positive work behaviour (Alrajhi et al., 2017). Related to the above, the application of technology for less experienced counsellors requires the provision of resources, guidance, stimulation, and transition time (Pittman and Gaines, 2015). Thus, the reliance on technology experienced during the pandemic posed a significant challenge for many teachers and professional counsellors who experienced this change as a burden (Quezada et al., 2020).

Counsellors who are forced to use equipment and technology with which they are not comfortable experience high pedagogical stress. For most professional counsellors, the pandemic led to increased stress, anxiety, frustration, depression, and loneliness (Gupta et al., 2022), all of which have serious consequences for psychological well-being (Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2020). Conversely, the pandemic can also be seen as an opportunity for growth, a challenge rather than a threat, where effective coping involves the effective use of emotional strategies (Budimir et al., 2021; Dowling & Barry, 2020; Manasia et al., 2020). Thus, sudden changes, such as the use of technology in counselling, could be dealt with effectively by those with high emotional intelligence.

Problem of the Study

It is necessary to investigate whether the ICT competence of the professional counsellors, may be influenced by the following four indices of self-efficacy: personal accomplishment, vicarious experience, social persuasion and individual's physiological states, and whether influence of self-efficacy judgments concerning specific ICT tasks. In addition, the ICT competence of professional counsellors may also be hindered by a lack of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills. Given this, the problem being investigated in this study is to find out whether emotional Intelligence and self-efficacy are determinants of ICT Competence among professional counsellors.

Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is a relationship between emotional intelligence and ICT competence

Ho₂: There is a relationship between Self-Efficacy and ICT competence

Ho₃: There is a simultaneous relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy towards ICT competence

METHODOLOGY

This paper investigated emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy as determinants of ICT competence among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria: Evidence from CASSON, Kwara State, Nigeria. A descriptive research design of survey type was used. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested to ascertain the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. This study used three adapted instruments for data collection. The first instrument is the Emotional Intelligence (EI) Questionnaire designed by Gerald (2003) measuring four domains of emotional intelligence viz. Self-awareness, Self-Management, Social-

Awareness & Social-Skills and these were included for domains of the scale. The instrument contains 48 items on emotional intelligence. The study used the validity of the EI scale by Dr. Ekta with a reliability of 0.68. The second instrument is The General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by researchers Schwarzer and Jerusalem in 1981, the two leading experts in self-efficacy (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The scale contains 10 items rated on a scale from 1 (Not at all true) to 4 (Exactly true) but 9 items were adapted. The score is by summing up the response to each item. The total was between 10 and 40, with higher scores indicating higher self-efficacy. The last instrument was the ICT competence scale adapted from Türel et al. (2017). It contains 16 items on the ICT competence of counsellors. The target population was all 230 Counsellor Association of Nigeria (CASSON) Kwara State branch members. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 120 participants considering the ethical issue. The adapted questionnaire instruments were physically administered and retrieved from voluntary professional counsellor participants which gives a 100% return rate. Data collected was analyzed using inferential statistical tools of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) to test the relationship between the emotional intelligence and ICT competence of professional counsellors. Also, to investigate the relationship exists between self-efficacy and ICT competence of professional counsellors as variables of the study at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This session presents the research results based on the research hypotheses raised and tested for the study.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and ICT competence among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 1. Results of PPMC on the relationship between emotional intelligence and ICT competence among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria

Variable	Mean	Std.	N	Df.	r-cal.	r-crit.	Sig.
Emotional Intelligence	10.85	0.84	120	118	0.72	0.99	0.00
ICT Competence	13.51	0.92					

** Significant at 0.05 critical region

Table 1 shows that the calculated r value 0.72 is positive and less than the r-crit. of 1.00 (r-cal. = 0.72 < r-crit. = 0.99). Therefore, hypothesis **H_{o1}** is rejected. Hence, there is a strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and ICT competence among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and ICT competence among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 2. Results of PPMC on the relationship between self-efficacy and ICT competence among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria

Variable	Mean	Std.	N	Df.	r-cal.	r-crit.	Sig.
Self-Efficacy	10.54	0.84	120	118	0.63	1.00	0.00
ICT Competence	9.33	0.92					

** Significant at 0.05 critical region

Table 2 shows that the calculated r value 0.63 is positive and less than the r-crit. of 1.00 (r-cal. = 0.63 < r-crit. = 1.00). Therefore, hypothesis **H_{o2}** is rejected. Hence, there is a strong positive

relationship between self-efficacy and ICT competence among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study found that there is a very strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and ICT competence among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria. The result means that self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills are determinants of ICT competence among the professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria. This finding correlates with Martínez-Martínez et al. (2020) correlation study which revealed that there was a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and student academic performance but there was also a negative relationship regarding cyber victimization. Wong and Low (2002) noted that emotional intelligence has a relationship with satisfaction and the ability to handle stress. Joseph et al. (2015) discovered a correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance.

Furthermore, the study revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between self-efficacy and ICT competence among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria. This implies that personal accomplishment, vicarious experience, social persuasion and individual physiological states are positive determinants of ICT competence among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria. This result concurred with Tetri and Juujärvi (2022) that Internet self-efficacy and proxy efficacy predicted the intention to use digital services. Alias (2021) noted that factors of computer self-efficacy and internet self-efficacy positively and significantly influenced IEO among Bumiputra University students. Abdillah et al. (2020) discovered that school counsellors accept the use of ICT during school from home in the Covid-19 era. Also, Hatlevik et al. (2018) concluded that ICT self-efficacy is positively related to computer and information literacy.

The study on the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and ICT competence among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria, provides valuable insights but has several limitations. Firstly, the sample size and representation of the research may have been limited, potentially restricting the generalizability of the results to a broader population. To address this, future research should aim to include a more diverse and extensive sample that encompasses counsellors from various regions within Nigeria.

Secondly, the methodology employed in the study may have introduced biases and inaccuracies in the data collected. Researchers should consider incorporating objective measures and multi-method approaches to enhance the robustness of the findings. A cross-sectional design may also pose a limitation in establishing causal relationships between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and ICT competence among professional counsellors. A longitudinal study design would be more beneficial in capturing the dynamic nature of these constructs over time and elucidating the directionality of the relationships observed. Lastly, the study's focus on professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria, may limit the generalizability of the findings to counsellors in other cultural or regional contexts. Cultural and contextual factors play a significant role in shaping individuals' emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and ICT competence, and researchers should be mindful of these influences when interpreting the results.

To address these limitations and further advance the understanding of the relationships between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and ICT competence among professional counsellors, researchers can consider the integration of multiple theoretical frameworks, exploring potential mediating factors, and designing training and development programs that enhance counsellors' emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and ICT skills. Practitioners and policymakers should also consider the cultural and contextual factors that may influence counsellors' emotional

intelligence, self-efficacy, and ICT competence and tailor interventions and support mechanisms accordingly.

CONCLUSION

Based on the outcomes of the research hypotheses, the study concluded that emotional intelligence is a strong determinant of ICT competency among professional counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study also concluded that emotional intelligence, which involves recognizing, understanding, and managing one's own emotions and those of others, is crucial in the counselling field. Emotional intelligence also enhances counsellors' communication skills, allowing them to leverage ICT tools for effective client engagement and collaboration. Based on the conclusion, the study recommended that the professional counsellor association, university management and government should equip the counselling units with modern ICT tools such as radio recording machines, and computers with Internet facilities and also give regular trainings and workshops on ICT integration in the counselling profession. This would ensure high emotional intelligence which could facilitate effective integration of ICT for the provision of counselling services to students and the general public. This would not only enhance the self-efficacy of professional counsellors but also maximize the integration of ICT tools in counselling services for students and other clients.

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