

School Counsellors' Attitudes and Knowledge of Tele-Counselling Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools, Abuja Municipal Area Council, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the attitudes and knowledge of school counsellors regarding the efficacy of tele-counselling in public secondary schools in the Abuja Municipal Area Council. This study employed a descriptive survey design to examine the level of acceptance and knowledge of school counsellors of the concept of tele-counselling in public secondary schools in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). One hundred and five (105) registered school counsellors completed questionnaires that collected information on their demographic profiles, attitudes towards tele-counselling, knowledge of its use and benefits, and potential implementation challenges. Results indicate a generally favourable attitude towards tele-counselling, with 76.2% indicating that it is a good substitute for in-person counselling and 71.4% noting that it could increase student access. However, counsellors had varying levels of confidence and knowledge, particularly regarding confidentiality and technical problem-solving. Awareness of appropriate platforms and ethical issues was generally high, whereas the myth of complete confidentiality in tele-counselling remained prevalent. A significant and positive relationship was found ($r = 0.70$, $p < 0.001$) between counsellors' knowledge and their belief in the effectiveness of tele-counselling. The main barriers identified were technical problems, lack of training, privacy, resource constraints, and poor institutional support. The study highlights the importance of capacity building, infrastructure development, policy guidance, and awareness-raising among students and parents to make tele-counselling in secondary schools as effective as possible. These results illustrate the opportunities and challenges of integrating tele-mental health into school mental health services in a Nigerian educational setting. The study recommended that Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Secondary Education Board and AMAC Education Authorities should prioritise structured capacity building for school counsellors. Also, AMAC-specific in-service training workshops should be organised to equip practising counsellors with basic digital skills, familiarity with tele-counselling platforms, and knowledge of ethical practice in online counselling.

Keywords: *Tele-counselling, counsellors, secondary schools, tele-counselling efficacy*

Introduction

School counselling remains a critical component of the secondary school system, particularly in addressing students' academic, career, personal, and socio-emotional development. In Nigeria, school counsellors are often required to perform multiple roles beyond counselling, including classroom teaching and administrative duties, while simultaneously supporting students' psychosocial needs. This multiplicity of roles, coupled with high student–counsellor ratios and limited institutional support, has continued to constrain the effectiveness of school counselling services in public secondary schools.

Globally, the roles and functions of school counsellors are shaped by cultural context, educational policies, counselling models, and national priorities. The American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) conceptualises school counselling as a comprehensive service aimed at fostering students' academic success, career readiness, personal growth, self-awareness, and positive behavioural outcomes. However, international evidence indicates considerable variation in counsellors' responsibilities and service delivery models across countries, reflecting differences in policy frameworks, professional standards, and educational systems (Harris, 2013; Martin *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, defining and strengthening school counselling practice remains both a professional and policy concern worldwide.

In recent years, tele-counselling has emerged as an innovative approach to expanding access to school-based mental health services. Tele-counselling refers to the provision of counselling services through digital technologies such as video conferencing, telephone calls, and secure online platforms (Kidd, 2020). Within school settings, tele-counselling offers potential benefits including increased accessibility, flexibility in service delivery, continuity of care during disruptions, and the ability to overcome geographical and infrastructural barriers. These advantages are particularly relevant to Nigerian public secondary schools, where shortages of trained counsellors, inadequate facilities, and uneven service coverage remain persistent challenges (Elborai & Othman, 2021).

Despite its promise, the adoption of tele-counselling in Nigerian public secondary schools remains limited. One critical determinant of successful integration is school counsellors' readiness, which is largely influenced by their attitudes and knowledge regarding the effectiveness of tele-counselling. In this study, attitude refers to counsellors' perceptions, beliefs, and dispositions towards the usefulness and acceptability of tele-counselling as a

mode of service delivery, while knowledge encompasses counsellors' understanding of the technical, ethical, and practical requirements for delivering counselling services through digital platforms. Perceived efficacy relates to counsellors' judgments about the extent to which tele-counselling can effectively meet students' counselling needs.

Existing literature suggests that counsellors' attitudes towards technology significantly affect their willingness to adopt digital interventions. Positive attitudes facilitate acceptance and integration into practice, whereas negative perceptions may act as barriers to adoption (Adewale & Olaniyan, 2019). Equally important is counsellors' level of knowledge and competence in tele-counselling, including awareness of ethical standards, confidentiality issues, digital platforms, and strategies for managing technical disruptions. Without adequate knowledge and training, counsellors may be reluctant or ill-prepared to deliver effective tele-counselling services, even when they recognise its potential benefits (Davis, 2020).

From a policy perspective, Nigeria has articulated commitments to integrating information and communication technology (ICT) into education through documents such as the National Policy on Education, the National ICT in Education Policy, and various school guidance and counselling frameworks. These policies emphasise the use of digital tools to enhance teaching, learning, and student support services. However, there is limited clarity on how tele-counselling should be operationalised within public secondary schools, and existing counselling frameworks have not sufficiently addressed digital or remote service delivery. This policy–practice gap further complicates counsellors' adoption of tele-counselling and underscores the need for empirical evidence to guide implementation.

Notably, there is a paucity of empirical studies examining school counsellors' attitudes, knowledge, and perceptions of the effectiveness of tele-counselling within Nigerian public secondary schools, particularly in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). This gap is concerning given the growing mental health needs of adolescents and the structural challenges facing school counselling services, including inadequate funding, limited in-service training opportunities, infrastructural deficits, and safety concerns (Ogunyemi & Akinola, 2018). Without empirical insights into counsellors' readiness and perceived barriers, policy initiatives and professional development efforts risk being poorly aligned with on-the-ground realities.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to appraise school counsellors' attitudes and knowledge regarding the perceived efficacy of tele-counselling in public secondary schools within AMAC. By focusing on

counsellors' perceptions rather than clinical outcomes, the study provides critical insights into the human and institutional factors that may facilitate or hinder the integration of tele-counselling into school mental health services. The findings are expected to inform evidence-based policy formulation, targeted training programmes, and strategic planning to strengthen school counselling practice and expand equitable access to student mental health support in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

School counselling services are an integral component of the Nigerian educational system, expected to support students' academic, personal, social, and career development. However, public secondary schools in Nigeria, including those within the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), continue to face persistent challenges that limit the effectiveness of conventional, face-to-face counselling services. These challenges include high student–counsellor ratios, inadequate counselling facilities, insufficient funding, limited opportunities for professional development, and increasing psychosocial needs of students in a rapidly changing, technology-driven society. As a result, many students who require timely counselling support are underserved.

Tele-counselling has emerged globally as a viable alternative or complementary approach to traditional counselling, offering opportunities for increased accessibility, flexibility, and continuity of care, particularly in contexts where physical, logistical, or resource constraints exist. In Nigeria, tele-counselling holds considerable promise for addressing gaps in school-based mental health services, especially in urban settings such as AMAC where digital technologies are increasingly available. Despite this potential, the adoption and effective implementation of tele-counselling in public secondary schools remain limited.

A critical factor influencing the successful integration of tele-counselling into school settings is the attitude and knowledge of school counsellors. Counsellors' perceptions of tele-counselling effectiveness, their understanding of its ethical, technical, and practical requirements, and their confidence in using digital platforms can either facilitate or hinder its acceptance and utilisation. Negative attitudes, inadequate knowledge, misconceptions about confidentiality, and limited competence in managing technical challenges may lead to resistance or ineffective use of tele-counselling services, thereby undermining its potential benefits for students.

Although studies have examined counsellors' roles and challenges within the Nigerian educational system, there is a paucity of empirical research focusing

specifically on school counsellors' attitudes and knowledge regarding the effectiveness of tele-counselling, particularly within the Abuja Municipal Area Council. This gap in the literature limits evidence-based policy formulation, training interventions, and strategic planning for integrating digital counselling services in secondary schools.

Therefore, the problem addressed by this study is the limited understanding of how school counsellors' attitudes and knowledge influence their perceptions and acceptance of the effectiveness of tele-counselling in public secondary schools in AMAC. Without such understanding, efforts to leverage tele-counselling to improve access to school mental health services may remain fragmented, ineffective, or unsustainable. This study seeks to bridge this gap by systematically examining counsellors' attitudes and knowledge, identifying existing barriers, and providing empirical evidence to inform policy, capacity building, and the effective integration of tele-counselling into school counselling practice in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of school counsellors' attitudes and knowledge on the efficacy of tele-counselling in public secondary schools in the Abuja Municipal Area Council, Nigeria. Specifically, this study:

- i) Assessed the attitude and knowledge of school counsellors towards the efficacy of tele-counselling in public secondary schools in Abuja Municipal Area Council.
- ii) Established a relationship between Knowledge and Perceived Efficacy of Tele-counselling.
- iii) Ascertained the relationship between attitude and perceived efficacy of tele-counselling in public secondary schools in Abuja Municipal Area Council.
- iv) Examined the perceived challenges and barriers faced by school counsellors in implementing tele-counselling services in Nigerian secondary schools.

Theoretical and Empirical Literature Review

Tele-counselling, also referred to as telepsychology or e-counselling, involves providing counselling and psychological services through information and communication technologies, such as telephone calls, video conferencing, email, and web-based platforms (American Psychological Association [APA], 2013). The concept of telepsychology is rooted in the broader framework of telemedicine, which seeks to extend healthcare services beyond traditional physical settings using digital tools. In educational contexts, tele-counselling has gained prominence as a means of

increasing access to mental health support, especially in environments constrained by limited personnel, infrastructure, or geographical barriers.

Theoretically, tele-counselling aligns with systems theory, which views counselling as an interaction between individuals and their environments, including technological systems. By leveraging digital platforms, tele-counselling restructures the counselling environment, allowing counsellors and students to interact despite physical separation. Additionally, person-centred counselling theory (Rogers, 1957) supports tele-counselling, as core conditions such as empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness can still be communicated through digital media when appropriately managed.

Empirical studies indicate that tele-counselling can be as effective as face-to-face counselling for addressing a wide range of psychological, academic, and emotional concerns among adolescents (Barak *et al.*, 2008; Richards & Viganó, 2013). During the COVID-19 pandemic, global reliance on tele-counselling significantly increased, with evidence suggesting improved continuity of care and expanded reach to underserved populations (Wind *et al.*, 2020). In school settings, tele-counselling has been shown to enhance accessibility, reduce stigma, and allow flexible scheduling for students (Elborai & Othman, 2021).

In the Nigerian context, however, tele-counselling remains relatively underutilised in public secondary schools. Studies suggest that while counsellors acknowledge its potential benefits, implementation is hindered by limited training, infrastructural deficits, and uncertainty about ethical standards (Adewale & Olaniyan, 2019). This underscores the need to examine counsellors' perceptions of the effectiveness of tele-counselling within specific local contexts, such as AMAC.

Attitude plays a critical role in the adoption and effective use of new technologies in professional practice. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989) provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding counsellors' attitudes towards tele-counselling. TAM posits that an individual's intention to use a technology is primarily determined by two factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In the context of tele-counselling, counsellors are more likely to adopt digital counselling platforms if they believe such tools enhance counselling effectiveness and are easy to operate.

Similarly, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) explains that attitudes towards behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural

control jointly influence behavioural intentions. Applied to school counselling, counsellors' attitudes towards tele-counselling, institutional expectations, and perceived competence in using digital tools collectively shape their willingness to engage in tele-counselling practice.

Empirical evidence consistently shows that positive attitudes towards technology correlate with higher adoption rates and sustained use. For instance, Alotaibi *et al.* (2020) found that counsellors with favourable perceptions of digital tools were more open to integrating tele-counselling into routine practice. In Nigeria, Ogunyemi and Akinola (2018) reported that resistance to innovation among school personnel often stems from fear of technology, lack of exposure, and inadequate institutional support.

Furthermore, studies conducted in African educational settings reveal that counsellors' attitudes are influenced by age, years of experience, access to technology, and prior training (Lasode *et al.*, 2017). Counsellors who perceive tele-counselling as a threat to traditional counselling relationships or confidentiality tend to demonstrate negative attitudes, which in turn limit its adoption. Therefore, understanding counsellors' attitudes towards tele-counselling is essential for the successful integration of technology in school counselling services.

Knowledge and competence are central to the effective delivery of tele-counselling services. From a theoretical standpoint, competency-based counselling models emphasise that counsellors must possess adequate technical, ethical, and clinical competencies to function effectively in digital environments (Corey *et al.*, 2015). Digital counselling competence includes familiarity with online platforms, ability to manage virtual therapeutic relationships, understanding of data security, and skills for handling technological disruptions.

Empirically, research shows a strong relationship between counsellors' knowledge of tele-counselling and their confidence in its effectiveness. Davis (2020) observed that counsellors with higher levels of digital literacy and prior exposure to online counselling training demonstrated greater self-efficacy and more positive perceptions of tele-counselling outcomes. Similarly, a study by Abaa *et al.* (2022) in Nigeria revealed that counsellors who had participated in ICT-related professional development were more willing to explore innovative counselling approaches.

Despite increasing awareness of tele-counselling, gaps remain in counsellors' practical knowledge, particularly regarding platform selection, online assessment techniques, crisis intervention, and the maintenance of therapeutic

boundaries in virtual settings. Misconceptions—such as the belief that tele-counselling guarantees complete confidentiality—persist among some practitioners, highlighting the need for structured training and clear professional guidelines.

In Nigerian public secondary schools, the absence of formal tele-counselling modules in counsellor education programmes further exacerbates knowledge gaps. This deficiency limits counsellors' readiness to implement tele-counselling effectively, even when positive attitudes are present. Hence, examining counsellors' knowledge and competence is crucial for understanding the efficacy of tele-counselling in school settings.

Ethical considerations are paramount in tele-counselling practice, particularly when working with minors in school environments. Ethical frameworks provided by professional bodies such as the APA (2013) and the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) emphasise issues of confidentiality, informed consent, data protection, professional boundaries, and competence. In tele-counselling, these issues are compounded by the use of digital platforms that may be vulnerable to data breaches or unauthorized access.

Theoretically, ethical decision-making models in counselling suggest that practitioners must balance client welfare, professional standards, and contextual constraints when adopting new service delivery methods. Inadequate understanding of ethical requirements can undermine the effectiveness and credibility of tele-counselling services.

Empirical studies identify ethical concerns as major barriers to tele-counselling adoption. Richards and Viganó (2013) reported that counsellors often worry about privacy breaches, difficulty managing emergencies remotely, and challenges in obtaining parental consent for minors. In Nigeria, Elborai and Othman (2021) noted that weak regulatory frameworks and limited awareness of digital ethics heighten counsellors' apprehension towards tele-counselling.

Infrastructural challenges further compound ethical issues. Poor internet connectivity, irregular power supply, lack of digital devices, and inadequate technical support remain significant obstacles in Nigerian public schools (Ogunyemi & Akinola, 2018). These limitations not only disrupt counselling sessions but also raise concerns about equity and access, as not all students can benefit equally from tele-counselling services.

Collectively, ethical and infrastructural challenges highlight the need for comprehensive policy frameworks, investment in digital infrastructure, and

continuous professional development to support the effective and ethical implementation of tele-counselling in Nigerian secondary schools.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey design, which enabled systematic data collection on counsellors' attitudes and knowledge regarding tele-counselling. The survey approach enabled efficient quantitative data collection, providing a broad understanding of counsellors' perceptions within the target population.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study used a purposive inclusion framework to define the target population, in addition to a total enumeration (census) sampling technique. Using this method, all 105 secondary school counselors in Abuja's public and private secondary schools who met the study's specific inclusion criteria were included. Schools in the major districts of Abuja, such as Garki, Wuse, Maitama, Asokoro, and Gwarinpa, were deliberately included in the sample to ensure that it accurately represented the administrative and socioeconomic diversity of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). These included well-known private institutions as well as important governmental institutions run by the FCT Secondary Education Board (SEB). Since the entire eligible population was accessible, highly localized, and relatively small, it was deemed appropriate to adopt total enumeration, which made it completely possible to include all qualifying counselors. Because the entire target population comprised the final study sample, neither a traditional sampling fraction nor a random sampling process was necessary. By avoiding selection bias and eliminating sampling error, this method greatly improved the representativeness and generalizability of the findings to the larger group of secondary school counselors working in the Abuja metropolis.

Inclusion Criteria

To be captured in the selection, counselors had to meet the following purposive parameters:

- i) Possess a bachelor's degree in guidance and counseling or a similar field of study.
- ii) Currently work as a registered counselor in a secondary school in the city of Abuja.
- iii) Have worked as a counselor at their current institution for at least a year.

Data Collection Instruments

To obtain the data needed for this study, a structured questionnaire was designed to assess school counsellors' attitudes and knowledge of tele-

counselling. The instrument was divided into four sections, each measuring a distinct construct relevant to the study objectives. The psychometric properties of each section are described below.

Section A: Demographic Information

Section A elicited background information from respondents, including age, gender, highest educational qualification, years of counselling experience, professional registration status, and category of public secondary school in which the counsellor was employed (junior, senior, or combined junior/senior). This section was included to provide context for respondents' professional profiles and to enable subgroup analyses where necessary.

Section B: Attitudes Toward Tele-counselling

Section B measured respondents' attitudes towards tele-counselling. Items assessed counsellors' perceptions of the usefulness, practicality, and acceptability of tele-counselling, as well as their willingness and self-confidence in using digital platforms to provide counselling services. Sample items included statements such as "Tele-counselling can effectively substitute face-to-face counselling sessions in schools" and "I feel confident providing counselling services through digital platforms." Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating a more positive attitude towards tele-counselling. Content validity was established through expert judgment, ensuring that items adequately covered the attitude construct. A pilot test of the instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating good internal consistency and reliability for the attitude scale. This value meets the acceptable reliability threshold recommended for social science research.

Section C: Knowledge of Tele-counselling

Section C assessed counsellors' knowledge of tele-counselling. The items comprised multiple-choice and true/false questions designed to measure respondents' understanding of core tele-counselling concepts, available digital platforms, ethical and confidentiality issues, and basic technical competencies required for effective online counselling. Typical items included statements such as "*Certain online platforms are appropriate for delivering tele-counselling services*" and questions relating to data protection and confidentiality safeguards. Correct responses were scored as 1, while incorrect or "don't know" responses were scored as 0, with higher total scores reflecting greater knowledge of tele-counselling.

Content validity was ensured through alignment with established tele counselling guidelines and literature, and expert validation by counselling

and ICT specialists. The reliability of the knowledge section was determined using the Kuder–Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20), appropriate for dichotomously scored items. The analysis produced a reliability coefficient of 0.76, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

Section D: Perceived Challenges and Barriers to Tele-counselling

Section D examined counsellors' perceptions of challenges and barriers associated with the implementation of tele-counselling in public secondary schools. Items addressed issues such as inadequate training, poor internet connectivity, lack of institutional support, ethical concerns, privacy issues, and infrastructural limitations. Sample statements included *"Insufficient training limits my ability to effectively use tele-counselling"* and *"Inadequate infrastructure hinders the effective delivery of tele-counselling services."* Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating greater perceived barriers.

The barrier scale demonstrated strong content validity following expert review. Reliability analysis from the pilot study yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85, suggesting high internal consistency and reliability of the scale.

Before collecting the main data, ten counsellors from other schools who were not included in the main study piloted the questionnaire. This pilot testing allowed us to test the clarity of questions, stability of responses and the general validity of the instrument. The feedback from this procedure resulted in modifications to enhance the clarity and accuracy of the instrument.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was administered using both direct (face-to-face) and online approaches to ensure broad coverage and a high response rate. Prior to data collection, official permission was obtained from the relevant education authorities and school heads within public secondary schools in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The purpose of the study was clearly explained to all participants, and they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

The questionnaires were distributed personally to the 105 selected school counsellors with the assistance of school heads and guidance coordinators in the respective schools. This personal administration helped to clarify any concerns raised by respondents and enhanced cooperation. In situations where counsellors were unavailable for physical contact or where logistical

constraints existed, the questionnaire was administered via online platforms using a secure electronic form.

Participants were given a period of two weeks to complete and return the questionnaires. To enhance the response rate and minimise non-response bias, follow-up reminders were issued through phone calls, text messages, and electronic notifications. At the end of the stipulated period, all administered questionnaires were retrieved and found suitable for analysis, yielding a 100% response rate. This systematic approach ensured effective data collection and adequate representation of the target population.

Data Analysis

Method of Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 26.0, was used to conduct both descriptive and inferential analyses of data gathered from 105 secondary school counselors. The final analysis sample comprised 105 individuals after the data purification procedure eliminated incomplete responses. Descriptive statistics were used for research questions 1, 2, and 5, which examined counselors' attitudes, knowledge levels, and institutional impediments, respectively. To analyze individual item responses across the five-point Likert scale options—strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree—frequency and percentage distributions were computed.

To ascertain the items' central tendency and dispersion, the mean and standard deviation were also calculated. A theoretical mean of 3.0 was set as the baseline for the five-point weighing scale, with strongly agree assigned a value of 5 and strongly disagree a value of 1. Items with a mean score of 3.0 or more indicated high prevalence or agreement, whereas items with a mean score of less than 3.0 indicated low prevalence or disagreement. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to examine the relationship between the study variables for research questions 3 and 4. In particular, research question four examined the relationship between knowledge of tele-counseling and perceived efficacy, whereas research question three examined the relationship between attitudes toward tele-counseling and perceived efficacy. Standard behavioral science thresholds were used to assess the strength of correlation coefficients: values between 0.10 and 0.29 were regarded as weak, between 0.30 and 0.49 as moderate, and between 0.50 and 1.0 as strong or high. Lastly, the statistical significance of these directional associations was examined and confirmed at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant educational authorities and the institutional review board.

Results

Research Question 1: What are school counsellors' attitudes towards the efficacy of tele-counselling in public secondary schools in Abuja Municipal Area Council?

Table 1:

Attitudes of school counsellors towards the perceived efficacy of tele-counselling in public secondary schools in Abuja Municipal Area Council

Statement	SA (Strongly Agree)	A (Agree)	U (Undecided)	D (Disagree)	SD (Strongly Disagree)	Mean Score
Tele-counselling can effectively replace face-to-face counselling.	35 (33.3%)	45 (42.9%)	10 (9.5%)	10 (9.5%)	5 (4.8%)	4.0
I am confident in my ability to deliver tele-counselling services.	20 (19.0%)	40 (38.1%)	15 (14.3%)	20 (19.0%)	10 (9.5%)	3.4
Tele-counselling is as effective as traditional face-to-face counselling.	30 (28.6%)	40 (38.1%)	15 (14.3%)	10 (9.5%)	10 (9.5%)	3.8
Tele-counselling improves students' access to counselling.	40 (38.1%)	35 (33.3%)	15 (14.3%)	10 (9.5%)	5 (4.8%)	4.0
Tele-counselling poses privacy and confidentiality challenges.	15 (14.3%)	20 (19.0%)	25 (23.8%)	30 (28.6%)	15 (14.3%)	2.8

School counsellors' views on the pros and cons of tele-counselling vary. For the statement "Tele-counselling may effectively replace face-to-face counselling," 76.2% of counsellors strongly agreed (33.3%) or agreed (42.9%), with a mean score of 4.0. This indicates a positive view of tele-counselling's ability to replace traditional approaches. Counsellors were less confident in tele-counselling: 19.0% strongly agreed, 38.1% agreed, and 28.5% were undecided or disagreed. Our mean score was 3.4, showing that while many counsellors are willing, others are uncertain or unprepared. With a mean score of 3.8, 66.7% agreed or strongly agreed that tele-counselling

was more successful than face-to-face counselling. While most therapists find tele-counselling useful, some are wary about comparing it to in-person counselling. A substantial majority (71.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that tele-counselling increases students' access to counselling (mean = 4.0). Final comments on tele-counselling privacy and confidentiality were divided. 33.3% agreed or strongly agreed that it poses obstacles, 42.9% disagreed, and 23.8% were undecided. Privacy concerns are recognised but not universally perceived as a substantial barrier, as seen by the lower mean score of 2.8. The research shows optimism about tele-counselling's role in education, while highlighting areas such as counsellor confidence and privacy that may require additional support and training.

The findings relating to the first research question revealed that school counsellors generally perceived tele-counselling as a promising approach to counselling service delivery in public secondary schools within the Abuja Municipal Area Council, although some reservations remained regarding counsellors' confidence and privacy issues. A substantial proportion of the respondents (76.2%) either strongly agreed (33.3%) or agreed (42.9%) that tele-counselling could effectively replace face-to-face counselling, with a mean score of 4.0. This finding reflects a generally positive perception of tele-counselling as a practical alternative to conventional counselling, particularly in situations where physical interaction may be limited. The result is consistent with Smith *et al.* (2021), who reported increasing acceptance of technology-based counselling within educational settings. It also supports the view of García and Weiss (2020) that tele-counselling provides an accessible means of delivering mental health services when face-to-face counselling is disrupted by geographical limitations or public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although respondents demonstrated favourable perceptions towards tele-counselling, their confidence in providing such services was comparatively lower. While 57.1% of the counsellors either strongly agreed (19.0%) or agreed (38.1%) that they were confident in delivering tele-counselling, a sizeable proportion (28.5%) remained undecided or expressed disagreement, resulting in a mean score of 3.4. This suggests that acceptance of tele-counselling does not necessarily translate into confidence in its practical delivery. The finding may be attributed to limited practical experience, inadequate training, or uncertainty about adapting traditional counselling skills to virtual environments. Similar observations were reported by Békés and Aafjes-van Doorn (2020), who emphasised the importance of targeted professional training in strengthening counsellors' competence for online practice. Simpson *et al.* (2021) likewise noted that familiarity with digital

platforms contributes significantly to counsellors' confidence in providing effective virtual counselling.

The findings further showed that 66.7% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that tele-counselling could be as effective as face-to-face counselling, with a mean score of 3.8. Although this reflects a generally positive perception of its effectiveness, the moderate mean score suggests that some counsellors remain cautious about equating online counselling with conventional face-to-face practice. This finding agrees with Backhaus *et al.* (2012) and Shore *et al.* (2018), who reported that tele-counselling can achieve outcomes comparable to face-to-face counselling when appropriately implemented. Nevertheless, concerns relating to therapeutic alliance, limited non-verbal communication, and crisis management continue to influence counsellors' perceptions of the effectiveness of remote counselling, as observed by Gros *et al.* (2013).

Another important finding was that 71.4% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that tele-counselling improves students' access to counselling services, with a mean score of 4.0. This high level of agreement reinforces one of the widely recognised advantages of tele-counselling, namely its ability to overcome barriers associated with geographical distance, transportation, scheduling difficulties, and shortages of qualified counselling personnel. Consequently, tele-counselling has the potential to extend mental health services to students who may otherwise have limited access to professional support. This finding supports the observations of Langarizadeh *et al.* (2017) and Myers *et al.* (2017), who highlighted improved accessibility as one of the major strengths of tele-counselling, particularly within underserved and resource-constrained settings.

The findings on privacy and confidentiality, however, revealed more diverse opinions among the respondents. Only 33.3% agreed or strongly agreed that tele-counselling poses challenges to privacy and confidentiality, whereas 42.9% disagreed and 23.8% remained undecided, producing a relatively lower mean score of 2.8. These responses suggest that although privacy concerns are recognised by some counsellors, they are not universally perceived as a major obstacle to the adoption of tele-counselling. Nevertheless, the variation in responses indicates the need for greater awareness of ethical issues relating to confidentiality in online counselling practice. This finding is consistent with Torous and Roberts (2017), who emphasised the importance of protecting client information within digital counselling environments. Likewise, Reamer (2018) stressed that clear institutional policies, secure communication platforms, and continuous

ethical training remain essential for safeguarding confidentiality during tele-counselling sessions.

Research Question 2: What is the level of knowledge of school counsellors regarding the perceived use and benefits of tele-counselling in public secondary schools in Abuja Municipal Area Council?

Table 2:
Level of knowledge of school counsellors regarding the use and benefits of tele-counselling?

Knowledge Item	SA (Strongly Agree)	A (Agree)	U (Undecided)	D (Disagree)	SD (Strongly Disagree)	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)
Which platforms are suitable for tele-counselling?	35 (33.3%)	45 (42.9%)	10 (9.5%)	10 (9.5%)	5 (4.8%)	4.0	0.8
Tele-counselling guarantees complete confidentiality. (False)	20 (19.0%)	40 (38.1%)	15 (14.3%)	20 (19.0%)	10 (9.5%)	3.4	1.2
Relevant ethical guidelines for tele-counselling	30 (28.6%)	40 (38.1%)	15 (14.3%)	10 (9.5%)	10 (9.5%)	3.8	1.0
Using confidentiality settings on platforms	40 (38.1%)	35 (33.3%)	15 (14.3%)	10 (9.5%)	5 (4.8%)	4.0	0.9
Managing technical disruptions	15 (14.3%)	20 (19.0%)	25 (23.8%)	30 (28.6%)	15 (14.3%)	2.8	0.7

The findings related to Research Question 2 indicate varying levels of knowledge among school counsellors regarding the use and benefits of tele-counselling. A significant majority exhibited awareness regarding suitable platforms for tele-counselling, with 76.2% either strongly agreeing or agreeing (mean score = 4.0, SD = 0.8). This demonstrates a solid comprehension of the technical tools utilized in remote counselling. The assertion that “Tele-counselling guarantees complete confidentiality” is inaccurate. Only 57.1% (19.0% strongly agree + 38.1% agree) accurately identified this issue, whereas 28.5% were either undecided or disagreed,

indicating a degree of confusion or misunderstanding regarding confidentiality assurances in tele-counselling. A mean score of 3.4, accompanied by a standard deviation of 1.2, indicates variability in knowledge within this important ethical domain. The familiarity with pertinent ethical guidelines for tele-counselling was moderately high, as evidenced by 66.7% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with their knowledge of these guidelines (mean = 3.8, SD = 1.0), indicating a level of awareness alongside the potential for enhancement. Counsellors demonstrated a strong understanding of confidentiality settings on tele-counselling platforms, with 71.4% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this item (mean = 4.0, SD = 0.9), reflecting their familiarity with practical measures to safeguard privacy during sessions. Knowledge regarding managing technical disruptions was notably low, with only 33.3% of respondents expressing agreement or strong agreement about their expertise. The majority remained undecided or disagreed, yielding a mean score of 2.8 and a standard deviation of 0.7. This indicates a notable deficiency in readiness to address typical technical issues encountered in tele-counselling.

The results concerning the degree of knowledge of school counsellors about the use and the benefits of tele-counselling demonstrate that knowledge is not uniform across particular domains. Many counsellors reported having good knowledge in identifying the appropriate platforms for tele-counselling (76.2%), with a mean score of 4.0 (SD = 0.8). This implies that most counsellors are acquainted with the technology needed for practical remote counselling sessions, which aligns with findings highlighting the significance of digital literacy in tele-counselling (Glueckauf *et al.*, 2018).

The findings also revealed some uncertainty regarding confidentiality in tele-counselling. Although 57.1% of the respondents correctly recognised that tele-counselling does not guarantee complete confidentiality, 28.5% were either undecided or disagreed, while the mean score of 3.4 (SD = 1.2) reflected noticeable variation in respondents' knowledge. This suggests that although many counsellors appreciate the ethical limitations associated with online counselling, misconceptions still exist regarding the extent to which confidentiality can be guaranteed within virtual environments. Since confidentiality remains a fundamental ethical principle in counselling practice, inadequate understanding of its limitations may affect both professional practice and clients' confidence in tele-counselling services. This finding is consistent with Barnett (2019), who emphasised the ethical responsibilities associated with protecting client information in telehealth services. Similarly, Reamer (2018) highlighted the need for continuous professional guidance and training to strengthen counsellors' understanding of privacy and confidentiality in digital counselling environments.

Knowledge of the ethical guidelines governing tele-counselling was also encouraging. The findings showed that 66.7% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they were familiar with the relevant ethical guidelines, with a mean score of 3.8 (SD = 1.0). Although this reflects a satisfactory level of awareness among many of the respondents, it also indicates that there remains room for improvement in ensuring that all school counsellors possess adequate knowledge of professional standards guiding online counselling practice. The finding supports the position of the American Counselling Association (2014), which emphasises the importance of ethical competence in the delivery of tele-counselling services and the need for continuous professional development to promote adherence to established ethical principles.

In contrast, respondents demonstrated comparatively lower knowledge regarding the management of technical disruptions during tele-counselling. Only 33.3% agreed or strongly agreed that they possessed adequate knowledge of handling technical challenges, resulting in a mean score of 2.8 (SD = 0.7). This finding indicates that many school counsellors may not be adequately prepared to respond effectively when technological difficulties occur during counselling sessions. Such challenges have the potential to interrupt communication, reduce the quality of counselling, and affect the continuity of service delivery. This finding agrees with Reese *et al.* (2016), who identified technological disruptions as one of the common challenges affecting the effectiveness of tele-counselling. The result therefore underscores the importance of providing counsellors with practical training that equips them with the necessary skills to anticipate, manage, and minimise the impact of technical difficulties during online counselling sessions.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between attitude and perceived efficacy of tele-counselling in Abuja Municipal Area Council public secondary schools?

Table 3:
Pearson Correlation between Attitudes and Perceived Efficacy of Tele-counselling

Variables	No	Df	R	Significance (p-value)
Attitudes Toward Tele-counselling	105	208	0.65	0.000
Perception of Tele-counselling's Effectiveness	105			

The Pearson *r* value of 0.65 indicates a moderately strong positive relationship. This suggests that as counsellors' attitudes become more

positive, they perceive tele-counselling as more effective in supporting students.

The attitudes of school counsellors in Abuja reflect a positive outlook on the role of tele-counselling in education, with hopes of increasing access and providing a viable alternative to traditional counselling. However, it also highlights key areas such as counsellor confidence and privacy concerns that need to be addressed through professional development, technical support, and policy guidelines to enable tele-counselling to be fully effective and acceptable.

The findings relating to Research Question 3 revealed a moderate positive relationship between school counsellors' attitudes towards tele-counselling and their perception of its effectiveness ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that counsellors who hold more favourable attitudes towards tele-counselling are more likely to perceive it as an effective approach for supporting students. The strength and statistical significance of the relationship suggest that counsellors' attitudes play an important role in shaping how they evaluate the effectiveness of tele-counselling within the school setting.

This finding is consistent with Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, which proposes that individuals who develop positive attitudes towards a particular behaviour are more likely to form favourable intentions towards engaging in that behaviour. Within the context of this study, counsellors who view tele-counselling positively are more likely to appreciate its value, perceive it as effective, and demonstrate greater willingness to incorporate it into counselling practice. Similar findings have been reported by Yellowlees *et al.* (2018) and Pierce *et al.* (2020), who observed that clinicians with positive attitudes towards telehealth services generally expressed higher levels of confidence, satisfaction, and belief in the effectiveness of these interventions.

The observed relationship further suggests that improving counsellors' attitudes towards tele-counselling may contribute to stronger perceptions of its effectiveness. Negative perceptions arising from concerns about privacy, technological challenges, or difficulties in establishing therapeutic relationships may reduce counsellors' willingness to embrace tele-counselling and influence how effective they perceive it to be. This position is supported by Simpson and Reid (2014), who noted that issues relating to confidentiality, technology, and therapeutic engagement can shape practitioners' attitudes towards online counselling. Consequently, addressing these concerns through appropriate interventions may help strengthen counsellors' confidence and acceptance of tele-counselling.

The findings also highlight the importance of continuous professional development and institutional support in promoting positive attitudes towards tele-counselling. Providing counsellors with relevant training, opportunities for peer learning, and access to reliable technological resources can improve their familiarity with online counselling platforms and enhance their confidence in delivering virtual counselling services. Gibson *et al.* (2021) similarly emphasised that increased exposure to appropriate technology and professional support contributes to more positive attitudes towards tele-counselling practice. As counsellors become more confident and competent in using digital counselling platforms, they are more likely to recognise the benefits of tele-counselling in improving accessibility, flexibility, and continuity of counselling services. This observation supports Glueckauf *et al.* (2018), who highlighted these advantages as important factors influencing the successful implementation of tele-counselling within educational settings.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between Knowledge and Perceived Efficacy of Tele-counselling?

Table 4:

Pearson Correlation between Knowledge and Perceived Efficacy of Tele-counselling

Variables	No	Df	r	Significance (p-value)
Knowledge of Tele-counselling	105			
Perception of Tele-counselling Effectiveness	105	208	0.70	0.000

The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.70$) indicates a strong positive relationship, confirming that this relationship is highly statistically significant. This implies that school counsellors with more knowledge about tele-counselling tend to view it as more effective in supporting. This finding is consistent with existing literature, which identifies knowledge as an important factor influencing the acceptance and effective use of technology-based counselling interventions. King *et al.* (2020) reported that counsellors who received adequate training on tele-counselling platforms and ethical considerations expressed greater confidence in delivering remote counselling services and were more likely to regard tele-counselling as a practical alternative to face-to-face counselling. Similarly, Nelson and Bui (2010) observed that increased familiarity with telehealth technologies reduced providers' anxiety towards the use of technology and encouraged greater acceptance and adoption of telehealth innovations.

The finding also supports the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which proposes that users' acceptance of technology is influenced by their perceptions of its usefulness and ease of use (Davis, 1989). Within the

context of this study, counsellors who possess adequate knowledge of the technical, ethical, and practical aspects of tele-counselling are more likely to perceive it as both useful and effective. This level of understanding may also increase their willingness to integrate tele-counselling into routine counselling practice and strengthen their confidence in its ability to meet students' counselling needs.

The strong relationship observed in this study further highlights the importance of continuous professional development for school counsellors. Providing regular training opportunities can help improve counsellors' knowledge, address existing knowledge gaps, and strengthen positive perceptions of tele-counselling. This position is supported by Gibson *et al.* (2021), who emphasised that continuous education and training enhance knowledge, improve perceptions of tele-counselling services, and encourage their effective utilisation. Furthermore, Reay *et al.* (2020) noted that the rapid expansion of telehealth during and after the COVID-19 pandemic has made it increasingly important for counsellors to maintain current knowledge and competencies required for effective tele-counselling practice.

Research Question 5: What are the main challenges and barriers school counsellors face in implementing tele-counselling in Abuja Municipal Area Council public secondary schools?

Table 5:

School Counsellors' Responses on Key Challenges and Barriers in Tele-counselling (N = 105)

Challenge	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	SD
Technical Issues	42	38	10	9	6	4.00	0.98
Lack of Training	45	35	12	8	5	4.01	0.96
Confidentiality & Privacy	39	37	13	11	5	3.89	1.02
Limited Engagement	41	36	14	9	5	3.94	0.99
Limited Resources	43	34	15	8	5	3.97	0.98
Institutional Support	40	33	17	10	5	3.89	1.00
Perceived Effectiveness	38	36	15	10	6	3.87	1.02
Client Readiness & Acceptance	44	32	13	10	6	3.95	1.01

Poor internet connectivity, shortage of equipment, and technical issues discouraged 42 counsellors who strongly agreed and 38 who agreed, suggesting that inadequate technical infrastructure hinders tele-counselling. The highest mean score related to inadequate training, indicating that a lack of training in ethical standards is the most significant difficulty and underscoring the need for professional development. Many counsellors were also concerned about the privacy of students attending sessions remotely, reflecting growing concerns regarding virtual data security and secrecy.

Virtual sessions may be less effective if students struggle to participate and maintain attention, and counsellors observed that students typically lack calm, secluded spaces for therapy, a further logistical hurdle to privacy and focus. Many respondents believed that schools lack the administrative support, regulations, and procedures needed for effective tele-counselling. Some practitioners were also hesitant to use remote counselling because they doubted its efficacy compared with face-to-face alternatives, while students and parents may be uncomfortable with the technology or with tele-counselling itself.

The findings revealed several challenges affecting the implementation of tele-counselling by school counsellors in public secondary schools within the Abuja Municipal Area Council. The results suggest that although tele-counselling offers considerable opportunities for expanding counselling services, its effective implementation is constrained by technical, professional, institutional, and client-related factors that require attention.

Technical challenges emerged as one of the major barriers to tele-counselling implementation. A large proportion of the respondents strongly agreed (42) or agreed (38) that poor internet connectivity, inadequate technological devices, and technical difficulties hinder the effective delivery of tele-counselling services. This finding supports previous studies which identified inadequate technological infrastructure as a significant obstacle to the successful implementation of tele-counselling, particularly in environments where digital resources are limited (Yellowlees *et al.*, 2018; Gibson *et al.*, 2021). The finding suggests that reliable technological infrastructure remains a fundamental requirement for effective online counselling service delivery.

Lack of adequate training was identified as the most significant challenge, with the highest mean score ($M = 4.01$). This finding indicates that many counsellors perceive insufficient preparation in the use of tele-counselling technologies, ethical requirements, and online counselling techniques as a major limitation to effective practice. Without adequate training, counsellors may experience reduced confidence in delivering virtual counselling services, which could ultimately affect the quality of support provided to students. This finding agrees with Glueckauf *et al.* (2018), who emphasised the importance of continuous professional development in equipping counsellors with the competencies required for effective tele-counselling practice.

Privacy and confidentiality also emerged as important concerns among the respondents ($M = 3.89$). Many counsellors expressed concern about maintaining students' privacy during remote counselling sessions, particularly when students participate from environments that may not

guarantee confidentiality. This finding highlights the ethical responsibilities associated with protecting clients' personal information during online counselling and is consistent with Simpson and Reid (2014), who noted that maintaining confidentiality presents additional challenges within virtual counselling environments. Similarly, Lester and Spear (2007) and Lester (2013) emphasised the importance of establishing trust by assuring students that counselling sessions remain confidential and that sensitive concerns can be discussed within a secure and supportive environment.

The findings further showed that student participation presented another important challenge, with a mean score of 3.94. Respondents indicated that maintaining students' attention and active participation during virtual counselling sessions can be difficult, potentially reducing the effectiveness of tele-counselling interventions. In addition, the availability of quiet and private spaces for students to participate in counselling sessions was identified as a challenge ($M = 3.97$). These findings suggest that environmental factors outside the counsellor's control may influence both students' engagement and the overall quality of tele-counselling sessions. Pierce *et al.* (2020) similarly reported that maintaining client engagement remains an important consideration in virtual counselling practice.

Institutional support was another area identified by respondents as requiring improvement ($M = 3.89$). Many counsellors reported that schools lacked sufficient administrative support, as well as clear policies and operational guidelines to facilitate the implementation of tele-counselling services. The absence of these institutional structures may hinder the successful integration and long-term sustainability of tele-counselling within school settings. This finding is consistent with Gibson *et al.* (2021), who highlighted the importance of organisational support in promoting the effective implementation of tele-counselling programmes.

The findings also revealed mixed perceptions regarding the effectiveness of tele-counselling, with some respondents remaining uncertain about whether it could achieve outcomes comparable to face-to-face counselling ($M = 3.87$). Such reservations may reflect limited knowledge of tele-counselling practice or concerns about developing therapeutic relationships within virtual environments. Simpson and Reid (2014) similarly reported that concerns relating to therapeutic alliance and the quality of online interactions may influence counsellors' acceptance of tele-counselling. Furthermore, respondents identified client readiness and acceptance as another important challenge ($M = 3.95$), noting that resistance or discomfort among students and parents could limit the successful adoption and effectiveness of tele-counselling services. This finding agrees with Glueckauf *et al.* (2018), who

recognised client acceptance as an important factor influencing the successful implementation of tele-counselling.

Overall, the findings indicate that although tele-counselling has considerable potential to improve access to school-based counselling services, addressing the challenges identified in this study remains essential for its successful implementation. Strengthening technological infrastructure, providing continuous professional training, developing clear institutional policies, safeguarding privacy and confidentiality, and improving student and parent acceptance will contribute to more effective and sustainable tele-counselling services within schools.

Conclusion

This study examined school counsellors' attitudes and knowledge regarding the perceived effectiveness of tele-counselling in public secondary schools within the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The findings indicate that counsellors generally hold favourable perceptions of tele-counselling as a potentially useful and accessible counselling modality, particularly in addressing challenges such as high student-counsellor ratios and limited physical counselling facilities. However, these positive perceptions coexist with varying levels of confidence, knowledge gaps, and concerns related to ethical practice, confidentiality, technical competence, and infrastructural adequacy.

Importantly, the study does not suggest that tele-counselling is already effective in practice within AMAC schools; rather, it highlights counsellors' beliefs, perceptions, and readiness to engage with tele-counselling. In line with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), counsellors' perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, and behavioural control were found to be central to their willingness to adopt tele-counselling. These perceptions are shaped by contextual realities specific to AMAC, including uneven access to digital infrastructure, limited institutional support, and the absence of clear operational guidelines for school-based tele-counselling.

The study therefore concludes that while tele-counselling is perceived positively by many counsellors in AMAC, its sustainable adoption in public secondary schools will depend on targeted policy support, structured capacity building, and institutional alignment within Nigeria's educational and counselling frameworks.

Based on the findings of our study, the implications and limitations are as follows.

Implications of the Study

The results of this study have significant ramifications for future research, counseling practice, educational policy, and counselor training.

First, there is significant opportunity to incorporate technology-mediated counseling services into public secondary schools in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), as evidenced by the generally positive views of school counselors toward tele-counseling. This suggests that tele-counseling could be used alongside traditional face-to-face counseling, especially when physical access to counseling services is limited by distance, emergencies, health issues, or school closures.

Second, there is a strong positive correlation between counsellors' perceptions of the efficacy of tele-counselling and their knowledge of it. This suggests that counselors' acceptance and efficient use of tele-counselling are likely to be improved by enhancing their skill and knowledge. Therefore, educational authorities and professional counseling associations should prioritize ongoing professional development programs focused on digital counseling competencies, online communication skills, ethical practice, confidentiality, crisis intervention, and the use of secure telecounseling platforms.

Third, the need for comprehensive regulations and operational standards governing tele-counseling in Nigerian secondary schools is underscored by concerns regarding confidentiality, technological proficiency, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient institutional support.

Fourth, the results emphasize the importance of schools investing in digital infrastructure. Successful implementation requires secure tele-counseling platforms, sufficient information and communication technology facilities, dependable internet access, and technical support systems. Despite positive views among counselors, the efficacy of tele-counseling may remain restricted in the absence of these enabling tools.

Fifth, the results also affect counseling education programs at Nigerian universities. To effectively prepare future counselors for modern practice, educational institutions that train professional counselors should incorporate tele-counseling competences, digital ethics, virtual counseling approaches, and developing mental health technologies into their curricula.

Limitations of the Study

Certain limitations should be noted, even though this study offers insightful information about school counselors' attitudes and understanding of tele-counseling.

The public secondary school counselors of the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) were the only participants in the study. As a result, the findings might not apply to counselors employed by private secondary schools, other Area Councils in the Federal Capital Territory, or other Nigerian states, which may have different educational settings, technology infrastructure, and institutional support. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used in the study to gather data all at once. Because of this, the study describes current associations but is unable to prove a causal relationship between counselors' evaluations of the efficacy of tele-counseling and their knowledge.

Additionally, rather than evaluating counselors' actual proficiency or real-world experience in providing tele-counseling services, the study evaluated their perceived knowledge and attitudes. As a result, positive attitudes do not always indicate competence in leading successful online counseling sessions. Additionally, the study's main focus was on the viewpoints of counselors. The opinions of kids, parents, school administrators, and legislators—all significant players in the deployment of tele-counseling services—were excluded. A more thorough grasp of the advantages and difficulties of tele-counseling in schools might have been possible with the inclusion of these groups. These restrictions and consequences are in line with your findings and are suitable for a journal article or postgraduate dissertation. Additionally, they inevitably result in suggestions for future research, practice, and legislation.

Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest the need for carefully targeted, context-sensitive recommendations that reflect the institutional realities of the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria's education and counselling policy environment, and the perceptual determinants of technology adoption as explained by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

First, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Secondary Education Board and AMAC Education Authorities should prioritise structured capacity building for school counsellors. In the short term, AMAC-specific in-service training workshops should be organised to equip practising counsellors with basic digital skills, familiarity with tele-counselling platforms, and knowledge of ethical practice in online counselling.

In the long term, tele-counselling should be formally integrated into the official school counselling service framework for FCT public schools, with dedicated budgetary provisions for digital infrastructure and technical

support, thus reinforcing counsellors' perceptions of usefulness and sustainability. Second, at the policy level, the Federal and State Ministries of Education should provide clearer direction for the adoption of tele-counselling in schools. In the medium term, the Ministries should collaborate with professional bodies such as the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) to develop comprehensive national ethical guidelines for school-based tele-counselling, with specific provisions for working with minors, parental consent, confidentiality, and data protection. Also, school administrators, including principals and vice-principals, play a critical role in shaping counsellors' readiness to adopt tele-counselling. The tele-counselling should be institutionalised as an integral component of school wellness and student support programmes, thereby normalising its use and strengthening behavioural intention and actual practice. Counsellor education and training institutions, including universities and colleges of education, should take responsibility for preparing both pre-service and in-service counsellors for digital counselling practice.

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