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APPLICATION OF INFORMATION AND COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES IN COUNSELLING SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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All sectors of Nigerian economy now find solace in the application of information and computer technologies in delivering quality and prompt services. Educational sector is one of the sectors where technology application is being embraced. One of the areas where technology is being applied is in the provision of psychological services to youths and children in the areas of educational, socio-personal and vocational developments. The applications of information and computer

technologies in counselling and psychological guidance although critical, must be carried out minding the ethical implications especially in university and college counselling centres. One way to ameliorate the danger in application of information and computer technologies in counselling service delivery is to first understand how the specific system or device functions. Knowing how technology works is crucial in evaluating how best to protect the information that may pass through it. There are a number of obvious examples of unacceptable disclosure that counsellors should avoid, such as conversations concerning clients on cell phones and others. It is paramount that counsellors using information and computer technologies in service delivery to keep abreast of improved technologies that may reduce the associated risks at reasonable cost. Counsellors are under obligations to discuss with clients the risks inherent in the use of Internet and other information and computer technologies facilities and abide by the clients' wishes regarding preferred methods of communication. There is evidence that many counselling centres in Nigerian universities adopt computer technologies in keeping records. However, in other countries of the world information and computer technologies offer more than record keeping. There are virtual counselling, e-counselling, online counselling and e-therapy which are flexible, accessible and convenient. The interactive features of websites have also provided greater opportunity to offer help using technically mediated platform to the students. The mobile phone, social media and e-mail, alongside face-to-face facilities such as Skype and teleconferencing are useful platforms that support both individual and group counselling. This study therefore examined the rate of adoption, prospects and challenges of information and computer technologies in counselling service delivery in Nigerian universities. Survey design was adopted and forty universities were randomly selected across six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The distribution revealed that 50% were federal universities, 30% state universities and 20% private universities. The finding revealed that all the universities sampled adopted information and computer technologies in keeping records while only 10% used information and computer technologies facilities to book appointment with the clients. The study concluded that the application of information and computer technologies in counselling delivery in Nigerian universities is still marginal. Numerous factors are responsible for this development. These include low level of skills on the part of staff and students, shortage of electricity supply, limited access to internet etc. It was recommended that government and other regulatory bodies should come up with policy that will mandate application of information and computer technologies in counselling centres because of its numerous advantages.

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