

COUNSELLORS' PERCEPTION ON ENHANCING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TRAINING IN THE THERAPEUTIC COUNSELLING RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract

The study investigated counsellors' perception on enhancing emotional intelligence training in the therapeutic counselling relationship. The study adopted the mixed - method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of counsellors' perceptions of emotional intelligence (EI) training in therapeutic counselling. The quantitative component involved a structured questionnaire, while the qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with practicing counsellors. The target population for this study comprised practicing counsellors across various counselling settings (e.g., clinical, educational, organizational) in the federal capital territory Abuja. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 150 participants based on their willingness to be part of the study. A researcher developed instrument titled "Counsellors Perception on Enhancing Emotional Intelligence Training in Therapeutic Counselling Relationship Questionnaire" (EEITTCRQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts. The instrument was tested for internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha Statistics and reliability coefficient of 0.70 considered high enough was gotten. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.5 level of significance. Findings revealed that emotional intelligence training enhance such skills as self-awareness, empathy among others. It was recommended that emotional intelligence training is essential in counselling and should be incorporated into counselling education.

Keywords: Counsellors, Perception, Emotional Intelligence, Therapeutic, Counselling Relationship.

Introduction

In the present expeditious psychological health field, the role of guidance counsellors cannot be over-emphasised. It is important to note that with the burgeoning knowledge and attention on psychological health, guidance counsellors are charged with the pivotal role of promoting mental, emotional as well as the psycho-social well-being of individuals. They achieve this by assisting clients with emotional, mental and psycho-social problems to navigate through their challenges in order to achieve proper coping and personal growth. Thus, for counsellors to properly perform the above stated functions effectively, emotional intelligence training becomes (EIT) paramount. Research revealed that emotional intelligence is of utmost importance to counsellors as it enables them to identify the client's strengths and weaknesses, thereby providing input on whether the client is improving or not (Ciarrochi & Scott, 2006). Junainah (2009), asserts that for any counsellor to function effectively and efficiently a high level of emotional intelligence is key. Also, Ghazali, Noah, Hassan, and Jaafar (2017), asserts that emotional intelligence is a vital factor in assisting counsellors in making perceptions of their own emotions and those of clients. Odaci, Değerli, and Bolat, (2017), maintains that emotional intelligence (EI) encompasses self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation as well as social skills. "Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage your emotions, as well as recognize and influence the emotions of those around you" (Landry, 2019). EI also enables a counsellor to manage emotions in a manner in which emotions, reactions, or biases of the counsellor do not get in the way of the therapy. This helps the patients feel secure to express themselves freely (Paulraj et al, 2021.) Emotional intelligence is the clincher for effective counselling influencing the therapist's interaction with clients and shaping the treatment process. "An emotionally intelligent therapist understands how to walk the high-wire balance of human feelings with grace, enabling clients to hear that they are heard and assisted in healing. Acquiring emotional intelligence (EI) strengthens the ability of counsellors to interact with clients, guide their own emotional responses, and facilitate real change" (Hilts, Liu and Luke, 2022). Following the above definitions, the researchers define emotional intelligence (EI), as the decisive or causal factor in therapeutic relationship which enables the counsellor to effectively and efficiently recognize and interpret the client's problem while managing the emotions that ensues appropriately for effectual counselling.

Md (2011) in her study stated that the emotional intelligence mastery by counsellors influences the way they think as well as determines the line of actions during counselling relationships. A study by Ghazali et al (2017) showed that emotional intelligence training is very important among trainee counsellors so that the roles and responsibilities of helping clients' well-being can be properly addressed. This he maintained is owing to the fact that, the ability of a counsellor to control the emotional capacity during counselling session affects client's ability to control and manage his own emotions. Thus, the clients feel secured to express themselves freely during counselling. Following the above, Bali-Mahomed et al (2022), revealed that counsellors' face challenges which revolves around workplace, home environment, administration, parenting

and self-deprivation. Such challenges affect the counsellor's emotions and often result to a decline in the quality-of-service delivery. Thus, emotional intelligence training becomes necessary for high quality counselling.

The researchers concur with the above reports because counsellors are human beings who also encounter different challenges in their day – to – day activities ranging from family, workplace, relationships, communities where they reside among others. Thus, emotional intelligence is cardinal in helping them to assist themselves by putting the feelings emanating from their personal challenges on check before they can be in a good position to assist the clients who look up to them as their ‘solution providers’. Therefore, emotional intelligence training is fundamental and should be made a prerequisite for counsellors if counselling should advance to the next level in Nigeria and other developing countries of the world.

Research consistently shows higher emotional intelligence equips counsellors with skills which makes them to be more effective in their roles. They are better equipped to build strong therapeutic alliances, navigate complex emotional landscapes, manage stress, and facilitate meaningful change in their clients. Additionally, it comprises of a number of key components which are crucial for effective therapeutic relationship especially in the understanding and management of emotions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Train Smart, 2024).

Therapeutic relationship is a connection between a therapist and a client that is built on trust, mutual respect, and a sense of hope. It provides a safe space for the client to express themselves freely without judgment and allows for collaboration in the therapeutic process (Price, 2017).

Following the above definition (Caitlin and Tyler 2024), sees therapeutic relationship as the cornerstone of talk therapy which is fundamentally built on trust, empathy, collaboration, and mutual respect to create a safe environment for clients to delve into their experiences and foster personal growth while the therapist maintains s professional and ethical boundaries. Similarly, Comstock (2024), expound it as a” professional connection between a therapist and a client that is grounded on trust, confidentiality, and respect. This relationship allows clients to share their thoughts and feelings while therapists provide support, guidance, and interpretation of those experiences”. In line with the above definitions, the researchers deduce therapeutic relationship as the bedrock of psychotherapy which essentially requires the counsellor or therapist to provide a supportive and an enabling environment capable of motivating the client to open up on their concerns, establishment of trust, empathic understanding of the client’s problem, good communication and synergy which leads to a positive counselling outcome.

Daniel Goleman in Train Smart (2024), outlined five critical elements of emotional intelligence which include the following: empathy, establishing rapport, motivation, effective communication, self – awareness and conflict resolution. These critical elements underscore the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering a strong and effective therapeutic alliance, which is foundational for successful therapeutic outcomes. Similarly, Silvi, (2021), identified

the critical elements of emotional intelligence to include; building rapport and trust, developing self-awareness, communication, managing and promoting emotional development in client.

The researchers see the above critical elements of emotional intelligence as key in counselling. This is because they afford the counsellors the opportunity and room to create an enabling and supportive atmosphere for clients during counselling or therapeutic relationship which include establishment of rapport, empathic understanding of the clients' problems or concerns, building of trust and active listening. Such enabling environment helps the clients to open up to the counsellor on their concerns without withholding any part thereby, achieving the goal of counselling. Any therapeutic relationship where the counsellor or therapist lacks the skills necessary for creating an enabling environment needed for the client to open up to his concerns is as good as nothing hence, reaffirming the need for emotional intelligence in therapeutic relationship.

Lang (2024), illustrated the practical application of emotional intelligence in counselling relationship with the following case studies: Jane, a 35-year-old woman, sought counselling to address her struggles with anxiety and relationship difficulties. She often felt overwhelmed by her emotions and had difficulty managing conflicts with her partner. Her therapist, had high emotional intelligence and employed different emotional intelligence -based strategies to assist her which include: Establishment of Rapport and Trust by creating a warm and empathetic environment. She made use of active listening and validated Jane's feelings, which helped Jane feel understood and safe. This strong therapeutic alliance was foundational for Jane's progress.

Emotional Awareness and Reflection: the therapist demonstrated this by guiding the client (Jane) to explore her emotional experiences as well as identify patterns in her emotional responses. Through reflective exercises and journaling, the client developed greater self-awareness and began to understand the triggers and underlying causes of her anxiety.

Emotional Regulation Techniques: the therapist introduced the client to mindfulness practices and cognitive-behavioural techniques to enable her manage her anxiety. she learned how to make use of deep breathing exercises to calm herself during moments of stress and how to reframe negative thoughts to reduce their emotional impact.

Empathy and Perspective-Taking: the therapist assisted the client in developing empathy and perspective-taking skills, which improved her ability to understand her partner's feelings and viewpoints. This enhanced her communication skills and reduced conflicts in her relationship.

Motivation and Goal-Setting: To keep her motivated, the therapist worked with her to set achievable goals and celebrated her progress. This approach kept her committed to the therapeutic process and maintained her motivation for personal growth. The rate of her anxiety gradually reduced over time while the relationship with her partner improved. She became more proficient at managing her emotions and resolving conflicts constructively. The above case study

by Lang (2024), underscores how emotional intelligence can be effectively integrated into the therapeutic process to enhance client outcomes.

Following the above reported case study, the researchers maintain that emotional intelligence is an indispensable tool in therapeutic process which should be harnessed among counselling through training. Many of the counsellors used in this study perceive emotional intelligence as a skill that is pivotal to effective therapeutic counselling relationship. However, many counsellors are lacking in the skill and there is urgent need to enhance the training among practicing counsellors as well as the counsellors in training. Therefore, the need to amplify emotional intelligence training for all counsellors in Nigeria and other developing countries of the world to improve the quality of counselling profession cannot be overemphasized.

Parveen and Shafiq (2014), study of theoretical and empirical perspectives which examined the importance of emotional intelligence in the counselling and psychotherapy professions in India. The results of the study show that emotional intelligence influences self-development in producing a quality and effective counsellor. Thus, the study found the need to create special training for trainee counsellors to ensure the quality of the counselling profession in the future.

Similarly, Lewis (2019), analysed the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and the Self Efficacy of counselling students in Group Counselling. Continuing, he maintained that counsellors with higher emotional intelligence are capable of delivering quality counselling to their clients as they imbibe qualities such as empathy, reflection on feelings and building interpersonal relationships required to respond effectively to patient needs.

Also, Mustafa et al (2013), studied the level of emotional intelligence and competence of secondary school counselling teachers and found that it creates a significant relationship. The study involved a total of 52 teachers and the relationship between the study variables showed moderate significance. Additionally, Gutierrez and Mullen (2016) studied the relationship between emotional intelligence and counsellors' stress levels and their impact on mental health. The findings of the study revealed that the higher the counsellor's level of intelligence, the lower their stress levels. This study proves that an understanding of emotional intelligence is important for every counsellor to be able to control and manage emotions appropriately.

In line with the above reports, Ghazali, Noah, Hassan, and Jaafar, (2017), conducted a study on the influence of well-being, emotional and spiritual intelligence, as well as self-efficacy on the self-development of trainee counsellors. The purpose of the study was to identify the factors which influence the self-development of counsellors. Undergraduates counselling students at five public universities in Nigeria were sampled and used for the study. It was a correlational study and the findings revealed a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and the self-development of student counsellors.

Overall, many studies have shown the importance of emotional intelligence to self-development and the quality of the counselling profession. Therefore, this issue should be taken seriously by many parties, especially institutions of higher learning, lecturers, and the counselling board to improve the quality of counselling and the quality of counsellors

themselves. According to a study by Md (2011), individuals with a high level of emotional intelligence will be more aware of the surrounding situation, happier, healthier, and successful in their respective fields.

In the same vein, Martin, Easton and Wilson (2024), investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and counselling self-efficacy. The participants for the study included 140 counselling students and practicing counsellors. The instrument for data collection was the Emotional Judgment Inventory and the Counselling Self- Estimate Inventory. Emotional Intelligence differentiated counsellors from the non- counsellor's category but it provided mixed results while differentiating counselling students and practicing counsellors. The factors of emotional intelligence such as Identifying Own Emotions, Expressing Emotions Adaptively, and Using Emotions in Problem Solving successfully predicted counselling self-efficacy in both the counselling students and the practicing counsellors. It was concluded that Emotional Intelligence may be another marker for individuals exploring professional counselling as a career and for improving student's counselling self-efficacy.

Going by the above discussions, the role of emotional intelligence in therapeutic counselling cannot be over exaggerated. However, despite the vital role it plays in therapeutic counselling relationship many counsellors are either oblivious of its effectiveness or lack the proper knowledge regarding its application. Thus, based on the background, the researchers investigated counsellors' perception on enhancing emotional intelligence training in the therapeutic counselling relationship.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the burgeoning reputation on the pivotal role emotional intelligence (EI) plays in fostering effective therapeutic counselling relationship, there remains limited knowledge on counsellors' perception and integration of emotional intelligence training within the counselling relationship. Emotional intelligence which is the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively, plays a vital role in building rapport, empathy, and trust between counsellor and client. However, to what extent counsellors value and adopt emotional intelligence (EI) training is vague. Also, access to training and the specific challenges they encounter in its application are not to be neglected. An insight into counsellors' perceptions, the capacity for enhancing therapeutic outcomes through emotional intelligence may be underutilized. Therefore, this study seeks to explore counsellors' perceptions on enhancing emotional intelligence (EI) training in the therapeutic counselling relationship in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja

Research Questions

- * What are counsellors' perceptions of the importance of emotional intelligence in the therapeutic counselling relationship?

- * How do counsellors perceive the impact of emotional intelligence training on their therapeutic effectiveness?
- * What challenges do counsellors face in integrating emotional intelligence training into their professional development?

Hypotheses (For Quantitative or Mixed Methods)

H₁: Counsellors with higher levels of perceived emotional intelligence report greater confidence in managing therapeutic relationships.

H₂: There is a positive correlation between the amount of EI training received and counsellor's perceived ability to manage emotionally charged sessions.

H₃: Counsellors perceive time constraints and lack of institutional support as significant barriers to implementing EI training.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of counsellors' perceptions of emotional intelligence (EI) training in therapeutic counselling relationship. The quantitative component involved a structured questionnaire, while the qualitative component consists of semi-structured interviews with practicing counsellors.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study comprises practicing counsellors across various counselling settings (e.g., clinical, educational, organizational) in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants with a minimum of two years of counselling experience. Approximately one hundred and fifty (150) counsellors participated in the survey. Ten (10) counsellors who participated in the survey were also selected for in-depth interviews based on their willingness and availability.

Data Collection Methods

For the quantitative data collection, an adapted questionnaire was administered to the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of items on demographic information, familiarity with emotional intelligence concepts; perceived importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in therapy, and attitudes toward emotional intelligence (EI) training. For the qualitative data semi-structured interviews was conducted to investigate counsellors' personal experiences and perceptions about emotional intelligence (EI) training and the role it plays in therapeutic counselling relationship. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire was Likert-scale items which were adapted from established emotional intelligence scales (e.g., the Emotional Quotient Inventory, EQ-I) and developed items relevant to emotional intelligent (EI) training in therapeutic counselling relationship. The instrument was validated by experts in the fields of Guidance and Counselling as well as Measurement and

Evaluation. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency across qualitative interviews, focusing on counsellors' views, experiences, and suggestions related to emotional intelligence (EI) training. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The average reliability coefficient showed a value of .83 which is considered highly reliable and adequate for the study.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data was analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (e.g., t-tests, ANOVA, regression analysis) to examine relationships between variables such as years of experience and perceptions of emotional intelligence (EI) training. Qualitative Data was analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes in participants' narratives.

Results

Research Questions 1: What are counsellors' perceptions of the importance of emotional intelligence in the therapeutic counselling relationship?

Table 1: *Counsellors' Perceptions of the Importance of Emotional Intelligence in the Therapeutic Counselling Relationship*

Statement Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
EI helps to develop stronger therapeutic rapport	52%	41%	5%	2	0%	4.52	0.67
EI helps me to regulate my emotional response when dealing with clients.	40%	48%	8%	3%	1%	4.38	0.73
EI helps a therapist to easily recognise client's emotional needs during counselling.	57%	38%	4%	1%	0%	4.61	0.60
EI assists in conflict resolution during sessions	40%	42%	12%	4%	2%	4.33	0.81
I perceive EI as very important in therapeutic relationship.	51%	39%	7%	2%	1%	4.49	0.69

SA= Strongly Agree (5), A= Agree (4), N= Neutral (3), D= Disagree (2), S= Strongly Disagree (1)

In the above table all items have high mean scores of 4.3, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.4 which indicate a strongly positive perception of the importance of EI in counselling. The corresponding standard deviations are relatively low which is an indication of consensus among counsellors.

Research Question 2: How do counsellors perceive the impact of emotional intelligence

training on their therapeutic effectiveness?

Table 2: *Perception of Counsellors on the Impact of Emotional Intelligence Training on their Therapeutic Effectiveness*

Statement Item	t	df	p-value	95% confidence interval
EI helps me feel confident in managing therapeutic relationships.	28.05	149	<.001	[4.42, 4.62]
EI help me to handle emotionally intense sessions effectively.	24.32	149	<.001	[4.26, 4.50]
EI help me to maintain professionalism under emotional pressure.	30.14	149	<.001	[4.51, 4.71]
EI makes me more effective.	21.75	149	<.001	[4.17, 4.49]
EI training has greatly improved my counselling skills.	27.38	149	<.001	[4.37, 4.61]

The results in the Table 2 are statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that counsellors' perceptions are significantly more positive than neutral.

B. Independent Samples t-test (by gender)

Table 3: *Independent Samples t-test (by gender)*

Statement Item	Group	Mean	t	df	p-value
EI enhances empathy	Male	4.58	-0.95	148	0.34
	Female	4.63			

Interpretation: No significant gender differences in perception of EI's importance.

Research question 3: What challenges do counsellors face in integrating emotional intelligence training into their professional development?

Table 4: *Challenges Faced by Counsellors in Integrating Emotional Intelligence Training into Professional Development*

Statement Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
Lack of time limits my participation in EI training.	28%	40%	20%	20%	8%	3.89	0.92

My institution does not support of EI training.	28%	45%	18%	7%	2%	4.01	0.84
EI training opportunities are not readily available.	21%	35%	24%	14%	6%	3.62	1.03
Lack of facilities reduces motivation to use EI skills	25%	38%	22%	10%	5%	3.74	0.97
Diverse client needs make it hard to apply EI techniques consistently	20%	37%	26%	12%	5%	3.58	0.95

SA= Strongly Agree (5), A= Agree (4), N= Neutral (3), D=Disagree (1) (2), S= Strongly Disagree (1)

Table 4 above reveals that all mean scores are above 3.5 which shows moderate to high agreement that counsellors face a lot of challenges which hinders the use of EI training in their different institutions.

Hypothesis 3: Inferential Statistics

Counsellors perceive time constraints and lack of institutional support as significant barriers to implementing EI training.

A. One-sample t-test (test value = 3)

Tests whether perceptions of challenges differ significantly from a neutral position:

Table 5: *Counsellors perceive time constraints and lack of institutional support as significant barriers to implementing EI training*

Statement Item	T	df	p-value	95% confidence interval
Lack of ongoing support	1.17	149	<.001	[3.74, 4.04]
Time constraints	14.55	149	<.001	[3.87, 4.15]
Training too theoretical	7.68	149	<.001	[3.47, 3.77]
Organizational discouragement	9.85	149	<.001	[3.60, 3.88]
Client diversity challenges	8.55	149	<.001	[3.44, 3.72]

Interpretation: All items reveal statistically significant agreement above neutral ($p < .001$), confirming that counsellors commonly face challenges integrating EI training.

B. Group Comparison (ANOVA)

For example, comparing perceived challenges by work setting (e.g., school, clinical, private practice):

Table 6: Comparing Perceived Challenges by Work Setting

Work Setting	Mean Perceived Challenge Score	Std. Deviation
School Counsellors	3.85	0.71
Clinical counsellors	3.66	0.76
Private Practice	3.57	0.68

ANOVA Result $F(2, 14) = 3.92, p = 0.022$

Interpretation: There is a statistically significant difference among groups. School counsellors reported more integration challenges, possibly due to systemic or administrative constraints. All challenge areas are statistically significant ($p < .001$) with mean scores above the neutral midpoint.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one on the importance of Emotional intelligence in counselling is in line with Martin, Easton and Wilson (2024), which investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and counselling self-efficacy and concluded that Emotional Intelligence may be another marker for individuals exploring professional counselling as a career and for improving student's counselling self-efficacy. Also, Parveen and Shafiq (2014) study of theoretical and empirical perspectives which examined the importance of emotional intelligence in the counselling and psychotherapy professions found the need to create special training for trainee counsellors to ensure the quality of the counselling profession in the future.

The findings of research question 2 is supported by the empirical study by Abdul Gafar Alafara Adio and Hameed Olalekan Bolaji (2023) which examined counsellors' perception and attitude toward e-counselling in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study found that counsellors recognized the benefits of emotionally driven communication in counselling. Also, that they exhibited positive attitudes toward approaches which enhance interaction and emotional connection. Supporting the above finding Glory Iyobosasere Imhabekhai (2025), investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence, therapeutic self-efficacy, and conflict resolution effectiveness among university counsellors in Edo State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that counsellors with higher emotional intelligence demonstrated better conflict resolution skills,

improved interpersonal relationships and higher therapeutic self-efficacy.

The findings of research question 3 is supported by the study carried out by Ogunsola & Adeyemo, (2020), which revealed that while emotional intelligence is essential for effective counselling, multiple barriers hinder its practical application among Nigerian counsellors. In line with the above, Asemota, Edinoh, and Ejike (2025) examined the problems facing counselling centres in Nigerian universities and identified lack of institutional support as a major barrier to effective counselling practice and application of emotional intelligence. The study revealed that institutional limitations directly affect counsellors' ability to apply emotional intelligence which requires time, space, and supportive environments to be effectively practiced, overworked counsellors cannot engage deeply in empathy, emotional regulation, and client-centred interaction. Additionally, that lack of training reduces the development of emotional awareness and interpersonal skills among counsellors.

Conclusion

Counsellors overwhelmingly value emotional intelligence as central to therapeutic relationships. Empathy, rapport, conflict resolution, and professional competence are key areas where emotional intelligence is perceived as impactful. There is no significant difference across gender, indicating shared perspectives. Counsellors report notable challenges in applying emotional intelligence training, including time constraints, lack of support, organizational barriers, and complex client needs. School-based counsellors perceive greater difficulty than others.

Counselling Implications

- * **Integration of Emotional Intelligence into Counsellor Training Programs:** Counsellors perceive emotional intelligence (EI) as pivotal to therapeutic efficacy. Curriculum planners and counselling association of Nigeria (CASSON) should ensure that emotional intelligence (IE) is entrenched into the foundational and advanced counselling curricula. Core components such as self-awareness, rapport, empathy, emotional regulation, and social skills, should be covered in the modules.
- * **CASSON to Advocate for Emotional Intelligence Development:** Lack of organizational support was identified as a barrier. It is very important for Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) to recognize emotional intelligence (EI) as a core professional competency and advocate for supportive environments for counsellors who work in different institutions to fully acquire the knowledge. This includes making provisions for emotional intelligence training, promoting emotionally quotient leadership among counsellors, and encapsulating emotional intelligence EI goals in performance evaluation frameworks.
- * **Contextualized and Experiential Training Approaches:** Counsellors expressed challenges in applying overly theoretical emotional intelligence (EI) training. Thus, there is need to prioritize experiential methods in training as they mirror the real-world demands of therapeutic relationships. Such experiential methods include; role-playing, emotion-focused supervision, case simulations, and peer feedback.

- * On-going Professional Development and Supervision: Based on the counsellors' perceptions on the relevance of emotional intelligence (EI) in therapeutic counselling relationship, there should be a consistent training programme rather than a one-time event. Emotional Intelligence workshops, reflective practice groups, and supervision sessions should be enhanced to promote learning.
- * Tailoring EI Strategies to Diverse Client Populations: Counsellors observed and reported challenges involved in the application of emotional intelligence (EI) skills athwart disparate settings. Training should incorporate ethnographic sensitive emotional intelligent (EI) exercises, assisting counsellors to learn empathy and expression in culturally diverse, trauma-informed, and neurodiverse counselling settings.

Recommendations

The study recommended the following:

- * Incorporate Emotional Intelligence into Core Counselling programme: Counselling curriculum should incorporate emotional intelligence training as a major course for both undergraduate and postgraduate counselling students. This would help them to be properly equipped with the knowledge and skills of emotional intelligence early in the profession and make positive impact in therapeutic relationships.
- * Strengthen Institutional Support and Resources: Organizations should make emotional intelligence training a priority thus, map out time, financial resources and incentives for it. Also, institutions should integrate it into their performance appraisals, team development strategies, and workplace wellbeing programs.
- * Provide in – service training on Emotional Intelligence: In – service training on emotional intelligence should be provided by Counselling agencies, private practices, and professional bodies from time to time in the form of workshops, seminars and symposiums to aid professional development. Tools such as case-based learning, reflective exercises, and emotional skills assessments should be used to make it interactive and context - specific.
- * Professional counsellor to Advocate for Policy Recognition of EI in Counselling Standards: Professional counsellor should advocate for should recognition and inclusion of emotional intelligence as a competency area in counselling education, licensure, and ethical codes by professional bodies and accrediting agencies. Doing so would help to ensure its sustained relevance in both training and practice.
- * Conduct Further Research on EI Training Effectiveness: More empirical studies in the area of emotional intelligence should be encouraged to evaluate the long – term impact it has on counsellor effectiveness and client outcomes.

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