Disposition of students to online counselling: The Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigerian experience

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ABSTRACT

An online guidance and counselling services was established at the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) in December, 2010. This study was designed to examine the undergraduates' disposition to the online counselling services after 24 months. It also investigated the prevalent disposition, dispositional types and distribution of students across the types. 1200 undergraduates of the University participated in the study comprising 900 students who made use of the site during the period and 300 students who were selected by proportionate stratified random sampling from the students' hostels and two clusters off campus. The instruments for the study were the OAU online counsellors software purposefully developed for this study, an online feedback questionnaire and a self-constructed questionnaire. Data collected were analysed using simple percentages, RSI, ANOVA, factor, cluster and discriminant analyses. The results showed that students were mostly (94.9%) favourably disposed to online counselling services in OAU, particularly in form of trust (44.4%), curiosity (31.9%) and enthusiasm (13.9%). Although, the students' disposition was not affected by their age and level in the university, sex and their awareness of the weblink significantly influenced their disposition to online counselling.

INTRODUCTION

The Obafemi Awolowo University, one of the first generation federal universities in Nigeria was established on 8th June, 1961. In recent times and like in many other Nigerian universities, the Obafemi Awolowo University's student population has been on the rise, not only in terms of numbers but also in terms of complexity and diversity. However, the University is noted for not denying admission to students on the basis of age or any other consideration apart from the academic inability of the applicant. Hence, year-in-year-out, students of various age groups, economic and moral backgrounds are admitted. Given the poor financial status of the average Nigerian family caused by the economic downturn in the country, it is very likely that many of the freshly admitted students have not been given the necessary parental guidance, care and proper orientation which could enhance their healthy social interaction, integration and adjustment in the University. This situation means that their counselling needs would most likely be as diverse as the variations observed in their age distribution, social and economic backgrounds.

Furthermore, new courses and programmes are being introduced in the University to reflect the reality of the modern needs for top flight management level manpower that are expected to compete favourably in modern economies. Today, there are more faculties, departments, sections and directorates than there were at the inception of the university. Consequently, more applicants are admitted into such courses and programmes and more facultymembers are employed to service them, thereby, swelling the ranks of those who potentially will need help in confronting their day-to-day life challenges.

Moreover, some fields in which the university previously offered postgraduate programmes only, are diversifying and are admitting students into their undergraduate courses as well as certificate and diploma programmes. Distance learning programmes at both regular and executive levels

are revitalized and broadened, ostensibly, in order to broaden the internally generated revenue base of the university. All these have placed more stringent pressures on existing facilities and services to the extent that a considerable proportion of the university community members now live off-campus and their ability to promptly seek and obtain counselling support is becoming distanced.

The Obafemi Awolowo University has a total of eight counsellors on its payroll as at the beginning of the 2012/2013 session. These counsellors are expected to provide Guidance and Counselling services to 31, 945 students, in addition to over 4,000 staff members. The counsellors are also not completely immuned from "other duties that may be assigned to them from time to time.". Obviously, the number of available counsellors is inadequate to provide the student and staff population with effective counselling support via the face-to-face approach. From the foregoing, it is clear that it is practically impossible for the face-to-face counselling approach to meet the counselling needs of students and staff members of the university. In this situation, online counselling becomes highly expedient.

Online counselling refers to the process whereby a professional counsellor provides counselling services on the Internet. This could be by e-mail, chat, video or even Internet phone. Online counselling becomes a viable alternative source of help when the traditional face-to-face counselling is not accessible. Online counselling is effective particularly when it is conducted by skilled and qualified professionals.

Many advantages exist for clients who use online counselling. It is of tremendous benefits to people living in remote or isolated areas, people homebound due to disability or agoraphobia, those relocating but still wanting to work with their current therapist, and people with fast-paced lifestyles or unusual employment schedules (Attridge, 2004; Collie, Cubranic & Long, 2002; Robson, 2000; Stevens & Shulman, 2003; Sussman, 2004). Another benefit of online counselling services is that clients have the opportunity to be served by specialists in their areas of concern regardless of geographical location (Sussman, 1998). For example, a gay or lesbian couple living in Nigeria may have difficulty finding a local counsellor who is sensitive to their lifestyle, but may readily find one online.

Online counselling is considered to be cost-effective for clients and increases a sense of privacy while decreasing concerns about interpersonal risk. According to Sampson, Kolodinsky and Greeno (1997), typically in the western world, where online counselling seems to be more popular, online counsellors may charge as little as $15 per e-mail and up to $65 for a 1 hour chat session which is not comparable to what is charged in face-to-face encounter. Clients may feel more comfortable and emotionally open in their own homes. They also can share their sessions with significant others, if they desire.

For counsellors, online counselling offers cost-containment. This is the ability to potentially serve more clients daily, scheduling flexibility, and the opportunity to interact with peers in other locations (Attridge, 2004). One can work from his or her home without renting office space, hiring ancillary help, or providing furnishings. Entire sessions are automatically recorded and preserved, eliminating the need for progress notes and enhancing supervisory capabilities (Sussman, 2004). A counsellor could be supervised by another professional in a completely different location without any concerns about scheduling conflicts. Some even argue that counsellors have a high ethical standard with Internet counselling because the clients have transcripts of the sessions immediately and readily available (Robson, 2000). Professionals working in online counselling find that most individuals are more willing to write while asking for information than they might not otherwise solicit (Murphy & Mitchell, 1998) in verbal communication. It also reduces likelihood of counsellor dependence and allows the potential for family members to be involved in the therapeutic process (Collie et al., 2002).

Most institutions of higher learning in Nigeria have established their presence on the Internet. The Obafemi Awolowo University is not an exception. The university also ensures that students establish a working relationship with the Internet, as early as when they apply for admission and throughout their stay in the university. They carry out registration of courses, payment of school fees, registering and paying for accommodation, checking their results and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) on the Internet. Some courses are also offered to promote the knowledge and proficiency of students in using the computer and the Internet. It is, however, paradoxical that despite the varieties of applications to which Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has been deployed in the university, counselling services are not yet available through ICT. If counselling is allowed to share in the ICT capability of the university, many counselling needs of students are likely to be met.

For many years, the OAU like most universities in Nigeria, has been providing counselling service to students through the traditional face-to-face method to meet their counselling needs. However, with an increasing student population, evident inadequacies have been observed in the effectiveness and patronage of the service, as students shy away for fear of becoming laughing stocks among their peers. The number of counsellors employed to handle the gamut of students' counselling needs is grossly inadequate and more so that existing counsellors are usually overburdened with administrative duties (Adebowale & Popoola, 2011).

Though the usefulness of online counselling is not in doubt, little is known about the disposition of Nigerian university students for the service. For a successful use of the Internet in this manner, therefore, it is important to explore the students'disposition toward an online counselling service in the University.

In psychology, disposition is regarded as a relatively long-lasting emotional attitude (English & English, 1958). It is a tendency to exhibit frequently, consciously, and voluntarily a pattern of behaviour that is directed to a broad goal (Katz, 1993a). This disposition must occur in the absence of coercion; it constitutes a habit of mind under some conscious and voluntary control, should be intentional and oriented toward broad goals (Katz, 1993B). Katz (1993a) gave some examples of dispositions as they are intentionally and mindfully directed toward particular objects. According to her, learners can be said to have the disposition to be curious if they typically and frequently respond to their environment by exploring, examining, and asking questions about it; similarly, the disposition to complain or whine would be robust if exhibited frequently, and weak if rarely exhibited.

Attitude and disposition are not exactly the same. Attitude has been defined as an evaluative tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour (Eagly, 1992, p. 693). It can be thought of as pre-dispositions to act positively or negatively with respect to a particular phenomenon. According to this definition, it is possible to have an attitude toward something without accompanying behaviour. However, the term disposition, according to Buss and Craik (1983), refers to frequently exhibited trends in actions. Thus one could have an attitude toward something in the absence of manifestations of related behaviour. It is possible, for example, to have a negative attitude toward a race or nation without having opportunity or occasion to manifest it in actual behaviour. In contrast to attitude, a disposition always implies trends in behaviour and not merely an evaluation or cluster of beliefs about something.

The importance of attitude and by extension, disposition, to behaviour has been canvassed in literature. For instance, research confirms that linking general attitudes to specific actions, and the reasoned action approach to the prediction of specific behaviors have advanced our

understanding of the attitude–behavior relation and have demonstrated the importance of attitudes as determinants of behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, n.d.)

This study is therefore designed to achieve the following objective:
   a. To examine the general disposition of the OAU's undergraduates to online counselling
   b. To investigate differences in students' disposition based on their demographic variables
   c. To determine the specific types of dispositions the students demonstrate in the course of the online counselling service
   d. To explore the students distribution across the different types of disposition.

To achieve these objectives the following research questions were posed:
   1. What is the general disposition of OAU students to online counselling in the university?
   2. What is the prevalent disposition of OAU students to online counselling service in the university?
   3. Will there be any difference in the students' disposition on the basis of demographic variables?
   4. What types of disposition do the students demonstrate toward the online counselling service in the university?
   5. What is the distribution of the students across the types of disposition to online counselling service in the university?

METHODOLOGY

The study is an exploratory research adopting a mixed-method approach. The mixed-methods approach adopted in the study involved the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data sequentially. This approach has been considered a legitimate and stand-alone research design in many studies (Creswell, 2002, 2003; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989;Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska & Creswell, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 2003). The approach was adopted based on the recommendation that mixed-methods approach is particularly useful for conducting research in Guidance and Counselling, and Counselling Psychology. Some of the reasons given are that these fields of study deal with human therapeutic experiences and that when both quantitative and qualitative data are included in a study, researchers may enrich their results in ways that one form of data does not allow (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Also, using both forms of data, for example, allows researchers to simultaneously generalize results from a sample to a population and to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Hanson et al, 2005). Finally, results of precise, instrument-based measurements may, likewise, be augmented by contextual, field-based information (Greene & Caracelli, 1997).

Consequently, two types of research designs were employed: the descriptive survey and phenomenological research designs. According to Best (1978), the descriptive survey design should normally be employed in exploratory studies as such studies are normally aimed at collecting data, describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population (Nworgu, 1991). The quantitative data used in this study is mainly nominal data obtained by counting the number of users in different categories and continuous data obtained from the synthesis of students' responses to the questionnaire on disposition to the OAU online counselling services.

In the second aspect, the study adopted the Interpretative phenomenological design. Actually, phenomenology is concerned with human understanding and it originated in the ideas of Edmund Husserl, first put forward in 1936, who rejected the view that empirical science is the basis for achieving an understanding of the world, stressing instead the importance of the real 'life world' or lived experience (Fade, 2004). According to Hussert, the core meaning of entities in the world can

be understood by intuition, that is, what is really there in the world can be understood by perceiving it in a manner that is uncontaminated by an individual's past experiences and viewpoints. The method was particularly applied to extract students' disposition to online counselling.

The population for the study consisted of all undergraduates of the Obafemi Awolowo University. According to statistics provided by the University Computer Centre, there were 28, 416 students in the university at the commencement of the 2009//2010 Harmattan semester. The study sample comprised 1200 students, representing 4.22% of the population. This sample was raised in two ways – 900 for qualitative data and 300 for quantitative data. For the qualitative data, 900 participants who accessed the OAU online counselling platform were selected. For the quantitative data, 300 students were selected by stratified random sampling consisting of 30 respondents from each of the eight residential halls available in the university, the UNIFECS hostel area and Omole estate in Ile-Ife town (where a substantial number of OAU students resided).

Three counsellors, consisting of one male and two females (from the Directorate of Student Affairs) participated in attending to clients who were allowed to make their choices of who they wanted to interact with. The two female counsellors from the Counselling Unit of the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) participated in attending to clients, after obtaining the permission of the Dean, DSA, while the researcher served as the male counsellor.

Three instruments were used in this study for data collection. The first is the "OAU Online Counselling Software" purposefully developed for the online guidance and counselling service. This package ensured that the information obtained from the online interactions (chat and email) served as the data collection apparatus. The link to the software was visibly displayed on the home page of the website and individual student pages on the University e-portal to allow the students to access counsellors through the e-mail and chat platforms. It also allows students to be referred from one counsellor to another as a result of differences in competencies, ethical considerations or for prompt attention if a counsellor was busy with another client. The software used was able to keep records of emails or chat interactions undertaken on the site and particular ones may be searched out using powerful searching conditions based on date, month or year. The chat and mail records were down loaded for transcription and analysis.   Whenever a student wanted to log out of the online counselling site, he/she was requested to fill a brief feedback form from which his/her attitude to the online counselling service would be inferred. The feedback form is the second instrument used in the study.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the records obtained from the website, the website itself was validated. Validating a website is the process of ensuring that the pages on the website conform to the norms or standards defined by various organizations such as the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). Validation is important to ensure that web pages are interpreted by various machines, such as search engines, as well as users and visitors to the website. Conforming to standards and regulations is one of the many ways that can make a website universally understood. That means codes and styles meet the "strict" standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) such as search engines, as well as users and visitors to the webpage. Conforming to standards and regulations is one of the many ways that can make a website universally understood. That means codes and styles meet the "strict" standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) organization and pass a variety of validation for CSS and XHTML.

The online counselling site was subjected to validation using HTML validators. HTML validators operate by comparing the mark-up on a web page to the W3C standards. After the validator had read the page and determined the applicable standards, looking for such things as missing opening or closing tags, missing quotation marks and other hand-coding errors. The validator

then provided a report indicating some coding errors. The errors were noted in a list and reported to the website designer. Necessary corrections were promptly made and the procedures were allowed to run again until no other error was detected.

Further validation attempts were made via expert judgement. The site and its operations as well as the feedback form were presented to experts in the fields of Guidance and Counselling from the Guidance and Counselling Unit of the Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling, Obafemi Awolowo University, and the Guidance and Counselling Department of the University of Ibadan for content validation. They were also presented to Information and Communication Technology experts from the Department of Computer Science and Information Technology and Communications Unit (INTECU) both of the Obafemi Awolowo University for their guidance, comments and suggestions. The counselling experts examined the counselling content of the site in terms of effective counselling interaction requirements such as confidentiality, genuineness and unconditional positive regard provisions. The information technology experts examined the site and its records for IT conventions, presentation and performance. Both groups of experts offered useful suggestions and all their suggestions were integrated into the construction and development of the website.

The third instrument was a self-constructed questionnaire designed to involve those who may not have used the online counselling facility on the site. It consists of two major section- section A which sought demographic information from the respondents and section B, consisting of twenty items which sought to survey students' disposition to the online counselling services. To validate the questionnaire on students' disposition, the questionnaire was originally administered to 30 students who were not part of the actual sample used. Their responses were subjected to factorial validation via factor analysis available in SPSS 17. The results showed that the instrument was mainly unidimensional as it produced only one dominant first factor. It was therefore concluded that the questionnaire was valid for the purpose for which it was designed. To determine its reliability, the internal consistency reliability of the instrument was tested by determining the Cronbach's Alpha value and the split-half reliability coefficient. The results show the Cronbach Alpha value obtained was 0.91 while the split-half reliability coefficient was 0.87. It was concluded that the instrument was also reliable.

The process of data collection spanned a period of 22 months. Although the software started running on 1st December 2010, data collection commenced on 1st January 2011 and ended on 31st October 2012. The first month (December 2010) was devoted to training and awareness creation. It involved the training of the counsellors in the usage of the OAU Online Counsellors software, the intricacies of online communication and other online counselling skills. Awareness creation involved the pasting of posters on notice boards in all the faculties in the university and in conspicuous places in all the eight cybercafés available in the university. Handbills were also distributed to students in their halls of residence and as they were leaving the course venues. At each of the faculty colloquiums, university counsellors assigned to each of the faculties also helped to sensitize the students to the availability of this service in the university.

Copies of the questionnaire on students' disposition to online counselling were administered to the respondents in their hostels by the researcher with the help of some research assistants (who were actually postgraduate students). They were took an average of 25 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Only a few of them requested the researcher and the assistants to come back for the questionnaire the following day.

Data collected for the study were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A qualitative approach was used to analyse the mail and chat interaction content collected through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This study adopted one of Smith's et al (1999) two approaches to IPA. Fade (2004) identified the two approaches to include ideographic case

study and theory building approaches. In particular, the theory building approach of IPA was adopted in this study.

In the quantitative analysis, descriptive analysis was adopted in describing the respondents' dispositional views and their disposition (favourable/unfavourable). Also, t-test and ANOVA were used to determine if the variances in students' disposition could be accounted for by the differences in their sex, age, level in the university and their awareness of the OAU online counsellors weblink on the university webpage and/or eportal. Factor analysis was used to determine the types of disposition students had to online counselling while cluster analysis was used to classify the students according to their prevalent disposition.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the disposition of Obafemi Awolowo University students to online counselling service?

To answer this research question, two approaches were adopted. First, a quantitative analysis of the responses to the research instrument titled "Students' Disposition toward Online Guidance and Counselling Services" was carried out and second, a qualitative analysis of data generated from students' e-mails and chat interaction with the online counsellors was undertaken using the IPA approach.

In the first approach, three major strategies were adopted to analyze the students' responses to the instrument on students' disposition to online counselling. First, a descriptive analysis of the students' direct responses was carried out to determine their prevalent dispositional views on the OAU online counselling services. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 presents the students' responses to items on their disposition to online counselling. It can be seen from the table that the most popular view of the students is that "The OAU online counselling service is an interesting addition to other services provided by the University information systems" as it has the highest Relative Significance Index (RSI) value of 0.836. It was also strongly agreed to by 43% of the students while another 45.9% agreed to this view. Only 6.8% of the respondents disagreed while 2.9% strongly disagreed. This view was closely followed in terms of popularity by "All universities in Nigeria should establish their own online counselling system" and "I like the protection of my identity as offered by the OAU online counselling system."

The items yielded very high RSI values of 0.807 and 0.806 respectively. However, the least canvassed view by the students is that "Even if I have time and internet service is free, I will still not make use of the OAU online counselling service" as it yielded the least RSI value of 0.593 and was strongly agreed to by 16.8% of the respondents while 24.4% of the respondents merely agreed. However, 30.8% disagreed while 23.3% strongly disagreed.

Table 1: Students' disposition to OAU Online counselling services

S/N	Statements on disposition to OAU online counselling services	SA		A		D		SD		NR		RSI	Rank
		F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1.	The OAU online counselling service is an interesting addition to other services provided by the University information systems.	120	43.0	128	45.9	19	6.8	4	1.4	8	2.9	0.836	1
2.	I can make use of the OAU online counselling services to navigate my personal challenges.	93	33.3	125	44.8	41	14.7	12	4.3	8	2.9	0.776	6
3	I am willing to discuss some issues with OAU online counsellor which I may not want to discuss face to face with a counsellor.	89	31.9	122	43.7	40	14.3	19	6.8	9	3.2	0.760	7
4	I like the protection of my identity as offered by the OAU online counselling system.	99	35.5	139	49.8	23	8.2	8	2.9	10	3.6	0.806	3
5	The OAU online counselling service will enable students to express their grievances against the university authority.	99	35.5	120	43.0	31	11.1	19	6.8	10	3.6	0.778	5
6	Conflicts and confusion can easily be resolved more quickly through the OAU online counselling services.	74	26.5	103	36.9	67	24.0	26	9.3	9	3.2	0.708	14
7	The services of the OAU online counsellor make the university another first in the committee of higher institutions in Nigeria.	76	27.2	127	45.5	58	20.8	8	2.9	10	3.6	0.752	10
8	The OAU online counselling services may lead students to internet addiction.	46	16.5	73	26.2	98	35.1	50	17.9	12	4.3	0.608	17
9	The OAU online counselling services will definitely be frustrated by erratic electric power supply.	68	24.4	120	43.0	59	21.1	24	8.6	8	2.9	0.714	12
10	Cost of assessing internet is a major constraint students experience in making use of the OAU online counsellor services	77	27.6	101	36.2	75	26.9	17	6.1	9	3.2	0.720	11
11	The OAU online counselling service is useful as a good source of information to students.	86	30.8	155	55.6	23	8.2	7	2.5	8	2.9	0.795	4
12	Making use of OAU online counselling services helps to improve students' computer skills.	58	20.8	132	47.3	61	21.9	20	7.2	8	2.9	0.710	13
13	The OAU online counselling link on the individual student page of e-portal encourages students to seek prompt help on their academic challenges	79	28.3	134	48.0	42	15.1	14	5.0	10	3.6	0.758	8
14	If I tried to meet a counsellor online but couldn't I will try again	43	15.4	124	44.4	73	26.2	25	9.0	14	5.0	0.675	15
15	I would have love to use the OAU online counselling service but for my computer and internet skill.	58	20.8	82	29.4	81	29.0	48	17.2	10	3.6	0.639	16
16	Even if I have time and internet service is free, I will still not make use of the OAU online counselling service	47	16.8	71	25.4	86	30.8	65	23.3	10	3.6	0.593	20
17	I do not like the OAU online counselling services because I will not be able to see the person I am discussing with	38	13.6	79	28.3	98	35.1	54	19.4	10	3.6	0.594	19
18	The OAU online counselling services give students the impression that someone cares.	73	26.2	136	48.7	51	18.3	9	3.2	10	3.6	0.754	9
19	All universities in Nigeria should adopt establish their own online counselling system	114	40.9	113	40.5	34	12.2	9	3.2	9	3.2	0.807	2
20	The OAU online counselling services entertain students during boredom.	37	13.3	69	24.7	116	41.6	43	15.4	14	5.0	0.594	18

Research Question 2: What is the prevalent disposition of OAU students to online counselling service in the university?

To answer this research question, the items on the questionnaire were scored as follows: "strongly agree" 4, "agree" 3, "disagree" 2 and "strongly disagree" 1. The resulting scores were cumulated to constitute a measure of student disposition to OAU online counselling services. The mean score on this measure was 55.51 and the standard deviation was 12.44. The scores were categorized in such a way that those who scored 20 or below were categorized as having very unfavourable disposition while those who scored 21 to 40 were categorized as having unfavourable disposition. Also those who scored 41 to 60 were described as having favourable disposition and those who scored 61 and above are very favourable disposition. These categories were then given a descriptive analysis and the results are presented in Table 2

Table 2: General disposition of students to OAU Online counselling services

	Frequency	Percent
Very Unfavourable	8	2.9
Unfavourable	6	2.2
Favourable	183	65.6
Very favourable	82	29.4
Total	279	100.0

Table 2 shows the prevalent disposition of OAU students to the OAU Online counselling services. From the table it can be seen that most of the students (65.6%) demonstrated favourable disposition toward the online counselling services while 29.4% demonstrated very favourable disposition. Only 2.2% of the students demonstrated unfavourable disposition while 2.9% also demonstrated very unfavourable disposition toward the online counselling services at the University.

Research Question 3: Will there be any difference in the students' disposition on the basis of demographic variables?

To answer this research question, differences in students' scores on the measure of disposition to online counselling were sought on the basis of their age, level in the university, sex and their awareness of the existence of the online service link on university webpage and e-portal. The results are presented in Table 3

Table 3 shows the differences in the students' disposition to online counselling on the basis of their age and level in the university. The results shows that in both cases there is no significant difference (For age, $F_{(3,272)} = 0.742$, $p > .05$, for level in the university, $F_{(3,263)} = 1.220$, $p > .05$). It can be concluded that neither age nor level in the university influence students' disposition to online guidance and counselling.

Table 3: Differences in students' disposition to OAU online counselling on the basis of their age and level in the university

Variables	Levels	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Age	Between Groups	297.138	3	99.046	.742	.528
	Within Groups	35893.770	269	133.434		
	Total	36190.908	272			
Level in the university	Between Groups	578.007	3	192.669	1.220	.303
	Within Groups	41543.754	263	157.961		
	Total	42121.760	266			

The differences were also explored on the basis of students' gender and their awareness of the existence of the service in the university. The result is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Differences in students' disposition to OAU online counselling on the basis of their sex and their awareness of existence of the link on OAU webpage and e-portal

Variables	Levels	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	sig
Sex	MALE	185	54.0162	11.21212	276	-2.872	0.009
	FEMALE	93	58.5054	14.22232			
Awareness of the existence of the online service link on university webpage and e-portal	YES	184	58.1685	8.81683	275	5.199	0.000
	NO	93	50.2796	16.44911			

Table 4 shows the differences in the students' disposition to online counselling on the basis of their sex and awareness of the existence of the online service link on university webpage and e-portal. The results show that in both cases there are significant differences in students' disposition (For sex, t = -2.872, p <.05, for their awareness, t = 5.199, p <.05). With regard to sex, the female students were found to possess significantly better (mean = 58.50) disposition to OAU online counselling services than their male counterpart (mean = 54.016). Also those students who claimed to be aware of the OAU online counselling link had better disposition (mean = 58.17) than those who were not aware (mean= 50.27).

Research Question 4: What types of disposition do the students demonstrate toward the online counselling service in the iniversity?

To answer this research question, the students' responses were subjected to Principal Component Analysis available in the Factor analysis procedures of SPSS 17 in order to determine the principal disposition that underlay the students' responses. Starting with the original data matrices and using multiple correlations as the estimates of communalities, principal

factors were extracted after interaction of communalities. Each factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1 was retained for rotation. The results are presented in Table 5

Table 5: Rotated Component Matrix for students'disposition to OAU Online Counselling

Item	Component 1	2	3	4	5
B18	.654				
B6	.653				
B20	.630	.424			
B5	.623				
B7	.569				
B14	.544				
B9		.727			
B17		.701			
B16		.629			.461
B10		.582			
B12			.811		
B11			.707		
B13			.554		
B15			.520		.455
B3				.763	
B2				.691	
B4				.611	
B1				.565	
B19	.423				-.655
B8					.573

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 10 iterations.

Table 5 presents the rotated component matrix and the factors eventually extracted. It can be seen from the table that five factors were extracted in all, as presented in the screeplot in Figure 1
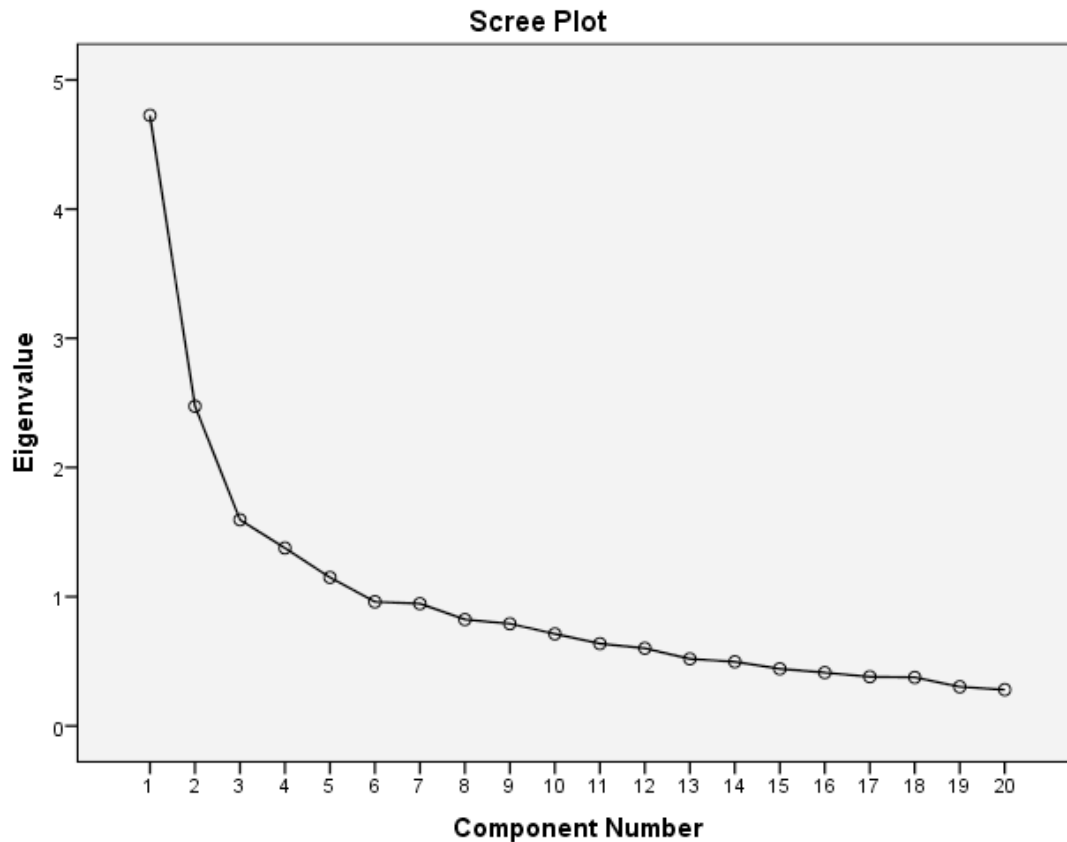
Figure 1: Screenplot of component analysis

Table 6 also shows the items associated with each of the factors and were identified.

Table 6: Identification of factors extracted and the associated items

Factor	Associated items	Students' disposition
1	B14, B7, B18, B6, B5, B19, B20	Enthusiasm
2	B9, B10, B17, B20, B16	Doubts
3	B11, B12, B13, B15	Curiosity
4	B2, B3, B4, B1	Trust
5	B16, B15, B19, B8	To complain

Research Question 5: What is the distribution of the students across the types of diposition to online counselling service in the university?

To answer this research question, the different categories of students' disposition were subjected to cluster analysis and then using the respondents scores under each of the factors identified.

Five clusters were obtained and were given descriptive analysis to determine the distribution of the students across the categories. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: *Distribution of the students across the disposition categories*

	Frequency	Percent
Doubts	8	2.8
Curiosity	78	27.8
Trust	89	31.7
To complain	38	13.5
Enthusiasm	66	23.5
Total	279	99.3
No response	2	.7
Total	281	100.0

Table 7 shows the distribution of the students across the categories of disposition to online counselling services at the Obafemi Awolowo University. It can be seen from the table that the largest percentage of the respondents (31.7%) were found to exhibit a trusting disposition toward the services while considerable percentage exhibited curiosity (27.8%) and enthusiasm (23.5%). However, 13.5% of the respondents exhibited a disposition to complain while 2.8% of the respondents demonstrated a doubting disposition. It should be noted that 2 (0.7%) of the respondents were not included in the cluster analysis as their responses to the questionnaire were not complete.

In the qualitative analysis, the students' communications with the online counsellor (email and chat) which contained statements bordering on their disposition towards the online counselling service as well as their response to the online feedback questionnaire were selected and coded for analysis. The results showed that students exhibited five categories of disposition towards the online counselling service. These include trust, curiosity, enthusiasm, doubt and disposition to complain. A descriptive analysis in form of frequency counts of the students' mails and chat threads bothering on disposition was also carried out to determine the distribution of the students across the disposition categories as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: *Distribution of students across their categories of disposition to online counselling service*

Disposition	F	%
Enthusiasm	112	13.89
Curiosity	257	31.94
Doubt	22	2.78
Disposition to complain	56	6.94
Trust	358	44.44
Total	806	100.00

Table 8 shows that most of the students (44.44%) exhibited a trusting disposition while 31.94% shows curiosity and 13.89% exhibited an enthusiastic disposition. However, a considerable

percentage exhibited disposition to complain and 2.78% exhibited doubt. Each of these was also given a qualitative analysis.

Trust

It has been seen that most of the students exhibited a trusting disposition. This term is used to describe students' disposition that displays an expression of hope, reliance, gratitude and a disposition to give feedback. It is expected that when the student expressed hope, reliance or gratitude or made an attempt to give a feedback, it may be said that the students already developed a trusting disposition toward the online counselling service. For instance, some excerpt from the students' mails and chat interactions are presented below:

> 10:52:38 Counsellor F: I just wanted you to know that I am attentive and still here
> 10:53:22 A……. A……: in doing this, i figured out that in other to take care of my family the way i want i would have to have a very high paying job
> 10:54:44 A……. A……: because of this i thought about getting a job in the oil company and those lofty places..
> 10:55:26 A……. A……: anyway to cut the long story short, i was able to streamline down to 2 areas
> 10:56:48 A……. A……: i am thinking a pursuing my own passion and where i have my strength which is in the area of counseling like you are doing, public speaking, encouraging, inspiring people etc
> 10:58:08 A……. A……: ..but my concern now is that i don't know what career might fit these attributes, and then also i don't know if i'll still be able to take adequate care of my family

The client expressed confusion between getting a highly paying job (like the one obtainable in oil companies) and his passion of "public speaking, encouraging, inspiring people……." But had the trust that if he/she discusses with the counsellor he would be guided to a career that "…..might fill these attributes……". Some students even find it comfortable to share their life's secrets with the online counsellor because of the trust they have. Here are some other excerpts:

> ……Client g: my mom
> 22:45:52 Counsellor F: How many children of the same mother are you all together?
> 22:47:31 Client g: 3 all together, twin baby sisters
> 22:47:43 Counsellor F: I am male
> 22:47:59 Counsellor F: Are you of the same father and what is your position
> 22:49:15 Client g: no
> 22:49:32 Client g: let me explain
> 22:49:35 Counsellor F: Are you the first born?
> 22:51:00 Counsellor F: ok let me wait for your explanation
> 22:51:20 Client g: my mom got pregnant while she was in school which the dad i don't know didn't accept
> 22:51:55 Counsellor F: Ok that should not debar your success and progress in life
> 22:52:01 Client g: so she raised me alone until she got married a few years ago
> 22:52:45 Client g: ok! am not angry with my mom………………………………………
> 23:31:12 Client g: thanks, i am very grateful but could you help me with this final thing
> 23:31:41 Counsellor F: yes what is it because you too will have to help me to do something there on your page
> 23:32:52 Client g: there is this girl i really like and we got real close after i askedher out
> 23:33:38 Counsellor F: All I want you to do for me is to fill the feedback form concerning your satisfaction with this chatting. to do that click the "Pls give feedback" when we are through. Yes lets go to the girl issue

23:34:16 Client g: but last month she told me she's back with her former boyfriend
23:34:32 Client g: no problems
23:34:51 Counsellor F: Is she one of our students in OAU?
23:35:17 Counsellor F: Did you have any quarrel with her or why?
23:35:38 Client g: but said we should still remain close friends which i objected to
23:36:43 Client g: no i did not ,said the guy was pressuring her
23:36:51 Counsellor F: Ok, so she broke your heart
23:37:24 Counsellor F: Do you think she loves you?
23:37:30 Client g: as i'll hate to admit yes
23:38:00 Client g: bt i'm really trying to forget her

Another student presented a bitter experience that she has found difficult to discuss with anyone but which has been bothering her. She stated:

> I was sexually abused for 3yrs by 2 of my uncles I dnt knw how to forgive and 4get plz wat can I do. Help me

There was the case of another student who claimed to have been living with an emotional problem that had almost paralyzed his mind because of his inability to discuss it with anyone. He stated:

> ". . . .For d meeting-is it by physical contact or what?if it's by physical contact that means students(i'm among) of   Awolowo university have 2 resume b4 we can see if otherwise or by email let me know.Phone number is 070********.Once again d quick erection is embarrassing-I cant have an interaction free with any girls with my manhood not rising up.Isn't. . . . .

Another one stated:

> l'm rily confusd right nw...i dnt knw hw 2 say dis...i lyk ladies-agreed but der is dis nt-so-close male frnd of mie dt am rily beginning 2 lyk in an 'unusual' way.av rily tried 2 b far away frm him but i doubt dats nt wrkig..By God's grace...I'm nt gay in Jesus ame but i dnt undastand masef anymore...am scared.i knw it sounds weird but pls, try 2 undastand me...help me out!

Other clients also told their stories:

1. Pls its been like 9 yrs now since i've had gonorrhae. When went for test 2 yrs ago, the result was a "scanty symptons of the infection".But now i'm afraid, i dnt knw either to go for traditional herbs or medical herbs. I can see the symptons persisting. Pls hlp

2. I EXPERIENCE HEADACHE FOR THE PAST TWO OR THREE WEEKS NOW,I HAVE BEEN TREATED FOR MALARIA IN THE HEALTH CENTRE YET THE HEADACHE PERSIST,MY BP IS BETWEEN 138-142.PLS WHAT CAN I DO?

3. Its my dad, i always find it difficult to talk to him cos of d fear dat he has put in us.wat can i do to put things in order

4. Myself 25yrs & my choosen husban 27yrs is still virgin but this days due 2 long vacation 4rm school, we see ourselves everyday & feel having sex. What can we do 2 avoid dis until we graduated & get married legally. Thanks

The students' disposition to freely discuss their private affairs does not stop at their personal-social matters. The students found the system an avenue to express their states of worry, confusion and serious difficulties concerning their academic activities. Here are typical excerpts from the e-mail records:

1. gud day. Am a part 2 student in one of the science based faculty on this campus and my current cgpa is 1.95. . . . . .Because i read very well in my part1 to achieve this and also prepared hard but my result dissappointed me. Please what can I do to graduate well.

2. I am currently at a crossroad, I am dropping in my academics, my GP in part two is not okay at all which affected my overall CGPA.

3. i'm a part 2 student,and my performance last session wasnt all that good,i mean i didnt perform as much as i expected.I applied for a change of course but my hod refused to release any of us. I need advice on what to do.

4. i am a 300 level std of psychology.i need help in my academics.av bin tryin my best to make a 2:1 bcos right nw am on 2;2.i start my reading 3wks after resumption.i ensure am ready 4 any exams or test but my results ar jus fair.though, btw my prt 1 and 2,my g.p increased bt i xpected mor.wat shud i do?

5. . . . . a final year student and am really worried that i will not be able to come out with a good grade. I work very hard but it seems like each time the results are released my best is not good enough. am studying demography and social statistics and my weakness has always been calculations. how do i make headway because am so confused. thanks.

6. i need help as regard my g.p, i ave been reading hard bt i still cant get good grades. pls help me

Students who express these worries and concerns can be seen to cut across all levels of study in the university – particularly stale students and even graduating/final year students. Their confusion seem to stem from their belief in the fact that they have tried to "read" hard enough but their performances were not in consonance with their expectations to the extent of contemplating suicide.

hello, i m a student of this great institution....but im worried and very frightened when I think about my cgpa....sometimes I feel like comiting suicide....please what do I do?

Some even went ahead to suggest possible causes such as inability to separate their academic, emotional and social life. Other academic areas in which they were able to express their frustration and confusion included tests and examinations, course registration, and time management. Some excerpts of such situations are presented below:

1. I missed an exam due 2 family problems and i dont want to carry the course. What can i do?
2. i registered for ZOO101 course, i missed the test which held yesterday, what can i do?

Their trusting disposition also extended to aspects of providing feedback on the earlier counselling interactions they had and in some cases giving gratitude and appreciation for their

experiences. Some of the excerpts below tend to validate the extent to which students trust the service and consequently want to give feedback, gratitude or appreciation.

1. …….. Thank you for your clarification.I realy appreciate it…….

2. . . . . . .Okay, i prefer 12 oclock noon on Sunday? If it is convenient or if otherwise, I would like to know.. . . .

3. . . . . it's quit a long time i've given you feedback about condition.well, for the time being there is improvement.but it does'nt mean that it has gone completelx.the next question is that can i have total control over my mind concerning the issue(unwanted erection) . . . . . .

4. DEAR SIR GLORY BE TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST THIS IS TO SHARE WITH YOU MY JOY THAT I HAVE BEEN ADMITTED TO O A U IFE MY DAD SAW IT AND PRINTED IT OUT FOR ME YESTERDAY THANKS FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND ENCOURAGEMNTS SIR GOD BLESS YOU AND YOUR FAMILY BUT SIR WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS FOR ME TO FOLLOW THANKS

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that one of the major dispositions of students have toward the online counselling service is trust, one in which they can discuss matters that are very private to them. They also found the service an avenue where they can express their worries, frustrations and difficult situations with the trusting belief that with the counsellor's intervention the situation would be alleviated.

Curiosity

This refers to a group of students' disposition to search for information, explore, examine, and ask questions about issues, events or objects. In course of the online counselling, students made several attempts to explore the online counselling programme itself as well as issues relating to the university and their own academic activities.

1. i'm a part 1 law student of oau. i need guidance in choosing my elective courses

2. please, what is the total course unit a UME entry student will have to complete to be qualified for graduation in OAU

3. As a student studyin int'l relations, were can i secure a job wen i graduate?

4. Gud day, Counsellor,i am a student of the department of religious studies part 2. I need advise on the prospect and career opportunities available for my after a degree in this course. Currently am very depressed morally and emotionally. Pls i need ur help.

The scenarios presented above show that students who had one thing or the other to find out from the university became curious about the functionality of the online counselling site and wanted to try and see if someone will respond to them at all or if useful information can be derived from the site. In fact, some came up to show their curiosity about the service itself. Some of such excerpts are presented thus:

1. I'm very interested in this counselling service. Please i will like to know how it works.

2. Hello Sir/Ma, This is my first time of trying this. I know it will be of good use to me. I want to let you know about my performance in school. It's the major problem we students face in school. Please how do i go about it?

Enthusiasm

This refers to students' disposition to readily accept and use the online counselling service regardless of any discouraging setbacks such as power, network, payments or time. Several records of the students' interaction with the online counsellor shows that students were quite enthusiastic to make use of the online counselling despite any setback they may experience. For instance in a chat interaction with a student OC (Not the real name), the system kept the following record:

12:05:32 **OC**: Relationship
12:05:43 Counsellor Counsellor F joined the chat
12:06:03 Visitor closed chat window
12:06:12 **Counsellor F**: Hello
12:06:50 **Counsellor F**: Hello OC
12:07:02 **Counsellor F**: Pls call back
12:07:30 Visitor joined chat again
12:08:30 Visitor joined chat again
12:09:16 **Counsellor F**: Hello and welcome
12:09:50 Visitor joined chat again
12:09:55 **Counsellor F**: Just type directly into the lower box and press enter or clikc send (Enter)
12:11:02 **Counsellor F**: Are you still there?
12:11:38 Visitor joined chat again
12:12:01 **Counsellor F**: Are still there?
12:13:22 Visitor joined chat again
12:14:27 **Counsellor F**: Hello pls type into that box presented to you and press enter
12:14:28 Visitor joined chat again
12:15:27 **Counsellor F**: will u prefer to use the email?
12:15:38 Visitor joined chat again
12:16:12 **Counsellor F**: Are you more familiar with email?
12:16:57 **Counsellor F**: If u open more than one window the computer may hang
12:18:00 Visitor closed chat window
12:18:35 **Counsellor F**: pls call back

In this case, the client kept on trying to reopen a new chat window everytime the system records "Visitor joined chat again." It seems the client was not familiar with chatting and the counsellor was trying to guide him/her on how to use the system. The client wanted to interact with the counsellor despite the fact that he/she does not possess enough online communication skill to carry out this activity. In some other cases, the student did not mind buying more airtime to ensure that he/she was able to interact with the online counsellor. An example of such an interaction with a student, OOO (not the real name) is presented below

09:38:45 **Counsellor F**: How are you today?
09:38:46 Visitor joined chat again
09:39:04 **OOO**: fine sir
09:39:40 **Counsellor F**: Yes I went through your mail and saw the need for us to chat
09:40:13 **OOO**: that is why i am here sir
09:40:56 **Counsellor F**: You mention the issue of a tricycle "Keke Napep/Marwa" that is between you and your friend

09:41:12 **OOO**: yes sir
09:41:43 **Counsellor F**: Before we go on I need to get some information from you
09:42:07 **OOO**: okay sir
09:42:26 **Counsellor F**: Firstly what course are you doing in OAU and what part are you?
Will you prefer a male or female counsellor?
09:43:15 Visitor closed chat window
09:43:31 **Counsellor F**: I also want to assure you that whatever we discuss is confidential and will not be exposed to third party unless where it may cause harm to you or the society
09:43:46 **Counsellor F**: Is there any problem?
09:47:55 **Counsellor F**: ok you can call back later.
09:47:59 **OOO**: i am in english language sir
09:49:22 Counsellor has connection issues, we temporarily moved you to foreground queue. Sorry for keeping you waiting.
09:50:49 **OOO**: so that i can buy more time because in am in a cyber cafe
09:52:16 **OOO**: this is my phone number sir. 080********
09:58:06 **OOO**: you can check your inbox i have sent my phone number there.
10:10:46 **OOO**: are still there sir

Disposition to complain

This refers to students' disposition to lodge their grievances, discontentment and disappointments at certain persons, policies, events or places in the university through the online counselling system with the expectation that the system will serve a shorter route to the authorities. For instance a student wrote in his/her mail:

> Things are not in good shape concerning lecture holding at Amphitheater since the resumption this semester there is no either blackboard or whiteboard for the lecturer to write during lecture we always make use of a broken entrance Door,for example in csc-201 class,and I think for a university like this with Good reputation this is not good,thanks.

The client raised his/her complaint about the use of the amphitheatre for taking lectures as there were no writing facilities for the lecturers and even had to pass through a broken wall to gain entrance. They probably found no one through which the complaint could be channelled and felt the online counselling system would be able to sensitize the university authority to this. Complaints against individuals were also raised. An example is presented:

> Am a part four student of the department of ****** ******, OAU. I have an issue with my part adviser in the name of **** ******* *******.When we where told to confirm our studentship, i didnt show up. When i eventually showed up, he wouldn't answer me at all....i need to verify somethings about my result and its my final semester...

Another one wrote…..

> Good day Ma/Sir, i finished in the Department of ***** in the month of December,2011 and even as i make this complaints nothing as been done about our results to be taken to the Senate for approval so we could commence for NYSC and our planned lives and the reason been that the lecturer in charge of this is never on sit when this meetings are going on, attempts to always reach him to inform him even when he does not know

which he ought to proved abortive. Please Sir/Ma, i would be very grateful if this situation is promptly looked into and would like to know the response. Thank you and God bless.

Doubt

This represents students' disposition involving the expression of feelings of uncertainty, lack of conviction or statements bothering on suspicion toward the online counselling service, events or any activity within the university system. Students commonly bring up such issue to seek confirmation, correction or refusal. For instance some of the clients wrote:

1. Is this for real? is it reliable? in there any way i can subsrcibe or have scheduled visit to a counsellor in person?

2. Good Afternoon, I'm not sure if this counselor thing really works but it would be nice to talk to someone about my present predicaments. Someone other than my part adviser. I just got kicked off Pharmacy and I'm now in Economics and i need advice on some issues. Thanks

3. Just to confirm whether it is real or not. I never knew there was anything on our website called online counsellor link. Now that I have known, we shall decide on what next to do

They expressed doubt in whether the online counselling service link on the university website was functional or just mere links placed to decorate the site like some links that might have been under development for a long time on the web page. However, with this mail and the attendant replies they became regular visitors and online counselling clients. Other doubtful information were presented by students with the hope that they would be able to obtain reliable information about them. Here are some excerpts from students' mails.

1. Good day, please i just want to confirm if the resumption date for freshers is truly on the 16th of Jan. 2012. I saw these news on a website and i just want to confirm it. Thanks
2. Please, must I register LIB 002 in 2nd semester.
3. Please, How can I register for LIB 002

In the cases presented, the students were familiar with the registration of a university-wide "compulsory" elective course LIB 001 – The use of the Library. They were also familiar with the fact that Harmattan semester courses are usually tagged odd numbers particularly 001 such that their continuation in the rain semester would carry the even number equivalent such as 002. However, LIB 001 is just a single course in OAU and a sessional course that has no continuing equivalent. The students also had doubtful understanding of restricted elective courses such as MAC 206 as a student also stated:

My enquiry is about MAC 206 cost accounting. MAC 205 was done first semester but I didn't register for it, this semester I wish to do 206 but I don't know if 206 is a continuation of 205, as it will be a disadvantage to me if it is due to the fact I ve no prior knowledge of cost accounting. I wrote my WAEC as a science student, but am studying economics now. I want to know if 206 will be taught afresh from the beginning, if so i can register for it. I await ur reply ASAP, thank u

It can be concluded that one of the dispositions demonstrated by OAU students toward the online counselling service is doubt and they exhibited this in order to clear their minds of the uncertainty and suspicion involved.

Apart from the fact that the largest percentage of the student users demonstrated this type of disposition, it can be seen that the enthusiastic disposition exhibited by some of them may have been generated from the fact that they had developed some trust in counselling and found the online counselling a highly welcomed idea and consequently wanted to make immediate or urgent use of it. This may also lead in part to the disposition to be curious, wanting to find out about the service on one hand and wanting to find out other issues that might have been bothering their minds. Their disposition to lay their complaint through the online counselling service may also be linked to the fact that they have the trust that they will be able to get their complaints across to the school authority of they pass it across the online counselling service. Only the disposition of doubt can be said to contradict the trusting disposition.

DISCUSSION

Given the rising student population at the Obafemi Awolowo University coupled with the introduction of new courses and programmes, evident inadequacies observed in the effectiveness and patronage of the available face-to-face counselling service lend credence to the need for online counselling as an alternative approach. Research question 1 was posed to determine OAU students' disposition to the online counselling service. The importance of disposition in social relations has been stressed by researchers. For instance, Hamlin (2005) posited that dispositions carry some motivational force that may modify, and sometimes dominate, what might otherwise be desired and chosen. Consequently, Dotger and Theoharis (2008) described dispositions as trends in an individual's judgments or actions within ill-structured contexts.

The study found five categories in students' dispositions to the online counselling service. These include trust, curiosity, enthusiasm, doubt and disposition to complain. The trusting disposition expressed by students was found to be in terms of hope, reliance, gratitude and a disposition to give feedback. One in which they can discuss matters that they consider very private to them, in both academic and personal-social spheres of their lives on campus. They also found the service as an avenue where they could express their worries, frustrations and difficult situations with the trusting belief that with the counsellor's intervention, the situation would be alleviated. Trust has been described as being a particularly important aspect of online interactions, especially in regard to the fact that cues and signals such as facial expression, tone of voice and gesture are not available online (Fletcher-Tomenius & Vossler, 2009). Ishaya and Macaulay (1999) defined trust as "a characteristic for collaboration where members believe in character, ability, integrity, familiarity and morality of each other" (p. 145). It should be noted that building and maintaining trust is acknowledged as necessary condition for cooperation and as a key factor for effective functioning of collaborative computer-mediated communications (O'Hara-Devereaux & Johansen, 1994).

The students' expression of trust is in line with the assertions of Heitler (2012) that trust in a therapeutic relationship builds when clients feel that their therapist will be helpful, guiding them through to resolution of the issues that trouble them; will keep clients safe from blame, anger or hurtful comments, and will nourish positive feelings of hope and self-esteem. These elements were clearly demonstrated by the student in the course of their interaction with the online counsellors. Zimmerman (1987) gave possible reasons for this. According to him, computer-mediated communication was more expressive of feelings and that users made more frequent mention of interpersonal issues. Anyway, counselling has been described as a relationship of trust targeted at helping the clients to understand their potentials, challenges, opportunities and threats (Popoola, Adebowale, Akintomide & Olatomide, 2012).

The results obtained in this study are similar to the findings of Cook and Doyle (2002) that show participants in ionline counselling sessions felt a collaborative, bonding relationship with

therapists and that participants overwhelmingly indicated that online counselling was a positive experience with advantages over face-to-face interaction. Also Richards (2009), in a similar study involving the delivery of online counselling to students at a university (Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland) which involved the creation of a website where according to him individual students could post a submission online and receive a reply from a counsellor, noted that the characteristic of disinhibition is evident in the submissions made by users. In this way, it seems that a far greater amount of personal information and detail was divulged. Suler (2004) believed that in such an online interaction, the anonymity, the use of written communication and the lack of personal contact facilitates disclosures of personal information.

The study revealed that students who patronized the counselling service were curious with regard to their tendency to search for information, explore, examine, and ask questions about issues, events or objects. Litman (2005) defined curiosity as a desire to know, to see or to experience that motivates exploratory behaviour directed towards the acquisition of new information. The curiosity demonstrated by the students involved finding out about the online counselling programme itself, issues relating to the university, their personal-social matters as well as their academic activities. According to Hillman (1996) curiosity springs from feelings of doubt and uncertainty as one needs to find others to confirm experience rather than having faith in oneself. However, Loewenstein (1994) extolled the virtues of curiosity as being consistently recognized as a critical motive that influences human behaviour, as one of the most important spurs to educational attainments and the major impetus behind scientific discoveries, possibly eclipsing the drive for economic gains.

Another category of students were found to have an enthusiastic disposition toward the online counselling service. They were found to readily accept and use the online counselling service regardless of any discouraging setbacks such as power, network, payments or time. This is consistent with findings in many other attempts to establish online counselling system in schools. For instance Glasheen and Campbell (2009) reported enthusiastic success in using online counselling to wean reluctant secondary school boys into counselling relationships. In the US, there is a report that even old people are enthusiastically willing to use the Internet to manage their health care and communicate with their physicians (Dolan, 2012). This result is also consistent with earlier findings that OAU students were enthusiastically waiting for the establishment of the online counselling as they considered this to be long overdue considering the University's achievement in the area of ICT (Adebowale, 2010; Popoola & Adebowale, 2011).

Despite their favourable dispositions, some students were found to exhibit a doubtful disposition particularly directed at the service. This doubting disposition might have stemmed from their experiences these user have when they clicked similar links particularly on the university web pages which usually returned error messages such as "Sorry, your request was not found", blank pages or pages that might not have been updated in the last six months. Such links were very close to where the "OAU Online counsellor" link is situated on the University Homepage. It has been earlier said that such doubt might be attributed to curiosity (Hillman, 1996) such that one needs to find out information from others to confirm experience. Such doubts were also expressed toward university activities such as resumption dates, course registration and offerings.

The study also found that students exhibited a disposition to complain. It seems students wanted to lodge their complaints about one thing or the other but were scared about possible unfair consequences. They found the system a friendly platform by which they could pass their message about lecture venue, interpersonal relationship with staff and fellow students as well as processing of their results. One of the necessary learning support needs is to provide learners the opportunity to air their worries and concerns which may negatively influence their learning and cognition. Adebowale and Ehindero (2012) posited that the healthy development of the thought

process of the individual through Guidance and Counselling is an essential learning support service and that this goal will be more effectively and efficiently achieved if the Guidance and Counselling services is obtained through the Internet as it is quicker, cheaper, at the convenience of both the learner and his/her counsellor. It also removes the fear of stigmatization and encourages deeper disclosure, which is expected to facilitate the therapeutic relationship.

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