



Contemporary Ethical Issues in Counselling: A Dimensional Trend Analysis

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Abstract

There are faces of ethical issues in counselling relationships for which contributors to knowledge frequently lays hands on. When researchers look in to ethics their initiative is to discover the extent to which the practicing behaviors' adhere to the ethical codes governing the counselling profession. This current study provides answers to the; adherence rate to ethical issues for school counsellors and health counsellors, the counsellors overall adherence rate to ethical issues, and the trend by year of articles publication regarding confidentiality and friendliness, all during 2007 – 2021. The purpose of this study was to examine the trends and adherence to ethics confined to confidentiality and friendliness among counsellors in counselling relationships published in selected counselling and other psychotherapeutic related journal articles during the period of 2007 – 2021. Dimensional trend analysis was used to investigate the psychotherapeutic articles published online, all which are related to ethical issues in counselling. A total of 108 articles were used as samples all which are relevant to the purpose of this study. The analysis of the result showed counsellors generally adhere to ethics in the discharge of their services, specifically school counsellors are found to keep with confidentiality and friendliness higher than the health counsellors do. Analysis revealed that, adherence to ethics was found to be 74.07%. Regarding the trend by year of publication, 2019 was found the least in research article publication, adjudged due to COVID 19 trauma. The years 2020 and 2021 were found to have a rise in publications above all the other years except the year 2010 which investigated to be the highest in term of scholarly article publications. It is concluded that articles publications trend do not consistently surpass one another annually.

Keywords: Adherence, confidentiality, counselling, ethics, friendliness

Introduction

There are faces of ethical issues in counselling relationships for which contributors to knowledge frequently lays hands on. According to Çerkez et al. (2017), when researchers look in to ethics their initiative is to discover the extent to which the practicing behaviors' and decision making processes adhere to the ethical and legal codes governing the counselling profession. There exists consistent increase in articles publications on counselling's ethics. It is however reported that both in the developing and developed countries there is prevalence of researches in the domain of counselling psychology being conducted to solve domestic and national bedeviled social problem and concurrently

indigenizing psychological research. Across the regions of the world, contemporary published articles denotes and present the continuous need, everlasting interest, and full attention to counselling ethical related issues, for the survival of the profession, it's safeguard to maintain the counselling roles in the society. Ethics is the moral behavioral principles of a person or persons and the way of its conduct (Cerkez et al., 2017). Ethical issues are being carefully and severally digested in variety of scholarly journals and its dilemmas' is presented as an unending area worthy of consideration in counselling practice. Discussions of ethical issues in counselling practice are ever appearing and emerging (Gonsiorek et al, 2022). By implication, ethical issues have taken a variety of trends and forms in counselling and are contemporarily maintaining and improving its principles through the trends, content, dimension, and a host of other analysis.

According to King et.al (2008), Absence of self-disclosure help spread infectious disease, this is evidenced where an assisted disclosure enables clients to grant consent to a counsellor and inform her ex-husband about her HIV status so that he would not infect other women. Setiawan (2006) suggests there should be efforts to enhance confidentiality in counselling. The lack of optimum and maximum uphold of confidentiality to be precise, turn clients to a victim of ethical dilemmas in counselling. Instead of it to suppress and eliminates unwillingness among clients, the reverse would be the case, a menace highly unwanted and rejected in it's entirety. Among some of the effect and challenge tied to noncompliance and non-adherence to confidentiality in counselling is "Stigmatization". Hope, confidence, interest are motivating factors which confidentiality promotes and ultimately produced a desired result in counselling.

Friendliness in this current research article takes the dimension of the accepted relationships within the ethical codes. It is a quality that blends with all encouragers in an interpersonal relationship. It is interwoven with the following qualities of a good counsellor; respectfulness, trustworthiness, listening, patience, and verbal paraphrase. It is obvious if you respect a person he likes to stay with you, if you are honest he draws closer, if you listen you takes away anxiety and phobias, if you are patient he will be confident to relate, and in essence if you paraphrase it sends message that you are welcome and signifies interaction (essentially counselling is known to be wilful interaction). Hawke et al. (2019), posits that confidentiality and privacy are critical to youth-friendly services, therefore organizations should have clear policies about confidentiality, rights and responsibilities and consent to involve others in treatment. Here also the two variables could be seen to checkmate themselves. Where there is recorded compliance in confidentiality from a counsellor, the client as well is revealed to be friendly, and this emphasize the importance of friendliness in counselling as not only an ethical issue centered on counsellor, but also an elicited good behavior expected of a client, counselling relationship is mutual.

Confidentiality and Friendliness are key ethical considerations, very sensitive, delicate, and extra fragile among other indisputable counselling ethics towards an interrelationships. As a basis and a background to a study, Dapaah and Senah (2016), put forward; *it is true some people have cited lack of confidentiality on the part of health workers as a reason for not using HIV-related services*. Some among colleagues are excessive and therefore leak too much; as such they easily breach the guiding ethical conducts of counselling by making their clients status public. Fischel (1998), in the University of Chicago out sourced from the representatives of the legal profession; counsellors who learn information are required to learn secrecy to prevent persons from being falsely convicted.

Counsellors must therefore remain silent even if the disclosure would not implicate the client in the crime. The case could be murder case and a conviction of sentence to death.

Couple ups with the importance of ethical issues in counselling, confidentiality and friendliness lack contemporary analysis of ethical trend. Thus, this dimensional trend analysis could help the school and health counsellors in particular, teachers, and researchers to have recent research based information on the counselling situation regarding ethics. It will make an intra-disciplinary appraisal on adherence in counselling using the school counsellors and health counsellors. More so it will emphasize the dilemmas' that counsellors encounters in the process to accomplish their intervention. In essence, the current study aim to provide the counselling world with contemporary insights for better action and reaction, a need ever demanding to flourish.

Research based findings revealed that Confidentiality is an ethical issue very critical to the survival of counselling and revolve around the reason to seek counselling, abstain, or shun it. Clients for various reasons show lack of preference with the counselling building and locations for them to adhere, turn out, and meet with their need for wellbeing (Ito-Alpturer & Uslu, 2010; Jenkins, 2012; Hendelman, 2014; Yu, 2008). Counsellors were reported to have breached issues regarding confidentiality and client's motivation towards adherence in counselling (Beltran-Aroca 2021; Dapaah & Senah, 2016; Morfaw, 2013; Witt & Witt, 2016). Counsellors' adherence to confidentiality has been traced and reported as ethical conduct professionally complied (Cardoso et al., 2012; Carey et al., 2015; Mullen et al., 2014; Njeru 2009; Poorchangizi, 2019; Fox 2007).

Investigations in to related researches shows that Friendliness, facilitates counselling interaction that give hope, interest and sustain adherence to counselling. It enables clients to maintain adherence and also allow them to give consent to counsellors towards escaping future stress. Again it enhances a process of giving back collegial relationships (Murdock et Al., 2013; King et al., 2008; Brostrom et al., 2021; Audet, 2011; Guichard, 2009). Friendliness has also being found of abuse among counsellors which indicates non adherence in counselling relationships (Zeglin et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2020; Knox & Hill 2016; Florer & Prieto 2018).

The key goal of this research article is to investigate and present the adherence trends for contemporary ethical issues in counselling confined to confidentiality and friendliness in relation to school and health counsellors respectively that have been published in academic journals during 2007 to 2021, and also to survey and analyses the article publications by year, in conformity with counselling confidentiality and friendliness. This would provide the researchers in counselling and education with the trend history for reference and other academic hypothesis. Ethical issues are very crucial, they regulate counselling activities. The success of counsellors, psychologist, and all other psychotherapist lies on the judicious utilization of the proven reliable laid down ethical codes. Hence the results findings presented in this article will inform more to the understanding of ethical issues and the role they play in counselling.

Research Questions

1. What is the adherence rate to ethical issues for school counsellors and health counsellors from 2007 to 2021?
2. What is the counsellors overall adherence rate to ethical issues from 2007 to 2021?
3. What is the trend by year of article publications for confidentiality and friendliness during 2007 – 2021?

Methodology

Research Model

This research is a qualitative research, as it aims to describe the trends of studies related to the subject of the research in the field of Psychological Counselling and Guidance and to interpret the current situation. Among the qualitative research types, the document analysis method was used. Document analysis is a qualitative research method used to meticulously and systematically analyze the content of written documents (Wach & Ward, 2013).

Document analysis is a systematic method used to examine and evaluate all documents, including printed and electronic materials (Kral, 2020).

Sampling and Sources

The research article looked at counsellors' adherence to ethical issues in the dimension of confidentiality and friendliness among the school counsellors and health counsellors respectively. It also looked at the counselling trends by year of the articles publications limited to confidentiality and friendliness as counselling ethics. The dimensional analysis is for the counsellors' adherence trend from 2007 to 2021 (a period of fifteen years). The researcher looked at the qualitative and quantitative full text or abstract findings of the accessed articles, and arrived at counsellors adheres to the ethical issues in question or do not adhere to the ethical issues. Therefore the current research was a descriptive survey designed to investigate the dimensional trend regarding confidentiality and friendliness. The current study considered 119 published articles related to confidentiality and friendliness in counselling, initially searched for the purpose of the study from online data base, out of which 108 articles were used as the sample size for the study. The rationale for this is to work in harmony with the aim of the research and in compliance with the limitations of the journals articles criteria set to be used in the current investigation. The Sample size was determined by research advisor (2006). The sampling technique was a purposive sampling. It is the sampling technique that requires a researcher to specify criterion for inclusion. Purposive sampling is in another name called as Criterion based sampling. The data collection instrument for the current study were data base links for; Taylor & Francis, the Springer link, Elsevier, and Open Access.

The Criteria for Selecting Articles

Data regarding the purpose of the study were searched and collected from the internet using Google scholar and documented directly by the researcher. The key words used to search the online data were; ethical issues, counselling, confidentiality, and counselling relationships. International impact citation Journals articles in social sciences, Education, Counselling Psychology, and clinical sciences were those mainly checked, outlined, and reviewed in this research. The data base journal links that were mainly looked at for the scholarly articles, in this study were; Taylor & Francis, the Springer link, Elsevier, and Open Access. The research excludes articles that are not related to counselling practice. It equally excludes articles that are not about school counselling and health counselling. Unpublished articles, unpublished conference papers, and Text Books were also not considered. Articles published in any language other than English language are also excluded. Regarding the year, this work excludes 2022 for the reason the year is still counting. This research article is specific to include; Book reviews articles, articles published in English language, articles published

during 2007- 20021, articles related to counselling ethics, confidentiality in counselling relationships, and friendliness in counselling practice.

The criteria used to sample the articles for analysis were; counselling related publications, the year of the publication, and the nature of the research article (health counselling and school counselling). The current dimensional trend analysis, study the related and relevant published articles and purposively sample 108 scholarly articles out of 119 initially searched.

Data Analysis

All the articles used were relevant to ethical issues tied to confidentiality and friendliness in School and Health Counselling. In the process, 54 school counselling results were noted down from among which comprises 27 from confidentiality and 27 from friendliness respectively. In health counselling too, 54 articles were checked, regarding counsellors adherence to confidentiality and friendliness, 27 articles were used for each, respectively. The research type were all noted down and complied. On the excel spread sheet, data table was created in which the scores were inputted. The ethical issues were coded as; adherence = 2, and non-adherence = 1. Confidentiality and friendliness were analyzed for both the school counsellors and the health counsellors respectively. School counsellors were coded CO1, and health counsellors were coded CO2. Coding was also applied regarding the trend by year of publication in conformity with the purpose of the study. Subsequently data were analyzed in percentages using pie chart for the adherence rate and trend, and analyzed in bar chart for the trend regarding year of articles publication. This is achieved with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

Findings

The tables, and figures below presents the summary and analysis of the data collected which were analyzed using percentage and represented in pie chart and bar chat with the aid of statistical analysis instrument (SPSS).

Table 1.

Distribution of Adherence from the Ethical Dimensions of Confidentiality and Friendliness

Ethical Dimensions	Adherence frequency	Non Adherence frequency	Adherence in Percentage %	Non Adherence in Percentage %
Confidentiality	37	17	68.52	31.48
Friendliness	43	11	79.63	20.37

Table 1 presents the distribution of adherence from ethical dimensions of confidentiality and friendliness. It is important to note that “confidentiality and friendliness” were the ethical dimensions checked to find the adherence of school and health counsellors. Thus, result in table 1, simplifies the means to answer the research questions of the current study.

Table 2.

Distribution of Adherence to Ethical Issues by Counselling Nature

Nature of counselling	Adherence frequency	Non adherence frequency	Adherence in %	Non adherence in %
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School counselling	45	9	83.33	16.67
Health counselling	35	19	64.81	35.19
Overall counsellors adherence to ethical issues	80	28	74.07	25.93

Table 2 presents the percentage adherence to ethical issues in counselling between the school and health counsellors. As shown in the Table, the percentage of adherence for school counsellor was found to be 83%. This reveals school counsellors keeps adherence to ethical issues more than the health counsellor does with the clients or counselee. However, the Table revealed that the school counsellor adhered the more to ethical issues in counselling than the health counsellor. However from the table, regarding the overall counsellor's adherence to ethical issues, the result implies that both the school and health counsellors strictly adhered to ethical issues in counselling. The overall adherence percentage was found to be 74.07%.

Graphical Representation of Ethical Issues Adherence Findings

Figure 1.

School Counsellors' Adherence / Non Adherence Percentage

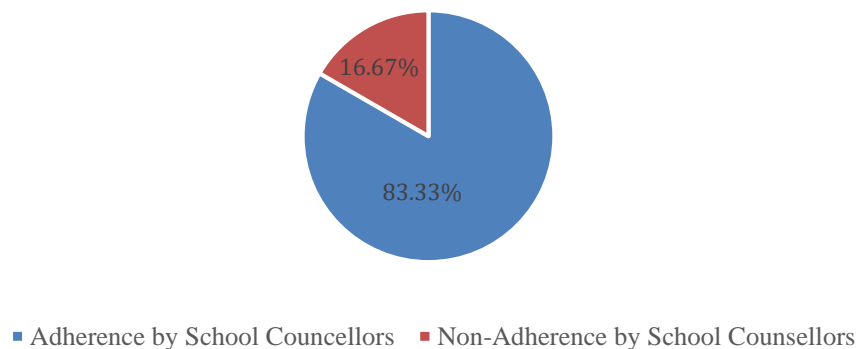


Figure 2.

Health Counsellors' Adherence / Non-Adherence Percentage

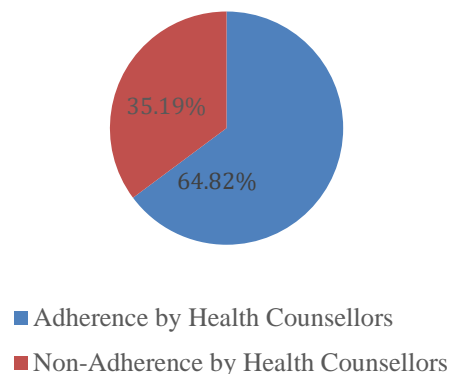


Figure 3.
Overall Counsellor's Adherence to Ethical Issues

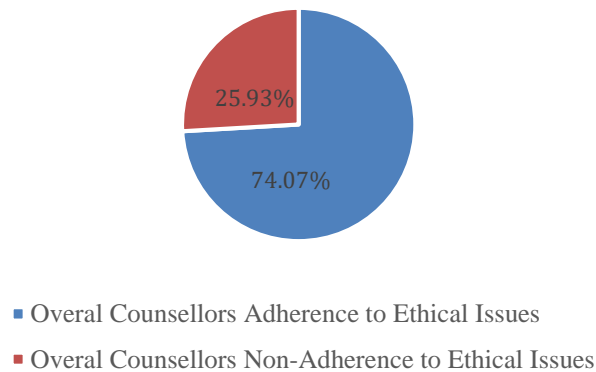


Figure 4.
Cross Tabulation of School Counsellor Adherence and Non Adherence

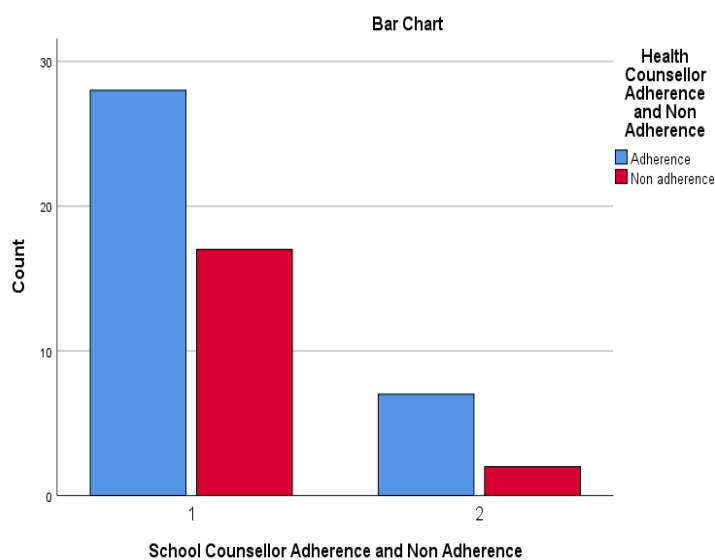
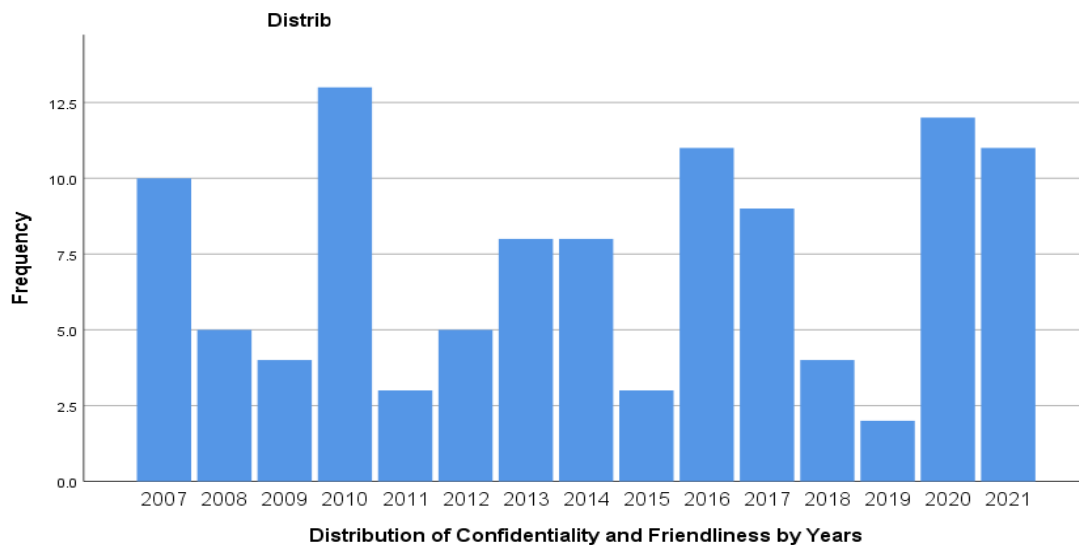


Table 3.
Distribution of Published Article Documents by year

Year of publication	Frequency	Percentage
2007	10	9.26
2008	05	4.63
2009	04	3.70
2010	13	12.04
2011	03	2.78
2012	05	4.62

2013	08	7.41
2014	08	7.41
2015	03	2.78
2016	11	10.19
2017	09	8.33
2018	04	3.70
2019	02	1.85
2020	12	11.11
2021	11	10.19
Total	108	100

Figure 5.
Distribution of Confidentiality and Friendliness by years



Discussion, Conclusions and Suggestion

The study analyzed the documents related to ethical issues confined to the ethical dimension of confidentiality and friendliness in counselling for school and health counsellors that were published in various scholarly journals from 2007 to 2021. Year 2022 was not included because as at the time of the study the year is still counting. In the process of conducting the research it was encountered several researches has been carried out related to ethical issues in counselling (Dapaah & Senah, 2016; Knight, et al., 2018; Anne et al., 2011; Bansal, 2010). Analyses various issues of interest which serves as an intervention strategies towards solving psychological problems. Majority of the scholarly articles journal

publications reviewed from different publisher's across the world, reveals emphasis more to school counsellors and health counsellors regardless of the nature of client complain and problem (Ito-Alpturer & Uslu, 2010; Beltran-Aroca, 2021), and found confidentiality disclosure at 81.8%, 77.2%, 80% respectively. The area of the study has gained interest and momentum from researchers globally as evidenced, it is also aiming to sensitize and check counselling activities regularly. From the results examined, it is carefully observed that the dimension of the published documents regarding ethical issues in counselling, discussions related to confidentiality and friendliness in counselling is significantly on the increase with school counselling and health counselling on the dominance. This is highly influenced by the sensitivity of the counselling confidentiality and vitality of friendliness towards assisting the client for better.

The overall adherence result obtained from this study were achieved through analysing the ethical dimensions in counselling (confidentiality and friendliness) and analysing adherence to ethical issues by counselling nature (the school counselling and the health counselling), results were presented in tables and pie charts respectively. The results from this study regarding the ethical dimensions showed that confidentiality and friendliness are adhered to in counselling specifically by the school and health counsellors. Confidentiality adherence was found to be 68.52%, it shows improvement to the findings of Erah and Erute (2008) at 58%.

Friendliness in the current research reveals 79.63% adherence, is in conformity with the findings of Brostrom et al. (2021), which assert that friendliness has made clients interested and participatory in counselling relationships and also similar to the findings of Felton (2015) which reveals that friendliness increased clients ability to pre-empt stress, increase confidence towards ameliorating stress, and increased self-compassion. The current study result indicates that counselling ethical issues are in compliance by counsellors and maintain the position of every day being an aspect of consideration in counselling activities. The result even though suggest that; friendliness is slightly adhered higher than confidentiality was strengthen with by the works of Poku et al. (2017), Morfaw et al. (2013) that shows leaked out of HIV status disclosure and which consequently resulted in client non adherence and distrust in confidentiality of health system among other contributory sources. Adherence to friendliness in counselling has been consistently positive in counselling relationships (Hanley, 2009; Hawley, 2007; Cheon et al., 2009; Felton et al., 2015). As referenced in the introductory part of this article, when researchers look in to ethics their initiative is to discover the extent to which the practicing behaviours and decision making processes adhere to the ethical and legal codes governing the counselling profession (Cerkez et al., 2017). Hence the research questions formulated in this study were primarily to investigate the adherence trend to ethical issues in counselling. The percentage adherence for school counsellors was found to be 83%, and for the health counsellors the result was found to be 64.81%. The findings reveals, school counsellors keeps adherence to ethical issues more than the health counsellor does with the clients or counselee. However, the results revealed that the school counsellor adhere the more with ethical issues in counselling than the health counsellor. Regarding the overall counsellors' adherence to ethical issues, the results indicate that both the school and health counsellors strictly adhered to ethical issues in counselling. The dimensional analysis revealed that, adherence to ethical issues in counselling for fifteen years from 2007 to 2021 is found to be 74.07%. Therefore the findings of this study also imply that counsellors are generally providing services within standard with optimum control and awareness of their role and situations. All the findings presented that ethical issues in counselling are functional and operational.

The current study concludes that School and Health counsellors adhere to ethical issues. But health counsellors lagged behind school counsellors and therefore call for more adherences from health counsellors and upkeep from the school counsellors. Regarding the publication trend by year, it was concluded, twenty ten (2010) was the year in which more related publications were made and accounted for 12% of the sample size used, slightly higher than the year 2020 which was concluded as the second highest, accounted for 11.1% of the sample. The two years took for more than 20% of the fifteen years analyzed. The year 2019 was analysed as the lowest in terms of publication and this was concluded due to COVID 19 trauma globally. It is however concluded that research publications has increased in the year 2020 and 2021 beyond the previous years, with only the year 2010 slightly higher than post COVID-19 publications, an indication that research is ongoing except on global emergencies evidenced during the active period of COVID-19 pandemic. Stagnation was also experienced in the years 2013 and 2014 showing that research level is not always varying in years; some years are likely to be similar in research and article publications. Hence scholarly article publications for confidentiality and friendliness from 2007 to 2021 are in conformity with meaning and aim of trend analysis.

The current dimensional analysis study confined to counselling ethical adherence in confidentiality and friendliness follows the path of descriptive research study and intended to contribute for knowledge to various researchers, professionals, experts, teachers and students in the field of psychological counselling and guidance, psychology, psychiatry and any other specialty fields in psychotherapy. The dimensional analysis done in this research work is beneficial to practicing counsellors, counsellors on the training grounds, supervisors and the related associations. The study reveals Nitti gritty the contemporary trends for adherence to confidentiality and friendliness as ethical variables of considerations in counselling psychology. It also provides the rising issues and dilemmas that sensitize counsellors' practice. The current study X-rays the strength and weakness of school and health counsellors, and this serves as a clue and guide to assists towards the challenges and all other areas that have pressing needs regarding compliance in counselling confidentiality and friendliness. Furthermore, this study identifies areas to conduct researches, for example; ethical issues in cohabitation counselling, ethical issues in the early use of technology counselling for early child, and the appraisals to ethical compliance in counselling relationships.

The current article used dimensional trend analysis, which is notably a scientific research survey approach. Trend analysis is use in making future predictions based on historical data points over a period, and identify uptrends, downtrends, and stagnation. This feature categorizes the research as an objective work (Shi & Leuwerke, 2010). There is also weakness in strength, as such one of the weakness noticed with this type of analysis is that, relatively some researchers may use information in a particular study and not referencing the article. It is therefore suggested that research should be carried out frequently so that counsellors would be up to date regarding ethical issues and the trends. It is also suggested that a more in-depth study should embark upon and analyzed ethics in counselling. The position of ethics in counselling is undying, and ever demanding. School counsellors temporarily are much awake in the counselling world, very well in control and awareness of the counselling situation. In view of this, it is suggested that health counsellors should be more vigilant in counselling confidentiality and adherence to ethics. It is suggested that there is need for quantitative research publications on friendliness as it relates to ethics in counselling.

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