

Gender Comparisons on the Cyber-Counseling and Face-To-Face Counseling Approaches

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Abstract

Cyber-counseling has been widely offered and has become one of the alternative approach in counseling help. However, the effectiveness of this service is highly debated among scholars. Some scholars claimed that the cyber-counseling will give a great help to men, and some other scholars stated that cyber-counseling will benefit the women. There was also a study showing no difference between the gender in choosing and benefiting from cyber-counseling services. With these arguments, this study aims to see the impact of gender on client satisfaction in face-to-face counseling and cyber-counseling approaches. Quasi-experimental study using The Non-Equivalent Post-test Only Design is applied in this study. A total of 60 subjects were involved and conducted in two study groups; control group using Face-to-Counseling approach and experimental group using Cyber-counseling approach. Quantitative data was obtained using the Client's Satisfaction Inventory Short-Form (CSI-SF) questionnaire. The findings show there are differences between the Gender and Client Satisfaction in both approaches and the results of the Two-Way Anova analysis show that there is a major interaction between the Gender and Client Satisfaction. Further analysis using One Way Anova shows the interaction effect that male clients get more satisfaction in the Cyber-counseling approach while female clients get more satisfaction in face-to-face counseling. The empirical data shows that the male benefited in cyber-counseling approach and the possible reasons are discussed.

Keywords: Cyber-Counseling, Client Satisfaction, Gender, Face-To-Face Approach

Introduction

In the 22nd century, on the speed of technology and in line with the explosion of information technology (ICT) to the world, the field of counseling is also no exception. When everyone is busy talking about cyberspace and the internet, there is a new relationship emerged in this helping services. Counseling services can now be carried out without having to meet face-to-face. The role of the counselor has changed due to the influence of this sophisticated communication and intimate setting that has been created virtually (Skinner & Latchford, 2006; Oravec, 2000). Given the internet's ability to create the right setting to build relationships, counseling practitioners have taken this initiative to maximize this internet

space. An alternative service through this virtual interaction has created known as cyber-counseling. This service is also known as web-counseling, e-counseling and e-therapy (Manhal-Baugus, 2001).

This cyber-counseling service risen as many qualified counselors started offering cyber-counseling services (Barak et al, 2008; Murphy, 2008; Robson & Robson, 2000). International Society for Mental Health Online (ISMHO) also expects cyber-counseling services from 300 websites to 2000 to 5000 websites in 2005 (Dawn, 2004). Some studies on cyber-counseling also has been done (Griffiths, 2005; Sampson et al., 1997). This increase is expected because counselors no longer place modernity as an obstacle but instead see the Internet as a potential and convenience platform (Dawn, 2004; Zainudin & Yusop, 2018).

There are many advantages in offering cyber-counseling services reported empirically. Some of the advantages and benefits of cyber-counseling are that clients can re-read all their emails and counselors for self-reflection purposes (Caudron, 1998; Murphy & Mitchell, 1998; Robson & Robson, 2000). The cyber-counseling service via email also allows clients to refer to their email when the same problem is repeated again (Alleman, 2002; Cook & Doyle, 2002; Robson & Robson, 2000). The cyber-counseling service involves the process of expressing feelings in writing. The writing or typing process is a process of self-exploration and considered a therapy (Caudron, 1998; Hall, 2004; Oravec, 2000; Robson & Robson, 2000). Online counseling is a great responsibility as is counseling an individual face to face. It is important to note that whenever an online client is communicating in a virtual world, his or her problems are still very much real (Poh Li et al, 2013).

Are this alternative approach has differences acceptance by different gender? Several articles have been discussing about gender who regularly receive cyber-counseling services. There are studies that show that more women choose and benefit from cyber-counseling services (Chester & Glass, 2006; Dawn, 2004; Chang & Chang, 2004; Leibert et al., 2006; Robinson & Serfaty, 2001; Zaida Nor, 2001). However, studies have reported that men prefer and benefit after undergoing cyber-counseling sessions compared to women (Hall, 2004: Wright, 2002; Young, 2005). There was also a study showing no difference between the gender in choosing and benefiting from cyber-counseling services (Blank & Adam, 2007; Musambiran et al, 2006; Owen, et al., 2003; Rochlen, Beretvas and Zack, 2004). Since there are debates on the benefits on gender towards cyber-counseling approach, the main objective of this study is to see the impact of gender on client satisfaction in face-to-face counseling and cyber-counseling approaches.

Methodology

This is a quasi-experimental study using The Non-Equivalent Post-test Only Design Quantitative studies were conducted on 60 respondents in two research groups; the Face-to-face counseling approach (control group) and the Cyber-counseling approach (treatment group). To measure Client's Satisfaction, the Client Satisfaction Instrument (CSI-SF) is used to measure client's satisfaction after completing counseling sessions. Client Satisfactory Inventory-Short Form (CSI-SF) Inventory by Professor McMurtry & Hudson (2000) that is developed specifically for counseling and mental health services.

Data is then analyzed using Two Way ANOVA to see the difference of client satisfaction that exists in both counseling approaches. One-Way ANOVA then used to see the effects of interaction between gender and counseling approaches.

A counseling session conducted through a complete counseling process and adheres to all the ethics of counseling. All respondents undergo a complete counseling session; from the process of establishing relationship until the termination that takes between 3 and 6 sessions. After the respondent completed the counseling session, then they are given the CSI-SF instrument.

Findings

Demographic data shown that the control group (face-to-face approach) consists of N=30 respondents, there were four male respondents (13.3%) and 26 females (86.7%). For the experimental group (cyber-counseling approach), three respondents were male (10%) and 27 respondents were female (90%). The total number of respondents was seven males and 53 females. Respondents' pattern for both groups is almost the same, which more female clients than men. Gender balance cannot be controlled to adhere to the counseling ethics as well as the walk-in principle in the study procedure.

Respondents are in the age group of 13-18 years old. Respondents according to age in the control group were 22 respondents (73.3%) ranging from 13 to 15 years old, at low secondary level, and 8 persons (26.7%) in the range of 16 to 18 years, at upper secondary level. Experimental groups showed that 21 (70%) of respondents were between 13 and 15 years and 9 (30%) were in the range of 16 to 18 years. The demographic pattern of age in both studies is almost the same as the 13 to 15 age ranges are more than 16 to 18 years old

Table 1
Respodents' profile

DEMOGRAPHY	CONTROL (face-to-face) n=30	EXPERIMENT (cyber-counseling) n=30
GENDER		
Male	4 (13.3%)	3 (10.0%)
Female	26 (86.7%)	27 (90.0%)
AGE		
13 to 15	22 (73.3%)	21 (70.0%)
16 to 18	8 (26.7%)	9 (30.0%)

Comparison of Client Satisfaction on Gender

The research objective is to determine if there is a significant difference between the Gender and Client Satisfaction in both counseling approaches. Two-way Anova tests are used to see the effects of gender and the counseling methods on Client Satisfaction. The findings are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

Differences between gender and counseling approaches on client's satisfaction

Client's Satisfaction	X ²	df	F	sig	Partial eta ²
Approaches	8.801	1	17.500	.001*	.238
Gender	.336	1	.668	.417	.012
Approaches*Gender	2.476	1	4.923	.031*	.081

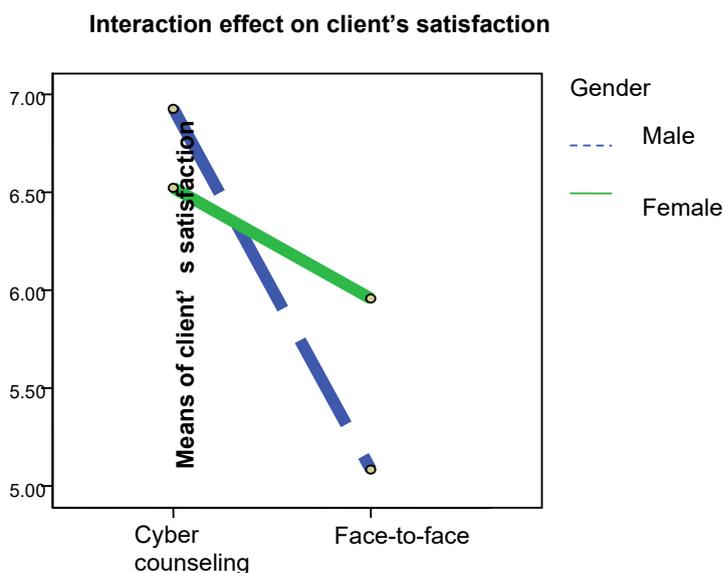
R Squared = .279 (Adjusted R Squared = .241)

The findings show that there is a significant difference in interaction effect between gender and counseling approach ($F = 4.923$, $sig = .031$, $p < .05$) on Client Satisfaction with the simple effect of this interaction (partial $\eta^2 = .081$). This means there is a significant difference between the Gender and Client Satisfaction.

Further analysis is done to see the main effects of both independent variables. There was a significant difference in the main effect of the approach ($F = 17.50$, $sig = .01$, $p < .05$) with a high impact size (partial $\eta^2 = .238$). The main effects of gender ($F = .688$, $sig = .417$, $p > .05$) did not show significant differences on Client Satisfaction.

The impact of gender interaction and counseling on client satisfaction can be seen through the following graph 1. Graphs show male and female clients get high satisfaction in cyber-counseling but low satisfaction in face-to-face approach.

Graph 1: Interaction effect on gender and counseling approaches



Looking at the differences between client satisfaction and gender in both counseling approaches, the analysis of interaction effects continues. To look at interaction effects on counseling approaches that contribute to Client Satisfaction, researchers conduct one-way anova tests. The findings are outlined in Table 3.

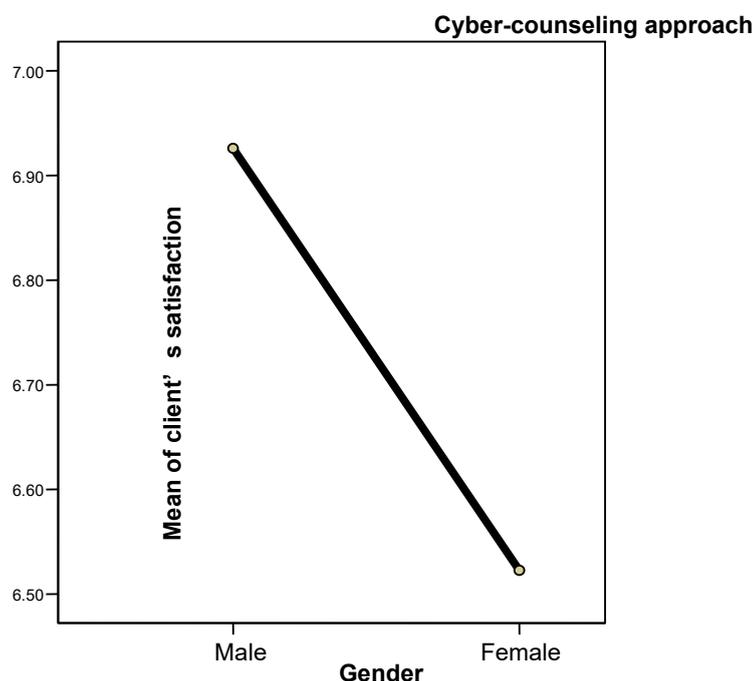
Table 3

Differences on client's satisfaction based on gender and approach

	F	Df	sig
Cyber-counseling	13.144	27	.001*
Face-to-face counseling	7.727	6	.032*

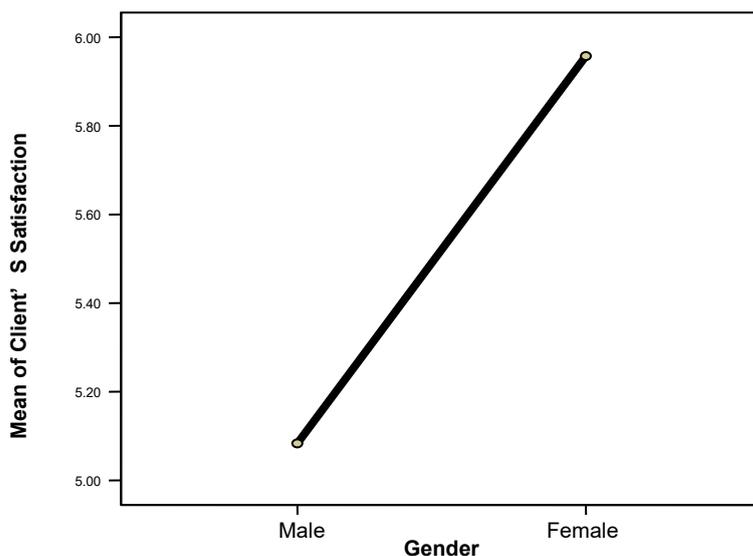
The results show that Cyber-counseling approach shows a significant difference in Client Satisfaction with $F = 13.144$, $sig = .001$, $p < .05$. This means that male Client Satisfaction (min = 6.9259) is higher than Female Client Satisfaction (min = 6.5226) in Cyber-counseling approach. Visually, the impact of gender interaction on client satisfaction is seen in graph 2.

Graph 2: Interaction effect on gender and cyber-counseling approach



The cyber-counseling approach shows the findings ($F = 3.629$, $sig = .067$, $p > .05$) compared to the Face-to-Counseling approach. Comparison of female with counseling approach ($F = 7.727$, $sig = .032$, $p < .05$) also showed significant differences. However, there was a gender difference in Client Satisfaction in Face-to-face Counseling approach where the mean score of female satisfaction (min = 5.9573) is higher than male satisfaction mean score (5.0833) with mean difference of 0.874. This proved that face-to-face counseling provides more satisfaction to female clients compared to male clients. The effect of interactions can be visualized in the following graph.

Graph 3: Interaction effect on gender and face-to-face approach
Face to face approach



In conclusion, to findings give the answer towards the research objectives that is to see the impact of gender on client satisfaction in face-to-face counseling and cyber-counseling approaches. There is an empirical evidence shows that there are differences in client satisfaction based on gender according to the counseling approaches. In the Cyber-counseling approach, male clients are seen to have high client satisfaction scores. While in face-to-face counseling, female clients are perceived to have higher client satisfaction scores. Or in another word, men benefited more from cyber-counseling while the women benefit more in face-to-face counseling approach.

Discussions

Previous researches indicate that Cyber-counseling benefited the clients based on gender. There are studies stating that male clients will benefit more and there are also studies that proved that female clients will get more benefits. There are also studies that indicate gender does not affect the success of Cyber-counseling services. Thus, this study focused on the impact of gender on the Cyber-counseling approach. To look at this effect, the study looks at the differences between gender and the two counseling approaches.

Interesting findings showed that there is a significant difference between gender and Client Satisfaction. Male clients are found to have high client satisfaction in Cyber-counseling services while female clients receive high client satisfaction in Face-to-face counseling services.

Client satisfaction for male clients higher in Cyber-counseling services supporting Wright's research findings (2002) noted that based on statistics of internet users, men dominate cyberspace. And from the statistics of customer service Counseling Face to face, women are seen overcoming men. Studies show that men regardless of age, race and socio-economic background are not likely to seek professional help. This is because they are worried to be seen as less masculine and weak (Mo et al., 2009)

The next factors are the prejudice and the social stigma has opened up space for men to seek counselling assistance without affecting their self-esteem. The factors of communication, acceptance and active support in face-to-face sessions make men

uncomfortable with face-to-face counseling and Cyber-counseling is the solution to this problem (Mo, et al., 2009; Young, 2005). This is because men are considered to be strong and not easily emotionally influenced by women (Dawn, 2004; Griffiths & Cooper, 2003; Young, 2005).

In addition, the ability to express emotion also affects male satisfaction. The higher the client's ability to express emotions, the higher they are in getting counseling face-to-face. The findings show that men choose the Cyber-counseling approach because they have low emotional ability (Rochlen, et al., 2004).

Psychological studies also show genetic men are able to see twice as much from women but women hear twice as good as men. This factor may be related to the finding that men are more positive towards acceptance (Dewdney, 1995). From a social point of view, men and women give different values to conversations. Men see conversations as report-talks compared to women who see the conversation as 'rapport-talk' Dawn (2004).

From the perspective of problem solving, men choose an informative approach as compared to women who are more comfortable in assisting because they are more focused on the emotional aspects of problem solving. Women are more comfortable discussing the problem and then feeling the problem. Women are more in need of 'emotional comfort' than 'problem solving' when faced with problems. These different approaches give an impression in the selection of approaches in getting help. Men are found to be more comfortable with Cyber-counseling or anonymity factors that will not affect social role factors and social forces. Another factor is the Cyber-counseling service is informative and leads to problem solving. Women prefer Counseling because they need more support and support (Mo et al., 2009).

Conclusion

Cyber-counseling services provide alternative services to counselors in expanding their network of services that is limited by various factors such as geographical factor, distance, and time gap. The capability of this service to be accessed by out-of-office clients provides more space for clients to get the most needed services without having to wait for counseling appointments. The ability of this service to reach more male clients is also seen to help widen the counseling service that creates social stigma for male clients in getting counseling face-to-face. The ability of cyber-counseling services should be utilized by all counselors in expanding their service network.

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