How Social Media today (Influences/Impacts) the Counseling Field

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**Introduction**

In today's' Internet shaped world, Social Media is becoming highly attached in our daily life and changes the way people interact with each other personally and/or professionally. Many and even all of the fields have been impacted by social media in today’s world and still putting huge impacts. Out of many fields, counseling has been found an impacting one by the Internet and Social Media. The social media platforms are helping counseling field in a very positive way that makes it easier for counselors and clients to navigate both (their online and offline) challenges. A huge difference exists between the youngsters who are considered as digital natives because of their interaction with the digital technology and social media platforms from very early ages and have a strong understanding of it against those professionals who adopted digital technology much later in their personal and professional lives.

The core purpose of this research paper is to investigate and know that impact or influence of social media on the counseling field. The main and specific topic for this paper is the Psychological Counseling. In addition, the paper discusses the risks which have been created because of or by social media for counseling field and other ethical dilemmas which can be created in the field because of the impacts of social media and its strong existence.

**Research Methodology**

The research type that will be used in the paper qualitative research and quantitative research. We will be gathering views, experiences and in-depth understanding about the topic we have at hand. Beside it, the phenomenon will be examined through the statistical and numerical information and analysis.

**Counseling and Psychological Counseling**

Counseling is a confidential and safe collaboration between the counselor and client for the purpose to improve and promote mental well-being and mental health as well as to enhance personal understanding and solve identified issues and concerns. While! Psychological Counseling is to offer psychological assessment, guidance, crises interference, and to address the social and emotional problems.

**Social Media and Counseling Field**

**Impacts of Social Media of Psychological Counseling**

In today's' world which has been completely covered by the internet and digital technology, social media has become a major part of the personal and professional life of every individual. Social media has also a huge role in every field. The continuous advancements in technology and social media have offered and consistently offering several opportunities to professionals of counseling fields. The opportunities offered by today’s advanced technology and well established social media platforms are an opportunities to perform strong and effective research, provide efficient services, uniquely offer service, and conveniently extract required data or information. beyond that, the features like anonymity and confidentiality protocols are making counseling easier and make the activities involved in psychological counseling much simpler (Chou, et.al, 2009). This also reduces the stigma which is related to the completion of questionnaires for researches in the counseling field.

The networking sites of social media, for instance, hold the potential of improving their capability to screen depressive psychology and symptomatology as it has become a general a venue for individuals for disclosing online depressive feelings and emotions as well as announce several possible suicide attempts. So social media currently impacts the counseling field in these terms by conveying messages and information to reduce the negative acts of people while reducing the efforts taken by the counselors in this era. (Chou, et.al, 2009)

Social Media platforms such as Facebook cannot be just a personal apparatus for people but nowadays it is a productive and effective professional tool. The use of Facebook is hugely increasing in psychological guidance and counseling. As well as, the impacts are becoming more positive as compared to the past years. So, making an online profile for professional purposes or reasons provide the potential to be used as an extension of psychological counseling practices and operations. A social media page suppose a Facebook page can be completely and strictly professional that display the philosophy of counselor, coming sessions, seminars, knowledge full articles, books, and much other information. In this case, the clients can comfortably from the location of their own choice have the possibility to search out and communicate with the counselor. In this way, social media has an extremely positive impact on the counseling field because it makes it easy for patients or clients to resolve their personal and relationship problems. The current strong social media presence enabled more than 87% of counselors and clients to reach out to each other without any geographical issues, shame, guilt, and stigma (Morrow, 2007). Despite, counselors can conduct seminars and sessions with patients and clients who are strictly homebound and create crisis interference in-person sessions or seminars.

In today’s digital world, social media can be used for the benefits of clients and would be highly valuable instrument psychologists and counselors in the way to create interference initiatives for youngsters who use social media sites and stay active on social media platforms in their routine life. The sharp rise in texting through social media networks other than direct calling and communication, the 800 plus hotline numbers emphasize social media and digital technology do not only help in improving the access to the psychological counselors and not only make the connection between counselor and client/patient, but it improves the experiences of psychologists (Mallen, et.al, 2005). In the current time, social media and digital technology are enabling psychological counselors to make an offer to follow up programs, practices, and protocols which can be shared out with the individuals on daily, weekly and monthly basis with no costs occurred.

The online sessions through social media platforms by the psychological counselors assist clients in delivering care for depression, anxiety, and any other disorder. This can be done with the help of many ways like internet or even technological programs which can be utilized as alternate for face to face counseling (Conway, & O’Connor, 2016).

In the past times when the social media was not a common source or platform, psychological counselors obtain information from their clients through face to face meetings and communication. But today, social media especially Facebook develops an environment which could foster a deep self-disclosure. This has been made possible by social media in the counseling field to foster in-depth disclosure because no one can do so in face to face discussion or communication (Conway, & O’Connor, 2016). Beyond this, today, social media is becoming the source of dynamic and crucial information for counselors to understand the experiences and behaviors of clients.

On another side, clients have been impacted positively too because they can get any possible information from the psychological counselors about their secret personal problems. Having full access to the online profile and online interaction of clients during counseling sessions can be utilized not just for getting further insights into their behaviors and thinking but also used as a response for the counseling course and the results.

**Risks and Ethical Considerations**

No doubt exists that social media has very positive implications/impacts on the counseling field especially when talking about psychological counseling but every photo has two sides. As the online world partially shaped the real world, several ethical and professional issues arise which put a huge impact on the practices of psychological counseling (Harris, & Birnbaum, 2015). Psychological counselors and even psychologists should be highly known to these risks when interacting with clients on social media.

In the current time, most youngsters immediately provide details and/or post requests on the counselors’ pages. So accepting these request allow the client to access sensitive personal info which further leads to dual relationship development. Beyond that, the social media platform is blurring the limitations between personal and professional lives. On another side, social media is not considered as a secure platform which can be used for sharing personal, confidential and highly important information (Harris, & Birnbaum, 2015). So, in today’s advanced technological world, the existence of many people who hacks and get personal information of clients is very high. In this case, social media create a huge concern for both counselors and clients that lead to high-level psychological problems like tension and depression, etc.

In terms of Facebook, counselors have been impacted very inversely. Their information like contact etc. have been found visible to those to whom they want to show. Apart from this, the ethical considerations like formalness of online psychological counseling, relationships with counselees, and processes are growing with pace (Harris, & Birnbaum, 2015). This impacts the online relationships of counselors with the clients inversely as well as it harms the online experiences of counselors and counselees.

**Conclusion**

After an in-depth analysis of the topic at hand and paper, it has been concluded that social media always have productive impacts on the counseling field. Social media and its networking platforms and their influences are found positive in the field of counseling. The social media and networking sites enable counselors to build up a strong connection with the clients which bring comfort and convenience for them when counseling clients online. Online counseling especially psychological counseling benefits clients in the way of finding, contacting and getting counseling from counselors from anywhere they want. So this is an indirect positive impact on the psychological health of patients/clients.

In terms of associated risks and ethical considerations, the negative consequences of social media in the counseling field cannot be ignored. In short, today's advanced technology has led to the issues in the counseling field like hacking of confidential information, sharing of personal psychological counselor’s’ views, and visibility of information to everyone. As well as the ethical consideration of today’s social media in the counseling field especially psychological counseling also have huge impacts. Those considerations are, but not only formalness of online psychological counseling and online relationships (via social media) with counselees.

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