# THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (SETTING) AND EFFECTIVENESS ON COUNSELLING PRACTICE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE DOUALA IV SUB DIVISION OF CAMEROON

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**Abstract:**
The study investigated the physical environment and effectiveness on counselling practice in secondary schools in the Douala IV Sub Division of the Littoral Region of Cameroon. The objectives of this study were, threefold: to find out the impact of location of the counselling room on the effectiveness of counselling practice, to establish the extent to which the availability of logistics impact the effectiveness of counselling practice and to examine the extent to which beauty of the counselling room impacts the effectiveness of counselling practice. The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. A sample of 25 resident school counsellors was used to collect data. The purposive sampling technique was used to determine the sample. A questionnaire was used for data collection and the respondents were required to strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree and neutral. The data were analysed using the descriptive and inferential statistics. The main findings of the study revealed that the location of the counselling room on campus significantly impacted the effectiveness of counselling practice; the availability of logistics greatly impacted the effectiveness of counselling practice; and the beauty of the counselling room greatly impacted the effectiveness of counselling practice. It was thus recommended that the counselling room should be appropriately located to permit access and confidentiality, the necessary and appropriate logistics (psychometric tests, furniture, recorders, communication access gadgets, computer & accessories, etc.) should be provided to facilitate effective practice, and attention should be paid to the beauty of the counselling room because of its psychological and emotional impact on the clients.

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## 1. Introduction

It has been found that the physical environment where counselling takes place affects clients' perceptions of counsellor competence, effectiveness, friendliness, and quality of care (Miwa & Hanyu, 2006; Nasar & Devlin, 2011; Pressly & Heesacker, 2001). These aspects may influence the therapeutic alliance and clients' belief in the counselling process. However, despite this awareness of the influence of the environment on human behaviour, perception, and its potential relevance to counselling, the physical environment and how it relates to the counselling field has remained on the edge of modern-day counselling research. In spite of the inadequacy of knowledge in view of the role that the physical environment plays in the counselling setting, a number of studies do provide evidence on how the physical environment affects human behaviour generally. These studies centre on various components of physical space, such as lighting, artwork, colour, sound, smell, and natural elements, among others.

The few published studies that do focus on counselling-specific settings are either outmoded (Chaikin, Derlega, & Miller, 1976; Lecomte, Bernstein, & Dumont, 1981) or make- up counselling situations with university students rather than current clients as participants (Devlin & Nasar, 2012; Miwa & Hanyu, 2006; Nasar & Devlin, 2011). Most studies use clients as participants to the disregard of the professionals themselves who can better assessed the effectiveness of practice. As a result, current literature that explores physical space as it actually exists and is experienced in real practice is rare to find. More specifically, little is known about the thoughts and perceptions that professionals have in relation to the physical environment used in counselling, and its perceived role in effective counselling practice. The meaning of the physical environment for counsellors, and their experience of meaning making as they create or change aspects of their physical space, has thus been left unexplored. As most studies that focus on the physical environment in counselling to date are quantitative in nature, the particular qualitative voices of the counsellors practicing in these spaces have been left unheard, but could provide valuable insight into the role that the physical counselling setting might offer to practice. However, there are some scholars that acknowledge a gap in the counselling literature concerning the role of the physical setting and therefore call for further research, with a focus on its practical applications for counsellors (Anthony & Watkins, 2002; Goelitz & Stewart-Kahn, 2006/2007; Gutheil, 1992; Pressly & Heesacker, 2001). Writing from a social work perspective, Gutheil (1992), established that workers often fail to consider clients' physical environments when making assessments, and recognizes the scantiness of appropriate literature specific to the physical environments used for social work or counselling settings.

Cameroon and the Littoral Region are undergoing a rapid increase in student population, proliferation of crime wave, increased drug consumption, increased involvement in distractive activities, social unrest that is why they need counsellors and

how they create and manage their physical environment for an effective counselling practice. Of recent, there have been some improvements in the counselling field towards the effective use of counselling principles, techniques and theories to help better create and manage their physical environment through seminars and training. For example, training and seminars on the Competence Based Approach and the use of Battery test in took place in Yaoundé on 14th September 2018. The training of pupil counsellors on how to better create and manage the space available for an effective counselling in schools in Cameroon has been on the increase. Several institutions have embarked on the training of counsellors. Amongst them are the Higher Technical Teachers' Training Colleges in Douala, Bambili, Kumba, the Higher Teachers' Training Colleges in Yaounde, Maroua, Bambili, Ebolowa and Bertoua, the Higher National Polytechnique, Bambui, the Bamenda University of Science and Technology, etc.

It can therefore be said that the environment plays a vital role on the effectiveness of counselling practice to the counsellor and to the client indirectly as the connection to the clients through the therapeutic alliance is a strong indicator of positive counselling outcomes (Lambert & Barley, 2001). Thus, any component of counselling that has an incidence on this relationship is worth examining. The second reason to explore the experiences of counsellors with regard to the physical counselling environment is that counsellors have more control over the physical space than clients do. The meaning counsellors give to their experiences of creating and using their physical counselling environment may be more tangibly connected to what physical therapeutic spaces are like. Of course, counsellors may not always have a choice about their workspace, and it is assumed that choice, or lack of choice will change individual counsellor's experience of their physical environment. Pressly and Heesacker (2001) suggested that, the counselling environment may in fact have a stronger effect on counsellors than clients, because counsellors spend more time in the space than clients do. Therefore, it may be possible that the greatest environmental effect on clients occurs indirectly, through the satisfaction or dissatisfaction experienced by counsellors and reflected onto their clients. The ideal physical environments may affect how well counsellors are able to do their job, as counsellors who work in an undesirable physical space may have poorer moods or more work dissatisfaction, which may be transformed into less desirable relations with clients.

It is worth noting that the counselling environment comprises three principal components: The physical, social and psychological/emotional. The physical environment consists of the physical facilities such as the provision of standard counselling office with equipment like furniture, computers, psychological tests, audio and visual, laboratories for example. The social environment comprises activities such as orientation, career forum, group counselling, storytelling, plays, music and dance therapy, study habit induction and others, which, enhance their potentials, develop social and coping skills, in order to become productive. There is the psycho-emotional component, which is the disposition of the counsellor in the course of counselling relationship. It involves listening, genuineness, unconditional positive regard, empathy, confidentiality, questioning skills, reassurance, friendliness, acceptance and

constructive expression of negative personality, all these are to make the clients relaxed, feel worthy and have sense of belonging; so that his/her best could be unfolded. In these state of affairs the client would be in a position to disclose his/her concerns without any deterrence. These conditions permit the counsellor and client to effectively work through the clients' challenges. There is no doubt that a positive counselling environment is very fundamental to the quality of counselling outcome. It is also paramount to effective guidance practice within the school setting. This is because the setting provides factors, conditions and elements that enhance good counselling relationships which in turn encourage effective guidance and counselling practice. The counsellor and the school authorities have as duty to create a positive environment so that the client can be pleasantly disposed towards the utilization of the services that counselling renders. Counselling excels most in a conducive environment. The effectiveness of the counselling environment depends on how conducive, friendly and relaxed it is. When these conditions are met then the individual can achieve his/her optimal potentials.

If the physical environment is one element that clients find important in creating a therapeutic alliance, the physical environment could impact the ability for counsellors to engage creatively with clients, this topic merits further consideration in order to continue to advance the counselling experience for clients and counsellors. It is in the interest of a clearer understanding of the role of the physical environment in counselling, that this study sought to explore counsellors' experience of creating and using the physical environment in their professional counselling practice particularly in schools, and the meaning they attributed to that experience and the effectiveness of counselling in schools.

## 2. The Problem

Very little attention has been given to the impact of the physical setting of the counselling environment in schools. Visits to a good number of schools where counselling offices exist do not really depict the ideal picture for effective practice. Noticeable contradictions were observed. These researchers therefore decided to find out the reasons behind these differences in the physical settings from resident school counsellors. The experience during these visits caught, our attention to the physical elements of counselling practice such as, The Location of the counselling room, The Beauty (colour, flowers, lighting, nature, ventilation, carpet, wall charts, etc.), The Availability of Logistics (furniture, tape recorder, functional telephone, access to internet, computer and its accessories, copiers, psychological tests, etc.) amongst others. Some school settings had the facilities while others did not. One began to worry about the incidence of having or not these facilities for practice. The physical setting of every work place certainly impacts the effectiveness of work to be carried out in that place. At this point one would want to know the degree to which the physical counselling environment impacts effectiveness of counselling practice in secondary schools in the Douala IV Sub Division of the Littoral Region of Cameroon.

## 3. Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to:
1) To find out the extent to which the location of the counselling room impacts the effectiveness of counselling practice in some schools in the Douala IV Sub Division.
2) To establish the extent to which the availability of logistics impacts the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division.
3) To examine the extent to which the beauty of the counselling room impacts the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division.

### 3.1 Research Questions
Specifically, the study was to answer the following questions:
1) To what extent does the location of the counselling room impact the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division?
2) To what extent does the availability of logistics impact the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division?
3) To what extent does the beauty of the counselling room impact the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division?

### 3.2 Specific Hypotheses
**Ho1:** There is no significant impact of Location of the counselling room on the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division.

**Ha1:** There is a significant impact of Location of the counselling room on the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division.

**Ho2:** There is no significant impact of the Availability of Logistics on the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division.

**Ha2:** There is a significant impact of the Availability of Logistics on the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division.

**Ho3:** There is no significant impact of Beauty of the counselling room on the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division.

**Ha3:** There is a significant impact of Beauty of the counselling room on the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division.

## 4. Theoretical Framework

John Holland's Trait-Factor Theory of Career Choice (1997) and Carl Rogers' Client-Centred Approach (1940s) inspired this study. John Holland's Trait-Factor Theory of Career Choice (1971) gives explicit attention to personality types as the major influence in career choice development.

Holland's theory considers how individuals with given personality characteristics are likely to react in work environments which match with their characteristics. It examines which vocational choices are likely to lead to job success and

satisfaction. According to Holland, people search for an environment that will allow them to exercise their skills and abilities as well as those which they would be able to express their values and attitudes. Holland's theory is of the fact that in choosing a career, people prefer jobs where they can be around others who are like them. Also, it explains the fact that peoples' work place has an effect on how they act or work and how comfortable they are in that environment. John Holland's Theory of Career Choice is centred on the perception that most people fit into one of six personality types which he qualifies as Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional type (RIASEC).

### 4.1 Realistic (R) "The doers"

Realistic individuals are practical people whose activities include working with their hands such as machinery operation, athletics and assembling or building things. They prefer working with things rather than people and would often like to work outdoors. People who fall under this category usually choose to learn by doing in a practical task oriented setting. They are hands- on types of people. Such persons are characterized by their simplicity, practical direction and natural attitude. They love nature, machines and animals. They are less sociable and have weak commanding attitude and weak capacity of expression. Typical realistic careers include computer technologist, security/police officer and flight engineer.

### 4.2 Investigative (I) "The thinkers"

Persons who fall under this category enjoy observing, investigating, experimenting, asking questions, solving questions, ascertaining and exploring ideas. They frequently work independently and do not seek leadership roles. Such persons are characterized by their taste for study. They are open, genius and very systematic. They like observing and carrying out experiments in order to understand the phenomenon. Such people are introverted and less sociable. Common investigative careers include biologist, veterinarian, electrical technician and pharmacist.

### 4.3 Artistic (A) "The creators"

Artistic personalities commonly use words, art, music or drama to express themselves. They are innovative, intuitive, and imaginative and enjoy creative activities such as composing music, writing, drawing, painting and directing stage productions. They seek opportunities for self-expression through artistic creation. These persons are impulsive, emotional and tend to communicate in a very expressive and open manner. They generally attach relevance to aesthetics and view themselves as creative, non-conforming, dramatic, artistic or writing skills while lacking organizational skills. Common artistic careers include editor, hair dresser, musician, reporter, dancer, fashion designer and comedian.

## 4.4 Social (S) "The helpers"

These are the humanists, idealists, responsible, altruistic and concerned with others' welfare and wellbeing. They like working with people and helping, training, healing, counselling or developing them. They focus on human relationships and enjoy social activities and solving interpersonal problems. Social types seek opportunities to work as part of a team, solve problems through discussions and utilize interpersonal skills but may avoid activities that involve systematic use of equipment or machines. They communicate in warm and tactful manner and are persuasive. They are adventurous, dominant and like to be leaders. Common social careers include social worker, physical therapist, counsellor, nurse and waiter.

## 4.5 Enterprising (E) "The persuaders"

Enterprising individuals are energetic, ambitious, adventurous, sociable and self-confident. They like meeting people, influencing people, encouraging people and working in business to lead a group. Possible occupations include sales person, hotel manager, travel agent and lawyer.

## 4.6 Conventional (C) "The organizer"

The conventional type like working indoors and at tasks that involves organizing and being perfect. They are skilled in and generally enjoy manipulating data, organizing schedules and operating office equipment. They view themselves as reasonable, orderly and efficient, possessing clerical, organizational and numerical abilities. They are sociable, domineering and aggressive. They may also see themselves as unimaginative or lacking in creativity. Possible occupations include secretary, receptionist, post office clerk, typist and mail career. The six personality types are demonstrated on figure one.
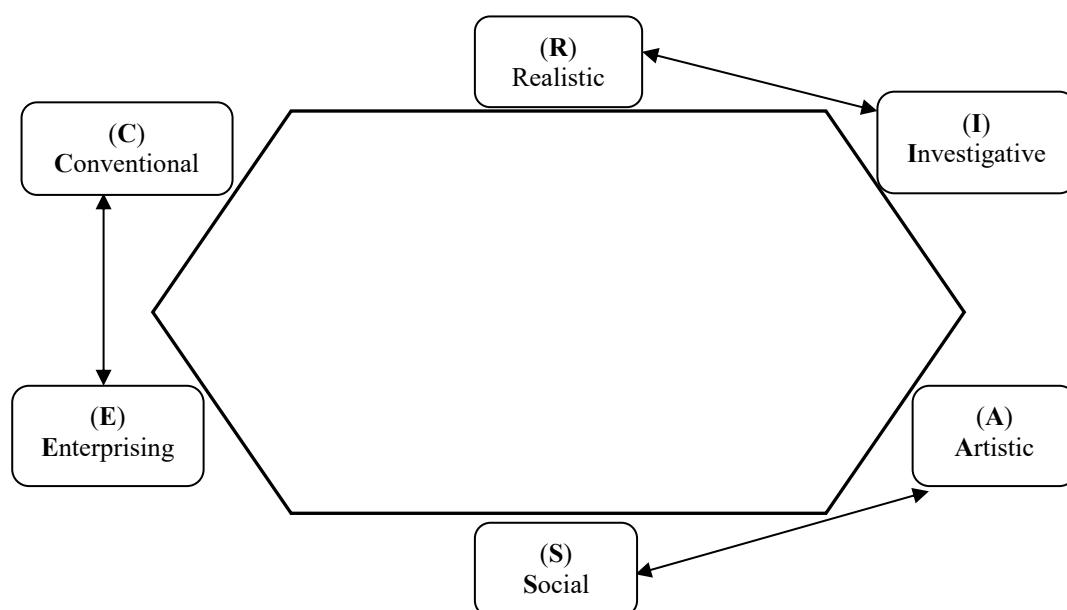


**Figure 1:** Hexagonal Model for Defining the Relationship amongst John Holland's Personality Types and Environment and their Interaction

Figure one, shows that Holland asserts that people of the same personality type are more likely to work together in a job in other to create an environment that best fits their type. The model above shows the relationship between personality and environment.

However, one of the issues against Holland proposition is that he failed to sufficiently explain how people come to fall in one personality continuum rather than another. He failed to point to the learning process of socialization or other factors which make one person different from another. From the point of view of this study, most Counsellors as well as clients want to be comfortable in a counselling environment wherein the counselling process can be effectively practiced based on their personality. They often try to know who they are, that is, what they can and cannot do during a counselling process, their likes and dislikes.

Carl Rogers' Client-Centred Approach (1940s) is a nondirective, empathic approach that empowers and motivates a client in the therapeutic process. The therapy is based on Rogers's belief that every human being strives for and has the capacity to fulfil his or her own potential. Client-centred approach has a tremendous impact on the field of psychotherapy and many other disciplines. Rather than viewing people as inherently flawed, with problematic behaviours and thoughts that require treatment, the person-centred therapy considers that each person has the capacity and desire for personal growth and change. Rogers referred to this natural human inclination as "*actualizing tendency*" or "*self-actualization*". He likened it to the way that other living organisms strive toward balance, order, and greater complexity. According to Rogers, "*Individuals have within themselves vast resources for self-understanding and for altering their self-concepts, basic attitudes, and self-directed behaviour; these resources can be tapped if a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided.*"

The client-centred therapist learns to recognize and trust human potential, providing clients with empathy and unconditional positive regard to help facilitate change. The therapist avoids directing the course of therapy by following the client's lead whenever possible. Instead, the therapist offers support, guidance, and structure so that the client can discover personalized solutions within themselves.

Carl Rogers emphasized the relevance of the nature of the counselling environment insisting that the counselling environment has to be client-friendly, comfortable, welcoming, acceptable, and conducive for effectiveness of counselling practice.

## 5. Six Factors Necessary for Growth in Rogerian Theory

Rogers identified six key factors that stimulate growth within an individual. He suggested that when these conditions are met, the person will gravitate toward a constructive fulfilment of potential. According to Rogerian theory, the six factors necessary for growth are:

### A. Therapist-Client Psychological Contact

This first condition simply states that a relationship between therapist and client must exist in order for the client to achieve positive personal change. The following five factors are characteristics of the therapist-client relationship, and they may vary by degree.

### B. Client Incongruence or Vulnerability

A discrepancy between the client's self-image and actual experience leaves him or her vulnerable to fears and anxieties. The client is often unaware of the incongruence.

### C. Therapist Congruence or Genuineness

The therapist should be self-aware, genuine, and congruent. This does not imply that the therapist be a picture of perfection, but that he or she be true to him- or herself within the therapeutic relationship.

### D. Therapist Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR)

The clients' experiences, positive or negative, should be accepted by the therapist without any conditions or judgment. In this way, the client can share experiences without fear of being judged.

### E. Therapist Empathy

The therapist demonstrates empathic understanding of the clients' experiences and recognizes emotional experiences without getting emotionally involved.

### F. Client Perception

To some degree, the client perceives the therapist's unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding. This is communicated through the words and behaviours of the therapist.

This theoretical approach points to the need for counselling practice to take place in a conducive environment, the counsellor has to respect the clients decision and portray some characteristics such as unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence which will help facilitate the counselling practice and the client will not be passive in the practice. Thus the physical environment has to be made ready for this to obtain.

## 6. Research Methodology

### 6.1 Research Design

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. This was a research design in which people were studied by collecting and analysing data from a few people or items considered to be the representative of the entire population. In this design the opinions of people in a sample representing the entire or target population were collected using questionnaire. This design was less stressful and of a less

demanding nature in items and skill. This study was carried out in the metropolitan city of Douala in the Littoral Region of Cameroon. It's the largest city in Cameroon and the economic capital of country. Douala is a melting pot of a multitude of cultures from all over Cameroon considering its metropolitan status. Educationally, the city of Douala is characterised with elementary, secondary, tertiary and vocational institutions to facilitate the learning process. Data were collected from six secondary schools within the Douala IV Municipality including Government Bilingual High School Bonaberi, Government Bilingual High School Bojungo-Bonaberi, Government Bilingual High School Bonandale-Bonaberi, Government Bilingual Technical High School Bonandale-Bonaberi, Government Bilingual High School Mambanda-Bonaberi, Government Bilingual High School Bikoko-Bonaberi.

In general, there exist 11 Government High Schools in the Douala IV Sub Division of Cameroon. The researcher purposively selected the sample school because, amongst these schools, there are five of them that are purely French speaking and it was not advisable for the resident counsellors to answer the questionnaire since it was purely in the English language.

A sample of 25 resident school counsellors was drawn from a target population of 30 as shown on table one.

**Table 1:** Population of the Study

| S/N | School | Target Population | Accessible Population | Sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Government Bilingual Grammar School (GBGS) Bonaberi | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| 2 | Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Bojungo – Bonaberi | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| 3 | Government Technical High School (GTHS) Bonandale – Bonaberi | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| 4 | Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Bikoko – Bonaberi | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| 5 | Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Mambanda – Bonaberi | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| 6 | Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Bonandale – Bonaberi | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| **Total** | | **30** | **25** | **25** |

Table one shows that the accessible population of 25 resident school counsellors from a target of 30 was used as sample.

**6.2 Sampling Technique and Construction of Instrument for Data Collection**
The sample of this study which comprised 25 counsellors was drawn from the target population using the purposive sampling technique. The researcher intended using all 30 resident counsellors (the target population) but five chose not to be involved and their freedom was respected. The counsellors were selected purposively because they were the ones practising in the field and could appropriately assess how the physical

environment affects their professional effectiveness. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire which was designed following the research objectives. The questionnaire was constructed in conformity with the variables under study. It was made up of 52 items with closed ended response options. A Likert scale with responses categorized under SA, A, NS, SD and D, where SA = strongly agree, A= agree, SD= strongly disagree, NS= Not Sure and D= disagree, in line with the variables of this study. As directed on the instrument, the counsellor was required to place a tick (√) on the appropriate responses of his/her own choice. The counsellors were asked not to disclose their identity in any form. This was to ensure that data were effectively collected without bias.

The student researcher went to the schools personally and administered the questionnaire. The student researcher explained her mission to the various Principals and Heads of Service for Guidance and Counselling of the concerned establishments. After obtaining their permission to administer the questionnaire, the copies of questionnaire were taken to the counsellors of the various schools. The questionnaire was administered in their offices where counsellors of each school assembled. The time allowed was an hour and immediately it was time everybody stopped answering, the student researcher collected the copies of questionnaire.

## 7. Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, percentages, frequency distribution tables and charts. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the basic features of the data in the study. Frequency distribution tables were used to group data into meaningful categories. Inferential statistics were used wherein the non-parametric tests such as Pearson chi square test and calculated the contingency coefficient to analyse the qualitative data of the study thus a decision for our working hypotheses (Nana, 2012). The following formula was also used appropriately:

$$\text{Percentage of respondents} = \frac{\text{no of respondents}}{\text{total no of questionaire given}} \times \frac{100}{1} \qquad (1)$$

### 7.2 Ethical Consideration
Clearance was obtained from school authorities to collect data from the school. The counsellors who participated willingly did so of their own freewill implying that their consent was given. At the level of confidentiality, participants were assured that whatever was disclosed through the questionnaire was to be used only for the purpose of the study. And participants were given the opportunity to withdraw if not comfortable. Perhaps it's for this reason that out of 30 targeted resident counsellors, five opted out.

## 8. Results and Interpretation

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does the location of the counselling room impact the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division?

**Table 2:** Respondents' Appreciation of the Location of Counselling Room on Campus

| Items | Response Options | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | A | NS | D | SD | N |
| My office is very open to public view | 12 (48) | 13 (52) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| It is easy to notice anybody coming into or going out of my office. | 11 (44) | 3 (12) | 0 (0) | 8 (32) | 3 (12) | 25 |
| My office is located in a quiet place where there is no noise. | 5 (20) | 10 (40) | 3 (12) | 2 (8) | 5 (20) | 25 |
| My office is sharing a wall or walls with a classroom or classrooms. | 10 (40) | 4 (16) | 0 (0) | 5 (20) | 6 (24) | 25 |
| The office is near the Discipline Master's office. | 9 (36) | 6 (24) | 0 (0) | 7 (28) | 3 (12) | 25 |
| My Office is near the Vice-Principal's office. | 0 (0) | 3 (12) | 4 (16) | 10 (40) | 8 (32) | 25 |
| My office is near the Principal's office | 10 (40) | 8 (32) | 4 (16) | 0 (0) | 3 (12) | 25 |
| My office is near the staff room. | 4 (16) | 10 (40) | 0 (0) | 3 (12) | 8 (32) | 25 |
| My office is near the food shed. | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 10 (40) | 15 (60) | 25 |
| A foot-path passes in front of my office. | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 15 (60) | 10 (40) | 25 |
| A foot-path passes behind my office. | 12 (48) | 5 (20) | 3 (12) | 2 (8) | 3 (12) | 25 |
| A motor-able road passes in front of my office. | 15 (60) | 4 (16) | 0 (0) | 6 (24) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| A motor-able road passes behind my office. | 0 (0) | 6 (24) | 0 (0) | 15 (60) | 4 (16) | 25 |
| I am comfortable with the location of my office. | 12 (48) | 11 (44) | 2 (8) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| **Total** | **96 (27.1)** | **88 (25.1)** | **16 (4.6)** | **83 (23.7)** | **68 (19.4)** | **350** |
| **MRA** | **52.2%** | | **4.6%** | **43.1%** | | |

The analysis of date on table two showed that a majority of respondents (52.2%) affirmed that location of counselling room on campus had an impact on the effectiveness of counselling practice, 43.1% differed while 4.6% were indifferent. From this, it showed that location of the counselling room to a greater extent had a significant positive impact on counselling practice.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does the availability of logistics impact the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division?

**Table 3:** Respondents' Appreciation of the Nature of the Physical Environment
(Availability of Logistics)

| Items | Response Option | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | A | NS | D | SD | N |
| My office contains a cupboard. | 15 (60) | 10 (40) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| My office contains a bookshelf. | 25 (100) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| My office contains more than three chairs. | 5 (20) | 10 (40) | 3 (12) | 2 (8) | 5 (20) | 25 |
| My office contains a computer and accessories. | 10 (40) | 4 (16) | 0 (0) | 5 (20) | 6 (24) | 25 |
| My office has psychological tests. | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 15 (60) | 10 (40) | 25 |
| I have a radio set in my office. | 10 (40) | 8 (32) | 4 (16) | 3 (12) | 00 (0) | 25 |
| I have audio (e.g. tape recorder) equipment in my office. | 14 (56) | 3 (12) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 8 (32) | 25 |
| I have a functional telephone in my office. | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 (100) | 25 |
| I have access to internet. | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 10 (40) | 15 (60) | 25 |
| I have periodicals in my office. | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 15 (60) | 10 (40) | 25 |
| My office has a mix of upright seats, lounge chairs, and cushions. | 15 (60) | 4 (16) | 0 (0) | 6 (24) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| The comfort of the office physical environment is vital for my comfort and that of clients. | 12 (48) | 5 (20) | 3 (12) | 2 (8) | 3 (12) | 25 |
| I feel that access to outdoors, or a space such as a garden or natural setting is desirable here. | 15 (60) | 4 (16) | 0 (0) | 6 (24) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| There an access door for clients to use without being noticed | 25 (100) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| **Total** | **146 (41.7)** | **48 (13.7)** | **10 (2.8)** | **55 (15.7)** | **82 (23.4)** | **350** |
| **MRA** | **55.4%** | | **2.8%** | **39.1%** | | |

The analysis of data on table three showed that majority of respondents (55.4%) recognised that there was availability of logistics for effective counselling practice, 39.1% differed while 2.8% were indifferent. Consequently, respondents held that their environment was very comfortable and to some degree well equipped with counselling kits, although there was the absence of psychological tests which could help the counsellor for effective diagnoses and assessment of clients, it was opined that there was availability of tape recorder, access to internet and a well-equipped office with chairs. From this, the finding thus revealed that the nature of the physical environment was an important determinant for effective counselling practice.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does the beauty of the counselling room impact the effectiveness of counselling practice in schools in the Douala IV Sub Division?

**Table 4:** Respondents' Appreciation of the Use of Colour (Beauty)
in counselling rooms and its Impact on Counselling Practice

| Items | Response Option | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | A | NS | D | SD | N |
| I took time to choose the colour of the various items in my office. | 10 (40) | 10 (40) | 5 (20) | 0 (00) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| The type of colour can determine clients' comportment | 8 (32) | 12 (48) | 1 (4) | 4 (16) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| Some colours have a positive effect on clients | 7 (28) | 11 (44) | 6 (24) | 1 (4) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| Colours do not really affect the counselling relationship. | 0 (0) | 3 (12) | 0 (0) | 15 (60) | 7 (28) | 25 |
| Most items in my office are blue in colour. | 15 (60) | 10 (40) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| Most items in my office are red in colour. | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 15 (60) | 10 (40) | 25 |
| Most items in my office are yellow in colour. | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 (100) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| Most items in my office are violet in colour | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 (100) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| Most items in my office are black in colour | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 10 (40) | 15 (60) | 25 |
| Most items in my office are grey in colour | 15 (60) | 10 (40) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| Most items in my office are brown in colour | 15 (60) | 4 (16) | 0 (0) | 6 (24) | 0 (0) | 25 |
| There are arts works in my office for decoration. | 12 (48) | 5 (20) | 3 (12) | 2 (8) | 3 (12) | 25 |
| My office floor is carpeted. | 6 (24) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 15 (60) | 4 (16) | 25 |
| **Total** | **88 (27.1)** | **65 (20)** | **65 (20)** | **68 (20.9)** | **39 (12)** | **325** |
| **MRA** | **47.1%** | | **20%** | **32.9%** | | |

The analysis of data on table four showed that majority of respondents (47.1%) affirmed that to a greater extent that beauty had a significant impact on effectiveness of counselling practice, 32.9% differed while 20% were indifferent. From this, it showed that the physical beauty of the counselling room had a great impact on effectiveness of counselling practice for instance drawing of various jobs availability could enable clients to come for counselling, also charts of various attractive colours could help beautify the office of the counsellor and by default impact counselling practice.

Most respondents considered that their physical counselling setting did not depict the ideal, perhaps, because they shared the same office space with colleagues, officials (like Vice-Principal or Discipline Master) or with other staff which made confidentially difficult; the offices lacked basic counselling kits like tape recorder, telephone, internet facilities; and oftentimes the school did not make provision for

counselling as such most counselling activities were focused on information sessions in class and not individual-based counselling.

## 9. Verification of Hypotheses

### Hypothesis One

**Ho1:** There is no significant impact of Location in effective counselling practice in some schools in the Douala IV Sub Division of Cameroon.

**Ha1:** There is a significant impact of Location in effective counselling practice in some schools in the Douala IV Sub Division Cameroon.

This hypothesis was tested using Friedman Chi-square analysis procedure to find out effect of location on counselling practice.

**Table 5:** Test Statistics for Hypothesis One Using Counsellor's Response

|  | Location of Counselling Room |
| --- | --- |
| No | 25 |
| Chi-Square | 22.34[a] |
| Df | 24 |
| Asymp. Sig. | .000 |

Friedman Test (Critical $T_{xy}$=37.65)

Based on the Friedman chi square test (table 5), the null hypothesis was rejected because the calculated table value (22.23) was less than critical table value (37.65). Since $p<.05$ (*0.00<.05*) the null hypothesis which stated that there was no significant impact of location in effective counselling practice was rejected in favour of the alternative one. This meant that indeed location of the counselling room on campus had significant positive impact on counselling practice.

### Hypothesis Two

**Ho2:** There is no significant impact of the availability of logistics on counselling practice in some schools in the Douala IV Sub Division of Cameroon.

**Ha2:** There is a significant impact of the availability of logistics on counselling practice in some schools in the Douala IV Sub Division of Cameroon.

This hypothesis was tested using Friedman Chi analysis procedure to find out the impact of the availability of logistics on counselling practice.

**Table 6:** Test Statistics for Hypothesis Two Using Counsellor's Response

|  | Availability of Logistics |
| --- | --- |
| No | 25 |
| Chi-Square | 31.5[a] |
| Df | 24 |
| Asymp. Sig. | .000 |

Friedman Test (Critical $T_{xy}$=37.65)

Based on the Friedman chi square test (table 6), the null hypothesis was rejected because the calculated table value (31.5) was less than critical table value (37.65). Since p<.05 (*0.00<.05*) the null hypothesis which stated that there was no significant impact of the availability of logistics on effective counselling practice was rejected at alpha 0.05 level of significant in favour of the alternative one. This meant that indeed to a greater extent availability of logistics had a significant positive impact on counselling practice.

## Hypothesis Three

$Ho_3$ was used to verify this objective.

**$Ho_3$:** There is no significant impact of Beauty on counselling practice in some schools in the Douala IV Sub Division of Cameroon.

**$Ha_3$:** There is a significant impact of Beauty on counselling practice in some schools in the Douala IV Sub Division of Cameroon.

This hypothesis was tested using Friedman Chi analysis procedure to find out the impact of the Beauty of the counselling room on counselling practice.

**Table 7:** Test Statistics for Hypothesis Three Using Counsellor's Response

|  | Beauty |
| --- | --- |
| No | 25 |
| Chi-Square | 18.61[a] |
| Df | 24 |
| Asymp. Sig. | .000 |

Friedman Test (Critical $T_{xy}$=37.65)

Based on the Friedman chi square test (table 7), the null hypothesis was rejected because the calculated table value (18.61) was less than critical table value (37.65). Since p<.05 (*0.00<.05*) the null hypothesis which stated that there was no significant impact of the of the beauty of the counselling room on effectiveness of counselling practice was rejected at alpha 0.05 level of significant in favour of the alternative one. This meant that indeed to a greater extent beauty had a significant positive impact on counselling practice.

**Table 8:** Tabular Summary of Findings

| Variables | $X^2$ | N |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Location of the counselling Room | 22.34* | 25 |
| Availability of logistics | 31.5* | 25 |
| Beauty | 18.61* | 25 |

Friedman Test (Critical $T_{xy}$=37.65)

Based on the Friedman chi square test (table 8), it was realized that all the indicators of the physical environment (setting) — location of counselling room, availability of logistics and beauty—could be seen as significant predictors of effectiveness of counselling practice in some secondary schools in the Douala IV Sub Division of the Littoral Region of Cameroon.

At this point it could be discovered that physical environment (setting) (Independent variable) has a strong positive impact on the effectiveness of counselling practice (Dependent variable).

## 10. Discussion of Findings

The discussion of the findings was done in accordance with the objectives of the study which include effect of location on counselling practice, the effect of availability of logistics on counselling practice and the impact of beauty on counselling practice.

### 10.1 The Effect of Location on Effectiveness of Counselling Practice

The first objective of this study was to find out the effect of Location on counselling practice in some secondary schools in the Douala IV Sub Division of Cameroon. Based on the findings of the study the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant impact of the effectiveness of physical environment to the counselling practice was rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained. This led to the conclusion that the Location of the counselling room on campus significantly impacted the effectiveness of counselling practice. Thus, the location of the counselling room on campus to a greater extent had a significant positive impact on counselling practice. For effectiveness of counselling practice, the counselling location/room therefore needs to be appropriately located in an accessible place that provides for privacy/confidentiality but not at an obscure point on campus. Such space should be void of noise, general public view and not beside the discipline department, classroom, vice-principal's or principal's office. Davis (2003) earlier held that there exist some elements which influence behaviour in counselling practice such as the physical structure. Also, Ulrich (1991) mentioned in his study on the physical environment, pointed out the importance or ability to control privacy in health care counselling. School authorities must therefore pay special attention to the location of counselling services on campus to enable these services attained set goals.

### 10.2 The Effect of Availability of Logistics on counselling practice

The second objective was to investigate the effect of Availability of Logistics on counselling practice. Based on the findings of the study the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant impact of the availability of logistics on counselling practice in some schools in the Douala IV Sub Division of Cameroon was rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained. This led to the conclusion that availability of logistics significantly impacted the effectiveness of counselling practice. It should be underpinned here that for effectiveness of counselling practice, availability of counselling logistics in the like of internet facilities, a functional telephone, tape recorder, psychological test kits, well-furnished counselling room with carpet and chairs with a secretariat is necessary. The findings of this study draw support from the views of Miwa and Kazunori (2006) who held that a well decorated office including chairs, flowers, pictures, an area rug, and a tablecloth, have a positive influence on

counselling practice. It is thus a pointer to school authorities to ensure that the necessary and appropriate logistics be made available to counselling personnel to enable them to be fully functional and effective.

## 10.3 The Impact of Beauty of the Counselling Room on Effectiveness of Practice

The last objective of this study was to examine impact of the Beauty of the counselling room on counselling practice. Based on the findings of the study the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant impact of beauty on counselling practice in some schools in the Douala IV Sub Division of Cameroon was rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained. This led to the conclusion that the beauty of the counselling room significantly impacted the effectiveness of counselling practice. Therefore, drawing of various jobs availability, display of flowers, wall charts, good lighting, colours of articles in the room, to name only a few, would enable the clients to feel comfortable and come for counselling. The findings of this study draw support from the views of Lecomte, Bernstein, and Dumont (1981) who established that the beauty of the counselling setting makes the counselling process very attractive. This point to the fact that to a significant degree, the physical beauty of the counselling environment is a major determinant for the effectiveness of counselling practice.

## 11. Recommendations

In view of the findings, the investigator made the following recommendations:
The counselling venue should be appropriately located on campus to permit confidentiality and ease of access. This means that school authorities and the counselling personnel have to pay adequate attention as to where to set up a counselling premise on campus to permit the effectiveness of practice. Such a counselling venue should not be located near a road, much public view, administrative or disciplinary offices, staff room, classrooms, but should not be located in obscure corners.

The counselling service should be provided with the necessary logistics that could permit the counsellor to be fully functional and effective in his/her professional activities. These logistics include appropriate office space with the necessary equipment required, a budget, psychological tests, bookshelves, cupboards, comfortable seats, computers and its accessories, printers, copiers, internet access, functional telephone, radio, recorders, to name only a few.

Attention should be paid to the beauty of the counselling space because of its psychological and emotional impact on the clients. Counsellors should take time in choosing the nature of items and colours of these items to be displayed in the counselling room. When the room is comfortable and welcoming in its appearance the client would feel relaxed and would be ready to fully disclose his/her worries in full confidence.

## 12. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of the findings the following conclusions were made:

1) It was discovered that the location of the counselling room on campus significantly impacted the effectiveness of counselling practice. This is because such a venue for counselling must provide for confidentiality, ease of access, not obscure, not too open to public view, free from noise that distracts focus, away from administrative and disciplinary offices and classrooms, to name only a few.

2) The findings revealed that the availability of logistics (psychological tests, bookshelves, cupboards, comfortable seats, computers and its accessories, printers, copiers, internet access, functional telephone, radio, recorders, etc.) impacted the effectiveness of practice because these facilitate counselling activities. A greater part of respondents confirmed the relevance of this component of counselling practice. Its absence could therefore be an impediment to the effectiveness of practice.

3) It was also discovered from the findings that the beauty of the counselling room greatly impacted the effectiveness of practice because the success or failure of counselling depends on large part on the comfort of the counsellor as well as that of the client. The colours of items in the office, items that portray nature, tidiness of the environment, decorations, carpeted floor, a less crowded table, natural light, the airy nature of the environment, etc. have a psychological and emotional effect on the counsellor and the clients alike.

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