Chapter 1
Roles and Importance of Ethics in the Counseling Profession

Sussan Olufunmilola Adeusi
Covenant University, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Absence of rules, guidelines, or instruction in any setting will lead to chaos. Ethics is a written law, and in this chapter, the focus is on the role and importance of ethics in counselling. Ethics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the morality of human actions. Every professional body is governed by ethics and counselling profession is not exclusive. Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) does not have already established ethical codes due to several challenges but the ethical codes of American Counselling Association (ACA) and British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) have been very helpful. These major associations (ACA and BACP) are guided by similar ethical principles and code of ethics. Without ethics, counselling will achieve nothing or very little of her goals. Hence, the roles and importance of ethics in counselling is crucial; it sets order and guarantees a total and healthy human development.

INTRODUCTION

In every society, there are either written or unwritten laws governing the affairs of the citizens or habitants. Absence of rules, guidelines or instruction in any given setting will surely lead to chaos or disorderliness because everyone will conduct him or herself in ways that he or she desires which may infringe on the right of others. No wonder the popular saying, "where there is no law, there is no sin", which simply implies that anything goes either good or bad and basically, when it is bad no one will get punished for such misconduct.

Wherever you find human beings gather or live together there are some unwritten laws that is been transferred from generation to generation. These unwritten laws are often seen or referred to as moral way of life that guides the action(s) of people to cohabit in a friendly and acceptable manner. Unwritten law is most commonly found in primitive societies where illiteracy is prevalent and it consists of those customs, traditions, practices, norms, and other maxims of human conduct while written laws are

documented rules or guidelines designed for a group of people or profession to ensure compliance of members for the smooth running of the society or profession and when anyone errs, such any individual is punished as stated in the law.

Ethics is a form of a written law and as it relates to this chapter, the objective is on the role and importance of ethics in counseling profession.

BACKGROUND

Concept of Ethics

Ethics originate from the Ancient Greek word "ethos" which means habit or custom. According to Omoregbe (1993), there is no univocal or general consensus on the definition of ethics. Ethics is defined as the branch of philosophy which deals with the morality of human actions or as a branch of philosophy which studies the norms of human behavior. It is also defined as the branch of study that deals with what is the correct course of action for man, that is, the moral principles that govern a person's behavior or an activity. Ethics can also be seen as the study of right and wrong or ways of categorizing values that govern people's affairs or endeavors. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines ethics is the branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. Kidder (2003, p. 63) states that 'ethics is the science of the ideal human character' or 'the science of moral duty' while Paul and Elder (2006, p. 2) define ethics as "a set of concepts and principles that guide us in determining what behavior helps or harms sentient creatures".

Ekanola (1999) corroborates the definitions above by stating that ethics is concerned with philosophical inquiry about morality, moral problems and moral judgments. It was revealed that in the field of ethics, 3 aspects can be identified which are: normative-ethics, descriptive-ethics and meta-ethics.

- Normative ethics: the main focus is to make moral judgments about particular actions or kinds of actions and offer reasons to support the moral judgment made in order to show that the judgments are reasonable (example – prostitution is bad; it can lead to incurable diseases).
- Descriptive ethics answers factual questions about the moral view of individuals or groups. Basically, statements of fact are made about the moral views held by individuals, groups or society at large (example – "Sussan believes prostitution is bad", or "Christians hate corrupt practices").
- Meta-ethics: is concerned with questions about the meaning of ethical terms. It attempts to analyze ethical concepts in order to arrive at their actual meanings and logical relations.

In all, ethics is often used interchangeably with morality, though morality is the basis for ethics because it is not to describe the way people behave in practice but to state the way people ought to behave or conform which helps to bring orderliness or saneness to the society.

Concept of Counseling

The word counseling is used in many different ways by different groups. For instance, in churches, there are so called counseling for new converts, intending couples or couple experiencing challenges in their homes, and other church members but unfortunately those referred to as counselors overseeing the

Related Content

A Current Review of Human Factors and Ergonomic Intervention With Exoskeletons
Thomas M. Schniedersand Richard T. Stone (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy (pp. 12-34).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-current-review-of-human-factors-and-ergonomic-intervention-with-exoskeletons/261337

Positive Psychological Interventions and Information and Communication Technologies
Rosa M. Baños, Ernestina Etchemendy, Alba Carrillo-Vegaand Cristina Botella (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy (pp. 1648-1668).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/positive-psychological-interventions-and-information-and-communication-technologies/261422

Hybrid Exoskeletons for Upper Limb Stroke Rehabilitation
Ashley M. Stewart, Christopher G. Pretty, Mark Adamsand XiaoQi Chen (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy (pp. 726-749).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/hybrid-exoskeletons-for-upper-limb-stroke-rehabilitation/261372

Devices for Rehabilitation
Jessee Moirangthem, Sateesh Reddy Avutu, Meena Guptaand Dinesh Bhatia (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy (pp. 602-631).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/devices-for-rehabilitation/261367

An Exploration of Mental Skills Among Competitive League of Legend Players
Daniel Himmelstein, Yitong Liuand Jamie L. Shapiro (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy (pp. 1607-1629).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/an-exploration-of-mental-skills-among-competitive-league-of-legend-players/261420