

Entrepreneurial Mindset in Counselling: Fostering Innovation and Creativity in Practice

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Abstract

The entrepreneurial mind-set is increasingly recognized as a valuable asset in the counselling profession. This mind-set encompasses a set of attitudes and behaviours that enable practitioners to navigate the complexities of modern therapy with innovation and creativity. It involves the ability to identify opportunities for growth, adapt to changing circumstances, and implement new strategies for client engagement and practice management. This paper explores the application of entrepreneurial principles within counselling, highlighting how they can foster a culture of innovation and creativity. It discusses the challenges and benefits of integrating an entrepreneurial approach, emphasizing the importance of resilience, flexibility, and proactive problem-solving. The paper also examines the impact of such a mind-set on client outcomes and the overall effectiveness of counselling services. Through a synthesis of current research and practical examples, this paper provides insights into how counsellors can cultivate an entrepreneurial mind-set to enhance their practice and contribute to the advancement of the counselling field.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Counselling Practice, Creativity, Entrepreneurial Mind-set, Education

Introduction

The ability of an individual or professional to cope in an increasingly competitive work environment depends on his/her level of creativity, innovation and resilience in all ramifications.

The ability to imbibe these qualities and overcome any hurdle or challenge in one's line of work is referred to as entrepreneurship. Counselling as a profession entails the use of different therapeutic and non-therapeutic techniques to address human problems demands for a high level of creativity and innovative mind-set and calls for a high level of emotional and mental resilience as it has a lot to do with different human problems.

In recent times, discussions and studies on the application of entrepreneurial skills and mind-set in different lines of work are fast becoming viral and an integral part of modern day lives of humans. This may be due to the change in narratives as being witnessed in the present world especially in terms of increase in overall world population, economic crisis worldwide and technological advancement. According to Thomassen, Leje and Basalawmoit (2018), during the past two decades, innovation and entrepreneurship have been dedicated much attention both politically and in an educational context across multiple disciplines. Skills and competences developed in these fields are believed to be essential for continuous social and economic prosperity, which is why many governments support innovation and entrepreneurship and thereby promoting activities such as entrepreneurship education.

More specifically, in counselling, the outburst and fast-rising number of people in need of mental health support and psychotherapy has called for a change in direction and approach towards the provision of mental health services by counsellors and other mental health professionals. For instance, the World Health Organisation (2022) reported that in 2019, 1 in every 8 people, or 970 million people around the world were living with a mental disorder. Mathews (2023) also found that over the last 10 years, almost half (46.9%) of all the participants of the study had at least one subsequent diagnosis that differed from their initial diagnosis. Across diagnoses, most diagnostic changes happened within the first 5 years. The study also found that the likelihood of receiving a psychiatric diagnosis different than the first diagnosis varied significantly across diagnostic categories, ranging from 23% to 87%. These indicate that demand for mental health interventions/psychotherapy is fast increasing and on a high rise.

In addition, as the occurrence of mental health disorders increases, so is the world population following suit. WHO (2024) reported that population in the world is growing at a rate of around 0.91% per year in 2024 (up from 0.88% in 2023). The current population increase is estimated at around 73 million people per year. It was further reported that world population has

doubled (100% increase) in 40 years from 1959 (3 billion) to 1999 (6 billion). It is now estimated that it will increase by 50% in the subsequent 40 years, to reach 9 billion by 2037. The latest world population projections indicate that world population will reach 10 billion persons in the year 2057. This indicates that there would be an increase in the demand for mental health interventions in years to come. From the data presented on mental health disorders and population increase, it becomes obvious that there would be a need for more proactive and innovative approach of psychotherapy and counselling to meet the projected surge in demand.

In order to cope and meet up with the already increasing demand for counselling services, counsellors need to imbibe innovative and creative methods of providing mental health services, thus, practicing entrepreneurship skills. The art of entrepreneurship involves critical thinking, strategic planning and problem-solving, resilience, creativity, leadership and communication skills.

Methodology

This position paper employed a comprehensive literature review methodology to explore the application of entrepreneurial mindset and principles within the counselling profession. The approach involved systematically identifying, analysing, and synthesizing previous research works and practical examples from peer-reviewed journals, professional publications, and authoritative sources on entrepreneurship and counselling. Key themes such as innovation, creativity, resilience, flexibility, and proactive problem-solving were examined to understand their relevance and impact on counselling practice. This method provides a robust foundation for discussing the benefits, challenges, and strategies for integrating entrepreneurial principles into counselling practice.

Concept of Entrepreneurship

The term entrepreneurship has been defined in various ways by different scholars and organisations. It can be defined as the self-directed recognition of opportunities to create value for others (Diandra & Azmy, 2020). The value created through entrepreneurial activities can be financial, as well as cultural or social and does not require one to start a business in order to do so. As such, it is clear that entrepreneurial activity is not limited to new venture creation but also includes those who identify opportunities to create value within established institutions and organizations. Rao and Chourasia (2024) referred to entrepreneurship as the practice of putting

ideas into practice and driving innovation, economic expansion, and societal advancement. Entrepreneurship is fundamentally about being creative, taking risks, and always looking for new chances to add or create value.

Garg (2024) posited that entrepreneurship is characterised by the process of recognising opportunities to build a new product, service, or process and finding necessary resources to exploit the opportunity and improving the lifestyle of people. Entrepreneurship is an important factor for job creation and economic growth of the nation. Entrepreneurship is the backbone of economic innovation and growth, propelled by individuals with an extraordinary mix of vision, resilience, and determination (George, Shubhashree & Latha, 2024). Entrepreneurship means having an idea of one's own and trying to implement the idea to create values from it. It encompasses identifying business opportunity of a particular demand, looking at the opportunity as a process of creating a new concept, constantly searching one's environment resources to implement the activities and creating a new product.

Concept of Entrepreneurial Mind-Set

Before an individual can be called an entrepreneur, he/she needs to have the qualities, attitude and mind-set that is required in an entrepreneur. The kind of mind-set required in an entrepreneur is a growth mind-set. An entrepreneurial mind-set is a mind of progress. An entrepreneurial mind-set is a mind of continuous professional development. It is a mind of continuous non-stop self-development; a mind-set of resilience, creativity, innovation and adaptation to changing market demand. Entrepreneurial mind-set is the ability to quickly sense, take action, and get organized under uncertain conditions. This also includes the ability to persevere, accept and learn from failure, and get comfortable with a certain level of discomfort.

In the opinion of Onasanya (2023), entrepreneurial mind-set is the ability and willingness of individuals to rapidly sense, act, and mobilize in response to a judgement decision under uncertainty about a possible opportunity for gain. McMullen and Kier (2016) also stressed that entrepreneurial mind-set is the ability to identify and exploit opportunities without regard to the resources currently under one's control, which means that entrepreneurial activity has risks to some extent. Bosman and Fernhaber (2018) referred to it as the inclination to discover, evaluate and exploit opportunities. It was further explained that one does not need to actually start

businesses to embrace the entrepreneurial mind-set, the point is that he/she utilises the entrepreneurial way of thinking so frequently that it has become a habit.

Entrepreneurial Mindset as an Asset for Adaptive Professional Practice

Unlike the emphasis laid on conventional clinical expertise, field knowledge and experience, and face-to-face engagement, an entrepreneurial mindset empowers counsellors with the skills to navigate the complex and dynamic nature of contemporary method of therapy. This mindset involves identifying opportunities for growth, adapting to changing circumstances, and implementing new strategies for client engagement and practice management. According to Rao and Chourasia (2024), an entrepreneurial mindset enhances the visionary prowess of entrepreneurs to design a clear and convincing vision for their professional practice. It gives them the braveness to take risks and learn from failures. It pushes them to seek innovative solutions to problems and identify opportunities in changing market demands by continuously exploring ways to improve their services and business models. An entrepreneurial mind-set gives entrepreneurs resilience in the face of challenge and use them as learning opportunities. By implication, if counsellors adopt the entrepreneurial mind-set, they have the potential to visualise their idea, take informed risks, learn from their failures and adapt with the demands of the market.

Although, counselling is a more of a humanitarian services profession, it is necessary for professionals in the field to commercialise their skills and expertise which calls for an entrepreneurial mindset. One of the most important benefits of entrepreneurship is its potential to help professionals monetise their practice in order to improve their skills and method of services delivery. Rabarijaona (2015) posited that a higher level of entrepreneurship has the potential to contribute to economic growth because entrepreneurship energizes the professional with new technologies that increase the effectiveness of his/her professional practice.

The study of Emmanuel, Hembadon and Alexander (2018) revealed that innovativeness, creativity, business alertness and risk taking were significant in affecting performance of businesses. The study then concluded that entrepreneurial mind-set or lack of it has a major effect on business performance. In other words, counsellors who embrace an entrepreneurial mind-set can acquire attributes such as innovativeness, creativity, informed risk-taking etc. that can help them achieve professional adaptiveness.

Traditional vs. Innovative Approaches

Traditionally, counselling has been based on clinical expertise and empathetic interaction, focusing on understanding and resolving clients' emotional and psychological problems. While this foundational approach remains essential, the complex and growing demand for mental health support demands for a broader skill set and incorporation of entrepreneurial principles. The innovative approach involves a proactive and entrepreneurial mindset, enabling counsellors to identify new opportunities, adapt to evolving conditions, and employ creative solutions. This diversification is essential as societal changes, technological advancements, and evolving client expectations present new challenges and opportunities for professional practice. Innovative approach encourages a more unique and flexible practice, capable of adapting with new trends and client needs.

While maintaining the core values of empathy and clinical proficiency, counsellors can benefit from incorporating entrepreneurial strategies to enhance their effectiveness and sustainability. In support of this line of thought, the study of Gual-Montolio et al. (2022) indicated significant positive results of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance psychotherapy and reduce clinical symptomatology. The researcher also mentioned that most studies reported high satisfaction, engagement, and retention rates when implementing AI to enhance psychotherapy.

Identifying Opportunities

Identifying opportunities as a counsellor involves understanding various contexts where counselling services can be provided to meet emerging needs and enhance professional practice. In order to do this, counsellors can leverage opportunities in diverse settings such as schools, workplaces, healthcare facilities, and online platforms. Nasrullahi (2022) presented three steps in achieving the evolution of opportunities through discovery which is needed to discover more ideas and opportunities:

- *Variation*: this occurs when new opportunities are generated. It is in the entrepreneurial counsellor's mind to make a new connection, insight, and association.
- *Selection*: once generated, ideas are selected by the entrepreneurial counsellor to evaluate opportunities, assessing their content, volume, stage of development, strategic value logic, and novelty.

- *Retention*: this involves the development of skills and competencies needed to make the idea happen, and in turn link with the wider evolution of competencies.

A crucial aspect of the entrepreneurial mind-set in counselling is the ability to identify and leverage opportunities for growth and innovation. This involves recognizing underserved populations, emerging therapeutic modalities, and new technologies that can enhance client care. For instance, the study of Sheikh, Abdulaziz, Agunbiade, Joseph, Ebiti and Adekeye (2015) shown that close to 60% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kaduna had probable depression, and 16% had definite depression. Also, study of Hamlett, Tyler, Bredemeier, Ballentine and Brown (2023) showed that the number of treatment-seeking individuals who self-reported concerns or diagnoses of PTSD increased significantly. This indicates an uncultivated market for counsellors as mental health professionals to explore various opportunities. In addition, counsellors can explore innovative therapeutic techniques and digital tools to enhance client engagement and outcomes. By staying updated with emerging trends and advancements, counsellors can identify gaps in the market and develop services that address these needs effectively.

Adaptability as a Component of Entrepreneurial Mind-set

Adaptability is a crucial component of the entrepreneurial mindset, essential for counsellors to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of their profession. Haysim, Rambe, Simanjuntak and Hutajulu (2023) mentioned that the adaptation process, which is characterized by efforts to adjust systems, procedures and structures, is an important stage in facing change. They further reiterated that in the process of adaptation, each person begins to explore new situations and themselves by trying new behaviours, operating to different standards, and trying to cope with change. Learning and adapting are part of this process. The counselling profession is continuously influenced by new research, emerging techniques, and changing societal trends. Counsellors who cultivate adaptability are better equipped to integrate these developments into their practice, ensuring they remain effective and relevant. This dynamism also extends to the business aspects of counselling, allowing practitioners to adjust to market demands, regulatory changes, and economic fluctuations.

An adaptable counsellor is open to experimenting with new therapeutic approaches and technologies, assessing their efficacy, and making necessary adjustments. This mindset not only enhance the counsellor's ability to meet clients' evolving needs but also contributes to professional

resilience, reducing the risk of burnout. By embracing change and continuously refining their practice, counsellors can provide high-quality care and support to their clients, even in the face of uncertainty. Maqbool, Parveen and Hanif (2021) indirectly confirm that a creative attitude can advance adaptability, inventiveness, continuous development, and restoration.

Innovative Client Engagement

Innovative client engagement is an integral aspect of integrating an entrepreneurial mindset into counselling practice. It involves developing and implementing new strategies to interact with clients, enhancing their therapeutic experience and outcomes. For instance, Macdonald (2024) suggested the use of client management software which is a specialised software designed to assist mental health professionals including counsellors in efficiently managing their relationships with their clients. This software helps simplify administrative tasks, enhance client care, boost practice efficiency, stream-line billing processes among others.

Traditionally, counselling has been grounded in face-to-face and synchronized communications between counsellors and their clients. However, counsellors can also utilize online platforms for teletherapy sessions, ensuring accessibility and convenience for clients who may face barriers to in-person sessions. In the words of Woo, Dondanville, Jang, Na, and Jang (2020), the widespread growth of computer and Internet-based technologies pave way for new alternatives for the delivery of counselling services. Email-based counselling, chat-rooms, cybertherapy, online self-help and support groups, and numerous counselling information websites provide the convenience of professional services regardless of time and location. Internet-based counselling can be attractive and beneficial to many clients as it is likely to increase the ease of clients' access to resources; is less intimidating to certain client populations; is cost effective; and is suitable for those who live in remote areas and/or those who are unable to undertake face-to-face counselling for various reasons.

Challenges Associated with Integrating Entrepreneurial Mindset

The challenges associated with the integration of entrepreneurial mindset in counselling practice are similar to the challenges associated with entrepreneurship generally. One of the most common problems is the potential for the counsellor's business considerations to overshadow the primary therapeutic goals thereby compromising the integrity of the counselling relationship. The

desire of a counsellor to achieve the goals he/she has set for his/her career may make him/her liable to forgetting or disregarding his/her core responsibilities, first, as a counsellor, then as an entrepreneur. This may negatively affect the attitude of the counsellor towards professional development and make him/her focus more on monetisation or commercialisation. Counsellors must learn and try to strike a balance between pursuing innovative, financially viable strategies and adhering to their ethical responsibility to provide unbiased, client-centred care.

Also, the adoption of new technologies and methods may require a lot of time and financial commitment, which can be burdensome for practitioners, especially those in smaller practices or with limited resources. Generally, the issue of time and finance in entrepreneurship in Nigeria has been a worrisome issue. Emmanuel, Gata and Odebiyi (2016) opined that where the expected return from a venture is lower than the opportunity costs, it will act as a disincentive for the entrepreneur; due to collapsed infrastructural facilities and unbridled corruption, where entrepreneurs have to spend huge sums to provide some basic infrastructure and bribe government officials it makes the cost of doing business in the country too high with adverse implication for profitability.

Emmanuel, Gata and Odebiyi (2016); Bode and Fatai (2020) stated that inadequate capital is one of the problems encountered by Nigeria Entrepreneurs. As a result of insufficient capital, entrepreneurs are not able to carry out all the beautiful project/ideas that they may have formulated. This has greatly affected business development. Financial insecurity is also one of the major challenges entrepreneurs across different sectors and professions face in Nigeria.

Another challenge associated with the integration of entrepreneurial mindset into counselling is the possibility of increased stress and burnout as counsellors combine clinical responsibilities with entrepreneurial activities. This is common in most entrepreneurs across different fields. According to Ovharhe and Chukwuemeka (2023), globally, mental health conditions among entrepreneurs in different areas of specialisation have been worrisome because of its rapid growth in illness and burnout among entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are always affected by frustration, depression, stress, anxiety and burnout. Gish, Lerner, McKelvie, Wiklund, Van Witteloostuijn and Wolfe (2022) further revealed that self-employment (which is a form entrepreneurship) is positively associated with short-term psychological distress and depression. As these positions and findings apply to entrepreneurs generally, it also has the risk to affect counsellors adopting entrepreneurial mind-set.

Benefits of Integrating Entrepreneurial Mind-Set

The entrepreneurial mindset encourages resilience, flexibility, and proactive problem-solving, which are crucial in the demanding field of counselling. This mind-set empowers counsellors with the tools to innovate and adapt to changes in demand for mental health services, enabling them to respond effectively to the evolving needs of their clients. One of the major benefits of entrepreneurial mindset is the enhancement of practice management through the adoption of new technologies and innovative approaches. This can lead to more efficient service delivery, increased accessibility, and improved client engagement. Rao and Chourasia (2024) conceived that innovation and technological advancements are part of the benefits of adopting entrepreneurial mind-set by counsellors. It emphasised that entrepreneurs are frequently inspired by novel concepts and approaches to meet the demands of the market or resolve issues. These endeavours may result in the creation of new modalities for service delivery, or technologies, spurring innovation and breakthroughs in technology. This innovation can create totally new markets and sectors in addition to improving productivity and efficiency within already existing ones.

In addition, by implementing creative solutions and personalized approaches, counsellors can significantly improve client outcomes, leading to higher satisfaction and better therapeutic results. Emmanuel, Hembadon and Alexander (2018) stated that entrepreneurial mind-set is about creativity, innovation and taking opportunities which eventually leads to organisational wealth creation and success; and as such, mind-set enables entrepreneurs to make realistic decisions when faced with uncertainties.

Impact of Entrepreneurial Mind-set on Client Outcomes

Adopting an entrepreneurial mind-set in counselling can have a significant impact on client outcomes, primarily through the development of innovative and unique therapeutic approaches. Counsellors who embrace entrepreneurial principles are more likely to implement creative strategies that resonate deeply with clients, addressing their unique needs and circumstances. This customised approach can lead to more effective therapy, as clients feel more understood and engaged. Hamlett, Tyler, Bredemeier, Ballentine and Browntet al. (2023) proved that there was a steady increase in treatment seeking on mental health issues, with a more pronounced increase

from 2020 into 2021. It was further observed that Interest in internet-based therapy increased significantly after the onset of COVID-19. This indicates that the need of clients for mental health treatment has not just been increasing but changing from the regular form of therapy to a more hybrid and flexible form. Therefore, counsellors who adopt the entrepreneurial mind-set stand a chance to achieve more client satisfaction than others.

Framework for Imbibing Entrepreneurial Mind-set

Developing a coherent framework for integrating entrepreneurial principles into counselling practice involves several key steps, ensuring that innovations are both effective and ethically sound. Counsellors should conduct a thorough needs assessment and identify areas where entrepreneurial strategies can be applied.

Counsellors can also engage in continuous professional and personal development to stay updated about latest trends and best practices in both counselling and entrepreneurship. This can involve attending workshops, participating in webinars, or collaborating with colleagues. Counsellors should also incorporate ethical considerations by ensuring all entrepreneurial activities prioritize client welfare and adhere to professional standards. Professional counsellors should be concerned with ethics and values. According to Gladding (2018), ethical codes should include counselling relationship (roles and relationships with clients); confidentiality and privacy; professional responsibility such as professional competence, professional qualification etc.; relationships with colleagues, employers and employees; supervision, training and teaching; research and publications; ethical issues relating to digital counselling, technology and social media.

Developing a detailed active plan and a plan for implementing new strategies, including clear goals, timelines, and evaluation methods, is crucial for any entrepreneurial setup. However, this plan should be flexible to adapt to client feedback and changing market demands. Finally, seeking feedback from clients can help refine and improve the approach, ensuring it meets the desired outcomes. By following this framework, counsellors can effectively integrate entrepreneurial principles into practice, enhancing service delivery and client outcomes while maintaining ethical standards.

Conclusion

The paper explored the integration of entrepreneurial principles into the counselling profession. It emphasizes the value of adopting an entrepreneurial mind-set, which includes attributes like innovation, creativity, resilience, and proactive problem-solving. The paper argued that as the demand for mental health services increases, counsellors must embrace these entrepreneurial attributes to enhance their practice, adapt to changing circumstances, and improve client outcomes. By fostering such a mind-set, counsellors can cope with the complexities of modern therapy, identify growth opportunities, and implement new strategies that contribute to the advancement of the field. Ultimately, the entrepreneurial mind-set serves as a crucial asset in ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of counselling services in an increasingly evolving environment.

Recommendations

This paper recommended that professional counsellors should organize training for prospective counsellors on the importance of incorporating creativity and innovation into the profession. This would give the client an assurance that counselling profession has adopted strategies to navigate the challenging situations. The paper also recommended that entrepreneurial skills and strategies should be learnt and promoted to meet the requirements of the present labour market.

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