

## COUNSELLING STUDENTS' PRACTICUM EXPERIENCES IN OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY- HARARE REGION

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### ABSTRACT

The problem of implementing practical courses in an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institution is a daunting one realizing that the student is being taught at a distant. The very nature of counselling also requires that the student should have some “hands on” experience in counselling real clients in a real practice. This is the dilemma ODL institutions face coupled with the fact that they do not own counseling clinics where students could do practicum. In order to solve this huddle the Faculty of Social Sciences instituted a practicum component into its counselling degree programme. This study focused on the practicum course, which has been offered since the inception of the degree. Its objective was to find out if students were benefiting from this experiential learning by asking their experiences they had in the various institutions they were attached to. Using triangulation consisting of questionnaires and focused group discussion, sixty second year students provided the benefits, the challenges they faced and their recommendations to improve the practicum. These findings and recommendations will go a long way in improving the implementation of practicum in ODL institutions.

**Keywords:** Counselling student; experiences; external supervisor; internal supervisor, practicum.