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The Importance of Counselling Basic Skills for the Counsellors

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Abstract

Basic skills used during counselling session is the development of trained skills and experienced obtained by counsellor candidate during their education. To obtain the skills the counsellors have to seriously pass some training phases. This study is aimed at finding out the basic skills possessed by counsellor candidate during counselling session in Faculty of Education in Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung. This research applied quantitative method, involving 145 of final year students who were randomly selected. Data was collected by distributing the questionnaire of counselling basic competence and analysed by using descriptive statistic aided by Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS version 22.0). Generally the findings of the study reveals that the counseling basic competence possessed by the counselor candidates is placed on Average/Simple level. The study also shows that there is no difference skills pursuant to gender and Grade Point Average (GPA) achieved by the object of the study. It implies that the basic skills in conducting counseling session is extremely important and prominent possessed by the counselors in schools.

Key Words: Counselling basic skills, counsellor in school.

1. Introduction

Basic skills in conducting a counseling session is defined as a capacity required in performing some counseling skills and becomes a crucial skills owned by a counselor¹. Besides, there are some skills required to conduct a counseling session namely: exploration skills (Attending, initiating a question, emotional reflection), knowledge (challenges, interpretation, self-reveal), and action skills (information and immediate action)². A counselor must have ability to help clients to solve their problems³. Besides, a counselor should be able to help his clients to find out and develop their potentials and make changes in their live⁴.

Some studies reveal the important for a counselor to have professional skills like building a network, counseling aid, case conceptualization, strategy and intervention⁵. Basic skills in conducting counseling session are integral crucial parts which cannot be avoided by a professional counselor. Beside, a counselor is required to master the advance content knowledge that the counseling session becomes quite impressive⁶. A counselor must possess the basic skills, various techniques of counseling and capable in implementing any theories that the guidance and counseling process can be fairly performed to their clients⁷. In this case, educational process, experiences and evaluation of the counselor's candidates have been professionally studied⁸. Besides, the counselors need to combine various theory for more effective and efficient counseling process⁹. However, some researches related to counselors' ability in combining concept and theory during the counseling session has been rarely conducted. Thus it is expected that the education system facilitate the candidates with any possible counseling professional skills that they possess the competencies applied in schools¹⁰.

Most of counseling trainings attended by the counselor candidates do not include the basic counseling training skills. They mostly use the principles of

¹ Hill, C. E., Sullivan, C., Knox, S., & Schlosser, L. Z. Becoming psychotherapists: Experiences of novice trainees in a beginning graduate class. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*. 2007, 44 (4), 434-449.

² Hill, C. E., Roffman, M., Stahl, J., Friedman, S., Hummel, A., & Wallace, C. Helping skills training for undergraduates: Outcomes and prediction of outcomes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 2008, 55 (3), 359-370.

³ Aladag, M., Counseling Skills Pre-Practicum Training at Guidance and Counseling Undergraduate Programs: A Qualitative Investigation. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice* 2013, 13 (1), 72-79.

⁴ Hackney, H., & Cormier, S. *The professional counselor: A process guide to helping*. 6 ed.; Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2009.

⁵ Cormier, S., & Hackney, H. *Counseling strategies and interventions*. 7 ed.; Boston: Pearson Education Inc. 2008.

⁶ Kamarul Azmi, J. A. H., T. *Pendidikan islam kaedah pengajaran dan pembelajaran*. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia: Johor, 2008.

⁷ Paw Eng See, N. M. I. S. A., Lukisan sebagai proses diagnosis dan intervensi rawatan dalam sesi kaunseling. *Jurnal PERKAMA, (Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Kaunseling Malaysia)* 2008, 14.

⁸ Hill, C. E., Sullivan, C., Knox, S., & Schlosser, L. Z. *Op. Cit*

⁹ Fajito, W. B., Art based therapy in the treatment of eating disorder, *Eating disorder*. 2005, 12.

¹⁰ Jonathan P. Rust, J. D. R., and Melanie S. Hill, Problems of Professional Competence Among Counselor Trainees: Programmatic Issues and Guidelines. *American Counseling Association* 2013.

teaching methods to teach counseling skills konseling³. In some eastern culture like Jordan¹¹ and Hong Kong¹², the counselor has less understanding related to their roles as the counselors. Supported by a study conducted by¹³ that the skills of the counselor are not dramatically increased through the improvement of education, training or experiences. Mostly the research focuses on experience accumulation rather than skills¹⁴. Some researches are aimed at describing the professional development of counselor candidates¹⁵. Other studies also identify that the counselors in school are merely expected to accept and conduct administrative monitoring which are not completely counseling skill oriented¹⁶.

A finding reveals that the effective counselors requires skills who demonstrate good role mode to the client and to improve the creativity and life skills of the client¹⁷. Further, Ekoja clarifies that counseling is aimed at helping clients who come for solution, to understand themselves, their weakness, strength, ability and potentials that make them possible to adapt and meaningfully contribute to their immediate environment¹⁸. Another ideas is also proposed that the counselors have to be facilitated with the concept of individual differences like, interests, ability, talent, and weaknesses¹⁹. It is also expected that the counselors must be professionally trained to help clients to make precise life goals²⁰.

2. Method

This study applied quantitative method. The data was collected by using inventory of counseling basic competence consisting of eight (8) constructs adapted from prior inventory. This study involves 145 of final year counseling students who were randomly selected. Data was collected by distributing the questionnaire of counseling basic competence and analyzed by using descriptive

¹¹ Alsmadi, R., & Mahasneh, R, Jordanian School Counselors' Leadership Behaviors. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling* 2011, 33 (3), 161-171

¹² Lam, S., & Hui, E, Factors affecting the involvement of teachers in guidance and counselling as a whole-school approach. *British Journal of Guidance & Counseling* 2010, 38 (2), 219-234.

¹³ Spengler, P. M., White, M. J., Agisdóttir, S., Maugherman, A. S., Anderson, L. A., Cook, R. S.,...Rush, J. D, The meta-analysis of clinical judgment project: Effects of experience on judgment accuracy The meta-analysis of clinical judgment project: Effects of experience on judgment accuracy. *The Counseling Psychologist* 2009, 37 (4), 350-399.

¹⁴ Hadziy, H. L., Development of a Pre-practicum Counseling Skills Model. 2011, 11 (2).

¹⁵ (a) Folkes-Skinner, J., Elliott, R., & Wheeler, S, A baptism of fire': A qualitative investigation of a trainee counsellor's experience at the start of training. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* 2010, 10 (2), 83-92; (b) Woodside, M., Oberman, A. H., Cole, K. G., & Carruth, E. K, Learning to be a counselor: A prepracticum point of view. *Counselor Education and Development* 2007, 47, 14-28.

¹⁶ (a) Bultsma, S. A., Supervision experiences of new professional school counselors. *Michigan Journal of Counseling: Research, Theory, and Practice* 2012; (b) Perera-Diltz, D. M., & Mason, K, A national survey of school counselor supervision practices: Administrative, clinical, peer, and technology mediated supervision. *Journal of School Counseling* 2012, 10 (4), 1-34.

¹⁷ Ifelunni, C. S. I., Secondary education in Nigeria Policy. 2005.

¹⁸ Ekoja, O. C. A., G.M, Rural Youth extension programme and counseling as means of eradicating gang delinquency in youths in Nigeria. *Journal of the Nigeria Society for Educational Psychologist* 2008, 6, 100-107.

¹⁹ Nwokolo, C. N. O., N.M, Counseling teachers for Effective implementation of Universal Basic Education in Anambra State. *Journal of Counseling Association of Nigeria* 2008, 23, 64-73

²⁰ Nwokolo, C., Counseling teachers towards the effectiveness of new trends in educational sciences. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2009, 1, 1029-1032.

statistic aided by *Statistics Package for Social Science* (SPSS version 22.0). The selection of appropriate research design is aimed at finding the importance of basic competence for the counselor candidates. This study used cross sectional survey research design meaning that the collected data is aimed at finding the counseling basic competence of counselor candidate who were studying in Faculty of Tarbiyah and Education of UIN Raden Intan Lampung²¹.

3. Findings

The findings reveals that the counseling basic skills to conduct counseling session is placed on simple level, namely: 70.49 (score 61-80) divided into eight constructs as follows construct of minimum suggestion 71.86 (simple level), construct of eyes contact 71.13 (simple level), construct of non verbal 70.17 (simple level), construct of position and distance 73.06 (simple level), construct of vocal quality 68.78 (simple level), construct of power 71.20 (simple level), construct of face expression 70.53 (simple level), and the last, construct of focus skill 71.35 (simple level). The findings can be summarized on the following table:

Table 1: The Findings of Constructs of Counselling Basic Skills

No	Construct	Mean	Ket.
1	Focus Skill	71.35	Simple
2	Face expression	70.53	Simple
3	Power	71.20	Simple
4	Vocal quality	68.78	Simple
5	Position and distance	73.06	Simple
6	Non verbal	70.17	Simple
7	Eye contact	71.13	Simple
8	Minimum suggestion	71.86	Simple

The classification of the findings is adapted by Noriah (2007) in Syafrimen (2010) consisted of four parts, namely mean less than 40, 41-60, 61-80, 81-100. **Mean which is less than 40** indicates the individuals who are weak on the particular component. According to Noriah those who are from this level is not appropriately functioned and it is highly recommended to find the effective way to improve their ability in the component. The **Mean ranged from 41 to 60** shows the low level and effective way should be found to improve the quality. The **Mean ranged from 61 to 80** reveals that the basic counseling skills on an individual is on the simple level that s/he is not completely mastering the counseling basic skills. Noriah states that the mastery of the individual skills will be improved when the competency can be elevated. The **Mean ranged from 81 to 100** indicates higher skills mastery. When the mean

²¹ (a) Creswell J W, Research design: qualitative and quantitative approaches. *Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publication* 2007; (b) Creswell J W, Research design: qualitative and quantitative approaches. *Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publication* 2014; (c) Creswell J W, Research design: qualitative and quantitative approaches. *Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publication* 2015; (d) Yin R K, Case Study Research: Design and Method (Applied Social Research Methods. *Illinois, Sage Publications, Inc.* 2008; (e) Yin R K, Applications of case study research. Newbury Park. *SAGE Publications* 2013.

ranged from 90 to 100, the score is placed as the highest one that those who obtain the level is regarded to have best basic counseling skills. According to Noriah, those who achieve the highest level are consistent and able to maximize their potentials that the skills can be either their self-reflection.

The important aspects for a counselor is professional identity integrated with professionalism, values, theory and techniques. As a professional who should integrate the personal identity with the profession, a counselor has to be able to adopt the skills, values, roles, attitude, etiquette, way of thinking, and pattern of problem solving²². A training for counselors has to be conducted to improve their professionalism. It is imperative for the counselors as the findings of each item in the research reveals that the basic skills possessed by novice counselors in Faculty of Tarbiyah and Education of UIN Raden Intan Lampung is on the simple level. Their basic skills on every construct (minimum suggestion, eyes contact, non verbal, distance and position, vocal quality, power, face expression, and focus skills) and every item in the construct is regarded low.

Professional identity of the counselor trainee and professional counselor is highly important²³. However, in a professional organization it is found that the trainee is responsible for the professional services related to identity development²⁴. Development of counseling session skills is reflected through interpersonal skill practice which is appropriate with the counseling techniques and strategy²⁵. Thus, the counseling skills and technique courses become the basis of counseling skills development²⁶. According to²⁷ the skills is termed as microskills conceptualized along the hierarchy pyramids in which the basic skills are placed in the bottom and complex skills are placed in the top of the pyramid. Ideally, a counselor must master all the skills in the pyramid and integrate them into practical usage²⁸.

When the counselor receives a client, s/he has to put an objective that s/he has to provide aids to the client. The session should be enjoyable, satisfying for both the clients and the counselor. Answered by Min²⁹ that based on Ornlinsky Ronnestad (2005), Ronnestad and Ladany (2006), Grafanaki (2010) shows that

²² Nugent, F. A., & Jones, K.D, *Introduction to the counseling profession (5th ed.)*. NJ: Pearson: Upper Saddle River, 2009.

²³ (a) Gibson, D. M., Dollarhide, C. T., & Moss, J. M, Professional identity development: A grounded theory of transformational tasks of new counselors. *Counselor Education and Supervision* 2010, 50, 21–37; (b) Luke, M., & Goodrich, K. M, Chi Sigma Iota chapter leadership and professional identity develop in early career counselors. *Counselor Education and Supervision* 2010, 50, 56–78.

²⁴ Luke, M., & Goodrich, K. M, Chi Sigma Iota chapter leadership and professional identity develop in early career counselors. *Counselor Education and Supervision* 2010, 50, 56–78.

²⁵ Ivey, A. E., Ivey, M.B., & Zalaquett, C.P, *Intentional interviewing & counseling: Facilitating client th development in a multicultural society*. 7 ed.; Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2010.

²⁶ Luke, M., & Goodrich, K. M, Chi Sigma, *Op.Cit*

²⁷ Ivey, A. E., Ivey, M.B., & Zalaquett, C.P, *Op. Cit*

²⁹ Min, R. M., Self-Efficacy Whilst Performing Counselling Practicum Promotes Counsellor Trainees Development: Malaysian Perspective. Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, MALAYSIA. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2012, 69 (2012), 2014–2021.

counseling basic skills' can merely be obtained through the counseling training. Recently, the counseling training gets significant changes in identity, knowledge and self-esteem³⁰. The training is a beneficial platform for the counselor trainer in UIN Raden Intan Lampung to identify their own progress during the training that they are able to implement their obtained knowledge in their practice session (internship).

The training of the new counselor is assisted and facilitated by the professional counselors that they can help the beginner on a challenging occasion³¹. The counselor trainer in this study feels confident for their professional performance³². However, the client's positive feedback will also positively influence the performance and professional identity of the counselor trainees that they could smoothly provide the proper counseling services³³. The professionals of the counseling have struggled to build their counseling professional identity³⁴. The government regulation and policy enable and facilitate the counselor to professionally participate in the field²⁷. The development of being professional can be grown along their professional development. Thus, it cannot be guaranteed that the graduate will automatically obtained the counseling skills. Being a professional requires continuous development. This research reveals that there is no correlation between the obtained counseling basic skills with the graduates' grade point average (GPA). The similar finding is also revealed that the skills are not dramatically improved³⁵. He proposed that though the counselors' faith is elevated, the counselors' skills are merely improved through education, training and experiences.

Counseling training is one way to obtained the counseling skills³⁶. It is reinforced by³⁷ that counseling session must be professionally conducted by the well-trained and experienced counselors. Some studies show that the counseling skills will be more sharpened through education, training and experiences obtained by the counselors along their career. Every counselee who comes for help is regarded as laboratorium for the counselors to implement the theories obtained by the counselors in any trainings and education along their career path.

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³⁰ Folkes-Skinner, J., Elliott, R., & Wheeler, S, A baptism of fire': A qualitative investigation of a trainee counsellor's experience at the start of training. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* 2010, 10 (2), 83-92;

³¹ Folkes-Skinner, J., Elliott, R., & Wheeler, S, A baptism of fire': A qualitative investigation of a trainee counsellor's experience at the start of training. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* 2010, 10 (2), 83-92;

³² Min, R. M, *Op. cit*

³³ Folkes-Skinner, J., Elliott, R., & Wheeler, Op. Cit

³⁴ Calley, N. G., & Hawley, L. D, The professional identity of counselor educators. *The Clinical Supervisor*. 2008, 23, 3-16.

³⁵ Engler, et.al, *Op. Cit*

³⁶ H. Rahimi Che Aman, H. S. A., Counseling practicum in producing excellent counselor, a School of Educational Studies. *Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 USM, Penang, Malaysia* 2010.

³⁷ Lai-Yeung, S. W. C., The need for guidance and counselling training for teachers, *The Open University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, (2013) Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2014, 113, 36 – 43.

The government requires the counselors to be highly qualified and professional trained through training, seminars, workshop and conference³⁸. Basic counseling skills and professional identity development as well as self-efficacy are important things owned by the counsellors³⁹. The findings show that the program is significantly contributing on self-awareness, automatic thinking, and emotional control. It can be concluded that the result of the training program is permanent⁴⁰. However, the skill training for the counselor is limited⁴¹. Further, the time allocation is imperative to be slotted as they have only limited meaningful self-development opportunity⁴². The lack of training proposed previously by the experts causes the minimum basic skills mastery in conducting counseling session as it happens to counselor trainee in UIN Raden Intan Lampung. Hence, the training of counseling skills improve the professional competency and aid the development of counselor trainees' professional identity⁴³.

The importance of standardization and accreditation of the counselors makes the mastery of the counseling skills becoming imperative⁴⁴. The basic skills are used to motivate the client through Motivational interviewing (MI)⁴⁵. The integration of MI in basic counseling skills training enables the counselors to emotionally approach the client. The integration strengthens the basic counseling skills⁴⁶. Besides, it also gives the clients a chance to learn how to solve conflict in a relation⁴⁷. Moreover, a research in Singapore reveals that the use of role play effectively improve the basic counseling skills and widen their perspective and understanding toward the roles of counselors⁴⁸. Thus, it is

³⁸ Nwokolo, C., Op. Cit

³⁹ Aladag, M., Op. Cit

⁴⁰ Erden, S., Awareness: The effect of group counseling on awareness and acceptance of self and others. *Proceedings - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2015, 174, 1465 – 1473.

⁴¹ (a) Bektas, D. Y. v. A., M., Psikolojik danisma ilke ve teknikleri dersinin kapsamı ve islenisi. VIII. Ulusal Psikolojik Danisma ve Rehberlik Kongresi'nde sunulan sozel bildiri. *Marmara Universitesi, Istanbul* 2005; (b) Mine Aladag, B., D. Y., Psikolojik danisman egitiminde psikolojik danisma becerilerinin kazandirilmasi. IX. Ulusal Psikolojik Danisma ve Rehberlik Kongresi'nde sunulan sozel bildiri. *Dokuz Eylul Universitesi, Izmir* 2007; (c) Meydan, B., Psikolojik danisman adaylarinin icerik yansitma ve duygu yansitma becerilerine iliskin yeterlilik duzeylerinin incelenmesi. *Yukse lisans tezi, Ege Universitesi, Izmir* 2010.

⁴² (a) Curry, J., & Bickmore, D., School counselor induction and the importance of mattering. *Professional School Counseling* 2012, 15 (3); (b) Robertson, D. L., Infusing the school counseling internship with a global perspective to promote ego development, moral reasoning, and ethnocultural empathy: A deliberate psychological education. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation) The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, 2013.

⁴³ Mine Aladag, B. Y., Ismet Koc, Opinions of Counselor Candidates Regarding Counseling Skills Training. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice* 2014, 14 (2), 879-886.

⁴⁴ Aladag, Op. Cit

⁴⁵ Melanie H. Iarussi, e. a., Integrating Motivational Interviewing into a Basic Counseling Skills Course to Enhance Counseling Self-Efficacy. *The Professional Counselor* 2013, 3 (3), 161-174.

⁴⁶ Young, T. L., & Hagedom, W. B., The effect of a brief training in motivational interviewing on trainee skill development. *Counselor Education and Supervision* 2012, 51, 82-97.

⁴⁷ Melanie H. Iarussi, Op. Cit

⁴⁸ Phey Ling Kit, R. M. G.-B. K. B., Making the Road by Walking: Using Role-Play and Instructor Feedback to Teach Basic Counseling Skills to Singaporean Trainee Educational Psychologists. *International Journal of School & Educational Psychology* 2015.

highly recommended to use triadic model or role play⁴⁹.

Beside the skills possessed by the counselor, the clients' progress has to be evaluated⁵⁰. Most of the counselors believe that the clients have to be continuously evaluated, proposes that there are eight interpersonal consultation skills, namely active listening, paraphrasing, summarizing, open interviewing, closing the questions, explaining the concept, explaining the procedures and informal conversation⁵¹. It is also reported that there are some counseling basic skills, namely; presence; open and close questions; client observation skills, supporting, paraphrasing; summarizing; emotion reflection; confrontation; meaning reflection and interpretation; reframing, skills integration; and determining stype and personal theory⁵². The development of initial behaviours and listening skills can be noted through eye contact, body language, vocal quality and verbal tracking⁵³. Thus, the counselors need to consider the effective way to face the challenge and responsibility in developing counseling basic skills⁵⁴.

4. Conclusion

This study then gives a clear recommendation that the counselor candidates have to broaden their perspectives and knowledge. The rapid growth of world development ultimately requires professional teachers. Thus, it is important for those who decide to be professional in education sector to improve self-qualities and basic competence in conducting counseling session. The basic competence should obtain high attention to be developed.

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⁴⁹ Ivey, A. E., Ivey, M. B., & Zalaquett, C. P, *Intentional interviewing and counseling: Facilitating client development in a multicultural society*. 8 ed.; Independence, KY: Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning, 2014.

⁵⁰ (a) Blackmore, C., Tantam, D., & van Deurzen, E, Evaluation of e-learning outcomes: Experience from an online psychotherapy education programme. *Open Learning* 2008, 23 (3), 185-201; (b) Trepal, H., Haberstroh, S., Duffey, T., & Evans, M, Considerations and strategies for teaching online counseling skills: Establishing relationships in cyberspace. *Counselor Education & Supervision* 2007, 46 (4), 266-279; (c) Wang, L., Integrating communities of practice in e-portfolio assessment: Effects and experiences of mutual assessment in online courses. *Internet & Higher Education* 2010, 13 (4), 267-271.

⁵¹ Brush, P. v. L. A. T. O.-L. T., *Interpersonal Consulting Skills for Instructional Technology Consultants: a Multiple Case Study*. *Association for Educational Communications & Technology* 2016.

⁵² Ivey, A. E., Ivey, M.B., & Zalaquett, Op. Cit

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ (a) Dickson, G. L., & Jepsen, D. A, Multicultural training experiences as predictors of multicultural competencies: Students' perspectives. *Counselor Education and Supervision* 2007, 47 (2), 76-95; (b) Cates, J. T., Schaeffe, S. E., Smaby, M. H., Maddux, C. D., & LeBeauf, I, Comparing multicultural with general counseling knowledge and skill competency for students who completed counselor training. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 2007, 35 (1), 26-39; (c) Hays, P. A., *Addressing cultural complexities in practice: Assessment, diagnosis, and therapy*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008.

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