

The Influence of Self-Reflection Towards Counselor Trainee Self-Development

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Abstract: The study on the self-reflection among counselor training has not been conducted comprehensively in Malaysia. Even though self-reflection is very important in counselor development, it is a unique process whereby counselors can reflect on intrapersonal, interpersonal and clinical issues that influences their work. This process will be able to assist counselors in understanding how and when their personal attitudes, feelings and personal values influence the counseling process, besides acting as a guidance in their work. This study examined the development of counselor trainee influenced by self-reflection. A sample of 100 counselor trainee from four university who are undergoing internship training participated in the study. Using quantitative methodology, measures include self-reflection (self-awareness and management strategies) and self-development. The study found that self-development correlated negatively with self-awareness ($r = -.249$, $p = .012$), but positively with management strategies ($r = .632$, $p = .000$).

Key words: Reflection • Self-supervision • Counselor trainee • Self-development • Self-awareness and Management Strategies(SAMS) Scale • Supervisee Levels Questionnaire-Revised (SLQ-R)

INTRODUCTION

Reflection, reflectivity and self-reflection all refers to the process cycle to assess a person's experience in order to develop critical thinking skills and insightfulness [1]. Researchers in the field of education have found that students who practice reflective thinking will get more experience in their learning [2, 3]. Reflection in applied disciplines is adopted based on the contribution from the results of previous studies. For example, diagnosis and clinical strategies are crucial in nursing courses where by both actually derive from reflective thinking [4]. Reflective thinking involves internal assessment and exploration which will provide awareness to individuals who combines changes that eventually trigger the acceptance of a concept from a new perspective [5]. The practice of reflection can be a very useful process in the practice of counseling. Reflection can help the counselor trainee remember their counseling practices. The situation allows for the trainees to better understand

themselves, are less likely to accentuate personal issues to their clients and are more likely to treat the issues faced by their clients.

Nevertheless, for trainee counselors, they are in an uncomfortable and unsafe position. There are many who may feel anxiety, are lacking in confidence and are not prepared to deal with clients. For these groups of trainees, the presence of a supervisor is very much needed. However, it is impossible for supervisors to continuously be there with their trainees. In this situation, counselor trainees need to find strategies to overcome these difficulties. In this case, the self supervision method through reflective practices will be very helpful. This type of practice is the most common approach that characterizes the conventional supervision that acts as its core application.

According to Griffith and Frieden [6], reflective thinking in counseling practices is an action based on theories, beliefs and assumptions. These three components are the driver towards the understanding of

a counselor towards his clients and at the same time guides the counselors in selecting the most appropriate intervention for their clients. The process of reflection is also seen as a continuation in the development of supervisory practices. Morrisette [7] emphasized that reflectivity is the cornerstone in the self-supervision process. He also mentioned that self-monitoring, self-assessment, self-evaluation, self-reporting and self-management are the elements of reflection. In addition, Morrisette stated that reflection can enhance self-awareness and the ability to apply the clinical approach in one's work from various perspectives, as well as reducing counter transferences.

For self-supervision, reflective practices are done by questioning one's assumptions and expectations, beliefs and values that leads to the elements of open-mindedness, concerns and intellectual responsibility. Regardless of how the counselors choose to do reflection, the principles described above are necessary to support the process of self-evaluation. Finally, there reflection can be done naturally and spontaneously. However, for some trainees, the attendance of a supervisor who acts as a mentor can help them in improving their reflective practices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is treated as a correlational study. The focus of this study is to identify the influence of self-reflection which is a key component of self-supervision towards the development of counsellor trainees.

Sample: The sample consists of 100 counselor trainee from four universities who are undergoing internship training. Stratified random sampling was selected to ensure a balance of sample was taken from the population.

Measure: Two questionnaires were used to obtain the required information. The questionnaire items used the Self-awareness and Management Strategies (SAMS) Scale and the Supervisee Levels Questionnaire-Revised (SLQ-R). The SAMS scale is an is25-items self-awareness instrument to measure the self-reflection among counselor. This instrument was designed by Williams *et al.* [8]. The SAMS scale has been used a5-point likert scale of 1(never) to 5 (always). There are two sub-scales; self-awareness (eg: How often do you experience awareness of negative self-talk (eg.: self-critical thoughts, distracting thoughts?) and management strategies

(eg.: How often do you take a break or time during the session?). Meanwhile, the SLQ-R is used to test the level of self-development counseling. This instrument was designed by McNeill *et al.*, [9]. It consists of 30 items with a seven-point Likert scale response options (1 =never, 2 =rarely, 3 =sometimes, 4 = half of the time, 5 = frequently, 6 = almost all the time; 7=always) eg.: I am able to critique counselling tapes and gain insights with minimal help from my supervisor.

Procedure: The instruments was translated from English to Malay Language by Language Department of Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, University Putra of Malaysia. Then, the content of this instrument has been verified by the three panel expert in counselling supervision.

Findings: Table 1 refers to the reliability of the SAMS Scale and SLQ-R instrument. Overall Cronbach's alpha was. 796 and. 713.

As stated above, this study involved 100 trainee counsellors who are undergoing internship training, with 78 of them being female and 22 males. 44 respondents (44%) were placed in schools and tertiary institutions, 8were placed in government organizations such as hospitals, while the rest, around 4 respondents were positioned in other non-government of organizations.

Bivariate Correlation (Pearson's r): The relationship between self-reflection and self-development was investigated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients.

As depicted in Table 2, the strongest linear correlation was found to exist between self-development and management strategies ($r=.632, p=.000$). While the correlation between self-development and self-awareness are $r=.249, p=.006$.

Regression Analysis on Factors Which Influence the Self-Development: The data were further analysed using utilized multiple regression to identify factors which influence the self-development. The results of the analysis (Table 3) showed that the combination of self-awareness and management strategies accounted for as much as48.2% ($R^2 = .482$) of the variance of the independent variable, namely the trainee counselors' self-development $R^2 = .482, F(2,97)=45.171, p=.000$.

The standard beta coefficient for Self-awareness is.288and the value of $t = -3.938(p=.000)$ and the standard beta coefficient (Table 4) for Management

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Standard deviation
Self-awareness and management strategies (SAMS) scale	$\alpha = .796$	81.97	9.46
Supervisee Levels Questionnaire-Revised (SLQ-R)	$\alpha = .713$	139.32	12.99

Table 2: Pearson Correlations of self-development, self-awareness and management strategies

Variables	Self-development
Self-awareness	.249
Management strategies	.632

Table 3: The R squared for predictors and dependent variable

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the Estimate
1	.694 ^a	.482	.472	11.263

a. Predictors: (constant), Self-awareness, Management strategies.

b. Dependent variable: Self-development.

Table 4: Standard Beta Coefficients for Self-awareness and Management Strategies

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Standard Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	89.568	12.333	7.262	.000			
	Self-awareness	-1.178	.299	-.288	-3.938	.000	.996	1.004
	Management strategies	1.543	.179	.649	8.871	.000	.996	1.004

strategies is 649 with a value of $t = 8.871(p=.000)$. Referring to the values, Management strategies were identified as having a greater influence on the development of trainee counselors.

DISCUSSION

In general, self-reflection is a complex effort that includes introspection, self-awareness and self-assessment. The climax is the enhancement of understanding, skills and functionality of the counsellor [7]. To achieve this goal, counsellors should consider the role of actively self-regulating themselves as a need in assessing their professional development. According to Saemah *et al.* [10], meta cognitive reflection process is suggested to be implemented during the learning process. Supervisory support also an important factors for the self-development [11].

Reflection process requires time, patience and courage in infusing the ability to do it. In fact, it is recognized that only experienced counsellors have the capacity to do it well. Therefore, training is needed at an early stage. Clinical experience experienced by counsellors play an important role in enhancing their abilities and in appreciating the need to do reflection. The outcome achieved over time is the fact that counsellors will be able to understand the uncertainties and complexities of their work. Despite facing cases that seem similar to each other, but the actual fact is that each case is unique.

Awareness of this unique aspect will impact the counsellors indifferent ways. Self-awareness is a requirement in producing an effective counselor.

Accordingly, self-supervision is highly beneficial to a variety of professions providing assistance in various stages of development. It is a rigorous and complex process that encompasses a wide range of information. During this process, trainee counsellors begin to collect information from different sources. For example, they must consider information about their relationship with the client, information about themselves(past and present) in relation to the client and finally, new information resulting from considering all this information. The findings will incorporate some oral aspects of the self-supervision process (eg. research components, audio or video tape, clinical notes, client-family feedback) into working models that increase treatment which requires time and experience.

The findings are in line with the studies of Ronnestad and Skovholt [12] and Morrisette [7]. Ability and willingness to practice self-reflection on one's experience is seen as a necessity and prerequisite for achieving an optimal development. Self-awareness and the ability to apply clinical approach in one's work or job will increase from a variety of perspectives, besides reducing counter transferences. Conversely, negative developments will occur if counselors avoid the reflection process. These findings also support previous studies, for example Bolin [13] who found that the process of self-reflection

can promote change and improve any work practices. Larson and Daniels [14] reported that through self-reflection, self-efficacy in counseling will be enhanced. Granello [15] reported self-reflection can assist in raising the level of cognitive complexity and have a more stable internal orientation. Self-reflection should be practiced on an ongoing basis which involves the process of planning, taking action, describing and doing reflections.

In addition, the study by Magnuson and Norem [16] also found that self-reflection can, not only help the development of counselors, but also to enhance the counselors' ability in creating a bond and cooperativeness with clients. Counselors, who always practice self-reflection based on their previous experiences, are counsellors who are able to think critically about their clients as well as their moment of interaction with their clients. Thus, the process of self-reflection allows for the counselors' efficiency to continuously grow.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this paper can serve as guidance for counselling educators, counsellors and towards the counselling profession itself. It is also thought to be really good if the supervision aspect could be given particular attention by the relevant parties in carrying out specific studies with regard to the importance, supervisory styles and other elements that can help improve the supervision aspect and the development of the counselling profession. In evaluating self-supervision, trainee counsellors need to appreciate how the aspects of intrapersonal, interpersonal and clinical outcome from their counselling interviews and the relationship that exists with their clients. Counselors from all levels of experience can benefit from their observations of what they see, how they think about what they see and how they finally act on what they see. Reflectively scrutinizing the issue at hand will be helpful towards taking an action or making decisions.

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