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
counselor\(^1\). 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 problems\(^3\). Besides, a counselor should be able to help his
clients to find out and develop their potentials and make changes in their live\(^4\).

Some studies reveal the important for a counselor to have professional skills
like building a network, counseling aid, case conceptualization, strategy and
intervention\(^5\). 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 impressive\(^6\). 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 clients\(^7\). In this
case, educational process, experiences and evaluation of the counselor’s candidates have been professionally studied\(^8\). Besides, the counselors need to combine various theory for more effective and efficient counseling process\(^9\). 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 schools\(^10\).

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
359-370.
\(^3\) Aladag, M., Counseling Skills Pre-Practicum Training at Guidance and Counseling Undergraduate
\(^4\) Hackney, H., & Cormier, S, The professional counselor: A process guide to helping. 6 ed.; Upper Saddle
\(^5\) Cormier, S., & Hackney, H, Counseling strategies and interventions. 7 ed.; Boston: Pearson Education
\(^6\) 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
\(^10\) Jonathan P. Rust, J. D. R., and Melanie S. Hill, Problems of Professional Competence Among
teaching methods to teach counseling skills \(^3\). In some eastern culture like Jordan \(^1\) and Hong Kong \(^2\), the counselor has less understanding related to their roles as the counselors. Supported by a study conducted by \(^3\) 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 skills \(^4\). Some researches are aimed at describing the professional development of counselor candidates \(^5\). Other studies also identify that the counselors in school are merely expected to accept and conduct administrative monitoring which are not completely counseling skill oriented \(^6\).

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 client \(^7\). 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 environment \(^8\). Another ideas is also proposed that the counselors have to be facilitated with the concept of individual differences like, interests, ability, talent, and weaknesses \(^9\). It is also expected that the counselors must be professionally trained to help clients to make precise life goals \(^10\).

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

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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 Lampung.

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

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...
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 professionality, 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 solving. A training for counselors has to be conducted to improve their professionality. It is imperative for the counselors as the findings of each items 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 important. However, in a professional organization it is found that the trainee is responsible for the professional services related to identity development. Development of counseling session skills is reflected through interpersonal skill practice which is appropriate with the counseling techniques and strategy. Thus, the counseling skills and technique courses become the basis of counseling skills development. According to 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 usage.

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 Min that based on Orlinsky Ronnestad (2005), Ronnestad and Ladany (2006), Grafanaki (2010) shows that

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26 Ibid
27 Ibid
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 field 27 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 by 37 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.

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;
35 Spengler, 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.
The government requires the counselors to be highly qualified and professional trained through training, seminars, workshop and conference. Basic counseling skills and professional identity development as well as self-efficacy are important things owned by the counsellors. 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 permanent. However, the skill training for the councilor is limited. Further, the time allocation is imperative to be slotted as they have only limited meaningful self-development opportunity. 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 identity.

The importance of standardization and accreditation of the counselors makes the mastery of the counseling skills becoming imperative. The basic skills are used to motivate the client through Motivational interviewing (MI). The integration of MI in basic counseling skills training enables the counselors to emotionally approach the client. The integration strengthens the basic counseling skills. Besides, it also gives the clients a chance to learn how to solve conflict in a relation. 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 councilors. Thuse, it is

38 Nwokolo, C. Op. Cit
39 Aladag, M. Op. Cit
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.
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 play.  
Beside the skills possessed by the counselor, the clients’ progress has to be evaluated. 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 conversation. 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 theory. The development of initial behaviours and listening skills can be noted through eye contact, body language, vocal quality and verbal tracking. Thus, the counselors need to consider the effective way to face the challenge and responsibility in developing counseling basic skills.

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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53 Ibid


school counselor supervision practices: Administrative, clinical, peer, and technology mediated supervision. Journal of School Counseling 2012, 10 (4), 1-34.


[34] 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.


