Topic: An investigation on the perceived Effectiveness of Personal Counseling among Educational Psychology students: Case of College of Education in Eritrea Institute of Technology- Mai-nefhi

Jude Thaddeus Jasu & Bereket Yohannes Tekleab

CONTENTS

Abstract

Counseling as a helping relationship is an important practice in resolving life problems; the practice does instill in the individuals skills that are essential for their future practice. Among many beneficial effects in personal counseling are skills development, self-awareness, emotional availability, empathy and theoretical knowledge. This study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of personal counseling.

The data was collected from 72 educational psychology students, age ranging from 20 to 27 years old, in the academic year 2016-2017 in their second, third and fourth years of the academic year. A self-structured four Likert scale questionnaire measuring perceived effectiveness of personal counseling was administered during the normal classroom hours. Convenience sampling was employed. The scale's reliability produced a Cronbach's Alpha of .587, p= .000. It was found that personal counseling is perceived to be highly effective (86%). There was no significant difference between the participants' demographic characteristics. Gender did not influence the participants perceived effectiveness of personal counseling (χ^2= 1.138, p= .286). Similarly, prior experience of personal counseling did not yield any significant relationship with perceived effectiveness of personal counseling (χ^2=.861, p= .650).

Key words: Personal counseling, effectiveness, prior experience demography

Introduction

Research studies on counseling effectiveness; considerable importance has been placed on the factors that contribute to successful outcomes in counseling. Knowledge of the determinants of successful counseling is essential in order for counselors to improve therapeutic efficacy, for counselor educators to incorporate current research into instruction, and for counseling students to begin their training with the proper understanding of counseling procedures. There is a lack of discussion in the literature regarding what particular perceptions in regard to what counseling students specifically believe are the effective attributes in personal counseling. Malikiosi-Loizos (2013) noted that personal therapy provides the trainees with expertise and skills necessary in exercising counseling and psychotherapy is an integral part of training for future counseling practitioners. Norcross (2005) held a positive perception for counseling therapy because it foster a significant level of psychological maturation, adjustment, and personal awareness in order to be able to help another person do the same (Norcross, 2005; in Malikiosi-Loizos, 2013).

It is one of the major objectives of the counseling therapy that individuals seeking personal therapy learn and acquire some basic skills such as empathy, warmth, active listening, etc. in the subsequent personal therapy contact hours with the therapist. Through the help and guidance of the counseling therapist, the student counselor gets exposed to the appropriate way of applying the theories they have been taught; how some class counseling theories could best be applied in practice. Personal therapy has been valued for several reasons. Firstly, it has been found to have therapeutic benefits for some problematic behaviors in trainees, secondly it is believed that it helps correct the limitations and distortions prior to development of personality in individuals and it does help promote positive personal development (Orlinsky, Ronnestad, et al., 2005). The process helps the individual student counselor to process his or her own personal psychological issues before enrolling for the counseling practicum and learning the counseling skills.

In personal counseling, it is envisaged that at the end of the required hours of the therapy, the counselee would have acquired a greater depth of personal awareness, goals, strengths and limitations as a counselor to be. One gets to have the feel of what it means to be a client so as to be able to deal appropriately with individual client's presenting issues. The student counselor is also presented with some important basic counseling skills within the session and how to probably apply it in the field. It is also a moment of debriefing for the student counselor from the past problematic experiences that have no opening towards a positive direction in living psychologically happy life. As therapists we serve as role models for our clients. If we model incongruent behavior, and remain distant, we can expect our clients to imitate this behavior. Meanwhile, if we model realness by engaging in appropriate self-disclosure, our clients will tend to be honest with us in the therapeutic relationship (Corey, 2009). Macran, Stiles and Smith (1999) further highlighted the benefit of personal therapy as a window of role modeling to the trainees. They Macran, Stiles and Smith (1999) in their study among seven participants found that six out of 7 (6/7) of them responded that personal therapy provides a role model. Though Macran et al. (1999) conducted their studies among a very small participants (N=7), their

findings as reflected in themes and specific domains show that personal counseling is valued and seen as effective for many reasons. Under the theme of "Listening with third ear" for example, they found that all (seven out of seven) participants recognized that personal counseling helps in "separating own feelings and clients' feelings" (Macran et al. (1999, p.431). Similarly, under the theme; "orienting to the therapist; humanity and power" all (7) the participants responded that personal counseling helps in taking care of the self, knowing how it feels to have therapy was scored by six out of seven participants, knowing one's boundaries and limitations (5/7). Meanwhile other benefits identified included aspects like; providing a role model (scored by 6/7), and therapists can be clients scored by the least (4/7). The benefit of having a role model in personal therapy was also upheld in the research by Orlinsky, Norcross, Ronnestad, & Wiseman, 2005). They (Orlinsky, Norcross, Ronnestad, & Wiseman, 2005) found that as part of the therapist's training, personal therapy offers a model of therapeutic practice whereby the trainee experiences the work

Other studies on the benefits of personal therapy have shown that the outcomes and impacts of the psychotherapist's own psychotherapy showed that more than 90% of mental health professionals report satisfaction and positive outcomes from their own counseling experiences (Orlinsky, Norcross, Ronnestad, & Wiseman, 2005). Geller, Norcross, and Orlinsky (2005) for instance found that 85% of therapists who have undergone therapy reported that they have personally benefitted while 78% said that personal therapy has strong positive contribution to their professional development. This practice also enhances the counselor's interpersonal skills that are necessary for skillful practice and also contributes to their ability to deal with life stressors that correlate with counseling profession. Norcross (2005) in his studies with counseling professionals has found lots of positive contributions on counselors' self-esteem, work functioning, social life, emotional expression, and intrapersonal conflicts, among others. It was emphasized by Corey (2009) that some of the lessons learned in personal therapy are the importance of warmth, empathy, and the personal relationship and the sense of what it is like to be a client; as well as aspects of appreciating the importance of learning how to deal with transference and countertransference among others. Macran, Stiles and Smith (1999) also found that six out of seven of their participants responded that personal therapy is beneficial because it helps to know how it feels to have therapy.

Often at times professional counselors seek personal therapy, which points to the fact that the experience is an essential part of the practitioner's ongoing personal and professional development (Norcross, 2005). The experience helps counselors to face their unexplored blocks of our life challenges like loneliness, power, death, anger, sexuality , conflicts, etc. (Corey, 2009). Reupert, (2006) and Wosket, (1999) argue that counseling practice requires a high level of self-awareness and the ability to connect skills and knowledge of personal and interpersonal dynamics in the therapeutic context. Moreover, the mastery of theory, research, skills and knowledge is closely related to personal characteristics and qualities as well as to interpersonal engagement skills (Malikiosi-Loizos, 2013). This approach awakens the counselor's awareness

of the personal unfinished businesses within the self and others, which would negatively affect us in the practice. We have to learn to deal with such life challenges so as to be able to help our clients effectively, or else we would not be able to do so for clients presenting similar challenges or problems. The healer needs to be healed so as to be able to enter the world of the clients and their psychological wounds (Corey, 2009). As such, personal therapy is important and ought to be mandatory for student counselors. Corey (2009) further highlights the need for personal counseling when he said that counselors cannot take clients any further unless they have been willing to go in their own lives. Macran, Stiles and Smith (1999) too had found that personal therapy is a wonderful experiential task that enables the counselors to work at a deeper level with their clients when they found that four out of seven participants said personal therapy helps in "working at a deeper level" (Macran, Stles & Smith, 1999, p. 431). Thus, as counselors, there is the need to have personal commitment to the value of examining life, and it is only then they we shall be able to convince clients of the worth of personal exploration (Corey, 2009). The current study has been designed to try and investigate the student counselors' perception of effectiveness of personal counseling.

Research objectives

The main objective of this study was to identify the level perceived effectiveness of personal counseling for future and already practicing mental health workers.

Specific objectives

The specific research objectives included;

1. To find out the differences among the participants' demography and the perceived effectiveness of personal counseling
2. To examine the relationship between having experienced personal counseling and perceived effectiveness of personal counseling?

Method

To gain information about the participants' perceived effectiveness of personal counseling, 72 educational psychology students, in age ranging from 20 to 27, were selected from the academic year 2016-2017 in their second, third and fourth years of the academic year. A self-structured four Likert scale questionnaire measuring perceived effectiveness of personal counseling was during the normal classroom hours. A non-probability sampling technique was employed using convenience sampling, which involves selection of participants because they are often readily and easily available. It also helped to minimize the financial expenses that would have been in incurred in the research process.

Procedure

The research instrument was pilot tested to a group of undergraduate educational psychology students in the college of education of the academic year 2016-2017 in Eritrea Institute of Technology (EIT) prior to utilizing it in the present research project. Modifications were made to clarify ambiguous terminologies, instructions, and time to complete. The questionnaire was

administered during a normal class period with students having the option to participate at will without reward or penalty for doing so. The study required students to respond to each of the items based on their level of agreement or disagreement (4-Strongly agree, 3- agree, 2- disagree and 1- strongly disagree) for about 15-25 minutes. Anonymity was provided to all participants regarding answers to all items. Seventy two questionnaires were distributed and all the seventy two were returned bringing the response rate to 100%; due to the controlled nature of the administration in the classroom. The collected data was cleaned prior to entry into SPSS-V25 for subsequently analysis. Descriptive data analysis was analyzed and the results reported and discussed in accordance with the study objectives.

Results

The results are presented in narrative and table forms in response to the research objectives. All percentages are rounded for clarity of reading and presentation, except where percentages are in tables and fall below 1%. A total was 72 educational psychology students from the college of education in Eritrea Institute of Technology-Mainefhi. There were 40 (56%) females and 32 (44%) males and their year of study comprised of 43 (60%) second years, 14 (19%) third years and 15 (21%) fourth years. The scale's reliability produced a Cronbach's Alpha of .587, p= .000.

Perceived effectiveness of personal counseling

The main research objective was to determine the perceived level of effectiveness of personal counseling therapy among the participants. The general finding was that majority; 62 (86%) of them reported that personal counseling is highly effective and only 10 (14%) reported that personal counseling is less effective. This implies that the participants have the knowledge of the possible benefits that they would gain from personal counseling if given the opportunity for it. It was further found that only 22 participants have received personal counseling. Nevertheless, almost all; 21 (95%) of the individuals who have received personal counseling reported that personal counseling is highly effective and the only remaining 1 (5%) has a low perception of the effectiveness of personal counseling. Measuring the participants' level of agreement on the construct that personal counseling can help them resolve their many life problems, majority; 35 (49%) of them agreed and 28 (39%) strongly agreed. Meanwhile only 3 (4%) strongly disagreed and the remaining 6 (8%) disagreed to the same construct. This same construct of personal counseling 'helping to resolve personal life problems/issues' was measured against the total view towards effectiveness and it was found that there was significant relationship (χ^2= 29, p=.000). Most of the participants who have a high view towards personal counseling also tend to either strongly agree or agree with the single item as presented in the table 1 below.

Table 1 Level of effectiveness and the item; 'It would be helpful for me to have personal counseling in order to resolve my personal life problems.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Less Effective	3	3	3	1	10
	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	10.0%	100.0%
Highly Effective	0	3	32	27	62
	0.0%	4.8%	51.6%	43.5%	100.0%
Total	3	6	35	28	72
	4.2%	8.3%	48.6%	38.9%	100.0%

Implications/development of counseling skills- It was found that most of the participants who were in agreement with this construct, "having personal counseling is significant to help understand the implications of counseling skills." 36 (50%) agreed and the other 32 (44%) strongly agreed that the practice is significant and would help them embrace knowledge of counseling skills. Thus, majority of the participants appreciate the role of personal counseling as opposed to the remaining 4 (6%) who disagreed with this particular practice in the counseling profession.

Emotional availability- This construct was measured and the findings showed that majority; 56 (77%) of the participants responded in favor of the statement while the remaining few; 16 (23%) responded against this item as presented in table 2 below.

Table 2 Counselors can be more emotionally available to clients if they have inquired into and attended to their own experiences, issues, needs and feelings through a process in counseling/therapy

|	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	6.9	6.9	6.9
Disagree	11	15.3	15.3	22.2
Agree	33	45.8	45.8	68.1
Strongly Agree	23	31.9	31.9	100.0
Total	72	100.0	100.0	

Self-differentiation between the counselor and client is important aspect in counseling as a practice. The current research found that 43 (60%) of the participants agreed that personal

counseling has the benefit of differentiating one's feelings from that of clients, while only 15 (21%) strongly agreed to this construct of self-differentiation in counseling. On the other hand, 12 (17%) disagreed and the remaining 2 (9%) strongly responded in disagreement to this statement. Closely related to this, the aspect of "willingness to sit in the other seat and experience being a client provides the therapist with the knowledge of what is important in a counseling relationship" was measured and the findings were mostly in agreement. The highest score was recorded among participants who agreed; 38 (53%), while 26 (36%) strongly agreed with the statement and the remaining 4 (7%) strongly disagreed and the other 4 (7%) disagreed. These are scores worth of note that the participants have mostly good understanding of the effective benefits of personal counseling.

Demography and the perceived effectiveness of personal counseling
The cross tabulation analysis across gender showed that majority of both females and males reported that personal counseling is highly effective. From the total 40 females, 36 (90%) and total 32 males, 26 (81%) reported that personal counseling is highly effective. This leaves the remaining participants reporting that personal counseling is less effective as it was found that out of the total 10 (13.89%) participants who reported that personal counseling is less effective; only 4 (10%) were female and 6 (18.8%) males. This distributional frequency did not however have any statistical significant value (χ^2= 1.138, p= .286). See the figure 1 below for the distributional

Figure 1 Gender and perceived level of Effectiveness
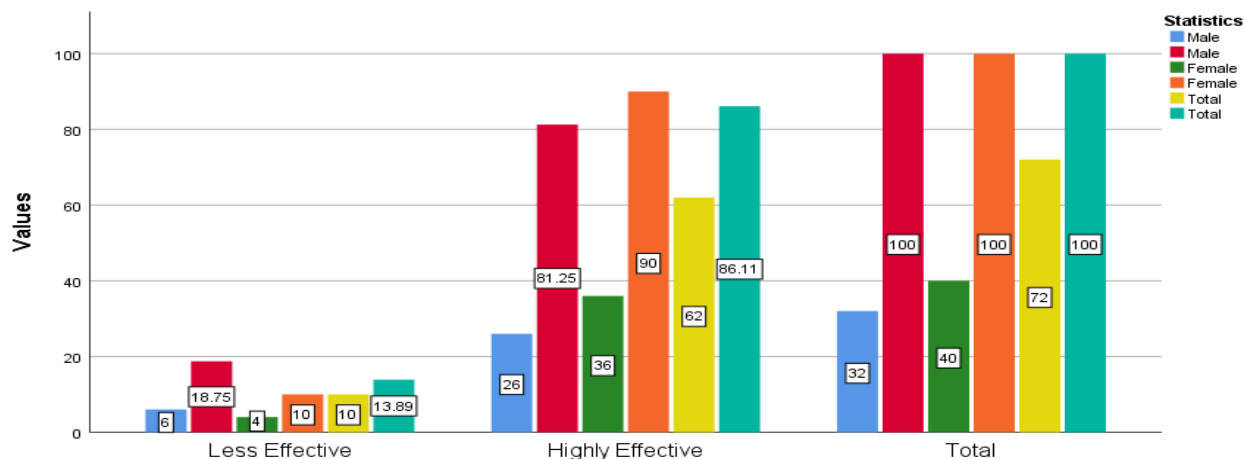
The aspect of emotional availability was examined across gender and it was found that majority of both females and males agreed or strongly agreed that personal counseling helps in being emotionally available to clients after inquiring and attending to personal counseling. These score are presented in the table 3 below.

Table 3 Counselors can be more emotionally available to clients if they have inquired into and attended to their own experiences, issues, needs and feelings through a process in counseling/therapy

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	2	7	9	14	32
	6.3%	21.9%	28.1%	43.8%	100.0%
Female	3	4	24	9	40
	7.5%	10.0%	60.0%	22.5%	100.0%
Total	5	11	33	23	72
	6.9%	15.3%	45.8%	31.9%	100.0%

The distributional scores between the participants' gender and the construct of being emotionally involved as presented in the table above had statistical significant relationship (χ^2= 8.14, p= .043).

When the participants' gender was compared with the perceived effectiveness of skills development it was found that there is no significant difference between females and males (χ^2= 3.73, p= .155). It was specifically found that majority of both males and females strongly agreed or agreed that personal counseling helps in skills development; whereby, 16 (40%) agreed and 21 (53%) strongly agreed and among males, 20 (63%) agreed and 11 (34%) strongly agreed. The remaining 3 (8%) females disagreed and only 1 (3%) males disagreed and none of the participants strongly agreed this perceived effectiveness of personal counseling in skills development.

Resolving personal life problems- This study found that the participants were generally in agreement that personal counseling helps individuals to resolve their personal life problems. The perceived effectiveness of personal counseling in resolving personal life problems for example did not have any statistical significant results (χ^2= 2.45, p= .483). Out of the 40 females, 17 (43%) agreed and 18 (45%) strongly agreed and among the males, 18 (56%) agreed and 10 31%) strongly agreed. On the other hand, only 4 (10%) females disagreed and the only remaining 1 (3%) strongly agreed as compared to males, 2 (6%) disagreed and 2 (6%) strongly disagreed.

The concept of self-awareness was also examined to help further determine if there were any significant relationships. It was found that there is high level of perceived effectiveness between both females and males. From the total 72 participants, only 7 (10%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed and the remaining majority; 65 (90%) either agreed or strongly agreed that personal counseling helps in attainment of self-awareness. The detailed distributional frequencies are presented in the table below.
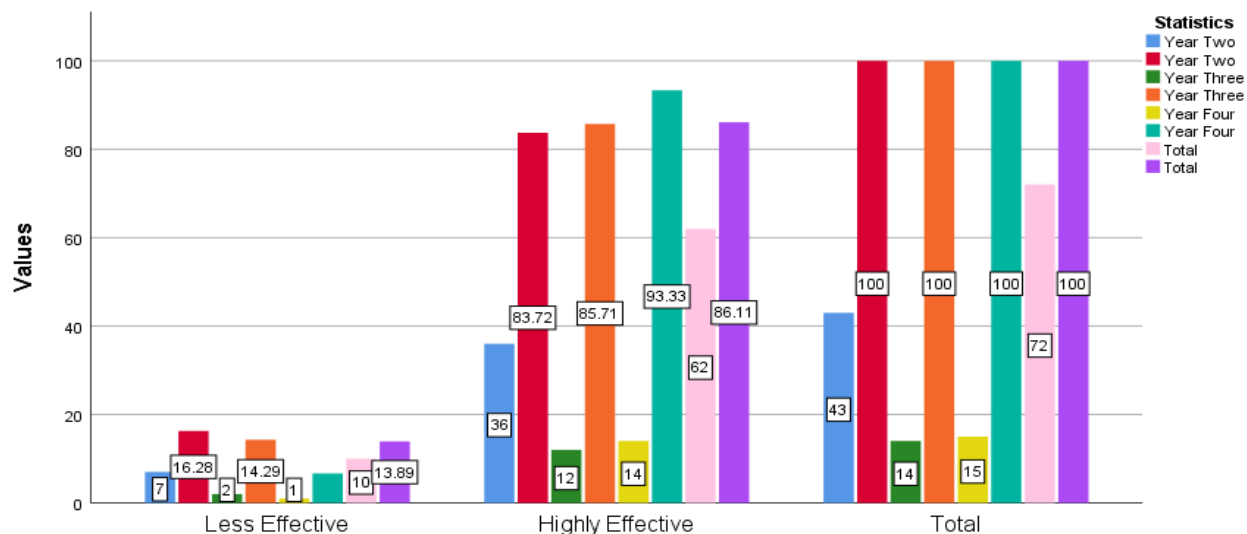
Table 4 Having personal counseling would help me to attain a certain level of self-awareness.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male		0	2	13	17	32
		0.0%	6.3%	40.6%	53.1%	100.0%
Female		1	4	18	17	40
		2.5%	10.0%	45.0%	42.5%	100.0%
Total		1	6	31	34	72
		1.4%	8.3%	43.1%	47.2%	100.0%

As it is observed in the above table, there was significant relationships between gender and the participants responses to the construct measuring self-awareness as an effective attribute in personal counseling (χ^2= 1.60, p= .658). Both females and males have positive knowledge of the beneficial effect of personal counseling for the fact that it contributes to high level of self-awareness.

It was equally found that there are no significant relationships between the participants' year of study and their perceived level of personal counseling effectiveness. The participants who took part in the study report high level of effectiveness of personal counseling and very few of them said it is less effective. Second year psychology students were the majority in the study and 36 (84%) of them perceived that personal counseling is highly effective, and only 7 (16%) thought it is less effective. Among the third year students, out of 14 (100%), 12 (86%) reported that personal is highly effective and only the remaining 2 (14%) thought of it to be less effective. The same trend was observed among the third years, whereby almost all; 14 (93%) said personal counseling is highly effective and the remaining 1 (7%) reported that this practice is less effective. The findings in this study thus do not have any statistical significant relationships between the demographic characteristics of the year of study and the general view of personal counseling effectiveness (χ^2=.861, p= .650). Across all the years of studies from second to fourth year, there was observed level of agreement that personal counseling is highly effective. The general scores of the participants' year of study and their general view of personal counseling effectiveness are presented in the figure below.

Figure 2 Year of study and perceived level of Effectivenes

The specific constructs that were used to measure the perceived effectiveness were measured across the year of study and there were similarly no item that yielded significant relationship. It is therefore concluded that the year of study does not affect the views towards the effectiveness of personal counseling. It was for instance observed that across all the years of study, majority of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that having personal counseling would help to attain a certain level of self-awareness. These scores as reported in table 4 did not have any statistical significant differences (χ^2=3.056, p= .802).

Table 4 Having personal counseling would help me to attain a certain level of self-awareness.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Year of study	Year Two	1	3	21	18	43
		2.3%	7.0%	48.8%	41.9%	100.0%
	Year Three	0	2	5	7	14
		0.0%	14.3%	35.7%	50.0%	100.0%
	Year Four	0	1	5	9	15
		0.0%	6.7%	33.3%	60.0%	100.0%
Total		1	6	31	34	72
		1.4%	8.3%	43.1%	47.2%	100.0%

Having experienced personal counseling and perceived effectiveness of personal counseling

This study found that personal counseling is not a common practice because most; 50 (69%) of the participants were found not to have had experience of personal counseling and only 22 (31%)

reported having had personal counseling. It was generally found that there was no significant relationship between prior personal counseling experience and the perceived effectiveness of personal counseling (χ^2=2.312, p= .128). As it is observed in table 5 below, majority of the participants who have both had personal counseling and those who have not, perceive personal counseling as highly effective.

Table 5 Level of Effectiveness and prior experience of personal counseling

		Less Effective	Highly Effective	
Have you ever received counseling from a counselor in relation to your personal problems?	Yes	1	21	22
		4.5%	95.5%	100.0%
	No	9	41	50
		18.0%	82.0%	100.0%
	Total	10	62	72
		13.9%	86.1%	100.0%

Nevertheless, there were two constructs measuring effectiveness that were found to have significant relationship with prior experience in personal counseling. The first construct with statistical significant relationship with effectiveness was the one measuring emotional availability to clients. See table 6 below.

Table 6 Prior experience of personal counseling and emotional availability to clients

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Have you ever received counseling from a counselor in relation to your personal problems?	Yes	4	0	10	8	22
		18.2%	0.0%	45.5%	36.4%	100.0%
	No	1	11	23	15	50
		2.0%	22.0%	46.0%	30.0%	100.0%
	Total	5	11	33	23	72
		6.9%	15.3%	45.8%	31.9%	100.0%

Personal counseling has its beneficial effectiveness in the counseling practice. This research study for instance found that prior experience of counseling has statistical significant relationship with the construct of emotional availability to clients (χ^2=10.8, p= .013) as observed in table 6 above.

The second construct that was found to have significant relationship with personal counseling experience was the beneficial effect of helping resolve personal life problems. The detailed distributional frequency is presented in table 7 below. The distributional frequency was found to be statistically significant (χ^2= 7.525, p=0.05.

Table 7 Prior experience of personal counseling and resolving personal life problems.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Have you ever received counseling from a counselor in relation to your personal problems?	Yes	1	0	8	13	22
		4.5%	0.0%	36.4%	59.1%	100.0%
	No	2	6	27	15	50
		4.0%	12.0%	54.0%	30.0%	100.0%
	Total	3	6	35	28	72
		4.2%	8.3%	48.6%	38.9%	100.0%

It was found that the participants who have experienced personal counseling, 8 (36%) agreed, 13 (59%) strongly agreed and only 1 (5%) strongly disagreed that personal counseling would help resolve personal life problems. Meanwhile from those who have not received personal counseling, 27 (54%) agreed, 15 (30%) strongly agreed and 2 (4%) strongly disagreed and the remaining 6 (12%) disagreed to the item.

Discussion

Personal counseling has been found to be highly (86%) effective and to some degree less (14%) effective in the current study. This implies that the participants have the knowledge of the possible benefits that they would gain from personal counseling if given the opportunity to enter in this therapeutic process. The effectiveness of personal counseling as found in the current study range from the aspect of self-awareness, skills development, self-differentiation and emotional availability to clients among others. Most of the findings in the current study are supported by a number of literatures. In a survey involving counselling psychologists Williams, Coyle, & Lyons, (1999) reported that three domains in which therapists benefited from personal therapy were handling their personal issues, dealing with difficulties encountered in their training, and mostly learning how to conduct psychotherapy (Wampold, 2007). Wampold (2007) further identified that one of the effects of personal counseling is the development of skill; these skills

development is imbedded in areas of intensive practice with model based feedback that would occur in personal therapy. The aspect of personal development and improvement is viewed as an essential attribute in the counseling profession. Strozier and Stacey (2001) also reported that personal therapy is beneficial in development of skills. They (Strozier & Stacey, 2001) argued that the practice contributes to the greater effectiveness in the use of different skills, the possibility of a more authentic connectedness between therapists and clients, and the protection from harmful interventions due to self-awareness and experience gained from having been in the position of the client. Consequently, exploration and awareness of personal experiences are believed to be core to the training of counselling psychologists (Norcross, 2005).

The findings in the current study do correspond with the earlier research studies. Rizq (2011) for example reported that personal counseling during the training of psychoanalysts leads to enhanced sensitivity and awareness, to improved mastery and technique, a decreased personal symptomatology and an increased conviction about the validity of the theory used (Malikiosi-Loizos, 2013). One of the benefits or effectiveness of personal counseling as reported by Norcross, Strausser-Kirtland, and Missar (1988) is that it improves the emotional and mental functioning of the therapist, alleviates the emotional stress of the profession, sensitizes to the interpersonal reactions and needs of the clients by being placed into the client role. Emotional availability in therapy was found to be one of the most interesting results whereby 77% of the participants agreed that personal counseling enhances emotional presence to clients for future practitioners and only 23% did not see emotional presence as an effective outcome in personal counseling.

Macran, Stiles and Smiths (1999) in their research studies with only seven participants; under the theme of "Listening with third ear" found that all (seven out of seven) participants recognized that personal counseling helps in "separating own feelings and clients' feelings" as well as "knowing how it feels to have therapy" that was scored by six out of seven participants, and "knowing one's boundaries and limitations" (5/7) Macran et al. (1999, p.431). This finding is in agreement with the findings of the current study where 60% of the participants agreed that personal counseling has the benefit of differentiating one's feelings from that of clients. Similarly, Mackey and Mackey (1994) in their study with social workers found that in personal

counseling, the therapist's empathy indicated healthy ways of connecting and disconnecting from their clients, which is a form of self-differentiation in therapy.

The personal counseling beneficial effects identified by Kumari (2011) in his qualitative research with graduate students was that it adds knowledge and skills and helps trainees comprehend more effectively the counseling process, and promote self-awareness (Kumari, 2011). These findings by Kumari (2011) are equally reflected in the current study were there were high scores by participants on the aspect of self-awareness and skills development. The area of self-awareness is yet another important dimension of counseling as a profession.

The current research tried to examine the effect of personal counseling on self-awareness. Generally, it was found that most of the participants responded that self-awareness could be attained through personal counseling therapy. Mackey and Mackey (1994) had also earlier in their researcher studies with social workers found that personal therapy helped them gain greater self-awareness, become better active listeners, develop empathy for their clients and gain a greater awareness of their personal and professional identity. Personal counseling in education was also reported by most post-graduate social work students that it is essential in increasing self-awareness and in understanding their clients' needs (Strozier & Stacey, 2001). Personal counseling is beneficial in learning what therapy means and what issues may arise when trainees are faced with personal difficulties (Malikiosi-Loizos, 2013). Gestalt therapy, which also belongs to the humanistic-existential approaches, places similarly a great emphasis on self-awareness (Clarkson, 2005). Wampold (2007) in his study on the qualities and actions of effective therapists reported that psychotherapists who have sought personal therapy, report that they benefited by becoming more aware of the personal relationship that develops between therapists and clients. The benefit highlighted by Wampold (2007) was awareness of issues of transference and counter transference in the therapeutic relationship as well as development of warmth and empathy among others.

The demographic characteristics of the participants was found not have generally impact on the overall perception of personal counseling effectiveness. This would imply that gender for example does not affect how one evaluates the benefits gained in personal counseling, both females and males have similar outcome regarding personal counseling the same way year of

study would. The demographic characteristics that were included in the available literature for the current study did not include the aspects of gender and year of study. Orlinsky, Ronnestad, et al (2005) carried out a survey study in 14 countries in Europe, Asia, Australia and America among psychologists, psychiatrists and other psychotherapists and there was no significant difference in the findings from the different continents.

Conclusion

Personal counseling has been found in this research study as having high level of effectiveness; ranging from self-awareness, empathy, skills acquisition and development. Gender and year of study did not show statistical significant differences in the general perceived effectiveness, except for a few constructs as represented in the results section. Nevertheless, the findings in this research study are a strong first step in a line of needed research regarding how people perceive the effectiveness of personal counseling. The current findings in this study do not dictate any action on behalf of professional counseling organizations but they indicate the perceived effectiveness of personal counseling among psychology students. It is the data which could be considered when making policy decisions in training prospective counselors. If future counselors are going to move to new, future levels of competence then personal counseling should be given due consideration as an important initial component for both trainees and practitioners.

It is worth of note that the current research study had relatively low representation and would have included graduate psychology students in order to come up with more comprehensive findings. This simply was an artifact of the college where the data was collected. Further research should contain samples with larger representations of demographic features. As a recommendation, future research should broaden questionnaires to include questions that are derived empirically from the research literature.

Finally, qualitative research is needed in this area. Questionnaires help provide large amounts of data and providing breadth of understanding and answering statistical queries (Wantz & Firmin (2011)). However, there is need for more descriptions qualitative research methodology to help answer the why and how questions that the present findings raise can best be answered with follow-up (Wantz & Firmin (2011).

Reference

Bike, D. H., Norcross, J.C., & Schatz, D.M. (2009). Processes and outcomes of psychotherapists' personal therapy: Replication and extension 20 years later. Psychotherapy, 46(1), 19-31. doi:10.1037/a0015139

Clarkson, P . (2005). *Gestalt counselling in action* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE.

Corey, G. (2009). Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson-Brooks/Cole.

Geller, J. D., Norcross J. C., & Orlinsky, D. E. (Eds.), The psychotherapist's own psychotherapy: Patient and clinician perspectives (pp. 214-230). New York: Oxford University Press.

Kumari, N. (2011). Personal therapy as a mandatory requirement for counselling psychologists in training: A qualitative study of the impact of therapy on trainees' personal and professional development. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 24*(3), 21 1-232.

Mackey,R.A.,&Mackey,E.F.(1994).Personalpsychotherapyandthedevelopmentofaprofessionalself.FamiliesinSociety, 75(8), 490-498.

Macran,S.,Stiles,W.B.,&Smith,J.A.(1999).Howdoespersonaltherapyaffecttherapists'practice?JournalofCounseling Psychology, 46(4), 419-431. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.46.4.419

Malikiosi-Loizos, M. (2013) Personal Therapy for Future Therapists: Reflections on a Still Debated Issue. The European Journal of Counselling Psychology 2013, Vol. 2(1), 33–50, doi:10.5964/ejcop.v2i1.4

Norcross, J. C. (2005). The psychotherapist's own psychotherapy: Educating and developing psychologists. The American Psychologist, 60, 840-850. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.60.8.840

Norcross, J.C., Strausser-Kirtland, D., & Missar, C. (1988). The process and outcomes of psychotherapists' personal treatment experiences. Psychotherapy, 25 (1), 36-43. doi:10.1037/h0085321

Orlinsky, D. E., Norcross, J. C., Ronnestad, M. H., & Wiseman, H. (2005). Outcomes and impacts of the psychotherapist's own psychotherapy: A research review.

Oteiza, V. (2010). Therapists' experiences of personal therapy: A descriptive phenomenological study. Counselling & Psychotherapy Research, 10(3), 222-228. doi:10.1080/14733140903337300

Reupert, A. (2006). The counsellor's self in therapy: An inevitable presence. International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 28(1), 95-105. doi:10.1007/s10447-005-9001-2

Rizq, R.(2011). Personal therapy in psychotherapeutic training: Current research and future directions. Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy, 41, 175-185. doi:10.1007/s10879-010-9168-7

Strozier,A.L.,&Stacey,L.(2001).TherelevanceofpersonaltherapyintheeducationofMSWstudents.ClinicalSocialWork Journal, 29, 181-195. doi:10.1023/A:1010382104323

Wampold, B. E. (2007). Qualities and Aactions of Effective Therapists. Continuing Education in Psychology. American Psychological Assocuation.

Wantz, R. A. & Firmin, M. (2011). Perceptions of professional counselors: survey of college student views. *The Professional Counselor 1*(1), 71–81. doi:10.15241/raw.1.1.71

Williams, F., Coyle, A., & Lyons, E. (1999). How counselling psychologists view their personal therapy. The British Journal of Medical Psychology, 72, 545-555. doi:10.1348/000711299160112

Wosket, V. (1999). The therapeutic use of self: Counselling practice, research and supervision. London: Routledge.