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Paving the Way for Counselling? The Link between Maltese PSD Model and Counselling

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Abstract

This study explored whether Personal and Social Development (PSD) teachers, school-based counsellors, and students in Maltese secondary schools perceived processing experiences as empowering to seek counselling, if and when needed. The study investigated if processing techniques within PSD methodology helped develop self-awareness. The research builds on the concept of ethical advertising - opportunity to inform and help clients arrive at courses of actions beneficial for themselves. The literature review discusses processing in the PSD Maltese model, comparing processing with overall counselling experiences. Data were collected through two questionnaires, one for professionals and one for 15 and 16-year-olds completing secondary school education. Results revealed that participants acknowledged the effectiveness of processing with regard to empowerment, information to seek counselling, and increased self-awareness. The results also indicate a need for more students' awareness with regard to PSD teachers' specific role, disclosure, and boundaries. Based on the findings, the authors recommend that such a methodology be encouraged in educational systems and that more training and awareness be carried out to clarify teachers' roles with students so that small-group set-ups yield more effective results.

Keywords: processing, counselling, experiential, questionnaires, pupils, PSD teachers

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The main objective of this research was to explore perceptions of students, teachers, and school counsellors of processing and counselling within a statutory subject in the Maltese Curriculum, namely Personal and Social Development (PSD). PSD methodology in the Maltese model embraces helping skills and processing rather than teaching (Bezzina, Falzon & Muscat, 2015; Muscat, 2006). Given the similarity in the philosophy, raison d'être, and techniques used in helping skills, processing and counselling, as well as the benefits of counselling evidenced in research related to counselling in schools (e.g., Baginsky, 2004; Carey & Dimmitt, 2012; Myllymäki, Ruotsalainen, & Kääriäinen, 2017), we explored whether students exposed to processing are more likely or not to be empowered; cognizant and

skilled to proceed to counselling if the need arises.

Literature Review

Schooling and education would be ineffective if personal development were not included in educational programmes, as self-empowerment and freedom to make informed decisions are crucial for a good quality of life (e.g. Kahneman & Tversky, 2000; Kenji & Shadlen, 2012; McLaughlin, 2014). PSD in Malta developed out of a psychosocial need, rather than an educational one, and gained ground as people appreciated its positive effects. Falzon and Muscat (2009) noted that its development and implementation are in themselves a journey of empowerment (helping the person become aware of their right to power, or authority to perform various acts or duties), as Maltese educators began to adopt a more democratic system of education and teaching.

Defining Processing

Processing is derived from the Latin *processus* (i.e., "going forward"; Skeat, 1983), a progression intended to help individuals grow and move towards goals (Egan, 2012; Heron, 2002). It is an essential experience of reflection and action. *Praxis* can be defined as the passage through a cyclical process of action-reflection-action that helps put theoretical knowledge into practice (Freire, 1998). Darmanin (1992) referred to processing as a sequence of experiences: emotional reactions first experienced by individuals and later within the group, evaluation of what takes place and how group dynamics influence and are influenced by experiences processed. When groups are "process-oriented" they can examine their group development and seek to understand how it is functioning (Heron, 2002; Johnson & Johnson, 1991). Likewise, Bezzina et al. (2015) noted that processing aids the pathway to emotional literacy (Goleman, 1996; Sharp, 2001). Further, Bond (1986) referred to processing as discussion and felt that this technique should follow all activities and should never be omitted or rushed. It is here that PSD facilitators give participants the opportunity to explore and address feelings, as well as further self-awareness, increase communication skills, and apply learning outcomes drawn out of activities to one's real life. This processing appears to be ten times more effective at promoting changes in self than lectures or talks (Bond, 1986). Napier and Gershenfeld (1999)

did not use the term processing but referred to the need to finish activities by "[t]ak[ing] a few minutes to engage participants in sharing some reflections of this experience to help internalise and maximise the learning and recognition of this achievement" (p. 157). Within the Maltese context, this technique has been referred to as processing since the inception of PSD on the island in the early 1980's (Falzon & Muscat, 2009; Muscat, 2006).

Processing requires a solid grounding in humanistic theory and knowledge, particularly with regard to communication skills, as well as a psychological/sociological/philosophical background. Professionals must therefore be well-trained in performing, thinking, communication, leadership and discussion provoking skills, as well as in questioning techniques, for example eliciting by probing and paraphrasing (Shor, 1987) and helping skills (Egan, 2012, 2018) so that participation can be encouraged and developed to provoke dialogue (Shor, 1987).

Processing involves three levels of group process: content, method, and socio-affective levels (Goleman, 1996; Nelson-Jones, 1992). Although interactive and dependent on each other, each level has its own identity and stage in the processing experience. Content is the question and the basis of the session (Abela et al., 2001). Method refers to *how* to go about the learning process (Abela et al., 2001; Falzon & Muscat, 2009) through activities and techniques such as brainstorming, discussions and role-plays (Heron, 2002). Socio-affective addresses the *who* question (Abela et al., 2001): every member influences one another, and is influenced by, the emotive climate within the group. Therefore, processing is also used during immediacy situations and is based on what the person is doing or experiencing at a particular point in time. Egan (2012, 2018) also distinguished between immediate and relationship immediacy:

Two kinds of immediacy are reviewed here: first, immediacy that focuses on the overall relationship - "How are you and I doing?" and, second, immediacy that focuses on some particular event in a session - "What's going on between you and me right now?" (p. 210)

Hopson and Scally (1981) and Nelson-Jones (1991) married this intellectual/emotional aspect as "empowerment…component skills by means of which people assume rather than avoid personal responsibilities for their lives…competencies that enable people to help themselves… empower rather than de-power or weaken people" (Nelson-Jones, 1991, p. 12). This notion is also in line with guidelines presented by a division of the American Counseling Association, namely Specialists in Group Work, who profess that group workers':

[R]esponsibility and scope of practice involve[s] those activities, strategies and interventions that are consistent and current with effective and appropriate professional ethical and community standards… views

Group Workers as ethical agents… by their very nature in being responsible and responsive to their group members, necessarily embrace a certain potential for ethical vulnerability…[must] give considerable attention to the intent and context of their actions because the attempts of Group Workers to influence human behavior through group work always have ethical implications. (Thomas & Pender, 2008, p. 112)

Both Falzon (2013a, 2013b) and Muscat (2006) argued that processing in the Maltese PSD model is a technique borrowed from the counselling field which has been adapted to group growth and learning in PSD sessions. Processing and counselling enable sensitization towards feelings and individual growth (Bond, 1986; Nelson-Jones, 1992). Skilled trainers use questioning techniques and helping skills (Egan, 2012) in processing. Asking questions may serve a variety of purposes during processing including initiating discussions, encouraging participants and asking them to elaborate (e.g., Brammer & MacDonald, 2003; Egan, 2012; McCormick Morgan, 2001). These skills are some of the common denominators between counselling and processing.

It is important to distinguish the difference between PSD group processing (Nelson-Jones, 1992) and group counselling (e.g., Grant Hayes, 2001; McMahon & Palmer, 2014; Nelson-Jones, 2015). Both are effective (Falzon & Muscat, 2009; Grant Hayes, 2001) but employed by PSD professionals and counsellors, respectively. A main difference is that whilst group counselling is therapeutic, PSD aims at eliciting learning outcomes (Ministry for Education and Employment [MEDE], 2018) and competencies (Camilleri, Caruana, Falzon, & Muscat, 2012; MEDE, 2018).

Therefore, inasmuch as processing skills borrow from the helping skills used in counselling, the boundaries between processing and therapy distinguish the two experiences. PSD specialists are trained to understand their boundaries and limitations. They work hand in hand with other trained professionals for transdisciplinary teamwork and to make proper referrals (Berne & Savary, 2014; Falzon & Muscat, 2009). PSD is not meant to be therapeutic or to develop into a group counselling session. It is meant to develop personal and social skills, namely to empower those who are engaging in the process. Such skills and awareness can then pave the way for counselling, if and when needed.

PSD Rationale and Ethos

The pedagogy of the Maltese PSD model distinguishes itself from other school subjects (e.g., sciences, languages, mathematics). Rather than teaching skills, PSD uses helping skills (Egan, 2012), eliciting, facilitating, and processing techniques (Heron, 2002) as its pedagogy (e.g., Abela et al., 2001; Falzon & Muscat, 2009; Macnamara, 1995). Based on Kolb's (1984) ELC, learning experiences - as opposed to learning outcomes -

become paramount to PSD learning (e.g., MEDE, 2018; Ministry of Education, Youth & Employment [MEYE], 2005a). Processing in the Maltese model is what Kolb (1984) referred to as Reflective Observation (see Figure 1).

The PSD mission statement focuses on "empowering students to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes which will enable them to live and participate fruitfully and effectively in their environment" (Abela et al., 2002, p. 2). Although pedagogical skills used in the Maltese PSD model promote the concept that participants arrive at their own personal values and beliefs, the inherent philosophy and implementation of PSD promote universally regarded positive values (Dewey, 1916; MEYE, 2005b), similar to PSD aims in other European countries, mainly in Britain (Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills [DCEL], 2008; United Kingdom Department of Education, 2013). What is unique to the Maltese PSD model is the processing experience within the ELC (e.g., Kolb, 1984; National Minimum Curriculum, 1999; Sultana 1992b), using helping skills (Camilleri, Hamilton, Gatt, & Galea Naudi, 2012; Giordmaina, 2000; MEDE, 2012). Processing helps students integrate and internalise what they experience during activities, thus enabling them to transfer learned skills to real-life situations (e.g., Heron, 2002; Johnson, 1997; Kolb, 1984). As Sultana (1992a) noted:

It should be made clear… that "thematic investigation" needs a highly prepared facilitator, one who is not only aware of the cognitive challenges such a PSE programme represents, but also in Rogers' (1961) terms, "[is] a person in process" open to learning and to challenges which inevitably arise in the open-ended educational encounter with students. (p. 31)

A historical timeline of the name of the subject is due here. When first introduced in the late 1970s, PSD used to be called Programme for the Development of Skills (PDS) and involved sessions offered to university students. When it was introduced to educators, it was first referred to as Lifeskills and then became called Personal and Social Education (PSE) between 1981 and 1999 (Sultana, 2006). The title was changed to PSD in 1999 (Giordmaina, 2000) and to Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) in 2013. The reason behind this change was the Government's policy to give more emphasis to career training. This change also led to more PSCD sessions in the upper secondary classes (Debono, Camilleri, Galea, & Gravina, 2007). The approach continues to be referred to as PSD methodology.

Counselling and PSD Processing

When comparing definitions of counselling and processing, one finds similarities with regard to content and technique. Both embrace sensitization towards feelings and individual growth (e.g., Heron, 2002;

Macnamara, 1995; Nelson, 1991). Indeed, Muscat (2006) described counselling as a possible natural progression from PSD. As it were, processing experiences serve as a training ground, a platform enabling informed decision-making, to present to potential students who would find themselves in difficult life situations. Processing helps students understand that counselling would enable them to cope better with challenging experiences. The PSD professional models similar situations to the counselling session, including safe spaces, opportunity for disclosure and emphasis on confidentiality (Bezzina et al., 2015). We are therefore suggesting that processing experiences facilitate students to move more easily to counselling if needed. Such PSD experiences could raise awareness and lead students to seek counselling (Cauchi, Falzon, Micallef, & Sammut, 2017). A review of the literature indicates that this specific area has never been explored.

Helping skills. Egan (2012) presented a three-stage problem management model of helping skills and described each component as fundamental for counselling and also relevant in processing (Falzon & Muscat, 2009; Heron, 2002). Egan (2012) posited that helpers are effective only if they help clients get to a better position to manage difficulties, develop opportunities to learn more about themselves as options are increased, to learn in very practical and in-context ways, and to consequently live their lives more fruitfully and effectively since more skills are developed. He referred to this process as "collaborative" (p. 14), where there are total client participation and involvement, effectively empowering clients to take control and plan strategies to improve their quality of life.

Helping skills are essential tools for both PSD and counselling (e.g., Brew & Kottler, 2016; Hill & O'Brien, 2014; Muscat, 2006) and these skills can be reflected in both the definition of counselling and processing. Such essential skills are also imperative in order to empower students to become more in touch with their emotions and develop better as holistic individuals, the rationale of the Maltese PSD model.

The relationship. Processing can only be effective if PSD professionals build a positive and trusting relationship with their student group. Falzon and Muscat (2009) indicated that "both in processing during PSD sessions and in counselling, the relationship is crucial to the experience" (p. 6). The creation of a relationship of security, trust and care will make PSD sessions and the counselling experience much more effective. In order for this to take place, a good relationship between the counsellor/PSD specialist and the clients/students must be established.

Falzon and Muscat (2009) noted that the ethos of both the counselling profession and the PSD specialists' profession build on Egan's (2012, 2018) three basic principles of relationship skills: empathy, genuineness,

and unconditional positive regard. Their ethos also embraces Rogers' (1977) principles of counselling with "positive human change" (Nelson-Jones, 1997, p.7) as the main aim. Nelson-Jones (1997) described this as a process of development or self-discovery. France (1988) and Rogers (1977) acknowledged that the quality of the relationship undoubtedly seems to be the most valuable part of the experience, as it provides "the security and motivation indispensable for the more cognitive work in therapy" (France, 1988, p. 242). In his client-centred approach, Rogers (1977) considered the relationship as being an end in itself. However, "the client also needs to contribute to the relationship for it to succeed" (Gatt, 2006, p. 19). This is not possible without "warmth, friendliness and acceptance" (Howe, 1993, p. 41). Likewise, the PSD model states that "[t]he harmonious interaction between group members of a PSD lesson is considered to be paramount to the eventual effectiveness of those lessons" (MEYE, 2005a, p. 8). Both professionals and students need to contribute in order for change to occur (Egan, 2018; Muscat, 2006).

During processing, professionals also respect "role release" (Orelove & Sobsey, 2004) and become supporters rather than experts. The concept of exchange and mutual learning must be present at all times. PSD specialists, like counsellors, must promote empowerment, which is a critical piece of the puzzle for clients to change and grow. Furthermore, the PSD specialist "knows that although it is within the power of humans to create and transform, in a concrete situation of alienation individuals may be impaired in the use of that power" (Freire, 1998, p. 72).

Setting the Context

Malta is located in the middle of the Mediterranean, where two islands are mainly inhabited, Malta and Gozo. The Maltese Archipelago is one of the world's most densely populated countries and the smallest European Union (EU) member (Eurostat, 2018), with an area of 316 km² and a population of just over 475,000 (gov.mt, 2018). Inhabitants mostly speak Maltese (90%) as their mother tongue, whilst the rest are either totally English speaking, bilingual or use Maltese and English interchangeably (10%) (Camilleri, 1996). This country was under British rule from 1800, became independent in 1964 and a republic in 1974. Its justice system, educational system and the profession of counselling follow the British model (Farrugia, 1992; Sultana, 2006). State schools catering for compulsory education (ages 4 to 16 years) and are geographically divided into ten colleges, each responsible for around 3000 students. Further, Malta hosts 33 church-run and 13 private primary and secondary schools.

In a highly academic and exam-oriented Maltese culture, PSD was deemed necessary to address students' mental health and quality of life (Falzon & Muscat,

2009). In the 1980s, PSD became a statutory subject in secondary schools and then expanded to primary schools some years later. School counselling was launched by two teachers in the 1970s as Career Guidance and School Counselling, leading to an increase in services through the 1980s and 1990s, with another significant increase in the last three years (e.g., Cauchi et al., 2017; Galea, 2012; Sultana, 1992a).

Motivation for the Study

McLeod (2003) noted that there is a "social responsibility in research that transcends the academic discipline of a profession to which the researcher belongs. The ultimate moral justification for research is that it contributes to the greater public good, by easing suffering or promoting truth" (p. 175). Quality of life and a shared value system are criteria that most counselling professionals cherish. The PSD experience and the counselling experience both promote improving quality of life. We wanted to objectively explore our anecdotal experiences. Further, as mentioned earlier, research for papers on processing as a catalyst for counselling have to date yielded no results. This reveals unchartered territory in terms of research. Within this context, we were also cautious and aware of our roles as insider researchers, namely researchers with a direct involvement/connection with the research settings (Northumbria University, 2011), as discussed below.

Such research contrasts with traditional notions in which researchers are "objective outsiders" studying subjects external to themselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Validity in insider research is challenged due to the self-involvement. However, it has been suggested that all research is somewhat coloured by subjectivity. Such subjectivity must always be held in check, and researchers must remain ethical towards the objective of all their research, furthering the greater public good (McLeod, 2003).

Method

The main objective of this research was to explore perceptions of students, PSD teachers and school counsellors with regard to processing and counselling.

Research Aim and Questions

The main research question was: Does the processing experience make it easier for students to opt for counselling if the need arises? This question was supported by three others:

1. Given the similarity in the philosophy, raison d'être and techniques used in processing and counselling, are students exposed to processing more likely to be empowered, cognizant and skilled to proceed to counselling if the need arises?

2. Does processing in PSD help secondary school students become more in touch with their feelings and

emotions?

3. If effective, what skills and techniques make this so?

These research questions suggested a quantitative methodology using questionnaires for professionals and students as the research tool.

Participants and Sampling

It was deemed important that participants included all stakeholders directly related to the research question. The context of our research involved the whole Maltese population of PSD teachers and school counsellors working in secondary schools at the time, as well as a random sample of fifth-formers from nine secondary schools, including State, Independent, and Church educational institutions. This ensured a heterogeneous sample. We also ensured gender balance with regard to students. The professional population is heavily female-biased and we, in fact, did not attempt any gender comparisons of the professional participants. We specifically chose fifth formers (15 and 16-year-olds) as this is the last year of compulsory schooling and participants would, therefore, be able to respond using all their school years' experience. In any given year, Malta would have around 4000 children in one school year (NSO, 2018).

Out of a possible total of 228 questionnaires given to professional-participants, 158 (69.3% response rate) were collected: 139 (68.8%) from PSD teachers (out of a possible 202) and 19 (73.1%) from counsellors (out of a possible 26) working in schools. The data were collected before there was a significant increase in counsellors in Maltese state schools. From 839 student-questionnaires distributed, 551 (65.7%) were collected. The response rate of professionals and students do not differ significantly since the p-value (0.304) exceeds the 0.05 level of significance (see Table 1). The margin of error for professional-respondents and for the student-respondents as based on the whole population of fifth-formers was 4% (95% CI) for both groups. This allows for the ability to infer and generalise (DataStar, 2008; Ryan, 2013).

Procedure

Following permission obtained from the Ethics' Board associated with the University of Malta as well as from MEDE, questionnaires were distributed via e-mail to professionals and directly in classrooms to potential student respondents.

Measures

Given the specific aims of the research, two questionnaires were constructed to address the professionals and the students. The professionals' questionnaire was constructed in English only and the students' in English and Maltese. The questionnaires were developed as informed by the literature, including local research. The final versions included feedback from pilot-study participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Langdridge & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). Due to the research aims, both close- and open-ended questions were used (Langdridge & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). The content of the questionnaires addressed similar issues since the research questions were common to both populations. Readers may obtain a copy of these research tools by e-mailing the first author.

Data Analysis, Reliability, and Validity Issues

Data obtained were analyzed using the 2016 Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24. A 0.05 significance level was used to examine potential differences (Freund, 2004). Chi-square tests were used to test for associations between two categorical variables to examine whether percentage differences were significant. Graphs and tables illustrated the data trends. Further, z scores were used as needed, to query significant differences between two sample proportions (Stangroom, 2019).

Reliability. Developing a quality questionnaire is quite a rigorous exercise, as abstract concepts need to be transformed into readable and factual items (e.g., Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992; Russell & Roberts, 2001). Langdridge (2004) indicated that "[r]esearch invariably involves a trade-off between the parsimony (simplicity) of the method of data collection and the depth of information gathered" (p. 67). We did not design the questionnaire in a vacuum, but kept in mind personal research findings (e.g., Bezzina et al., 2015; Falzon & Muscat, 2001; Muscat, 2006), the literature review, and the culture and experience of professionals and students as perceived through our personal experiences, our research and the literature. We were privileged to not only knowing the theoretical and academic material, but also having a feel of the local scene as university academics, PSD teachers' educators, professionals in the field, parents whose children had already gone through the educational system, and counsellor/counselling researcher.

To enhance the investigation's reliability, two pilot studies were used to understand and address deficiencies in the design (Altman et al., 2006). These included the survey tool and a respondent feedback sheet. The final version of the research tools included all input received. Specifically, Langdridge (2004) described reliability as "gathering data that are reliable" (p. 31) with measures that will provide "similar results on different but comparable occasions" (p. 32). The pilot studies helped streamline and address language, set-up and the content. Cohen et al.'s (2000) three-step process was followed. Further, we tried to present as parsimonious and clear a questionnaire as possible by ensuring that questions were kept as simple and as short as possible and using as clear,

precise, non-ambiguous and simple a language as possible. We avoided double-negative questions, ensured that the wording of the questions was non-threatening and used least technical a language as possible.

Validity. The concept of validity is challenging to fully achieve (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Langdridge, 2004; Yin, 2009). The crux of the matter in this research is whether results were valid enough to allow for recommendations for better practices. Within the context that the ultimate truth is a "chimera", one can argue that there is not one ultimate method which is a "royal road to ultimate knowledge" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 205). However, commitment to be as faithful as possible to the voices of respondents addresses validity. Guba and Lincoln (2005) referred to *positivistic rigour* focusing on method application; and *interpretative rigour* focusing on how the research data are presented, interpreted and discussed. Practitioners of positivistic and post-positivistic social inquiry are the most critical of validity. Any action on the part of researchers thought to potentially stabilize objectivity or introduce subjectivity results in bias. Ultimately, validity is an issue of ethics and integrity (Lather, 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). We used bracketing to address possible bias as authors (Draper, 2004; Tufford & Newman, 2012)

Berdie and Andersen (1974) argued that "[t]he validity of a questionnaire item is concerned with whether or not the item actually elicits the intended information. Questionnaire items are valid if they are successful in eliciting true responses relevant to the information desired" (p. 13). This was an issue that was central during the construction of the questionnaire and that received positive feedback from pilot study participants. Furthermore, reliability with regard to statistical data was respected by ensuring that data were inputted correctly and any errors were corrected.

Insider-researchers. Greene (2014) reflected that researchers' positioning depends on where they stand vis-à-vis the research questions and participants. Some argue one can never hold full or no membership in any group, but "space between" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 61) of a continuum. An insider researcher is hence one who belongs to the researched community (e.g. Greene, 2014; Loxley & Seery, 2008; Naples, 2003). This presents intimate information about the phenomena under study (Merton, 1972). Our history, as detailed below, provides us with privileged information and perception vis-à-vis these professionals' and students' experience. Banks (1998) "external-insider" model offers a more versatile approach as one is "socialized within another culture and acquires its beliefs, values, behaviours, attitudes, and knowledge" (p. 8). Bell (2005) explained that insider researchers feel cognitively, emotionally and psychologically close to participants, and are also in-group culture, history and language

proficient, which the participants sense. This may be beneficial to data collection and interpretation (Chavez, 2008).

Results

The context of our research was the whole Maltese population of PSD teachers and school counsellors working in secondary schools, as well as a random sample of fifth-formers from nine secondary schools, including State, Independent, and Church educational institutions.

Effectiveness of PSD

Tables 2 and 3 present salient data from the students' questionnaire. Table 3 presents significant gender differences found.

The *z*-test comparing two population proportions was used to check gender differences in students' answers. This yielded four significant gender differences (see Table 3).

Tables 2 and 3 present that students did not perceive PSD as a waste of time (74.4%). Significantly more female (81.8%) than male (64.4%) students disagreed that PSD was a waste of time ($p < .001$). Most students (81.1%) felt that PSD methodology was a fun way of learning about life. Gender difference (87.7% females; 72.2% males) was significant ($p < .001$). Most students (73.3%) liked PSD as they had a say in the lesson and gender difference (80.2% females; 63.9% males) was again significant ($p < .001$). Only 8.9% thought that PSD was not relevant to life experiences. On the other hand, only 52.1 % of students were aware that during PSD sessions they could talk about whatever they want, and gender difference (56.9% female 45.5% male) was significant ($p = .008$). Likewise, fewer students (59.2%) then felt comfortable to express themselves in PSD and believed that the safe atmosphere in PSD helped them express themselves (51.5 %). These three percentages concern us as half the student population do not seem to be aware of such three important aspects of PSD. Another concern yielded from the data is that only 40.5% perceived PSD as relevant to their studies and learning, whilst significantly more (65.0%) perceived the subject as relevant to their lives ($z = 8.15$; $p < .001$). Significantly more student-participants (80.6%) liked PSD as they can talk to and discuss with their teacher ($z = 5.82$; $p < .001$). Again, only 50.8% agreed that PSD lessons helped them talk about problems with someone who can help effectively. Females were significantly more unsure if they could talk with PSD teachers who can help them (24% male; 32% female − $z = 4.76$; $p < .001$). With regard to awareness of counselling, whilst 82.9% were aware that there were counselling services available in their schools, significantly less (30.3%) have ever used this service ($z = 17.63$; $p < .001$), whilst 42.1% noted that their PSD experience helped them should they

need to go to counselling, in a context were 53% would actually go to counselling if they needed such services. The difference between these two responses is significant ($z = 3.68$; $p < .001$).

The Processing Experience.

Tables 4 and 5 below present participants' perceptions regarding the processing experience.

Table 4 above displays the results of the Chi-square test and indicates that PSD specialists perceived the ELC model as ineffective if processing is not included in the learning experience. Professionals felt that processing helped students reflect, empowered them and enabled them to become more emotionally literate. Only half of the professionals (54.0%) then felt that students perceived the value of processing. This may be indicative of a need to address this more in the PSD lesson.

Students (61.0%) understood and acknowledged the importance of "reflection" in PSD sessions, whilst significantly fewer students (52.8%) stated that during processing they managed to "reflect" ($z = 2.74$; $p < .006$). Likewise, 98.6% of PSD specialists and counsellors believed that processing is important as it enables students to reflect. With regard to classroom set-up, 72.4% of students felt that processing was more effective in groups of 15 or less. Students agreed that processing must always follow group activities (71.7%). Significantly less (64.6%) agreed that processing should also follow individual activities ($z = 2.58$; $p < .009$). Professionals (87.3%) also believed that processing enabled students to become more emotionally literate. Significantly less students (59.9%) perceived processing as helpful to developing emotional literacy ($z = 7.46$; $p < .001$). These responses may support the need to address the link between processing and emotional literacy more in the PSD. Students may not have known what Emotional Literacy means.

The Skills of Processing

Table 6 displays the skills professionals perceived as most helpful to PSD specialists when facilitating processing. It evidences that professionals valued mostly listening, empathy, probes and prompts, communication skills and challenging skills. It is interesting to note that all items fall within the paradigm of communication skills (Nelson-Jones, 2015). Less professionals referred to teamwork (20), a non-judgemental attitude (17), reflection (14), evaluation (14), sensitivity (11), immediacy (11), clarification (11) feedback (10), trust building (9), self-disclosure (9), flexibility (8), paraphrasing (7) observation skills (6). Patience (5), thinking skills (4), creativity (4) humour (4), assertiveness (3) and emotional literacy (3) were mentioned by less than five professionals.

The z-test comparing two population proportions was used to check differences between the most common skills referred to by professionals. Table 7 displays significant differences between the main responses given.

The questionnaire presented statements using a 5-point Likert scale to address the qualities of PSD teachers' skills. Figure 2 presents the three top qualities student-participants thought makes a good PSD teacher. These are represented as means (*M*): good listener ($M = 4.40$), being a good communicator ($M = 4.37$), and being understanding ($M = 4.34$). The responses across participants agreed and were again all linked with communication skills - an essential constituent of what Shor (1987) terms as "performing skills", on which the processing technique is practically based upon. Surprisingly, being flexible was seen as the least important factor by students ($M = 3.84$). Likewise, only eight professionals referred to flexibility.

Processing, Counselling, Referrals and Boundaries

Table 8 reveals that professional-respondents clearly indicated to a significant degree (*p*-value < 0.005) that they perceived processing as a positive experience leading to counselling if needed. Most PSD specialists were also aware that they were not equipped to counsel students and preferred to refer to other professionals.

Most professionals (81.3%) agreed that students experiencing processing find it easier to proceed to counselling and that the processing experience facilitates "telling the story" in counselling (77.6%). However, significantly less (56%) felt that students experiencing processing would more likely choose to go to counselling ($z = 4.88$; $p < .001$). Whilst most professionals (94%) reported that students are referred to counselling by the PSD specialist when the need arises, significantly fewer students (50.3%) noted that PSD specialists do not try to address students' difficulties but refer students to counselling ($z = 11.47$; $p < .001$). The difference in the responses of these two answers may indicate uncertainty about boundaries which may need to be better addressed during Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Continued Professional Development (CPD).

As noted in Table 2, 48.6% of student-participants stated that PSD teachers helped them solve problems, whilst 27.2% were unsure. Further, 82.9% of the student-population were aware of counselling services at their school but 62.8% had never gone for counselling. Within this context, 46.6% of students remarked that PSD specialists referred them to a counsellor when needed and student-participants (53%) would go to a counsellor should they require to. Figure 3 below indicates that less than half of the students (42.1%) perceive PSD lessons as helpful to help them understand the need for counselling and girls (47.2%) are significantly more likely than boys (35.2%) to perceive this ($z = 2.813$; $p < .005$).

Results from open-ended questions included in the

Professionals' Questionnaire (see Table 9) demonstrate that when professionals were asked if and why they felt that processing was important for students, the following themes were elicited: students' ability to reflect; integration/assimilation of skills; self-expression; increased self-awareness; consolidation of skills and being in touch with feelings. Further, no significant difference between PSD teachers and counsellors was noted, implying congruence between the answers of the two groups of professionals.

Group Size

Table 10 indicates that professionals thought that processing worked better, generated more discussion, and was more effective if sessions were held in groups of 12 to 15 (p-value $< .001$). Likewise, Table 5 shows that 72.4% students preferred experiencing PSD in smaller a group-size and gender was not a significant difference ($z = 1.015$; $p = .313$). Student-participants (59.6%) also appreciated the circle formation used.

Professionals were also asked to give reasons why they felt processing was more effective in groups of 12-15. Table 11 presents that their reasons yielded four themes: better participation, self-expression, individual attention and a safer environment. What is of concern is that despite agreeing that small-group formats are more conducive to disclosure, only half of the student population (51.5%) felt safe to disclose (Table 2). This finding is an important issue for further research to consider.

Reflection on the data. These data present statistically significant differences indicating that, as perceived by the main stakeholders: (a) students exposed to processing are more likely to report that they are empowered, cognizant and skilled to proceed to counselling, if the need arises; and that (b) processing in PSD, carried out by appropriately-trained professionals, helps secondary school students become more in touch with their feelings and emotions and is much more effective in small groups. On the other hand, there is concern that only half of the students were aware that during PSD sessions they could talk about whatever they wanted; felt comfortable expressing themselves in PSD and believed that the safe atmosphere in PSD helped them express themselves. Also, less than half of the students perceived PSD as relevant to their studies and learning. With regard to the professionals, there seems to be a need for more awareness of boundaries and to understand that the processing experience is directly linked to emotional literacy (Bezzina et al., 2015). Further, professionals indicated a lack of awareness of the importance of flexibility in their profession. One also needs to reflect on the fact that only half of the professionals felt that students understood the value of processing.

Discussion

PSD is unique to Malta and therefore comparison with other non-Maltese studies was not possible. Present results concur with previous studies carried out, most of them undergraduate dissertations (e.g., Muscat, 2006). Participants perceived the experience of processing as positive. One can compare this to the positive effect of counselling sessions on clients (Myllymäki et al., 2017; Pearson & Wilson, 2008). However, our concern is that, notwithstanding this positive perception and the safety of the environment that should be created and is crucial to PSD (e.g., Holley & Steiner, 2005; Muscat, 2006; White, 2008) and was so noted by participants, only slightly more than half of the students were aware that during PSD sessions they could talk about their life experiences or felt safe to do so. This contrasts with the PSD model as presented by University of Malta trainers (Bezzina, 2016; Camilleri et al., 2012) and the PSCD Syllabus itself (Debono, 2017; MEDE, 2018). A more positive outcome was expected on these issues and the present results indicate the need for further studies on safe environments during PSD sessions.

Results also reflect that, despite being in the same school, students had different experiences and perceptions of the PSD lesson. This presents the importance of continuous professional training (CPD) and work on the self for the professionals (Cauchi et al., 2017; Mulvey, 2013). A third of the students were unsure if they could talk with PSD teachers who can help them. This result is of concern and needs to be addressed in training with professionals.

Whilst the majority of students and professionals understood and acknowledged the importance of "reflection" in PSD sessions, not all actually managed to do so during processing. Participants agreed that processing must always follow group or individual activities. Experiential Learning was perceived as most effective for processing by all (Bezzina 2016; Kraft & Sakofs, 1988). Respondents also perceived processing as supporting the progression to counselling, if and when needed.

Listening, empathy, probes and prompts were considered the most effective professional skills. It is of concern that flexibility was regarded as the least important factor by both students and professionals (Beltrán-Martín, Roca-Puig, Escrig-Tena, & Bou-Llusar, 2008; Muscat, 2006), also in a context where this is being seen as one of the most important characteristics in the labour market (e.g. Kalleberg, 2001; Lepak, Takeuchi, & Snell, 2003; Taylor, 2005).

Another concern is immediacy which requires flexibility on the part of the professionals and trust from the part of the students. In this regard, only 11 professionals referred to immediacy and students did not feel so safe to, or were aware that they could, address

immediate concerns. This is of concern as flexibility and immediacy are emphasised during ITT (Bezzina, 2016). We conclude that these need to be addressed during CPD and ITT more specifically.

Respondents perceived processing as a positive experience leading to counselling which facilitated "telling their stories" (Egan, 2018, p.77), if needed. Most PSD specialists were also aware that they were not equipped to counsel students and preferred to refer. This reflects their awareness of boundaries. This is of particular importance locally as counselling is a warranted profession and it is illegal to do any counselling unless one is a warranted counsellor (Counselling Professional Act, 2015). Participants noted that boundaries and referrals are stressed during training (Hart, 2017). More than half student-participants were either unsure or did not agree that PSD teachers helped them solve problems.

The link between PSD and counselling might not be so clear for some students and perhaps needs to be explored further and addressed better by PSD officials and PSD practitioners in the classroom. These results also require further qualitative research in order to explore reasons why students were doubtful. With regard to proceeding on to counselling, the higher rate of invalid and "*strongly disagree*" answers from the male students' cohort might reflect the idea that "boys tend to disregard the need to seek help and think they are 'macho' enough to suppress feelings, so as to portray a strong character" (Cutajar, 2009, p. 28). This implies a need for more work in helping students, particularly boys, overcome social structures, stereotypes and stigma.

Professionals felt that processing enables students to reflect, helped them integrate/assimilate skills; developed self-expression; increased self-awareness; consolidated skills and helped students get in touch with their feelings. These reasons are in line with the literature (e.g. Egan, 2012; Heron, 2002; Kolb, 1984) and support our hypothesis that processing enables students to proceed to counselling if needed. PSD specialist-respondent 11, for example, noted that processing "enables [students] to reflect on their own frame of mind, attitudes and decision they take in their everyday life," namely Egan's (2012) three-stage model of helping skills. PSD specialist-respondent 57 noted that "[processing] helps [students] reflect on their experiences and feelings and empowers them towards action", whilst PSD specialist-respondent 92 referred directly to more emotional awareness: "They get in tune with their inner self and understand better their feelings, behaviour and thoughts."

A content analysis of professional respondents' perception of small-group set-ups (12-15 students) evidences better participation, self-expression, individual attention, and safer environment as benefits to small groups. Respondents were clearly aware of the concept and mechanics of processing. For example, PSD specialist-participant 74 noted: "I believe that processing is an intimate experience and is best done with a small group in order to encourage disclosure confidentiality and a sense of comfort." PSD specialist-participant 129 commented that "having a group of 15 students makes you able to give them more attention. In addition, I would have more time to process their problems and tackle any immediacy." Counsellor Participant 1 further added that "[i]ndividuals have more time and opportunity to pass through the experiential cycle. There is also more containment and confidentiality could be better managed." It is interesting to note that the 21 professional respondents who disagreed that processing is more beneficial in groups of 12-15 where either not trained specifically in PSD or believed that processing would be beneficial in groups of 12 or less: "in groups between 8-12 students, it will be more effective" (PSD specialist-respondent 76).

In spite of the questionnaires referring to the term Emotional Literacy (Goleman, 1996) only three professionals referred to this term. This might reflect the fact that study units on Emotional Literacy were only added in ITT these last three years and the need for CPD training. Bezzina, Falzon, and Muscat (2015) discuss this extensively in their paper and note that: "PSD is a…process that occurs in the participants' lives and challenges participants to enrich their Emotional [literacy]" (p. 159). Likewise, Camilleri et al. (2012) encapsulate these results in their reflection:

The Maltese PSD model addresses EL in schools because of the methodology adopted in class, classroom formation and the use of good helping skills (e.g. empathy, disclosure, immediacy and good probing and questioning skills) employed by PSD specialists. PSD specialists are trained in 'Helping Skills' and are therefore more predisposed to offer emotional support and to deal with different emotions that come out during the lessons, as well as understand their boundaries and refer to other professionals as needed. (p. 31)

We conclude that most professionals might not be understanding the link between processing, experiential learning and emotional literacy. This finding, therefore, requires more emphasis and training during ITT and CPD training.

Research Limitations

This quantitative study offers a bird's eye view of the phenomenon in question but does not offer in-depth perceptions of the stakeholders. A qualitative study would provide enriching insights in the best interest of students' wellbeing. Further, the two questionnaires were rather long and might have induced stakeholders to respond without reflecting upon their answers. Whilst we were careful when translating the students' research tool into Maltese and also carried out back-to-back translation, one must also bear in mind that any

translation is an interpretation and may have affected the content of questions. Further, limited local research did not allow for comparison of findings.

Conclusion and Recommendations

PSD has been implemented in Maltese schools for about 30 years. Its positive effects have been repeatedly researched in the local context, but no research that linked PSD and counselling was available. In the present study, we collected evidence from the main stakeholders and concluded that participants perceived processing as a facilitative and empowering experience to proceed to counselling if needed. Participants further felt that students were referred to counselling by PSD specialists when the need arose, and professionals were very clear about roles and boundaries. Students referred to a counsellor by PSD specialists understood this need. Training in helping skills helped PSD facilitators handle processing better. With regard to techniques of processing, participants valued small groups for effective processing and hands-on activities. Concerns include: flexibility was not perceived as an important skill; immediacy was not given importance; half of the students did not feel safe to self-disclose; and the link between the PSD model and Emotional literacy is not perceived.

The preliminary survey results of this study were able to statistically confirm anecdotal experiences. It is also interesting to note that all the research references discovered in the area of processing come from the counselling field (e.g., Bond, 1986; Egan, 2012; Nelson-Jones, 1991). This may reflect how PSD in Malta evolved from counselling (Falzon & Muscat, 2009). Results concurred with our views which were proposed in the literature review and which enabled us to propose a theory based on statistical evidence: adolescents are more ready and willing to move on to counselling if they have experienced processing.

Recommendations from these data include the need for more training so that PSD teachers help students understand better pathways to counselling when needed. CPD for both counsellors and PSD Specialists needs to be ongoing, while further training and research are strongly recommended, particularly to address students' awareness of the link between processing and counselling; the link between emotional literacy and processing; and to address flexibility and immediacy in CPD training and PSD methodology. In order to consolidate prevention and maintenance programmes, transdisciplinary teamwork within and between the two professions would be beneficial to meet needs. PSD teachers also need to actually present the aims of the subject and ensure that safe environments are created, clearly explained and continuously maintained, so that students may feel safe to discuss and self-disclose. Finally, we hope that readers appreciate the effectiveness of processing and the power it has to impact the development of emotional literacy and help students proceed to counselling when they face challenging life situations.

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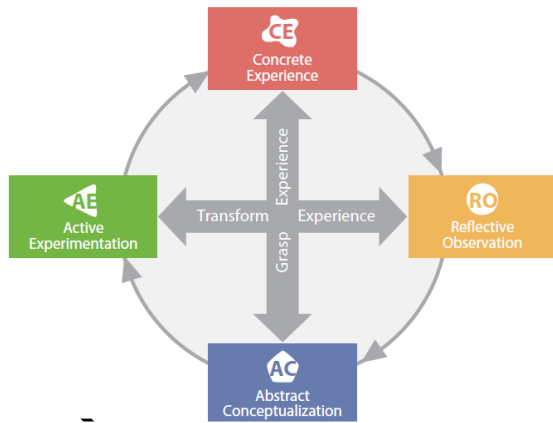*Figure 1.* The Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb & Kolb, 2007, p. 8)

Table 1

Number of Responses of the Two Questionnaires

Questionnaire	Professionals	Students
Collected	158 (69.3%)	551 (65.7%)
Not collected	70 (30.7%)	288 (34.3%)
Total	228 (100%)	839 (100%)

Note. $\chi^2 = 1.057$, $df = 1$. Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.

*p = .304

Table 2

Students' Perception of PSD, Processing and the Counselling Experience

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Invalid
PSD is a waste of time.	57 (10.3%)	410 (74.4%)	66 (12.0%)	18 (3.3%)
PSD is all about games!	68 (12.3%)	333 (60.4%)	132 (24.0%)	18 (3.3%)
A fun way of learning about life.	447 (81.1%)	23 (4.2%)	63 (11.4%)	18 (3.3%)
I can talk about whatever I want during PSD	287 (52.1%)	101 (18.3%)	144 (26.1%)	19 (3.4%)
Only time when I can talk about my problems	192 (34.8%)	184 (33.4%)	154 (27.9%)	21 (3.8%)
We can talk about real life situations.	498 (90.4%)	13 (2.4%)	24 (4.4%)	16 (2.9%)
We have a variety of activities.	413 (75.0%)	44 (8.0%)	75 (13.6%)	19 (3.4%)
Opportunity to share opinions and views	440 (79.9%)	25 (4.5%)	66 (12.0%)	20 (3.6%)
We have a say in the lesson.	404 (73.3%)	35 (6.4 %)	73 (13.2%)	39 (7.1%)
PSD is relevant to my learning/studies.	223 (40.5%)	113 (20.5%)	185 (33.6%)	30 (5.4%)
PSD is relevant to my life.	358 (65.0%)	49 (8.9%)	114 (20.7%)	30 (5.4%)
Can talk to the teacher/discuss together.	444 (80.6%)	24 (4.4%)	55 (10.0%)	28 (5.1%)
Talk about problems with one who can help.	280 (50.8%)	88 (16.0%)	158 (28.7%)	25 (4.5%)
Safe atmosphere helps me express myself.	284 (51.5%)	90 (16.3%)	149 (27.0%)	28 (5.1%)
I feel comfortable to express myself during PSD	326 (59.2%)	70 (12.7%)	133 (24.1%)	22 (4.4%)
The PSD teacher helped me solve a problem.	268 (48.6%)	100 (18.1%)	153 (27.8%)	30 (5.4%)
Teachers encouraged me to go to a counsellor.	257 (46.6%)	110 (20.0%)	150 (27.2%)	34 (6.2%)
I am aware of counselling services at school	457 (82.9%)	25 (4.5%)	48 (8.7%)	21 (3.8%)
I would go to a counsellor if I need to.	292 (53.0%)	92 (16.7%)	147 (26.7%)	20 (3.6%)
I have used Counselling services	167 (30.3%)	346 (62.8%)	16 (2.9%)	22 (4.0%)
PSD has helped me understand counselling	232 (42.1%)	118 (21.4%)	179 (32.5%)	22 (4.0%)

Note. $\chi^2 = 4476.0$, $df = 66$. Numbers in parentheses indicate row percentages.

*p < .001

Table 3

Significant Gender Differences in Students' Replies

Statements	Male (n = 233)	Female (n = 318)	Z scores	p-value
PSD is not a waste of time	150 (64.4%)	260 (81.8%)	4.620	< .001
Fun way of learning	168 (72.2%)	279 (87.7%)	4.633	< .001
We have say in the lesson	149 (63.9%)	255 (80.2%)	4.258	< .001
I can talk about whatever I want during PSD	106 (45.5%)	181 (56.9%)	2.652	.008

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate percentages of total population.

Table 4

Crosstab Displaying Professionals' Responses and Chi-Square Test Result on Processing

Statement	Disagree	Unsure	Agree
Experiential Learning is ineffective without processing	12 (8.1%)	8 (5.4%)	129 (86.6%)
Processing experience helps students to reflect	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	148 (98.6%)
Processing enables emotionally literate development	3 (2.3%)	16 (10.7%)	131 (87.3%)
Processing should be continued after learning	13 (8.2%)	32 (20.3%)	113 (71.5%)
Processing needs to be adapted to groups	0 (0.0%)	3 (02.0%)	147 (98.0%)
Students perceive the value of processing	10 (7.0%)	58 (39.0%)	80 (54.0%)
Processing empowers students	0 (0.0%)	6 (03.8%)	151 (96.2%)

Note. $\chi^2 = 777.54$, *df* =12. Numbers in parentheses indicate row percentages.
*$p < .001$

Table 5

Crosstab Displaying Students' Responses and Chi-square Test Result on Processing

Statement	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Invalid
Processing is more effective when in class we are less than 15 people.	399 (72.4%)	22 (4.0%)	94 (17.1%)	36 (6.5%)
After a group activity, we always discuss and reflect in the whole group.	395 (71.7%)	38 (6.9%)	88 (16.0%)	30 (5.4%)
We always discuss and reflect about own activities carried out in the whole group.	356 (64.6%)	53 (9.6%)	107 (19.4%)	35 (6.4%)
During processing, I really manage to reflect.	291 (52.8%)	51 (9.3%)	178 (32.3%)	31 (5.6%)
Reflecting about an activity is important.	336 (61.0%)	37 (6.7%)	140 (25.4%)	38 (6.9%)

Note. $\chi^2 = 206.74$, *df* = 18. Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.
*$p < .001$

Table 6

Table Displaying Frequency and Percentage of Skills Professionals Perceive as Most Helpful when Facilitating Processing (n=158)

Skills Helpful for Processing	Responses	% of Total Population
Listening	103	65.2 %
Empathy	85	53.8 %
Probes and prompts	64	40.5 %
Communication skills	30	19.0 %
Challenging skills	27	17.1 %

Table 7

Percentage Differences in Skills Perceived as Important by Professionals (n = 158): Pairs of responses were compared and those yielding a significant difference are presented in this table

| Description	Response 1	Description	Responses 2	Z scores	*p*-value
Listening	103 (65.2%)	Empathy	85 (53.8%)	2.063	.039
Listening	103 (65.2%)	Probes & Prompts	64 (40.5%)	4.395	< .001
Listening	103 (65.2%)	Communication Skills	30 (19.0%)	8.318	< .001
Listening	103 (65.2%)	Challenging Skills	27 (17.1%)	9.576	< .001
Empathy	85 (53.8%)	Probes & Prompts	64 (40.5%)	2.367	.018
Empathy	85 (53.8%)	Communication Skills	30 (19.0%)	6.431	< .001
Empathy	85 (53.8%)	Challenging Skills	27 (17.1%)	8.821	< .001
Probes & prompts	64 (40.5%)	Communication Skills	30 (19.0%)	4.184	< .001
Probes & prompts	64 (40.5%)	Challenging Skills	27 (17.1%)	4.597	< .001
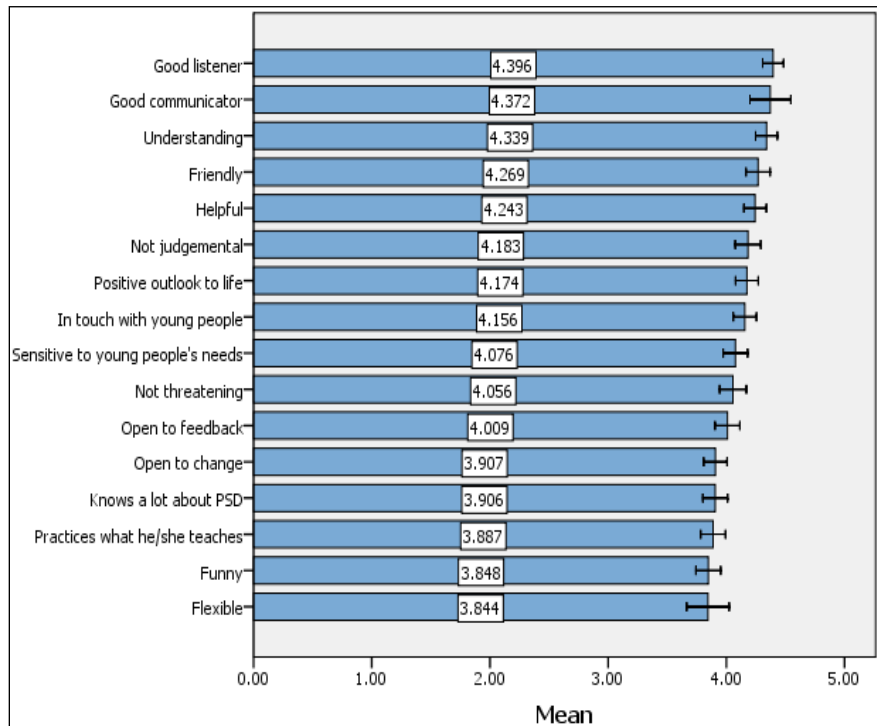
Figure 2. Likert Scale Mean Results: Students' Perceptions of PSD Ideal Teachers

Table 8

Crosstab Displaying Frequencies of Responses and Chi-square Test Result on Professionals' Perceptions on Processing and Counselling.

Statement	Disagree	Unsure	Agree
Students experiencing processing find it easier to proceed to counselling	0 (0.0%)	28 (18.7%)	122 (81.3%)
Students experiencing processing are more likely to choose to go to counselling	13 (8.7%)	53 (35.3%)	84 (56.0%)
The PSD processing experience facilitates "telling the story" in counselling	0 (0.0%)	33 (22.4%)	114 (77.6%)
Students are referred to counselling by the PSD specialist when the need arises	2 (1.3%)	7 (4.7%)	140 (94.0%)
PSD specialists try to address students' difficulties themselves instead of referring to counselling	72 (50.3%)	34 (23.8%)	37 (25.9%)
Students referred to Counselling by PSD specialists understand the need to for this	6 (4.1%)	40 (27.8%)	98 (68.1%)
Training in Helping skills helps PSD facilitators handle processing better	2 (1.4%)	3 (2.0%)	141 (96.6%)

Note. $\chi^2 = 452.95$, $df = 12$. Numbers in parentheses indicate row percentages.
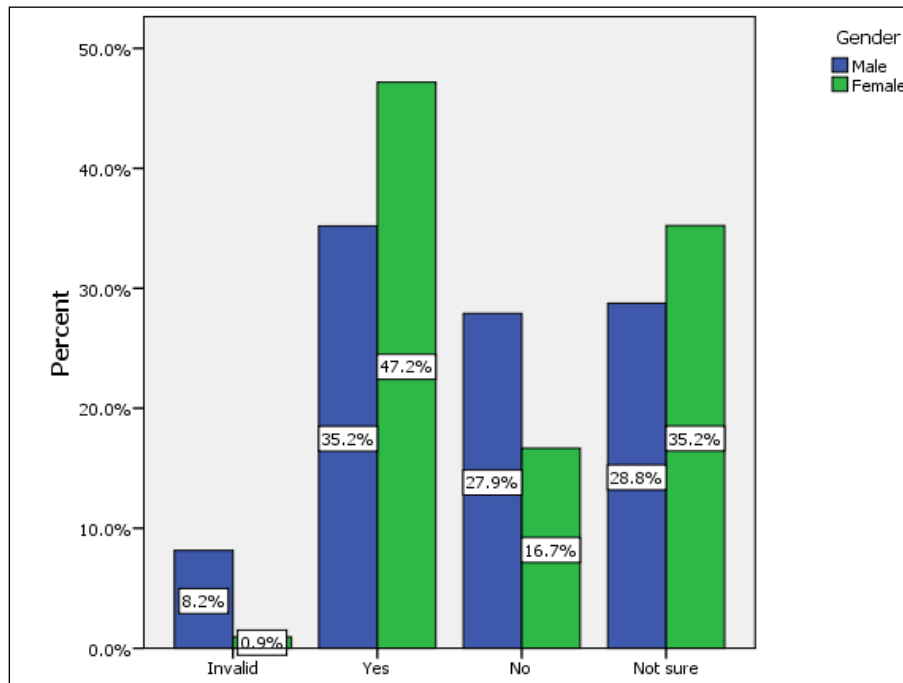
*$*p < .001$

Figure 3. Students' Perception: "PSD Lessons Helps Me to Go for Counselling if I Need it."

Table 9

Crosstab Displaying Frequencies of Responses and Chi-square Test Result on Professionals' Reasons for Relevance of Processing

Description	PSD Teachers (n = 139)	Counsellors (n = 19)
Enables students to reflect	78 (56.1%)	7 (36.8%)
Integration/Assimilation of Skills	32 (23.0%)	5 (26.3%)
Self-expression	28 (20.1%)	1 (05.3%)
Increase self-awareness	27 (19.4%)	4 (21.1%)
Consolidation of Skills	20 (14.4%)	2 (10.5%)
In touch with feelings	13 (09.4 %)	1 (05.3%)

Note. χ^2 = 2.654, *df* = 5. Numbers in parentheses indicate percentages of column's total population.
*p = .753

Table 10

Processing and Group Size - Listening to the Professionals (n = 158)

Statement	Disagree	Unsure	Agree
Processing is more effective in groups of 12 to 15	21 (14.3%)	10 (6.8%)	116 (78.9%)
PSD generates more discussion in groups larger than 15	129 (87.2%)	11 (7.4%)	8 (5.4%)

Note. χ^2 = 38.49, *df* = 2. Numbers in parentheses indicate row percentages.
*p < .001

Table 11

Crosstab Displaying Percentage of Professionals' Reasons for Smaller Groups in PSD Sessions

Description	PSD Teachers (n = 139)	Counsellors (n =19)
Better Participation	42 (38.9%)	4 (44.4%)
Individual Attention	26 (24.1%)	2 (22.2%)
Safer environment	21 (19.4%)	1 (11.1%)
Self-expression	19 (17.6%)	2 (22.2%)

Note. χ^2 = 0.483, *df* =3. Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.
*p = .923