6th World conference on Psychology Counseling and Guidance, 14 - 16 May 2015

Do courses taken from psychological counseling departments affect the trainee counselor’s self-efficacy?

F. Sulen SAHIN KIRALP*

*Girne American University, Kyrenia, North Cyprus

Abstract

The aim of the study is determine the level of psychological counseling self-efficacy of 1st and 4th year psychological counseling undergraduate students. In this study descriptive research method was used. In order to gathering data Psychological consultancy Self-Efficacy Scale which is developed by Lent et al. was used. According to findings it can be said that both 1st and 4th year consultant candidates have “some” confidence in their psychological consultancy self-efficacy levels and statistically there is no significant differences between 1st year and 4th year students self-efficacy levels. It can be suggest that they need more practice during their education.

Keywords: self-efficacy; counseling self-efficacy; counseling students

1. Introduction

People may need psychological support in different periods in their lives. The psychological support to be provided should be effective and sufficient in terms of the mental health of the individual. And effectiveness and efficiency of a psychological support service depends on numerous variables. Among these variables are the field knowledge (theoretic knowledge and consultancy skills), personality traits, ways of coping with problems and self-perception. Even though a psychological consultant may be competent and equipped in these areas his/her level of self-confidence regarding his/her own consultancy skills might influence the consultancy process.

In general, self-efficacy is individuals own perception as to how much he/she would be able to overcome any
obstacles he/she might face in the future (Senemoglu, 2013) and in this regard, it might influence the individual’s choice of activities, his/her level of patience in the face of difficulties, the level of endeavors and performance (Askar and Umay, 2001). As a result the individual’s own perception about his/her skills and competencies would play an important role in his/her efficacy in responsibilities he/she will assume.

Self-efficacy, which is among the main concepts put forward by Social Cognitive Theory, has a special significance in the area of psychological counseling. Larson et al (1992) defines psychological counselor’s self-efficacy as the individual’s self-perception regarding his/her own skills in terms of providing effective psychological consultancy support to his/her consultants in the near future. Moving from this definition, it may be argued that a low level of self-confidence in terms of self-efficacy might influence the effectiveness of the consultancy process negatively. In psychological consultancy, field knowledge is important for consultant’s self-confidence however it is not sufficient alone. As indicated by Altuncekic, Yaman and Koray (2005), for self-confidence to develop, the individual should see his/her knowledge sufficient for the work he/she will do and should be able to successfully resolve problems he/she faces by using this knowledge. In light of this information, it is important for research and work aimed at improving consultant’s self-confidence in him/herself and in his/her own level of knowledge to be carried out at the beginning of his/her career.

The concept of self-efficacy is frequently studied in the form of teacher’s self-efficacy especially in the area of education. Thus, there are numerous studies carried out on candidate teachers (e.g. Uysal and Koşmen, 2013; Yenice, 2012). On the other hand, it is seen that there are studies aimed at determining the level of self-efficacy of the consultants during their consultancy education even though such studies are few (Oztürk, 2014; Pamukçu and Demir, 2013; Larson and et all, 1992). Despite varying outcomes of these studies, it is believed that a research on candidate consultants who haven’t completed their education yet would be beneficial both in terms of improving the education given to them and reorganizing such education when necessary. Improving the candidate consultant’s self-perception regarding his/her own level of self-efficacy during the education process would have a positive effect on how the consultant practices his/her career in the future. In other words, when a consultant firmly believes that he/she may be of any help to any consultant, he/she would be more ambitious and patient while practicing his/her career. Because his/her positive perception of his/her own consultancy skills would motive him/her more to provide more effective consultancy services.

The purpose of the study is determine the level of psychological counseling self-efficacy of 1st and 4th year psychological counseling undergraduate students currently studying at the department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance (PCG) of Girne American University. In line with this main purpose, the study aimed to find answers to the below mentioned questions.

1) What is the level of self-efficacy of 1st and 4th year students studying at the department of PCG?
2) Is there a statistically significant difference among the self-perceptions of the 1st and 4th year students studying at the department of PCG regarding their own levels of self-efficacy?

2. Method

In this study, which aimed to determine the self-perceptions of the candidate consultants regarding their level of self-efficacy in terms of psychological consultancy, survey method, which is a descriptive research method, was used. Survey method comprises survey arrangements administered to a study population with multiple members or a sample to be taken from that population, with the goal of reaching a general conclusion about the study population (Karasar, 2014).

2.1. Study Population

The study population comprises 265 1st and 4th year psychological consultant candidates enrolled at the Department of Psychological Consultancy and Guidance (PCG) of Girne American University (GAU) located in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the academic year of 2013-2014. The reason for choosing 1st and 4th year students as the study population was that the 4th grade students had already taken the basic courses of the field such as principles and techniques of consultancy, group consultancy, individual consultancy hands-on training, and theories of consultancy. The authors believed that these courses would cause the self-perception of 4th year consultant candidates regarding self-efficacy to be different than that of 1st year students. The first year students
were only receiving the basic courses of the program during the time of the study. Taking into account the fact that it was possible to reach the whole study population and that the study method used was survey method; no sampling was made in order to obtain more reliable data.

The response rate of the surveys administered to psychological consultant candidates using the complete count method was 86% (265 people). 51.7% of the psychological consultant candidates in the study were 1st year students (137 respondents) and 48.3% were 4th year students (128 respondents). In addition, 49.4% of the psychological consultant candidates that took part in the survey were male while 50.6% of them were female.

2.2 Data Collection Tool

Data collection tool used in the study was the Psychological consultancy Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Lent et al. (2003). The scale was adapted to Turkish and validated by Pamukcu and Demir (2013). Comprising a total of 41 items, the scale is scored based on 3 factors. The first factor is support skills self-efficacy, the second one is session management self-efficacy and the third one is the self-efficacy with regard to the challenges faced during the consultancy process. High scores obtained from the scale indicate a high level of self-confidence with regard to overcoming problems that the psychological consultant candidate may face in his/her career. Internal consistency of the original scale was calculated as .97. It was seen that the internal consistency coefficient in sub-dimensions ranged from .79 to .94. As part of the Turkish adaptation process of the scale, Pamukcu and Demir (2013) calculated the internal consistency coefficient of the scale as .98. And the internal consistency coefficient of the sub-dimensions was found to vary between .92 and .95.

2.3 Data Analysis

As part of data analysis, frequency, average and standard deviation related to self-efficacy of the consultant candidates were calculated. For the statistics related to the sub purpose of the survey, t-test was administered to determine whether or not the seniority at the college made a difference with regard to self-efficacy.

Data obtained via administration of the scale were analyzed using SPSS 20.0 software package (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

3. Findings

The first sub-problem of the study was constructed as “What is the level of self-efficacy of 1st and 4th year students studying at the department of PCG?” Findings regarding the self-efficacy of the 1st and 4th year PCG students are given in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>ss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping Skill SE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.year</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>5.8920</td>
<td>1.24058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. year</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>5.7302</td>
<td>1.34771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session Management SE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.year</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>6.1226</td>
<td>1.35852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 year</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>5.8039</td>
<td>1.47805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling Challenges SE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.year</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>5.3613</td>
<td>1.37368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 year</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>5.2124</td>
<td>1.34064</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen from Table 1, the average score that 1st year PCG students obtained from the support skills self-efficacy sub-scale is 5.89 while the average score they obtained from the session management self-efficacy sub-scale was 6.12 and the average score they obtained from the sub-scale for self-efficacy regarding dealing with challenges was 5.36. The average score that 4th year PCG students obtained from the support skills self-efficacy
sub-scale is 5.73 while the average score they obtained from the session management self-efficacy sub-scale was 5.80 and the average score they obtained from the sub-scale for self-efficacy regarding dealing with challenges was 5.21. Looking at the average scores of the students for each of the three dimensions, it is seen that 1st year students have a slightly greater average than the 4th year students. Considering the fact that the highest average that can be obtained from the scale is 9, one can argue that both 1st and 4th year consultant candidates have “some” confidence in their psychological consultancy self-efficacy levels.

The second sub-problem of the study was constructed as “Is there a statistically significant difference among the self-perceptions of the 1st and 4th year students studying at the department of PCG regarding their own levels of self-efficacy?” Whether or not the level of self-confidence of PCG students regarding their own levels of self-efficacy varied based on seniority, was analyzed using t-test and the results are given in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>groups</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping Skill SE</td>
<td>1.year</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>5.8920</td>
<td>1.24058</td>
<td>.10599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. year</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>5.7302</td>
<td>1.34771</td>
<td>.11912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session Management</td>
<td>1.year</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>6.1226</td>
<td>1.35852</td>
<td>.11607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. year</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>5.8039</td>
<td>1.47805</td>
<td>.13064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>1.year</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>5.3613</td>
<td>1.37368</td>
<td>.11736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. year</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>5.2124</td>
<td>1.34064</td>
<td>.11850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen from Table 2, based on the t-test results for the sub-dimensions of the Psychological Consultancy self-efficacy scale for the students at PCG department, seniority does not result in a statistically significant variation [Helping skill $t_{(263)} = 1.02, p > .05$; Session management $t_{(263)} = 1.83, p > .05$; Counselling Challenges $t_{(263)} = .89, p > .05$]. In other words, self-confidence level regarding support skills self-efficacy, self-confidence level regarding session management self-efficacy and self-confidence level regarding self-efficacy related to overcoming challenges do not vary in a statistically significant manner based on the variable of seniority.

4. Conclusion

Looking at the definitions of self-efficacy in the literature, it can be argued that there might be positive correlation between level of self-confidence regarding self-efficacy and accomplishing a given task. It can be argued that the higher the consultant’s level of self-confidence regarding his/her own self-efficacy, the more patient, more ambitious and prone to successfully accomplishing his/her task, the consultant would be in the face of challenges. The average score obtained by the psychological consultant candidates from the scale was 5.65. When the average score that can be obtained from the score is taken into account (I have no self-confidence, I have some self-confidence and I have complete self-confidence), this average corresponds to “I have some self-confidence” in the scale. A similar finding was obtained in the study conducted by Ozturk as well. In this study, it was found that seniority didn’t result in a variation in terms of the consultant’s self-confidence levels regarding their self-efficacy levels in terms of support skills, session management and overcoming challenges in the consultancy process. In this study, because the college seniority varied in terms of the courses taken by the consultant candidates, it was analyzed as a variable. Accordingly, one can argue that the courses taken do not affect the level of self-efficacy. While there are studies supporting the findings of this study, there are also other studies with different findings. For example, Uysal and Kosemen (2013), in their study with candidate teachers, demonstrated that seniority didn’t result in a statistically significant variation. In addition, similar to findings of this study, it was found that the average scores of the 1st year students were higher than those of 4th year students. In literature, there are studies with similar findings. For example, in their study, Akbulut (2006), Cerit (2010) and Yenice (2012) showed that college seniority didn’t result in a statistically significant variation. On the other hand, Ozturk (2014) found that for each of the 3 dimensions of psychological consultant self-sufficiency, level of self-confidence of 4th year students regarding their levels of self-efficacy varied in a statistically significant manner, from that of the 1st year students.
According to the findings of this study, the courses taught in the PCG department are not sufficient alone, to improve the levels of self-confidence of consultant candidates regarding their self-efficacy levels. Taking into account the fact that students don’t have complete self-confidence regarding the consultancy process, it is clear that the reason behind this should be researched.

The fact that the first year students had high averages even though they didn’t take their field courses yet, might be because these students haven’t yet faced with all requirements of this field. And considering the fact that the fourth year students haven’t yet taken the institutional experience course, one may conclude that they don’t have a complete idea as to how effectively they would apply their skills to their jobs. It is believed that it would be beneficial if the future studies are planned as qualitative studies aimed at researching the reason behind the above-mentioned fact. The fact that the candidates do not have sufficient opportunity to practice during their education, might be seen as an obstacle that decreases their self-confidence. There are studies that indicate that higher experience in the field results in higher level of self-confidence regarding one’s own self-efficacy (Gunduz and Celikkaleli, 2009). Thus, students should be given more opportunities to practice in order for them to have higher confidence in themselves and their consultancy skills. The most effective way of doing this is by allowing them to be more active in their learning environments. Improving the self-confidence of the candidates regarding their self-efficacy during the early phases of education is crucial in terms of ensuring that they perform their jobs more effectively.

References


Pamukcu, B. & Demir, A. (2013). The validity and reliability study of the Turkish version of Counselling Self efficacy Scale. Türk Psikolojik Danisma ve Rehberlik Dergisi. 5(40), 212-221.

