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Counselling: What and How

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Abstract

This chapter describes the principles concept of counselling. It includes definition, characteristics, purposes, and counselling theories. Apart from that counselling process, counselling skills and the features of professional counsellor were also discussed. Generally, a counselling service is important in order to make a human being well-functioning. However, it is not an easy task because to make a meaningful and effective session, it must consider basic principles of a counselling service. Counselling theories are crucial to guide counsellor in a counselling session. Thus, the author's effort to address a pool of counselling theories is significant to help counsellors especially for a junior one. While, counselling process and counselling skills will be a guide to implement the best practises of professional counselling service. Then, a sub-topic on the features of a professional counsellor is relevant in order to make it a model on how to be the best counsellor.

Keywords: concept of counselling, theories of counselling, counselling skills, counselling process

1. Introduction

Historically, counselling concept emerged during World War II when militaries were highly afflicted with emotional damages [1]. Nowadays, counselling service has become significant as more people suffer from anguishes at an the alarming stage whereby stress, depression and anxiety issues are among the psychological problems [2–7] which are rising due to the rapid development that brings impact on the physical and mental well-being of the people [8].

1.1 Method

This chapter discusses the counselling service in general for the general readers including students, public and anyone who is interested in the counselling discipline. It consisted of seven subtopics which are (i) definition of counselling concept by highlighting some scholars' ideas from such field, (ii) characteristics of counselling, (iii) counselling theories by addressing 10 popular theories of the counselling profession. In this regard, a comparing among its philosophies and goals of the therapy have been done, (iv) purpose of the counselling theories by discussing the benefits and the role of these theories in counselling process, (v) counselling process by emphasising the phases of a counselling session, (vi) counselling skills. This sub-section focuses on seven counselling skills which are always being used in a counselling session. Before concluding the discussion, sub-topic of professional counsellor has also been discussed. This last sub-topic aim is to share with the readers how to be a good counsellor or what should a professional counsellor have. Unlike others discussion, the items (v) and (vi) were discussed based on two given

scenarios. The first scenario is in an education setting and the second one is at the workplace. Both scenarios will act as a guide in exploring the topic of counselling especially in highlighting the process of counselling itself.

1.2 Scenario 1

Alex is a final year student in a higher education institution who is pursuing his study in health sciences. As a final year student, he was enveloped with numerous issues that affected him emotionally and psychically. It includes financial, personal and family matters. He tried to reduce the issues himself but failed. As a result, he suffered from depression, bad mood and currently it is affecting his academic performance. Recommended by his friends, he met a counsellor in student affair division.

1.3 Scenario 2

Sarah, a junior employee in a private company is facing many pain points in performing her job. Initially, she was able to conduct these difficulties well. However, stress issues have recently become more serious. It includes poor communication with her colleagues, bad mood, and ultimately, her job performance deteriorated. Finally, she was included as one of the workers who will be terminated. However, she was referred to the counsellor for a counselling session.

2. Definition of counselling

The efforts to define counselling concept have been addressed in numerous ways. The variety ensues due to the philosophy of the scholar and the angle of the definition highlighted. Some of them focus on how such session is conducted or its process and others emphasise the relationship between counsellors and counselees. Both angles were seemed as popular points to describe counselling terminology. For instance, The British Association for *Counselling* [9] *had stated that the* 'counselling' term covers work with individuals and with relationships which may be developmental, crisis support, psychotherapeutic, guiding or problem-solving. The task of counselling is to give the 'client' an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more satisfyingly and resourcefully.

Counselling denotes a professional relationship between a trained counsellor and a client. This relationship is usually person-to-person, although it may sometimes involve more than two people. It is designed to help clients to understand and clarify their views of their life space, and to learn to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and through the resolution of problems of an emotional or interpersonal nature [10].

Counselling is also considered as a principled relationship characterised by the application of one or more psychological theories and a recognised set of communication skills, modified by experience, intuition and other interpersonal factors, to clients' intimate concerns, problems or aspirations. Its predominant ethos is one of facilitation rather than of advice-giving or coercion. It may be of very brief or long duration, take place in an organisational or private practice setting and may or may not overlap with practical, medical and other matters of personal welfare. It is both a distinctive activity undertaken by people agreeing to occupy the roles of counsellor and client … and an emerging profession … It is a service sought by people in distress or in some degree of confusion who wish to discuss and resolve these in a relationship which is more disciplined and confidential than friendship, and perhaps less stigmatising than helping relationships offered in traditional medical or psychiatric settings [11].

It is an interaction process that facilitates a meaningful understanding of self and environment and results in the establishment and/or clarification of goals and values for the future [12].

Counselling is a dynamic and purposeful relationship between two people, who approach a mutually defined problem with mutual consideration of each other to the end that the troubled one or less mature is aided to a self-determined resolution of his problem [13]. It is a definitely structured permissive relationship which allows the client to gain an understanding of himself to a degree which enables him to take new positive steps in the light of his new orientation [14].

In another view, counselling is regarded as a person helping another to clarify his or her life condition and to adopt further lines of action [15]. Counselling is a professional process which occurs when a counsellor and a client meet voluntarily to enhance the psychological well-being of a client. It takes place when a counselee seeks for counselling and the counsellor, after a careful analysis, applies proper techniques in the counselling process. Consequently, some positive outcomes can be achieved [1]. Based on the definitions above counselling can be concluded as an interaction process tailored by a trained counsellor with a client or a group of clients utilising systematically psychological principles with its ultimate purpose is to support, instil and maintain human's well-being.

3. Characteristics of counselling

In view of the different definitions, counselling can be delineated into three domains which are counsellor, client and professional relationships. Counsellor— here are some characteristics which relates to a professional counsellor; (i) a counsellor must be a trained one. In this regard having a minimum qualification of a counsellor is compulsory, (ii) counsellor's professionalism must be recognised by a professional body (e.g., professional counsellor body which is responsible to award such qualification), (iii) counsellor's competencies (e.g., clinical competence) must be frequently monitored by such professional body, (iv) counsellor is a facilitator, not an adviser during the counselling session, (v) counsellor should to be aware his/ her professional ability to refer his/her client to other professionals should the cases referred are beyond his/her expertise, and (vi) counsellors should be aware of the existence of dual relationships or conflict of interest in counselling sessions.

Client—(i) clients must volunteer to see their counsellor. However, in certain cases, the client can be referred to the counsellor (e.g., an employee referred by his/ her employer), (ii) clients must be normal persons, (iii) it is clients' right to withdraw from the sessions without any penalty.

Professional relationship—(i) counselling sessions must be held in a comfortable or conducive environment, (ii) it occur based on the same objective, (iii) counsellor and client must show a mutual respect to each other, (iv) a counselling relationship occurred in a structured or systematic plan, (iv) a counselling session is conducted based on one or more counselling theories that suit with the clients' issues(s), (v) the main objective of the counselling relationships is to empower clients' behaviour as well as their physical and emotional health. And (vi) counselling session is conducted professionally and ethically based on psychology principles.

Objective counselling: Generally, a counselling interaction is purposely to accomplish the following targets; (i) to help clients understand their problem systematically so that they are able to put themselves correctly in the context of the faced issues, (ii) to physically and mentally empower clients in order to make them stronger in tackling their issues, (iii) to prove meaningful information regarding

the issues faced by the clients, and (iv) to facilitate clients in solving the raised problems independently.

The benefit of counselling: Studies on the effects of a counselling session have shown that counselling has contributed to a positive impact in many features. In general, these impacts can be categorised into four domains which are psychical, emotion and behaviour as well. In detail, the impacts of a counselling session are as follows; feel healthier after joining the session, feel more comfortable, able to communicate with others in a proper way with your significant persons such as family members, spouses, friends and feel more useful at home and workplace. Apart from that, counselling sessions promote better psychological well beings such as it helps to reduce stress, anxiety, fear, worries, and sadness. Further, it is impacting the way one behaves in certain situation through a behaviour modification technique. These advantages of counselling session have contributed to a well functional human being.

4. Counselling theories

Counselling theory is regarded as a conceptual framework to guide counsellors in running a professional counselling session. It is used in a counselling session in accordance with the raised issues by the clients. Currently, there are many kinds of counselling theories offered. In this respect, a professional should understand the best theory for the problem.

There are many types of counselling and therapy theories that are currently popular in the counselling service. However, this assignment focuses on 10 familiar theories. These theories are psychoanalytic, Adlerian, existential, person centred,

No	Theory	The basic philosophies	Goals of the therapy
1	Psychoanalytic	Psychoanalytic scholar believes that the development of human beings is influenced by two factors: psychic energy and early experiences. A behaviour is triggered by insensible motives and struggles. Irrational forces are strong; the person is driven by sexual and aggressive impulses. Early childhood development is of critical importance because later personality problems have their roots in repressed childhood conflicts	To enhance clients' awareness through a reconstructing process of personality structure
2	Adlerian	Human is motivated by social interest by striving towards goals and by dealing with the tasks of life. Emphasis is on the individual's positive capacities to live in society cooperatively. People have the capacity to interpret, influence and create events	To encounter life principles and life goals of clients through motivation so they can grow a new life system. To help client's set-up self-confident and self-belonging
3	Existential	Freedom of choice in life is the central focus of this theory. Human's fate is a result of their choice	To make client aware and feel that they have freedom in life, and is responsible for possible events in life. Clients are also requested to recognise sources that disturb their choices

No	Theory	The basic philosophies	Goals of the therapy
4	Person cantered	Assumes that human is a positive objective. They are able to function well if given a chance. Human needs a positive environment to enable them to be more productive	To prepare client with conducive environment so that they are able to move forward quickly
5	Gestalt	Humans struggle for the comprehensiveness of feeling and thinking and both factors will influence their behaviour. Here and now are fundamental concepts to make choices in life	To support clients in accruing consciousness in decision making via internal motivation
6	Reality	Humans are developed by social features. A high quality of relationships is an important component in humans' life. Psychological problems exist because of failure in relationships	To help clients to accept the reality of the world and be ready to full-fill their desire in life. To ensure clients can communicate well with people around them
7	Behaviour	Behaviour is a result of the learning process. Humans and environment are interconnected with each other's	To assist clients to identify negative behaviour and try converting it to positive behaviour. The influenced factors of negative behaviour are also identified in order to reduce them
8	Cognitive behaviour	Believe that cognitive component will influence human behaviour. The ways of thinking is a main factor in determining life behaviour. Therapy will focus on learning process	To teach clients to challenge their wrong belief system so that they can become more rational
9	Feminist	Assume others theories based on gender discrimination. Thus, this group will fight for a similarity in many aspects	To transform clients and it society. To assist clients, identify policy that was made based in gender issues
10	Family system therapies	Family unit is important in a holistic life system. Treatment can be done based on family as will be a base to understanding individual behaviour	Focus on building a good relationships among family members so that the family able to well function. Apart from that the exists problems in family are also solved [17]

Table 1.
The counselling theories, its philosophies and goals.

gestalt, reality, behaviour, cognitive behaviour, feminist and family system thera-pies [16]. We have summarise them in **Table 1**.

5. Purposes of counselling theories and therapies

In general, a counselling theory or therapy will be a mechanism to (i) ensure that a referred case is suitable to be discussed, (ii) seek a meaningful objective of counselling session, (iii) guide counselling sessions, create objectives and the move

to achieve such goals, (iv) apply the best approach to tackle the issue, (v) determine the best intervention, and (vi) evaluate the success of the counselling session.

6. Counselling process

As a professional profession, a counselling session occurs in a systematic process. It starts with an introduction and ends with a conclusion. This process occurs in the duration of 35–45 min. However, for some cases it will take 1 h per session. In term of the number of sessions, it depends on the cases themselves; it might be one, two or sometimes 10 sessions. Importantly, it is not an advice meeting between a counsellor and client, yet a mutual relationship between them, where integrity, honesty and trust become a fundamental variable in the relationships. Here are the steps of a counselling session that a counsellor must consider; (1) rapport building, (2) identify issue (3) issue exploration, (4) discuss alternatives, (5) determination of measure to be taken, (6) decision making, and (7) termination.

6.1 Rapport building

An effective interaction starts with a good perception on how the session will be conducted. Thus, ensuring the session is professionally conducted is crucial to capture the clients' trust. In the context of the counselling session, building a good rapport between both parties (counsellor and client) is a primary matter. Ideally, rapport building can be defined as an early effort taken by counsellors to ensure the session occurs properly. In others word, an effective session can be achieved only through an effective rapport building. The aim of addressing a respectable rapport is to advance quality off session output, seek mutual trust and respect, and stimulate a conducive an environment for a safe session. A good rapport is characterised by both verbal and non-verbal signals. The task of this part is to gain client's trust and respect to counsellor. Counsellor should physically show interest to his/her client through, for instance, eye contact, posture and an ideal distance between client and counsellor. This stage, usually takes place in the first 3–5 min.

6.2 Identify issue

The second step started with giving the client a chance to express his/her problems or issues freely. Sometimes, at this stage a client indirectly shares numerous issues. For instance, a client (refer to scenario 1) highlights three simultaneously issues which are financial, personal and family matters. As such counsellor may ask client regarding the priority of the cases, for instance, "*based on your explanation, I conclude that you are facing three issues to be discussed which are financial, personal and family matters", is this correct?*. After receiving client's feedback, counsellor can ask the next question which is "Which *one do you prefer to discuss first*? After receiving client's respond, counsellor should be ready for the exploration step.

6.3 Issue exploration

Exploration issue is regarded as a detail client's explanation regarding the identified issue in the second stage. If the issue is more than one, the counsellor professionally should be able to promote client to explain all the issues precisely. The exploration process should be based on the three aspects, which are cognitive, physical and effective domains. The clients need to be asked how the raised issue

is effecting/effects such domains. To grasp this phase, acquiring skill of managing open-ended questions is recommended. For example (refer to scenario 1). *Could you tell me how the issue that we have discussed contributed to stress?*

6.4 Discuss alternative

The objective of the present stage is to address a pool of concrete measures to reduce the identified problems. At this stage client, together with the counsellor need to focus on the significant measures that possibly utilised to tackle the problems. It can be one or more actions that suit with the problems. For example, for scenario one, the measures taken should be the means to tackle the financial, personal and family issues. It probably includes; seeking a part time job. Counsellor may conclude "based *on your statements, I see that/realized that you have actually, highlighted a few steps in order to overcome your problems, these measures are seeking a part time job…",* or *"Now, you have three options to overcome financial issues. Let's discuss the measures one by one …".*

6.5 Determination of measure

Usually, many alternatives will be discussed. The different alternatives should be listed down accordingly. The list enables the clients the best choice upon an extensive discussion. In this regard, the discussion should focus on the advantages and weaknesses of the selected measures; in this context, seeking a part time job. It is important for the counsellor to ensure the points discussed are initiated by the client's perspective instead of the counsellor.

6.6 Decision making

Upon completing a huge discussion on the best step that clients should choose, a final decision must be made. This decision should be made based on strong evidences that are agreed by the clients. In this context, all information on seeking a part time job to solve the financial problem must be provided. It includes how, when and what kind of business that such client should get involve in.

6.7 Termination

In a normal session, a counselling session is completed in the duration of 45 min. However, it can extend to 1 h. At the termination stage client will be informed by counsellor that the session has ended and simultaneously counsellor can suggest the next meeting. Not all counselling session is terminated after one session it depends on the issue that has been discussed. If the client feel that he/she needs a further session, an appointment can be made. It is possible that the session is continued with other counsellor, it usually ensues due to clients' demand.

7. Counselling skills

Some counsellor has shown a good performance during the training session but not in their practical session. One of the important skills for counsellor is knowledge applied in conducting a counselling process. Scholars in such field have addressed the skills as follows; (i) listening skill, (ii) reflection skill, (iii) question skill, (iv) conclusion skill, (v) paraphrase skill (vi) clarification skill, (vii) interpretation skill [18].

7.1 Listening skill

The listening skill is represented in two features; attending and observing. Attending positive posture to show that someone is focusing his/her attention to his/her partner. In doing this, client feels that he/she is given full attention by the counsellor. Observing seriously try to understand the verbal and non-verbal information expressed by that client. According Ivey & Ivey non-verbal language includes body language, facial expression and appearances and grooming [18].

7.2 Reflection skill

Reflection can be expressed in two ways; content and feelings: content is referred to the issues that the client addresses in the session. Meanwhile, feeling is regarded as a kind of feeling that the client shares. It includes fear, anger, anxiety or sadness. Both of the reflections can be done by replying back to the client using a suitable word or message to show that the counsellor is giving undivided attention to the clients. For instance, counsellor may respond "it looks like you feel…" or "you seem to be scared at that time…".

7.3 Question skill

The approach of questioning will influence the effectiveness of a communication. The same thing transpires in the counselling session. The main purpose of questioning is to explore an issue deeper to enable counsellor to receive comprehensive information regarding the issues discussed. In this context, the counsellors' abilities to address open-ended questions are very crucial. The counsellors are discouraged to use closed-ended questions during the exploration session because that kind of question will limit the clients' explanation. Thus, effectiveness of the exploration session fails. Apart from that, counsellors must avoid asking many questions at one time. The best open-ended question should start with for examples, the terminologies of *"How"*, *"In your opinion "*, and *"could you tell me…."*. These kinds of questions will allow clients to talk freely rather than a closed-ended question.

7.4 Empathy skill

This skill refers to a counsellor's capability to perceive client's feeling as if his/her experience is exactly the same as his/her client. This skill is important for counsellor to show his honesty to the clients that his/her counsellor do understand what the client feels. Thus, counselling relationships will be at maximum benefit to both parties. Empathy can be shown via verbal and non-verbal language. The three forms of empathy that psychologists have are defined as: Cognitive, Emotional, and Compassionate. Empathy can be shown through listening, offering physical attention and speaking without judgmental.

7.5 Paraphrase skill

Paraphrasing can be defined as a repetition action by a counsellor using his/her own word after he/she understands the issues or client's feeling. This skill is important to show clients that his/her counsellor has thoroughly understood the problems that the clients prefer to discuss. By using paraphrasing skill, the counsellors will be provided with better information by their clients. For example, based on the scenario 1, counsellor tries to explore the reason his/her client is enveloped in financial issue.

The counsellor may say "you seem to indicate that your lecturer is not going to pay more attention at you" or "you seem to that your roommate is not going to take care of you".

7.6 Clarification skill

The clarification skill objective is to ensure a counsellor receives an accurate information or data as provided by his/her clients. This will help the counsellor from sharing the wrong feedback on one issue in the counselling session. For instance, a counsellor may request client by saying "*Could you tell me what is the meaning of personal issue*". This skill needs the application of open-ended question skill as mentioned above.

7.7 Interpretation skill

Interpretation skills are referred to a counsellor's statements that are purposively expressed in order to interpret an issue raised by clients. The objective of the interpretation is to provide clients with a new perspective of an issue so that the clients have other opinions on the same issues.

7.8 Confrontation skill

This skill is also important to a counsellor yet, it can be a big challenge for a junior counsellor. However, this skill can be garner/acquire through experiences. It is important to remind that this skill can be used only after few minutes of a session occurs. Confrontation skill is not suitable to practice as early as the session started. For example a counsellor can say "based *on your explanation, I concluded that you are in a position of dislike towards your brother, however at the time you are saying it, your expression were contracted where, you smile and in a cool environment*".

8. Professional counsellor

Generally, there are two components that are used to assess the professionalism of a career; personal and professional attribute.

8.1 Personal attribute

Personal features are regarded as a set of personal characteristics that a counsellor should have. It is closely related with the internal characteristic of a counsellor.

8.1.1 High interest in helping profession

This is a very important component; if you do something because of internal motivation, the job will be better and more effective. Being a counsellor means you are willing to work in humanistic areas. You like helping others, and sometime you feel that others are important than yourself [16].

8.1.2 Show high confident level

Stimulating high confident in a counselling session is important. This spirit can be fostered via meaningful experiences. Experience will educate you in having high confident level. One of the ways to realise is through continual clinical supervision. Apart from that, attending a continual professional development programme also contributes to self-confident.

8.1.3 Positive attitude

As a counsellor you will see different various clients with different range of attitude. It includes cancelling appointment without a single word. Sometime clients have a negative perception towards the counsellor. All these are potential issue that a counsellor should be concern with. In this situation, practising a positive thinking among counsellor is necessary. In doing this, a counsellor will be able to control his/her self so that anger, stress and burnout at workplace can be well managed.

8.2 Professional attribute

Supplementing the personal attribute, professional features are regarded as a set of professionalism characteristics that a counsellor should have. It is closely related with the external characteristic of a counsellor.

8.2.1 Professional practices

A counsellor service represents the service of all counsellor world-wide. Thus, it is important for them to maintain counselling service. In this regard counsellors should be aware of on professional ethic during their service. Currently, many resources can be considered as a guide to ethically deliver the service. It includes the 2014 American Counselling Association Code of Ethics, and 580 acts Malaysian counsellor board (1998).

8.2.2 Life-long learner

Since a counsellor is a professional profession, the practitioner must from time to time to extend his/her knowledge and skill in helping profession. It can be realised through life-long learning concept. Nowadays, there are many chances provided for counsellors to enhance their knowledge and skills through high quality technology. Among the important aspects to be learned is clinical skills and theory development.

8.2.3 Take care of bias issue

A trained counsellor will not let personal values and thought disturb his/her professional works. It is crucial for a counsellor to let counselling session occurs in natural setting.

8.2.4 Understanding the multicultural counselling

The recent development shows that the client's demographic is rapidly changing. There are various clients being referred for a counselling session. The variety can be seen in gender, value, cultural and religion as well. To tackle these, a counsellor should be competent in multicultural counselling. They need to specifically learn how to manage this issue properly. If not the counselling session will be an ineffective one.

9. Conclusion

This chapter highlights a fundamental concept of counselling and psychotherapy. It covers definition, principles, skills and theories. Although it had focused

to the basic information regarding counselling area, it is sufficient enough to those who are interested to understand the counselling and psychotherapy fields. The readers are strongly recommended to explore other sources in effort to seek a comprehensive knowledge regarding such topic.

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