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Self-report of Students Attending Counseling Class on Mindfulness Training

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Abstract.

Participants in this study were sophomores at the Faculty of Education at Siswa Bangsa International University who had taken an optional course Counseling Application in School Context. Mindfulness was one of the counseling skills practiced during the course.

Mindfulness is a skill to be non-judgmental, be here and now, trust impermanence, and attention to intention. In the world of education, the basic principles of mindfulness counseling approach is in line with humanistic psychology which emphasizes that any client who is undergoing counseling actually has the ability to heal itself. During the process, the counselor acts as a facilitator who listens to the client and accepts them without judgment and without condition.

Unconditional self-acceptance and non-judgmental attitude can occur when a counselor has to accept him-/herself as s/he is. This capability call congruency and can be obtained through mindfulness training. Thus, the purpose of mindfulness in the context of counseling is to help counselors accept themselves as they are.

The method used in this study was a qualitative research in which self-reflection was used as an instrument in the data collection. The first questionnaire had been used to justify the level of awareness and acceptance. Analysis of the reports of students' self-reflection indicated an increase of the level of awareness of the position of the body, feeling, and words that they pronounced. This article will propose recommendations for counseling education coursework in mindfulness.

Keywords: self-report, mindfulness, student counseling

INTRODUCTION

On airplane just before take-off, the flight attendants always give instruction as their standard operation procedure. One of the instructions is how to do when the cabin suddenly has lost its air pressure. The oxygen mask will drop from the ceiling and we expected to wear that mask to help us breath. The most repeated massage is that we supposed to wear our mask first, before helping others. The moral of the story is the helper should take care of themselves before helping other, or both will lose consciousness.

To prepare its students to be able to be an educator, faculty of education at Siswa Bangsa International University (USBI) put counseling as one of the elective course for sophomore. The objective of the course is for counseling class students (CCS) is that they will be able to understand the teacher's role in the practice of guidance and counseling, learn and develop effective counselor's characteristics, understand basic elements of the counseling relationships and counseling

process, use basic counseling skills to help students in need, and identify and discuss major ethical issues related to helping students.

In order to meet the course objective especially when we talk about skills, students need to learn and experience the process by themselves. CCS need to understand the importance of counseling relationship. The relation that is build by counselor who has an emphatic understanding and unconditional positive regards.

Counseling relationship is an important part in counseling work (Shin, 2006, p.37). However, the relationship is not the one and only predictor of therapeutic success (Asay & Lambert in Shin, 2006). There are fourteen variables in Integrative Multidimensional Meta-theoretical (MDM) which support the positive counseling outcomes (Shin, 2006). They are counseling relationship, counselor variables, client variables, counseling relationships, counseling process, counseling benefits-effects-functions-goals-outcomes-roles-uses-

limitations, counseling, counseling skills-strategies-techniques, change, person, human nature, human problems, human development, psychopathology, and wellness.

As we can see those variables in MDM, a counselor variable is holding key point in therapeutic success. Rogers mentioned that one of the qualities of good counselor is being congruent (cited in Campbell & Christopher, 2012). This means that within the relationship, counselor should be freely and deeply himself, with his actual experience accurately represented by his awareness of himself.

In order to be able to actualize themselves, counselor need to do self-inquiry and self-reflection. Counselor must first deal with their own problem in order to help the clients facing their problems. Often counselor have to deal with the source of stress: unrealistic expectations, task oriented and become a human-doing. If the counselor has no instrument to help them solve their own, they will soon become an ineffective counselor.

Mindfulness scientifically proven to be the practice which offer psychotherapists a way to positively affect aspects of therapy that account for successful treatment (Davis & Hayes, 2011). Based on their research therapists who meditate and client outcomes of therapists who meditate are evidently increased.

This study wants discover the impact on mindfulness practice, here we used breathing mindfully, to their mindfulness level. The study will used self report and questionnaire as its instrument.

Theoretical framework

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a term that usually used by the Buddhist monk but has already set a foundation in psychological context. Jon Kabat Zinn is a Professor of Medicine Emeritus at University of Massachusetts who first developed and found Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction program (MBSR). The program is scientifically proven that it is bring positive advantages (Davis & Hayes, 2011; Brausch, 2011; Broderick & Metz, 2009). As we discuss about the practice of mindfulness in preparing CCS to be able to give counseling to their future pupils, so we are going to limit the advantages on it.

There are some definitions regarding the term mindfulness. Thich Nath Hanh, the Zen Buddhist monk is the one who first introduce mindfulness, both concept and practice, outside the temple (Hanh, 1991). He mentioned that mindfulness at first is found in the Sutra call Anapanasati Sutra. Anapana means breath,

Sati means mindfulness. Hanh explained that the Sutra ask to do whatever we do consciously.

“When walking, (the mindfulness) practitioner must be conscious that he is walking. When sitting, the practitioner must be conscious that he is sitting. When lying down, the practitioner must be conscious that he is lying down ... no matter what position one's body is in, the practitioner must be conscious of that position.” (Hanh, 1991, p.7)

However, Hanh also stated that the awareness of body position is only the beginning. The mindfulness practitioner must then be conscious of every breath, each movement, every thought and feeling, everything which has any relation to ourselves (Hanh, 1991, p.8)

Didonna offered a more operational definition on his clinical handbook of mindfulness (2009). He stated that mindfulness is the awareness that arises through paying attention on purpose on the present moment, nonjudgementally. This definition is more or less in line with the definition given by Jon Kabat Zinn, discipline practice of moment to moment awareness and owning of each moment of our experience as it is (Kabat-Zinn, 2005,p.46).

Why Mindfulness?

Cultivating mindfulness can lead to the discovery of deep realms of relaxation, calmness, and insight within our self (Kabat-Zinn, 2005,p.47). This practice helps both therapist and clients to learn how to calm down to get into the state of deep relaxation. However, this state of relaxation is not the goal on the mindfulness practice. The point is that the students can profoundly adjust the relationship with themselves, with their feelings and their minds. The state of condition will eventually make easier to see with greater clarity of how the real situation is.

Practicing mindfulness

Mindfulness is basically just a particular way of paying attention. It is a way of looking deeply into oneself in the spirit of self-inquiry and self-understanding. It is not dependent on any belief system or ideology, so that its benefits are therefore accessible for anyone to test for himself or herself (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p.47).

Before starting the practicing of mindfulness practice, counseling class students (CCS) is given material related with the knowledge about what is mindfulness and how to practice it. There are some reading materials and video from Jon Kabat-Zinn and Thich Nhat Hanh explaining about the practice, the benefits of practicing and why it is simple yet difficult.

The content of counseling itself is become the focus on every meeting. However, CCS is expected to

practice breathing mindfulness as part of the practice in counseling class.

Self report

Klein, Kolden, Michels, and Chisholm-Stockard explained that genuine responses require mindful attention and self-reflection (in Campbell & Christopher, 2012). Learning to do self reflection includes becoming aware of one's feelings and knowing when to communicate them to the client. Beside this, CCS will also learning to know and feel when there is no genuineness, or when the relationship lacks attunement. This is also the indicators of congruence such Rogers mentioned (Klein et al, cited in Campbell & Christopher, 2012).

METHODS

The method in this research is qualitative research. Analysis is drawn from the CCS reflection. CCS is practicing mindfulness while they're having role play as a counselor, a client and as an observer. After each role playing, students are asked to make a self report as their reflection.

CCS are also given an assesment of present-moment awareness and acceptance (Cardaciotto, 2008). The scale is used for complete picture of their mindfulness level.

DISCUSSION

The assessment of the the present-moment awareness and acceptance showed that most of the students have a high level of awareness, while their level of acceptance is below the average level. Even so, both showed an increase on their level.

This is equivalent with the self report. CCS reported that they're becoming more attentive, mentally focused, more relax, and more aware. While some

students still struggling in their acceptance and still keep make judgement on things.

The limitation of this study is that students is not being asked to do mindfulness practice as their homework. The practice is only happen in the class. However, it is admitted by Campbell & Christopher (2012) that to ask students to practice mindfulness for three times a week for 45 minutes is really a challenging task, though it is important.

RESULT

Klein, Kolden, Michels, and Chisholm-Stockard (in Campbell & Christopher, 2012) described congruence as counselors being in touch with how they experience their clients and being in touch with how they experience their clients and being willing to use this information in the therapeutic process.

Teaching mindfulness practices requires a dedicated personal practice. Both the teachers and students should already apply this as their way of life. It is believed that counselor education should incorporate mindfulness training in their course, as counseling program has already integrated this into their approach recently. This practice will enhance their awareness of their body, and their mind and ready to focus on their clients feeling and problems.

As Rogers believed that every person can achieve their goals, wishes and desires in life. All they need is an environment that provides them with genuineness (openness and self-disclosure), acceptance (being seen with unconditional positive regard), and empathy (being listened to and understood) (in Gladding, 2009).

The result from this pilot study is preliminary for further research.

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