

EFFECTIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING AT SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Abstract. The professionals who try to basically provide mental health services at school are School Psychological Counselors. Most of the psychiatric disorders give their first signs as problem 61

behaviours during scholl years. In Turkey, problem behaviours are generally being handled with disciplinary procedures at school. But this approach leads to underestimation of etiology and prevens multidisciplinary treatment modalities thus symptoms which can be treated easily can turn to complicated school problems. Schools are important not only for educational and/or academic activities, but also they may provide countless opportunities to promote and support children’s mental health development. For this reason, schoolbased mental health services have started to be established in many countries. In this study, Mental Health Services at school, the roles of Psychological Counselors have been dealt with.

Key Words: Psychological counselling, psychosocial support, mental health at schools, school counselor.

Research Type: Review.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although the structure and implementation of school mental health services differ in each country, they mainly aim to screen, identify and help children with emotional and behavioral problems.

In Turkey, school mental health services are mostly provided through “Guidance and Counseling Services”. The school psychological counselors are known to experience a number of problems during their practices (Çokamay, Gül Kapçı & Sever (2017: 1395) Taking the recent developments into consideration, it is also necessary for Psychological Counselling and Guidance Services to provide developmental, remedial and preventive services. In addition to this, paying attention to the ecological approach at schools, the need for Mental Health School Programme has been increasing.

School Psychological Counselors play the basic role in the process of preparing, applying, evaluating these programmes and providing cooperation. It is of utmost importance for School Psychological Counselors to be of

service to students by evaluating their physical, social, emotional and behavioral needs and developments. Naturally, there are students who have behavioral and emotional problems among these students (Arıcıoğlu, 2008: 76; Tatlıoğlu, 2011; Tatlıoğlu, 2013).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. What is Effective Psychological Counseling?

An effective psychological counselor is defined as a professional who is able to balance the interpersonal relationships and counseling skills and techniques and use them successfully by integrating personal and professional competencies (Cormier, Nurius and Osborn, 2009; Egan, 1975; cited in Kalay-Usta & Deniz, 2019: 62236).

Counselors and psychologists have been providing mental health services to a more culturally diverse population than ever.

Providing sufficient services to diverse groups requires multicultural competencies. As Vera and Speight (2003) pointed out, commitment to multiculturalism also requires commitment to social justice.

Multiculturalism, social justice, and advocacy are highly empathized concepts of both counseling and psychology fields (cited in Kağnıcı & Denizli, 2018: 20).

2.2. Problems Encountered:

The psychological counseling profession has personal implications for counselors as well as compelling aspects. Engin (1996) stated that individuals working with face-to-face interaction experience more intense stress. The more intense emotional processes, the responsibilities of one-to-one interaction, the excess of people's needs and expectations, the difficulty of understanding and communicating individuals with various personality traits explain the source of this fact.

Many mental health professionals have noted that racial and ethnic factors may act as impediments to counseling.

Misunderstandings that arise from cultural variations in verbal and nonverbal communication may lead to alienation and/or an inability to develop trust and rapport. An analysis of the generic characteristics of counseling reveals 3 variables that interact in such a way as to seriously hinder counseling with 3rd-world groups: (a) language variables—use of standard English and verbal communication; (b) class-bound values—strict adherence to time schedules, ambiguity, and seeking long-range solutions; and (c) culture-bound values— individual centered, verbal/emotional/behavioral expressiveness, client to counselor communication, openness and intimacy,

cause– effect orientation, and mental and physical well-being distinction (Sue & Sue, 1977: 127-146).

It is emphasized by the researchers that the psychological counseling practice should be competent in the counselor's skills and theoretical knowledge in order to benefit the counselor (Lent, Hill and Hoffman, 2003; Bor, Ebner-Landy, Gill and Brace, 2002; Twin, 2010; cited in Kalay-Usta & Deniz, 2019: 236). If psychological counselors feel inadequate in the work environment, they cannot cope with the stressful situations in their own lives or have difficulty in providing well-being.

According to the study conducted by Lawson and Meyers (2011), it is seen that the well-being of psychological counselors is directly proportional to their professional life quality (cited in Kalay-Usta & Deniz, 2019: 236). The concept of well-being in mental health was examined by Keyes et al. (2002) with the dimensions of emotional well-being, social well-being and psychological well-being and explained with a new model called “mental health continuity”.

The success of psychological counselors in their profession is directly related to their psychological, social and emotional well-being. According to ACA (2013) ethical standards, a psychological counselor is responsible for regarding the client's well-being, while also regarding his or her well-being. One of the factors affecting the well-being of psychological counselor is career adaptability, which is defined as a concept that includes the acceptance of possible changes in individuals' career development process, the capacity to tolerate future uncertainties and changes, and the ability to cope with new opportunities and responsibilities (Rottinghaus, Day and Borgen, 2005; Koen, Klehe, Vianen, Zikic & Nauta, 2010; cited in Kalay-Usta & Deniz, 2019: 237).

It is important for the psychological counselors to have sufficient knowledge, skills and self-efficacy in the process of counseling candidate before starting to work as a professional in terms of the effectiveness of future counseling processes. In this context, it is important to determine the factors affecting the self-efficacy of counseling, in order to enable the counselor candidates to make more effective and productive future counseling processes (Hayran, Y. 2019).

3. CULTURAL AWARENESS

Cultural awareness is the mental health professionals' sensitivity to their personal values and biases and awareness of how these may influence perceptions of the client, the client's problem, and the counseling relationship (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

This basic competence indicates that mental health professionals' personal values have a critical role in providing efficient services to culturally diverse clients, being social advocates, and promoting social justice (cited in, Kağnıcı & Denizli, 2018: 21). Societies are more diverse than ever, and mental health professionals are providing mental health services to diverse groups.

4. CONCLUSION

It is important for a personal and professional life that a psychological counselor possesses. Effective psychological characteristics, career adaptation and mental health continuity.

According to the study conducted by Çokamay, Gül Kapçı and Sever (2017), it is seen that the problems encountered during undergraduate education". Each theme was construed exclusively. Accordingly, school psychological counselors depicted a number of problems.

First of all, they experience problems in relation to vague role description and for this reason they receive unrealistic expectations from other colleagues. Second problem is that of limited and/or inadequate participation of the families/parents to both school activities and the facilities provided by the guidance and counseling services. They also consider that school mental health services are not implemented collaboratively and in a systematic fashion. Last but not least, they stated that the undergraduate education programs were limited in terms of practical courses.

According to the study conducted Kalay-Usta and Deniz (2019), it is seen a significant positive relationship was found between the effective counselor characteristics and sub-dimensions of the participants and their mental health continuity levels and sub-dimensions. In addition, it was seen that there were significantly positive relationships between participants' effective counselor characteristics and sub-dimensions and career adaptability levels and sub-dimensions. Also, psychological counselors' effective counselor characteristics and career adaptability accounted for 34% of mental health continuum.

Based on this information, it is important to take into account the research findings by the psychological counseling fields and institutions, and to take measures to improve career adaptability and effective counselor characteristics for preventing mental health continuity levels of counselors (Kalay-Usta and Deniz, 2019: 237).

As Motulsky, Gere, Saleem, and Trantham (2014) underlined, sensitivity to injustice is only a start; counselors and psychologists should also be agents of change. In order to be agents of change, counselors and

psychologists first need to be culturally aware, in other words, work hard on their values, personal characteristics, and potential cultural biases.

Increased investment is required on all fronts: for mental health awareness to increase understanding and reduce stigma; for efforts to increase access to quality mental health care and effective treatments; and for research to identify new treatments and improve existing treatments for all mental disorders (www.who.int/health).

Treatment of mental illnesses can be made by evaluating the biological, psychological and social dimensions of the patients with a biopsychological approach and by providing their well-being (Abay & Çölgeçen, 2018: 2148).

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