

Expectations about Counselling among Orang Asli Students in the Cameron Highlands District

SEHGAR KANDASAMY
AHMAD JAZIMIN JUSOH

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine the expectations about counselling among the Orang Asli students in secondary schools in the Cameron Highlands district of Malaysia. Data was collected using the Expectations about Counselling Questionnaire which was distributed to 436 respondents. The findings showed that the expectations of counselling sessions among the Orang Asli students were high (mean= 4.605, 79%). The counsellor expertise factor was the most dominant (mean=4.84, 69.14 %). It was found that the expectations about counselling among the Orang Asli students were significant between the expectation dimension (personal commitment, facilitative conditions, counsellor expertise, and counsellor nurturance) and the variables of gender, age and client status. There was no significant relationship between their expectations and the religion and residence variables. In conclusion, this study was successful in giving a general picture about the students' expectations of counselling sessions.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to examine the expectations about counselling among the *Orang Asli* students in the Cameron Highlands district in Malaysia. *Orang Asli* refers to the indigenous groups of people living in Peninsular Malaysia. The *Orang Asli* children have equal opportunities in education and they are provided with all the basic educational needs such as school uniforms, textbooks, exercise books, bus fares, and pocket money. In some areas, the children attend boarding schools which are managed by the *Orang Asli* Affairs & Welfare Department in the Ministry of Education.

In the Cameron Highlands district, the *Orang Asli* students are regarded as problematic students who lack the necessary skills that are required to perform academically. In the past five years, only three *Orang Asli* students from the Cameron Highlands district attained the post-graduate level of education (Student Information System Statistics, Ministry of Education, 2010). The *Orang Asli* students also have major disciplinary problems at the schools they attend. The dropout rate among the *Orang Asli* school children at all levels is disproportionately high compared to the national average.

Efforts by the government in addressing the needs of the *Orang Asli* children include incorporating cultural factors into the school curriculum, revising the relevance of the subjects taught, planning the indigenization of the teaching modules, changing the medium of instruction, and acknowledging the indigenous traditions and systems.

Given this background, upon entering the national mainstream school system, the *Orang Asli* children have a cultural disadvantage compared to children from the other ethnic groups in Malaysia. The *Orang Asli* students are frequently referred to the school counsellors for psychological help. School counsellors are assigned to schools to give a comprehensive counselling service to all

students. Unfortunately, the school counselors are perceived to have failed in helping the *Orang Asli* students.

The need for counselling services among middle school students is well documented in the counselling literature (Bayley, 2002). For many students, middle school is a period which represents the first major transition and adjustment in familiar support and resources (Bayley, 2002). Coupled with novel decisions and challenges, this period also represents a time of identity exploration (Atkinson, 1989), transition into more adult roles and responsibilities (Tinsley, 1981) and more concrete career choice and development (Carter, 1991).

Expectations about counselling refer to the individual's beliefs about the likelihood of an event occurring or a condition taking place in counselling (Tinsley, 1988). Expectations are distinct from perceptions about counselling, which refer to an understanding of the process gained from direct observation (Hayes & Tinsley, 1989). Studies in the literature on general expectations about counselling have used primarily the Expectations about Counselling Scale (EAC; Tinsley, 1980) and the EAC-Brief Form (EAC-B; Tinsley, 1991). Research on these measures indicates that expectations can be conceptualized as comprising four factors, namely, personal commitment, facilitative conditions, counsellor expertise, and counsellor nurturance (Tinsley, 1980).

Virtually absent from the general expectations measures is insight into how people expect their counsellors to attend to cultural issues in therapy. Previous research suggests that general competence and multicultural counselling competence are two related but distinct constructs from the perspective of clients. For example, Constantine & Arorash (2001) found that for students of colour, multicultural competence ratings explained significant variance in their satisfaction with counselling beyond that accounted for by ratings of their counsellors. Sue and Sue (1990) suggest that culturally competent counsellors must possess the awareness, attitudes, and behaviour (skills) necessary to work with culturally diverse clients.

Differences in expectations by demographic variables have been investigated and are well documented in the general counselling expectations literature. Differences in multicultural expectations based on demographic characteristics have also been studied to a limited extent. Demographic variables including gender, race, ethnicity, country of origin, age, and education level have been studied, with respectively less examination of characteristics such as socioeconomic status and religion. Collectively, the results of the studies suggest that individuals from different cultural backgrounds may hold different expectations about client and counsellor behaviour.

Gender. No research has explored differences in multicultural counselling expectations based on gender. However, there is evidence that gender is related to differences in general counselling expectations. With regard to their own attitudes and behaviours, women generally have higher expectations of themselves in therapy. Specifically, they have consistently higher expectations than men for being motivated (Hardin, 1985). Compared to men, women also have higher expectations for their counsellors to display attitudes and behaviours including acceptance, genuineness, and trustworthiness (Hardin & Yanico, 1983). Studies on women's expectations for counsellor self-disclosure are inconsistent. One study indicated that women expect their counsellors to be less self-disclosing than men.

Race, ethnicity, and country of origin. Multicultural counselling expectations differ based on race and ethnicity, with Black and Latino students expressing higher expectations than Asian, biracial, and White students (Constantine & Arorash, 2001). With regard to general counselling expectations, some research suggests that Whites have higher overall general expectations for counselling than do Asians (Tinsley, 1982).

Age and educational level. Although no studies have examined whether multicultural expectations differ by age or education level, both age and education level are related to differences in general counselling expectations. Compared to young individuals, elderly individuals have lower expectations for counsellor self-disclosure (Kunkel & Williams, 1991).

Socioeconomic status. Research examining the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and expectations is limited for general expectations and non-existent for multicultural expectations. Early research on general expectations demonstrated that low SES clients expected a medically focused interview, with the therapist taking on an active but permissive role (Aronson,

1963). Compared to middle class clients, lower class clients expected their counsellor to focus more on physical complaints and to be supportive, directive and active in therapy (Aronson 1966). Although several of these SES studies suggest that lower SES individuals expect to have an active, directive therapist, the findings are not conclusive about how SES relates to general counselling expectations.

Religion. Research has not examined the relationship between multicultural counselling expectations and religion. Studies on general expectations and religion suggest that Christians express higher overall expectations for counselling when asked to rate their expectations about a counsellor that is described to them than do non-Christians (Godwin & Crouch, 1989).

METHODOLOGY

Data was collected using the Expectations about Counselling Questionnaire (Tinsley, 1991). The respondents were 436 *Orang Asli* students in three secondary schools in the Cameron Highlands district. Five demographic variables were tested against four expectation factors which were the

Dimension/Demographic Variable	Personal Commitment	Facilitatif Condition	Counsellor Expertise	Nurturance Factor
Gender	/	/	/	/
Residence	x	x	x	x
Religion	x	x	x	x
Age	/	/	/	/
Client Status	/	/	/	/

counsellor’s personal commitments, facilitative conditions, counsellor expertise and nurturance. The five demographic variables were gender, residence, religion, age, and client status. Statistical Inference Analysis was done using *SPSS version 12*. The mean, percentage, standard deviation and *T-test* were used to determine the level of expectations and the significant level of the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the statistical analysis, the results of the study are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Result Summary

Significant $p < 0.05$

(/) Significant

(x) Not Significant

The findings showed that the expectations of the *Orang Asli* students for counselling sessions is high (mean= 4.605,79%). The nurturance factor was the most dominant with a mean of 4.84, 69.14 %). This study showed that the expectations about counselling among the *Orang Asli* students were significant between the students’ expectations and the variables of gender, age and client status. There was no significant relationship between expectations and the religion and residence variables.

The relationship between the age variable with the main constructs in the questionnaire was an unexpected finding in this study. Younger respondents tended to hold more positive expectations about counselling than older respondents. Younger respondents particularly held more positive

expectations of counsellor expertise, facilitative conditions, and nurturance, but not personal commitment, which suggested that they held more positive views where more was expected of the counsellor. The findings also suggested that while the female students overall tended to have more positive views of the counselling sessions, the male students tended to have negative expectations of the counsellor's knowledge, empathy and support. Respondents who had experience in counselling sessions held more positive expectations about counselling compared to students who did not have any experience in counselling sessions.

In conclusion, this study was successful in giving a general picture of the students' expectations of counselling sessions. It also indicated that there was a willingness among the *Orang Asli* students to get psychological help from the counsellors.

CONCLUSION

The findings have several implications for clinical practice, research and multicultural theories. Schools need to ensure that the services they provide are student-centred, culturally sensitive, and tailored to meet the needs of the *Orang Asli* students. There is a great need to develop multicultural competency among the school counsellors in order to eliminate the negative perceptions of counsellors and to decrease the level of anticipated risks associated with seeking professional counselling.

This study has provided very useful information about the *Orang Asli* students. It is the first study in Malaysia that has identified the factors affecting those students' attitudes toward seeking counselling. The findings are hoped to contribute toward the improvement of counselling programmes in schools. It is also hoped that further research can be carried out on the culture of the *Orang Asli* people and the counselling needs of the students belonging to this group of people.

The results of this study could be used to help school guidance and counselling coordinators in several ways. First, this study sheds light on school counsellors' beliefs about their abilities to perform tasks and activities related to general and multicultural school counselling. Secondly, it could guide school counsellors and coordinators in designing strategic outreach programmes that can increase the expectation level of the *Orang Asli* students. Finally, school counsellors should realise the importance of multicultural competence in counselling services, and willing to seek more information and knowledge about the culture of *Orang Asli Students* in their respective living area.

REFERENCES

- Alice Law. (2004). *Persepsi Mahasiswa Terhadap Kaunselor Dari Perspektif Pelbagai Budaya Di Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris*. Tesis yang tidak diterbitkan. Tanjung Malim Perak, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.
- American School Counselor Association (2005). *Ethical Standard for school counselors*. Alexandria, VA: American School Counselor Association.
- Arredondo, P., & Arciniega, M. (2001). *Strategies and techniques for counselor training based on the multicultural counseling competencies*. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development*, 29(4), 263-272.
- Atkinson, D.R., & Gim, R.H. (1989). *Asian-American cultural identity and attitudes toward mental health services*. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 36(2), 209-212.
- Atkinson, D.R., Thompson, C. E., & Grant, S. (1993). *A three-dimensional model for counseling racial/ethnic minority clients*. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 21, 257- 277.
- Baker, & Gerler (2004). *Exploratory intervention with a scale of measuring adjustment to college*. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 35(1), 31-38.
- Bailey, E.J. (2002). *Sociocultural factors and health care seeking behavior among Black Americans*. *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 79, 389-392.165

- Berry, J.W. (1995). Social and cultural change. In H.C. Triandis and J.W. Berry (Eds.), *Handbook of Crosscultural Psychology*. Boston, MA:
- Capuzzi, D & Douglas R. Gross. (1997). *Introduction To The Counseling Profession*. United State Of Amerika.
- Carter (1991). Relationship of white and black racial identity attitudes and demographic similarity to counselor preferences. *Journal Of Counseling Psychology*, 38, 446-47.
- Cheryl Moore tomas. (2000). *Minority middle school Students willingness to self refer to school counselors for social and personal counseling*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Western Michigan, University, Kalamazoo.
- Constantine, G.Arorash. (2001). Examining the cultural adjustment experiences of African international college students: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 57-66.
- Godwin, T. C., & Crouch, J. G. (1989). *Subjects' religious orientation, counselor's orientation and skill, and expectations for counseling*. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 17, 284-292.
- Goodman, S.H., Sewell, D.R., (1989). On going to the counselor: Contributions of life stress and social supports to the decision to seek psychological counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 31, 306-313.
- Good, G., & Wood, P. (1995). *Male gender role conflict, depression, and help seeking: Do college men face double jeopardy?* *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 74, 70-75..
- John A. Axelson, *Counseling and Development in a Multicultural Society* (1999), Cole Publications, U.S.
- Johnson, HN. (1977) *A Survey Of Students Attitudes Towards Counseling At Predominantly Black University*: *Journal Of Counseling And Psychology* 24 (2) 162 –164 .
- Jones E. (1985), *Psychotherapy and Counseling with black students*, P (ed), *handbook on Multicultural Counseling*, Westport CT.
- Kamus Dewan Edisi Ketiga. (2002). Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka.
- Kelly, E. W., Aridi, A., & Bakhtiar, L. (1996). *Muslims in the United States: An exploratory study of universal and mental health values*. *Counseling and Values*, 40, 206-218.
- Kunkel, M.A, Richard williams (1991). *Expectations about counseling in relation to acculturation in Mexican-American and Anglo-American student samples*. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 37, 286-292.
- Krause, J. Miller (1975). *Some effects of a White institution on Black psychiatric outpatients*. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 41, 589-596.
- Patterson, P. (1999). *Multiculturalism as a fourth force*. Philadelphia: Brunner/Mazel.
- Rich, Y., Brook, M & Yechieli, O. (1989). Students preferences for male or female counselors for social and educational problem. *Adolescence*, 94, 433-438.
- Rogers, C.R. (1957). *The necessary and sufficient conditions of psychotherapeutic personality change*. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 21, 95-103.
- Subich & Hardin (1985). *Expectancies for counselling in relation to premature termination*, *Journal of counselling Psychology*, 37-40.
- Shneiderman, (1995), *The theory and practice of movie psychiatry*. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 144, 996-1002.
- Sue, D.W., & Sue, D. (1999). *Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice* (3rd Ed.). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Sue, D. W., Bernier, J. E., Durrant, A., Feinberg, L., Pedersen, P., Smith, E. J., & Vasquez-Nuttall, E. (1982). Position paper: Cross-cultural counseling competencies. *The Counseling Psychologist*.
- Sue, D.W., & Sue, D. (1981). *Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice*. New York, NY: John Wiley.

- Sue, D.W., (1992). *Multicultural counseling competencies and standards: A call to the profession*. Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 20, 64-68.
- Tinsley, H. E. A., & Harris, D. J. (1976). *Client expectations for counseling*. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*,
- Tinsley, H. E. A. (1982). *Expectations about counseling*. Unpublished test manual, Southern Illinois University, Department of Psychology, Carbondale.
- Tinsley, D. J., Holt, M. S., Hinson, J. A., & Tinsley, H. E. A. (1991). A construct validity study of the Expectations About Counseling-Brief Form: Factorial validity. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, 24, 101-110.
- Tinsley, H. E. A. (1982). *Expectations About Counseling*. [Test manual]. Unpublished manuscript, Southern Illinois University, Department of Psychology, Carbondale, IL.
- Tinsley, H. E. A. & Tokar, D. M. (1994). Client expectations about counseling and involvement during career counseling. *Career Development Quarterly*, 42, 326-337.
- Tinsley, H.E.A., Workman, K.R. & Kiss, R. (1982). Factor analysis of the domain of client expectancies about counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 27,561-570.
- Tylon Crook. (2008) *Relationship Between Counseling Self-Efficacy and Multicultural Counseling Self-Efficacy among School Counselors*, Clinical Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the California School of Professional Psychology at Alliant International University San Diego
- Wendy-Lou leslie Greenidge(2000).*Attitudes towards seeking professional counseling: The role of outcome counseling expectations and emotional openness in english speaking Caribbean College Students in the U.S.*. University of Central Florida.