



Construction of Observation Rating Scale Based On Existential Theory of Counselling For the Assessment of Counselling Skills Among Counsellor Trainees

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ABSTRACT

This study considered Construction of Observation Rating Scale Based on Existential Theory of Counselling for the Assessment of Counselling Skills among Counsellor Trainees. Rapport Creating Skills; Counsellor's use of Empathy; Attentiveness and Genuineness are operation used based on Existential theory of counselling. Method of derivation of items in constructing the observational rating scale, the scale and the direction on how to use the scale were also provided by the researchers based on Existential theory of Counselling by Soren Kier Kegaard (1813-1855).

Keywords: Observation Rating Scale, Existential Theory, Counselling Skills, Assessment and Counsellor Trainee

INTRODUCTION

Globally, life is becoming more difficult with the rocketed increase in human population, poverty, insecurity and many other life's demands are stressing every level of human development and performance. These life issues call for help for all levels of human beings, young and old, men and women, all need help. Counselling an important service in guidance and counselling is the central service employed in helping at different levels. For Counsellor to be successful in giving help, there is need for specialization in counselling and acquisition of effective counselling skills.

In the course of training the counsellor, there is a need for assessment to ensure that the proper needed skills are understood and are in calculated by the Counsellor trainees. For this reason, the art of designing effective and appropriate means of assessment scale becomes important. Observation scale is a non-testing appraisal Technique or method of recording what has been seen or observed carefully by an observer. It is a means of indicating trait or characteristics to be judged (Shertzer and Stone 1974).

The objective of this work is to construct an observational scale for assessing counselling skills based on existential theory of counselling. Specifically counselling skills like rapport creating, empathy, attentiveness and genuineness are operationalized based on existential theory of counselling.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers considered the following procedure for construction of the observational rating scale.

- Operationalisation of counselling skills based on Existential theory of Counselling
- Method of derivation of items
- Direction of how to use the scale and
- The Scale

Operationalisation of Counselling Skills Based on Existential Theory of Counselling by Sorenson Kier Kegaard (1813-1855).

Existential theory of Counselling was propounded by Danish theologian, Sorenson Kier Kegaard (1813-1855). The theory was sharpened and elaborated by Karl Jaspers and Jen- Paul Sartre (1905) after the death of Kier Kegaard by 1940, the concept in the theory has become a life-style for many Frenchmen. The theory is built on the philosophy that “each man carves his own destiny and that his essence, his inner being is the result of his action” (Belkin, 1975:233).

In this theory, man is viewed as the carver of his destiny through his actions and behaviour. Man is therefore forced to choose what he wants but is also responsible for the consequence of his actions. This implies that Counsellors in this theory must bear in mind that when counselling is going on, man’s desire to become what he wants is largely dependent on his relationship with others, entities, ideas, laws, tradition and customs, emotional bounds and his perception of the world. Man’s anxiety, is said to be precipitated by fear of death and life becomes meaningful only because of the certainty of death. This influences man’s activity and total behaviour. Each Counsellor is therefore expected to bear these facts in mind when applying this theory of Counselling.

The Client in this theory has a clear role to play. He should be able and willing to learn what the right commitment means. He should be encouraged to accept responsibility for his actions and not to blame others for whatever is wrong with him.

Existential psychotherapy is used on the fundamental belief that all people experience intrapsychic conflict due to interaction with certain conditions inherent in human existence which are known as “givens”. It is a theory of counselling that places emphasis on the human condition as a whole and uses positive approach that applauds human abilities and ambitions but still noted limitations or short falls. This theory has many things in common with human psychology, experiential psychotherapy, depth psychotherapy and relation psychotherapy. Four conditions (givens) inherent in human being that need to be noted according to this theory are:

- Freedom and Associated responsibility
- Death
- Isolation and
- Meaninglessness

These conditions (givens) are said to fill individual with a type of dread commonly referred to as “Existential Anxiety”. This anxiety is thought to reduce psychological, social and spiritual awareness which may lead to long term consequences.

This theory encourages addressing emotional issues faced through full engagement and taking of responsibility of the decision that contribute to the development of the issues. The theory encourages people undergoing the therapy to grow and embrace their own life experience as a journey and not trials. This in due course helps them eradicate fear associated with death, isolation and meaninglessness. Clients in this therapy are helped not to dwell on past, but rather helped to discover and explore the choices that lie before them. This theory is seen as helpful in freeing victims of poor mental health, rape and violence of different kinds (Ackerman 2017). Hoffman (2017); Prochaska & Norcorss (2003) and Yalom (1980) in this theory, noted that individuals who responded to treatment tend to find meaning and purpose in their lives and after developed self-awareness, understanding, respect and self-motivation.

The Counsellor in this theory is expected to be knowledgeable, skilful, understanding, genuine and reliable and has explicit roles to play. He establishes rapport, directs the sessions of counselling and help the client to identify and solve his problems. He has the obligation to help client discover valid meaning in his life, develop the freedom to police his destiny and interact with others in his environment. He create effective therapeutic relationship with the client and proper psychological atmosphere for counselling. He establishes good rapport of warm and permissive relationship with the client. In his primary interaction with the client the Counsellor ensures his readiness and his unconditional acceptance and liking for the client. This will help the client understand himself, modify and recognise his internal self. This is very

important in this theory because it is assumed that once someone understands the nature of his problem and the fact that he is responsible for whatever happens to him, he is likely to solve that problem.

In this theory therefore, counsellor's activities include verbal and non-verbal communication. He reflects the client's feelings, rephrase and clarifies client's statements. He uses gestures such as head nods, appropriate smiles and positive facial expression for client's encouragement in the counselling interviews. He listens attentively to the client, correct misconceptions and through dialogue helps the client identify his problem and the cause of the problem. He also helps the client to determine course of action in solving the problem.

From this theory, one could easily pinpoint the basic attitudes to demonstrate Counsellor's high level of confidentiality, flexibility, intellectual competence, acceptance of client as a human being in the client's true position. In addition, he is expected to show understanding and be sensitive. These attributes are expected to be seen in the Counsellor's use of basic counselling skills like creating rapport, empathy, attentiveness and genuineness, while counselling his client.

Creating Rapport

Creating good rapport is a basic and crucial skill in existential theory. It is only in this relationship that the Counsellor would be able to make the client understand, identify and accept his responsibility which is basic in this theory. Rapport is mutual condition of understanding, respect and sustained interest which is essential to a comfortable and unconditional relationship between Counsellor and Client. It is usually created by smoothness with which the Counsellor opens up the relationship. The effectiveness of rapport is judged by client's show of trust, acceptance and understanding of the Counsellor. Counsellor is therefore expected to be confidential, flexible and understanding. He also need to be friendly, pleasant, confident, co-operative, sincere, interested, attentive and sensitive to client's needs, moods and assume responsibilities. Activities where this skills is observed are in his method of interview, choice of appropriate words, facial expression, verbal and non-verbal communications like expressions, gestures, prodding, probing and restating of statements offered by clients.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability of the Counsellor to listen and understand the voices, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes and internal frame of reference of the Client, finds himself and reflect it back to the client as the client sees it. He helps the client without judging or stimulating anxiety and this promotes change of behaviour in the client. Counsellor's ability to master these skills is judged by the attention he gives the client, his use of non-verbal expressions, his ability to rephrase statements to show his understanding, and his ability to be non-judgemental. His empathy could also be deduced from his pace i.e appropriate timing, flexibility and perception of client's concern and repertoire.

Attentiveness

Attentive counselling skills refers to the maximum involvement by the counsellor in the client's communication. The counselor should be an active, yet a reflective listener. He should be able to observe and detect problem areas the client was unable to resolve by himself, notice the expectation of the client and give the client feedback. In fact, attentiveness goes with sensitivity. The Counsellor should be able to respond to both verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the client. In listening, the Counsellor understands what was said. Listening, helps, sustains, extends and deepens a Counsellor's knowledge of the client.

Genuineness

It is the naturalness of the Counsellor. He does not feel one thing and say another. He is being himself – not denying himself. The counselling relationship requires sincerity, spontaneous verbal interaction. The skilled counsellor must demonstrate acceptance of his client as an individual of worth or that has infinite worth and dignity. This helps client to unfold.

Method Of Items Derivation In Construction Of Observational Rating Scale For Assessment Of Counselling Skills Based On Existential Theory Of Counselling

Counselling skills is a performance, it is a Counsellor's combine attitudes and acts to help client overcome some difficulties. In constructing observation rating scale for effective assessment of counselling skills that are existentially based, numerical rating scale is one of the best scales that could be

used. Rating scale generally does not only indicate a trait or characteristics to be judged, but also indicate the frequency, degree or the level to which a particular characteristic is present. In this case, it will indicate the degree of effectiveness of Counsellor's use of the Counselling skills. Though rating scale could be affected by a variety of biases like leniency, strictness, halo effect and social expectations, and could be susceptible to faking; a careful avoidance of these shortfalls could make the method very useful in observing the effective use of different counselling skills by Counsellor on training.

As suggested by Glover and Brunning (1990) and Akinboye (1987), the following steps are taken in item derivation

1. After considering what is said about the role of a Counsellor in the Existential theory and considering the general qualities of counselling skills by Shertzer and Stone (1966), the researchers draw out the blue print of the behaviours or traits of each skills by defining it in order to ensure valid sampling of the areas to be observed and assessed.
2. The next step is to clearly define the traits that are to be rated in the most behavioural way possible.
3. Divide the rating continuum into three – hoping to ensure clarity.
4. Point on the continuum must be clearly defined.

Direction on how to use the scale

Name of scale: Counsellor's Skill Rating Scale

Instruction:- Indicate the degree of Counsellor's effectiveness in the use of the stated counselling traits in the following counselling skills.

1= Not Effective or a little Not Effective NE; 2= Effective: E & 3 = Very Effective VE

S/N	RAPPORT CREATING SKILLS	NE	E	VE
1	Counsellor's Friendliness			
2	Counsellor's sensitiveness to Client's Needs, Moods and Conflicts			
3	Counsellor's appropriate use of verbal and Non-verbal communication			
4	The natural and smoothness of Counsellor's behaviours interaction			
5	Counsellor's attentiveness			

S/N	COUNSELLOR'S USE OF EMPATHY	NE	E	VE
1	Counsellor's ability to pay attention			
2	Ability to rephrase statement correctly			
3	Counsellor's ability to use non-verbal communication to convey to the client his understanding of the Client's situation			
4	Counsellor's ability to be non- judgmental			
5	Counsellor's flexibility and appropriateness of timing			

S/N	ATTENTIVENESS	NE	E	VE
1	Counsellor's stability to convey to the client that he is listening to the client			
2	Counsellor's ability to reflect as he listens to the client			
3	Counsellor's ability to detect areas of problem, change of mood and react appropriate to the Client			
4	Counsellor's ability to respond to both verbal and non-verbal behaviours of the Client			
5	Counsellor's ability to understand the Client and reflect back the understanding to the Client			

S/N	GENUIENNESS	NE	E	VE
1	Fluency and smoothness of the counsellor			
2	Counsellor's firmness			
3	Counsellor's truthfulness			
4	Sincerity with which he accepts the Client			
5	Logical and spontaneous verbal interaction			

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