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CHALLENGES IN DEALING WITH EFFEMINATE CLIENTS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCREASING COUNSELORS' COMPETENCY

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Abstract

A phenomenological method of qualitative inquiry was used to understand the challenges experienced by Muslim counselors in dealing with Muslim effeminate clients. Interviews were conducted with five counsellors who are Muslims, have basic knowledge of counselling ethics, and have experiences in working with Muslim effeminate clients. As none of them received specific training in dealing with effeminate clients, they experience challenges in dealing with them. Considering the growing numbers of clients with sexual identity issues, this paper recommends strategies to increase counselors' competency in dealing with effeminate clients.

Keywords: Effeminate Clients; Counselors' Competency; Challenges

Introduction

Professional helpers who deal with diverse clients in different settings experience various challenges and trials. Most counsellors, psychologists and social workers experienced ethical challenges (Adams & Boyd, 2010; Aubé, 2011; Jenkins, 2010; Simmons & Rycraji, 2010). Some counsellors faced challenges from clients such as prejudices and counter-transference (Christogiorgos et al., 2010; Spong, 2012). Clients' experiences related to shame, labelling and stigma also cause counsellors to face challenges in dealing with them (Gray, 2011). As for some counsellors in the United States of America, they experienced cultural and religious challenges in dealing with Muslim women (Cook-Masaud & I. Wiggins, 2011). Meanwhile, counselling trainees in the United Kingdom faced the challenge to become an integrative Counsellor (Lowndes & Hanley, 2010).

Thus, there is lack of previous research specifically addressing challenges experienced by Muslim counsellors in dealing with Muslim effeminate clients. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the challenges experienced by Muslim counsellors in dealing with Muslim effeminate clients. This study also aims to recommend strategies for increasing counsellors' competency in dealing with those clients.

Methodology

In this study, phenomenological method of inquiry and analysis was used to identify and understand the processes by which Muslim counsellors who had experience challenges in dealing with Muslim effeminate clients elucidate meaning of the challenges. Phenomenological approach is relevant for this kind of study as the approach focuses on the meaning of several individuals' lived experiences which are related to a phenomenon (Marshall, Catherine & B.

Rossmann, 2011; W. Creswell, 2007). Moustakas (1994) (as cited in W. Creswell, 2007) stressed that this approach is suitable for this kind of study as it describes "what" phenomenon has been experienced by participants of study and "how" they experienced it. In the present study, the researcher describes the challenges experienced by Muslim counsellors and how they experienced it.

Participants

Participants of this study comprised of three female counsellors: Madam Ina, Madam Karimah and Madam Rahmah (pseudonyms) and two male counsellors: Mr. Nabil and Mr. Shah (pseudonyms). All of them work at a Counselling Services Centre of three selected Public Institutions of Higher Education. Only one counsellor (Mr. Shah) has more than twenty years experiences in providing counselling services, while other counsellors have less than ten years experiences. All participants have four basic requirements of being a Muslim, have knowledge of basic counselling ethics, have experiences in working with Muslim effeminate clients and had experienced challenges in dealing with those clients. As suggested by Creswell (2007), criterion sampling is suitable for phenomenological study as all individuals studied represent people who had experienced the phenomenon.

Procedure of Data Collection

Two steps were involved in obtaining participants for this study. First, the researcher used snow-ball sampling approach by inviting a Muslim counsellor known to have experienced challenges in dealing with effeminate clients to recommend other Muslim counsellors who have had experienced the same challenges. Individuals recommended were contacted to identify their