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Self-Efficacy Among Students and Professionals in the Field of Counseling/Psychotherapy

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A B S T R A C T

The study aims to explore the Self-efficacy of students and professionals in counseling and psychotherapy and their relationship with Career Commitment in the mental health support field. This could provide recommendations for those who wish to study and become professional counselors or psychotherapists. The research sample included 171 participants involved in the fields of counseling psychology and clinical psychology, with 27.8% male and 72.2% female. The study employed a 37-item abbreviated version of the Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSE) and Career Commitment Scale, using a combination of online and direct survey methods. The results showed that Self-efficacy was highest in the areas of Microskills and Awareness of Values, and lowest in dealing with Difficult Client Behaviors. The research also indicates that various aspects of Self-efficacy among counselors and psychotherapists significantly impact their career commitment in this field.

Keywords: Counseling Self-estimate; Career commitment; Self-efficacy; Students; Professionals; Counseling; Psychotherapy

1. Introduction

Counseling and psychotherapy Self-efficacy is regarded as a crucial factor that significantly influences the effectiveness of service delivery in these fields. This impact extends to the quality of counseling and therapy sessions. Numerous studies worldwide have highlighted the importance of Self-efficacy in counseling and psychotherapy for both the personal development of mental health professionals and the quality of their counseling sessions. The Self-efficacy of these professionals significantly affects their quality of life. Research by Fatih Aydin & Hatice Odaci (2020) has shown that Self-efficacy is directly linked to the health of the supervised individuals (counselors) and indirectly impacts their perceived happiness through characteristics of hope and anxiety.

For mental health professionals, a strong belief in their counseling and psychotherapy Self-efficacy allows them to perceive themselves as competent and capable professionals who can effectively fulfill their duty to assist others, especially those facing challenges (Aydin & Odaci, 2020). This counseling/psychotherapy Self-efficacy is an extension of Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory and can be defined as a counselor's belief in their "ability to effectively counsel clients in the near future" (Larson & Daniels, 1998, p. 180), including the capability to handle tasks related to therapy, such as executing basic helping skills, managing therapy sessions, or dealing with challenging clinical situations (Lent et al., 2003). This belief enables mental health professionals to feel more efficacious, recognizing themselves as more professional and helpful.

In Vietnam, research on counseling/psychotherapy Self-efficacy is still limited. This scarcity leads to challenges for recent graduates in counseling psychology and clinical psychology, as well as practicing professionals, in accessing these resources. However, with societal advancement and the increasing prevalence of mental health issues, the field of psychology, particularly counseling and psychotherapy, is expected to grow, thus elevating the demand for access to resources, knowledge, and skills, including counseling/psychotherapy Self-efficacy.

This raises questions about the current state of Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy among students and professionals in Vietnam. What are the factors influencing their Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy?

2. Research Method

2.1 Scale

Two primary tools were utilized in this study:

Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSE): Developed by Larson et al. (1992) and refined through a series of studies on individuals training to become counselors. This scale consists of 37 items across five dimensions: Microskills, Process, Difficult Client Behaviors, Cultural Competence, and Awareness of Values. Participants were asked to respond to each item on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

Career Commitment Scale: Created by Carson and Bedeian (1994), this scale is designed to measure the degree of commitment to one's profession and is applicable across various occupations. For the purposes of this survey, to ensure the relevance to the counseling profession, all phrases such as "this profession," "this job," or "this career field" were replaced with "counseling work." The scale includes 24 items. Factor analysis on the study sample led to the removal of 2 items with weak loadings and identified 6 factor groups: Consciousness (5 items), Career Identity (6 items), Career Planning (3 items), Career Resilience (4 items), Career Ideals (2 items), and Professional Pride (2 items). Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

2.2 Research data

The survey was conducted using two methods: deep interviews and online surveys via Google Forms. The participants were individuals who are currently studying or working in the fields of counseling psychology and clinical psychology. This includes students, bachelors, masters, and professionals in the field of psychology. The majority of the participants were from the Hanoi area and were students at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi. Additionally, there were professionals from various counseling centers, the psychological support hotline 111 in Hanoi, and other provinces in Vietnam such as Da Nang and Binh Duong, as well as some central provinces.

Characteristic		Quantity	Percentage (%)
Biology sex	Men	39	27,8
	Women	132	72,2
Education program	Psychology	159	93
	Difference	12	7
Education level	College Student/ Postgraduate Student	105	61,4
	Bachelor	23	13,5
	Master	43	25,1

2.3 Data Processing Methods

Independent Samples T-test;

One-Way ANOVA;

Bivariate Correlation Analysis (Correlation);

Linear Regression Analysis;

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA);

3. Research Result

3.1 Current State of Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy among Students and Professionals

The average Self-efficacy scores for both students and counselors/psychotherapists are moderate. The highest scores were recorded for belief in Awareness of Values (4.34/6) and Microskills (4.33/6). Following these, belief in Cultural Competence scored 3.72 on a 6-point scale, then Process with an average score of 3.47/6. The lowest was Difficult Client Behaviors, with an average score of 3.44/6.

Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Microskills	4,33	0,66	2,83	6,00
Process	3,47	0,88	1,00	6,00
Difficult Client Behaviors	3,44	0,75	1,29	5,71
Cultural Competence	3,72	0,84	1,33	6,00
Awareness of Values	4,34	0,87	2,00	6,00

All aspects of Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy are highly correlated with each other. Pearson correlation analysis indicates that the relationships between the factors within the Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy are generally strong. However, the correlation between belief in Process and Difficult Client Behaviors is not significant.
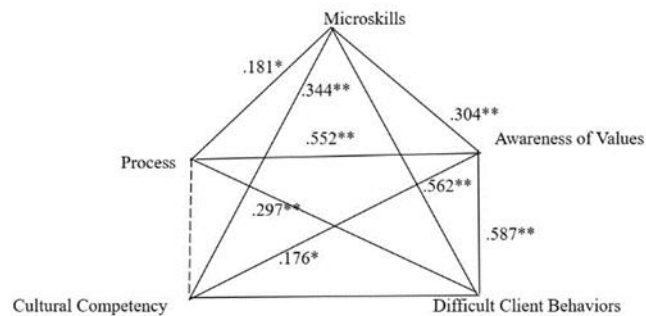

3.2 Current status of Career Commitment among students and professionals in the field of Counseling/Psychotherapy

The aspects of Career Commitment among the study participants indicate that Consciousness received the highest score, with an average of 4.23 out of 5, reflecting a relatively high level of commitment. This was followed by Career Ideals, which had a mean score of 4.05 out of 5. Lastly, the average score for Career Resilience was the lowest, at 2.81.

Career Commitment Category	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Consciousness	4,23	0,59	1,8	5
Career Identity	3,26	0,7	1,5	4,83
Career Planning	3,77	0,8	1,67	5
Career Resilience	2,81	0,79	1	4,75
Career Ideals	4,05	0,77	1	5

The aspects of Career Commitment are interrelated. Using Pearson's correlation analysis, it was found that the correlations among the factors within Career Commitment are all at a high level. However, it is noteworthy that there is no correlation between Career Planning and Career Resilience.
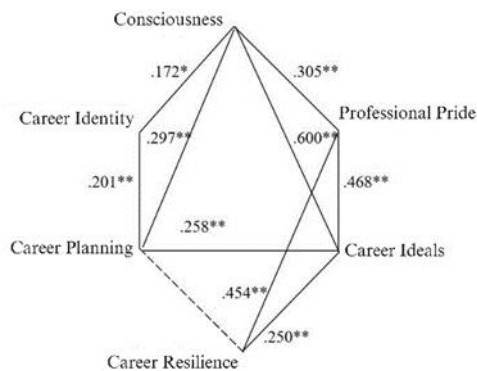
3.3 Factors influencing Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy

The demographic factors compared in the study with Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy include: gender, education program, education level, participation in work related to the field, enrollment in courses related to the field, and whether individuals are currently engaged in counseling or therapy. A T-test was conducted to evaluate the relationship between these demographic variables and aspects of Counseling Self-efficacy. The results indicated no significant correlation between the demographic variables and the dimensions of Counseling Self-efficacy. All factors considered were analyzed using the T-test; however, for variables with three factors, one factor was excluded due to insufficient sample size, with fewer than 30 participants.

However, the study "Counseling Self-Efficacy and Professional Commitment: The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence and Gender Identification" by Adeyemo David Akinlolu et al. (2019) indicated that the relationship between self-efficacy and gender is significant. Additionally,

research has shown that participants with a doctoral degree achieve significantly higher scores in Counseling Self-Efficacy (CSE) compared to previous studies, which suggest that doctors tend to have higher CSE levels than master's degree holders (Melchert et al., 1996). The relationship between CSE and education level remains unclear in some studies. Generally, CSE is stronger among individuals with at least some counseling experience compared to those without (Melchert, Hays, Wiljanen, & Kolocek, 1996; Tang et al., 2004).

Thus, this study differs from previous research in several ways. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is the limited sample size in this study, along with considerable disparities in the number of participants across groups. This variability is a factor that should be considered in future research.

3.4 The relationship between Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy and Career Commitment among students and professionals in the field of Counseling/Psychotherapy

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis indicate that Career Commitment has a statistically significant moderate positive correlation with Microskills ($r = 0.405$, $p < 0.01$), process ($r = 0.416$, $p < 0.01$), difficult client behaviors ($r = 0.367$, $p < 0.01$), and awareness of values ($r = 0.371$, $p < 0.01$). Cultural competence shows a weak correlation ($r = 0.210$, $p < 0.01$). In summary, Career Commitment exhibits a moderate positive correlation with all aspects of counseling Self-efficacy, except for cultural competence, which has a weak impact.

Career Commitment has a direct positive influence on Microskills (regression coefficient $B = 0.181$, $SE = 0.052$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI = [0.078; 0.284], Standardized Regression Coefficient $\beta = 0.281$); Process (regression coefficient $B = 0.098$, $SE = 0.045$, $p = 0.03$, 95% CI = [0.01; 0.187], Standardized Regression Coefficient $\beta = 0.204$); and Value Perception (regression coefficient $B = 0.097$, $SE = 0.038$, $p = 0.012$, 95% CI = [0.021; 0.172], Standardized Regression Coefficient $\beta = 0.2$).

The Self-efficacy of counselors and psychotherapists accounts for 26.7% of the variance in Career Commitment.

The study found that Career Commitment is positively influenced by all aspects of Counseling Self-efficacy. This aligns with previous research, such as Cherniss (1991), which demonstrated that Self-efficacy significantly impacts the Career Commitment of professionals working with people, emphasizing that individuals with higher career confidence tend to remain longer within organizations. Similarly, a study conducted by Niu (2010) indicated that Self-efficacy affects Career Commitment among food service employees.

These studies collectively indicate the influence of Counseling Self-efficacy on Career Commitment. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that individuals with confidence in their abilities are more willing to engage in tasks that showcase these competencies, thereby gaining valuable experience and knowledge essential for continued commitment and development in their professional field, particularly in counseling and psychotherapy. This finding supports all aspects of Counseling Self-efficacy.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research overview regarding Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy and its relationship with Career Commitment, this study was conducted to investigate the current status of Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy among students and professionals in the field. Additionally, it explores the relationship between Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy and Career Commitment.

Data analysis results indicate that there are no differences in Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy among different demographic groups. The study also reveals that the Self-efficacy of students and professionals working in the field of Counseling/Psychotherapy in Vietnam is at a medium level.

Furthermore, the research demonstrates a statistically significant correlation between factors related to Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy and Career Commitment. A predictive model for the impact on Career Commitment was identified.

The findings align with previous studies regarding the relationship and influence between Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy and Career Commitment. However, this study differs from earlier research in terms of the lack of differences in Self-efficacy across demographic groups.

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5. Discussion

Although there have been several contributions as mentioned, the study still has some limitations:

First, the research sample is a convenience sample; therefore, the generalizability of the findings should be approached with caution.

Second, the sample size is limited and not evenly distributed across demographic groups. The number of participants with experience in Counseling/Psychotherapy is relatively small, primarily consisting of college students and post-graduate students, with only a few individuals having extensive experience in the field.

Building on the study of Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy, future research could explore aspects of Career Commitment that may be influenced by Self-efficacy and vice versa, allowing for a deeper examination of each component within these factors. Subsequent studies could develop and investigate individuals with higher levels of training to assess the status of Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy to Career Commitment, thereby

comparing these findings with those of students or newcomers in the field. Research could also adapt the Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy scale to better suit Vietnamese individuals.

The study indicated a strong, positive relationship between Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy and Career Commitment. Therefore, to enhance students' commitment to the counseling/psychotherapy profession after graduation, it is essential to focus on fostering Self-efficacy in this area. By addressing the roots of self-belief, opportunities for practice, work, and experiential learning can be increased.

Enhancing experiences that require effort for success, such as participating in courses, competitions, and training sessions, can provide additional opportunities and positive challenges.

Moreover, there needs to be societal support and attention towards individuals and organizations involved in Counseling/Psychotherapy.

Simultaneously, each individual working in the counseling/psychotherapy field should prioritize their physical and mental well-being, avoiding stress and tension, and engaging in external activities to maintain a balanced personal life. This approach can enhance Counseling/Psychotherapy Self-efficacy and strengthen Career Commitment, ultimately leading to high-quality counseling sessions for clients and a happier life for individuals.

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