

Multicultural Theory of Counseling

Introduction

Multicultural counseling theory is a theory which emphasizes the importance of cultural competency among the counselors. Cultural competency refers to the capability of a specialist to be in a position of understanding a patient's culture and how it influences the counseling processes (Sue, Zane, Nagayama, Hall, & Berger, 2009). This theory is based on the fact that all the helping methods/theories are founded on a cultural context, because every member of a society has a culture which influences his or her decisions. According to this fact, multicultural counseling recognizes the difference in culture among and within clients. This approach assists in developing a counseling program that is specifically designed to meet the needs of the patients and to enhance the effectiveness of the counseling process (Sue et al., 2009). Research has shown that counselors who subscribe to the multicultural theory of counseling have a better chance of understanding the specific needs of their clients and hence are capable of developing a counselling program that satisfies the needs of the latter. This is also based on the fact that when the patients feel that their culture is being appreciated, they begin to feel as part of the counseling program thus enhancing the outcome of the counseling process.

This approach identifies the various ways through which a person's culture influences his/her perception of the world. It is evident that one's culture clearly impacts on how he/she sees the world. This directly influences how the person will perceive the counseling process thus affecting the outcome of such sessions (Sue et al., 2009). The following literature review explores the theory of multicultural counseling to establish its importance in the counseling field as well as to identify the gaps which need to be filled regarding research. Additionally, the literature provides the implications of using this research in the real life situation and how it can

be resourceful in enhancing the effectiveness of the counseling sessions (Nilsson, Love, Taylor, & Slusher, n.d).

Cultural competency is the other concept that is associated with multicultural theory of counselling. It refers to the capability of an individual to understand the cultures of other persons. It is clear that this competency is essential for counselors as it ensures the counseling process is designed to specifically meet the needs of the patient at hand. Through this approach, the quality of counseling services being offered to the minority group is seen to improve, and this is why cultural competency among counselors is being encouraged. Basing on the importance and benefits associated with cultural competency in the counseling field, the respective specialists are encouraged to acquire the skill and offer services that are designed to meet the specific needs of the clients. This is achieved by putting into considerations the specific requirements of the patients and how their needs are likely to be affected by their cultures. It is also noted that there is a gap regarding cultural competency among counselors as well as in the applicability of multicultural theory in the counseling programs. It is thus recommended for scholars in psychology to conduct more research in the area to ensure its applicability in real life situation.

The literature review was developed through intensive analysis of various articles concerning the theory. The findings from the different literature sources which are the same in most of the articles are documented in this literature review as the main themes. From the readings, it is evident that culture has various dimensions. The identified dimensions of culture are limited to the following: universal, ecological, national, regional and racio-ethnic. These factors are the ones which influence a person's culture and determine the general culture that an individual will display. The other theme evident from the readings is counselling relationships. It

is clear that interpersonal relationship exists between the counselor and the patient with a variation being very little. However, this difference is what brings about the importance of multicultural theory approach when counseling people. It is evident that using the method, the relationship between the counselor and the patient is enhanced thus elevating the efficiency of the counseling process.

Literature Review Process

The literature review process involves the assessment of multiple research works related to the topic at hand (multicultural counseling). The process involves a critical analysis of both qualitative and quantitative research on the topic so as to make a conclusion regarding the applicability of the concept in real life situation and to establish its implication for counselors. With the guidance of procedures for qualitative and quantitative research in psychology, the process of collecting, analyzing and reporting the data will be assessed to determine the credibility and reliability of the information published in the analyzed articles before making a conclusion basing on the summary made in the respective reading. Additionally, the research is limited to peer-reviewed sources such as books and articles.

Findings: Themes

Overview of Multicultural Counselling

According to Shamshad, Wilson, Henriksen, & Wind (2011), multicultural counseling happens when the counselor and the patient/client are from two distinctive cultural groups. Because of the various changes that are taking place in the world, multicultural counseling is essential. Vontress (2003) agrees with this argument. According to him, because of the world becoming a global village and people moving to the cities, the counselors should be prepared to

deal with diverse cultures of their patients that would be even different from theirs, and this requires cultural competency which is enhanced through multicultural counseling. According to Vontress (2003), culture can be deemed as the fourth force that complements the other forces of human behavior which are psychodynamic, humanistic and behavioral. From the research, it is evident that various researchers such as Arthur and McMahon (2005) have identified multicultural counseling as the fourth force (Arthur & McMahon, 2005).

Dimensions of Culture

From the readings, it is clear that the scholars agree that there are various dimension of culture. Others consider these dimensions basing on the various factors which influence an individual culture. These dimensions of culture include but are not limited to the following: universal, ecological, national, regional and racial-ethnic. The combinations of these factors are the ones which affect and shape an individual culture (LeBeauf, Smaby, & Maddux, 2009). The universal factor is an aspect which influences the behavior of human beings by the virtue of various biological processes. For instance, the human nature to move with the rhythm of the natural world affects a person's culture (LeBeauf et al., 2009).

The ecological factor is based on the fact that humans are integrating with different forms of environments. These environments have their distinct form of rhythm to which human being adjusts. In the process of adjusting to these rhythms, people develop a distinct culture based on where they are located (LeBeauf et al., 2009).

The third aspect is the culture which is unique for a specific group of people referred to as the national culture. People in a specific country have their system of languages, beliefs, style of government as well as values. This can go as far as to the style of dressing thus determining a

form of culture of an individual. Within a country there exist regions which are likely to influence an individual culture as well as the national culture (LeBeauf et al., 2009).

The last category that impact on the culture of a person is the racial-ethnic group from which a person is coming from. Each race or ethnic group has its form of culture, and this influences an individual's culture in the society. According to LeBeauf et al. (2009), culture has a strong effect on various aspect of life including counseling process. These findings have clearly indicated that culture as a factor has an impact on the counseling process, and counselor's cultural competency is required (LeBeauf et al., 2009).

Counselling Relationship

The various authors identify the importance of attachment and relationship which develop during the counseling sessions. Additionally, the researchers emphasize that establishing this connection is essential for ensuring that the desired outcome of the counseling session is achieved. According to Ponterotto, Mathew, & Raughley (2013), the interpersonal relationship during counseling can be compared to the social, interpersonal relationship, but it differs in some aspects (Ponterotto et al., 2013). The first distinction lies in the fact that interpersonal counseling relationship is aimed to be psychotherapeutic to the patient/client. The second aspect states that, in most instances, the two people involved (counselor and client), are complete strangers. The last element is that there are regulations, concepts, ethical standards, which are supposed to guide the interpersonal relationship process. The fourth aspect is the fact that the client has to make payment to the counselor thus making this interpersonal venture an economic enterprise (Ponterotto et al., 2013).

From the various articles, it is evident that the way a patient interacts with a counselor is influenced by the culture of the individual. The culture of a person impacts on the kind of

information that the individual can disclose to a person, and this directly affects the counseling session as some of the important information which is supposed to determine the counseling session is obtained through the communication (Sheperis, Young, & Daniels, 2015). For instance, in some cultures men do not think it is appropriate to talk about sex with a third party. This will thus influence the kind of information the person discloses to the counselors, and this impacts on the whole counseling process (Sheperis et al., 2015).

Cultural Competency among Counselors

From various articles, it is evident that cultural competency is essential for a multicultural counselor. Cultural competency refers to the good understanding of diverse cultures of individuals and how their cultural system influences the counseling sessions. It is clear that some cultures have their approaches in counseling, and this needs to be understood by a counselor so that he/she can incorporate them when the client needs them to be used. Cultural competency is essential among the discussed specialists due to the fact that people have different cultures, and the understanding of these various cultures enhances the building of a relationship between a counselor and a patient thus enhancing the outcome of the counseling session.

From research conducted by Paone, Malott, & Barr (2015), cultural competency has been able to improve the quality of healthcare, and this makes the approach capable of improving the outcome of counseling sessions. This is based on the fact that it makes the counseling session to be designed according to the needs of the clients hence becoming customer-focused, thus improving the effectiveness of the counseling process (Paone et al., 2015).

Interventions

Multicultural counseling is a good intervention for improving the effectiveness of the counseling process. This is the fact that it makes the process of counseling to be customized

according to the needs of the clients. Additionally, the patients will feel like part of the process since his or her cultural practices are taken into consideration. This will consequently result in a good attachment between the counselor and the client (Lee, Rosen, & McWhirter, 2014).

According to Lee et al. (2014), a focused culture-specific approach is one of the ways through which multicultural counseling is enhanced. This is attained by the counselor's examination of his or her beliefs and attitudes. Basing on this approach, the specialist is encouraged to view an individual on two levels: one as a member of a group and another as an individual. Viewing a person as a group assists in ensuring that the culture of the group from which an individual originates is observed during the counseling session (Lee et al., 2014).

According to Lee et al., (2014), the counselor should be in a position to practice the culture of the patient culture. This can be achieved through the examination of various field researches concerning a group that an individual is coming from, conducting interviews and reading anthropological records on the specific group. This process is essential because it assists the counselor to develop skills as well as strategies that can be used when dealing with the patient at hand Lee et al., 2014).

Additionally, this theory brings out the importance of involving other members of the society who are close to the client such as family during the counseling process. This approach ensures that the family of the patient is involved in the designing of the counseling session. This technique eliminates a risk of conflict which might occur between the services provider and the client. Additionally, this approach ensures that the integrative counseling is achieved. Even though multicultural counseling theory is evident in all methods of counseling, it is obvious that its effect is better in the integrative approach of counseling (Lee et al., 2014).

Integrative counseling, on the one hand, refers to a multidimensional approach which integrates knowledge and competency from different counseling models into a unified method. This technique makes it possible for the adopted model to respond to the changing needs of the clients thus making the counseling session effective (Lee et al., 2014). This approach takes care of various needs of the patient such as personality styles, interest and preferred types of treatment (Carr, Green, & Ponce, 2015). Multicultural theory, on the other hand, enhances the achievement of the integrative counseling approach through the understanding of one's culture and how it affects the counseling process. Using the multicultural theory, counselors are capable of enhancing their integrative method by including the cultural aspect of the patient thus developing a counseling session that is specifically meant to satisfy the needs of the client and to achieve the desired outcomes (Lee et al., 2014).

Another research has established that multicultural counseling improves the counseling process of the minority (Lee et al., 2014). The minorities are found to be locked out from benefitting from some programs which are beneficial to the general public because of their cultural practices. Basing on multicultural practices of counseling, the culture of the minority individuals is identified and the best approach to counseling them is selected. This is achieved by incorporating their religious beliefs into the counseling session and ensuring that they are not violated. This makes them feel like part of the counseling process thus encouraging them to participate in the counseling sessions (Lee et al., 2014).

From the various advantages associated with multicultural competency in the counseling process, it is important for institutions conducting trainings to psychologists to incorporate cultural education. This aspect, though essential to the counseling professionals, is missing. There is a need for the learning session to incorporate it so that counselors are equipped with the

necessary skills regarding people's cultures. This should be done because the cultural diversity within a setting is changing from time to time thus indicating that the discussed specialists will continue to deal with a diverse culture from time to time (Lee et al., 2014).

Gap in the Available Literature

From the literature review, the importance of the application of multicultural counseling theory is evident. Its benefits include but not limited to the improvement of the quality of counseling session, customizing the counseling sessions in accordance to the needs of patients thus encouraging the minority groups to access the counseling sessions.

However, the literature contains a huge gap which indicates that further research is needed concerning this theory. Further studies on the applicability of the theory need to be conducted. This is from the fact that there exists a limited experimental research examining the effectiveness of the theory. Most of the available studies concerning this theory are qualitative in nature. They are developed to examine how the quality of counseling is impacted when this theoretical approach is adopted (Sharf, 2015).

The applicability of this theory is also limited. There is a limited research which elaborates on the importance of this approach in counseling. The study does not expound on the various methods in which the theory can be used to enhance the quality of counseling process. Most of the researches on this theory are limited to establishing its importance but fail to bring out the procedures that should be followed in ensuring the approach is successful. Additionally, most works point out the significance of incorporating multicultural theory and cultural competency education into curriculum system for counselors. However, little research has been conducted on how this should be done and how it will impact on the learning process of the discussed specialists (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2015).

Implication for Counselors

The literature reviews on the multicultural counseling theory means that counselors are supposed to conduct further research concerning this theory. This is derived from the fact that there exists a wide gap which needs research to gain the information which is critical for the applicability of the theory. Additionally, the literature review has provided a background on the areas which need to be focused in the multicultural practices (Davidson, Meghan & Claire 2015).

The other implication is putting of the theory into practice. It is evident that for this theory to be implemented by a counselor, he or she should be culturally competent. Cultural competency in this context refers to the capability of a specialist to understand the clients' culture and the various ways in which it is likely to affect the counseling sessions. From this fact, it is evident that cultural competency goes beyond the understanding of a person's dialect (Davidson, Meghan & Claire 2015). It is the understanding of the belief system of a person and understanding the physical and the non-material aspect of his/her culture. This understanding assists a counselor to develop a counseling session that is designed in accordance to the patients' needs thus resulting to a focused counseling session (Davidson, Meghan & Claire 2015).

It is thus essential for the counselors to develop their cultural skills so that to enable them to create an effective counseling session (Davidson & Hauser, 2015). Cultural competency allows the discussed specialist to achieve an effective interpersonal relationship with the patient. Interpersonal relationship with the client is a factor which greatly impacts on the outcome of the counseling sessions. This is based on the fact that when a good rapport is developed between the patient and the counselor, it is possible for the latter to get the required information from the client (Davidson & Hauser, 2015).

Recommendation

It is recommended that further research on the multicultural approach should be conducted focusing on the empirical quantitative data. This is based on the fact that most of the studies done are not empirical in nature. Getting empirical-based research is essential for determining the field applicability of the theory. Additionally, it is recommended that counselors consider multicultural approach when dealing with the patient. This method can be combined with any of the available counseling techniques, and the effect is the enhancement of the counseling session (Davidson & Hauser, 2015).

Coming up with ways of incorporating cultural competency in education system is also essential as this will ensure that the proper skills are given to the counselors while graduating from colleges. The specialists are as well encouraged to attend offsite trainings and development sessions organized by institutions. These programs have refreshment lessons where counselor's skills on cultural competency are upgraded through the teaching of content based on the current changes taking place in the world (Sue, Jackson, Rasheed, & Rasheed, 2016).

Conclusion

Multicultural counseling theory refers to a theory that places much focus on the understanding of the client's culture and how it influences the outcome of the counseling session. It recognizes the fact that culture varies from one person to another and that a person's culture impacts on the counseling process. Basing on this, the multicultural theory argues that it is essential for the counselors to understand how ones' culture influences the counseling process. From the literature review, it is evident that one area of counseling where culture plays an important role is the establishment of a relationship between the services provider and the client.

Creation of the interpersonal relationship is essential during counseling programs so that the patient can feel free with the counselor thus making him/her trust the specialist.

From the literature review, it is evident that there is limited research concerning multicultural theory of counseling despite its important application in the counseling sessions. This theory provides guidelines on how to use cultural competency to establish the good interpersonal relationship which enhances the effectiveness of the counseling sessions. Interpersonal relationship between the counselor and the patient is one of the key factors which determine the connection that the parties will establish. The good connection is associated with counseling session which is effective and fulfilling to the patient. Consequently, this results in a counseling session that leads to the satisfaction of the client.

Basing on the above advantage and other benefits evident from the literature review, it is recommended that further research should be conducted concerning the applicability of the theory. The recommended study should bring out the importance of this approach in enhancing the quality of counseling that psychologists can offer to their patients. The establishment of the gap in the literature review concerning the theory is an indicator that there is little interest in this theory despite its significance. Through the literature review, it is evident that cultural competency is an essential aspect of the counseling session which needs to be considered by all the counselors. Cultural competency refers to the capability of a counselor to understand the various effects that one's culture has on their counseling processes.