Educational Research Statistics: Descriptive & Comparative:

Brief Literature Review: Counselor Wellness

Bianca D. Goodrum

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Educational Research Statistics: Descriptive & Comparative:

Brief Literature Review: Counselor Wellness

The concept of wellness is one that is crucial and applicable to all individuals; particularly to those whom work in the *helping profession*. “The practice of counseling is rich with challenges that impact counselor wellness. Consequently, counselors with poor wellness may not produce optimal services for the clients they serve. Furthermore, wellness is regarded as a cornerstone in developmental, strength-based approaches to counseling and is an important consideration when training counselors” (Blount & Mullen, 2015).The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs terms wellness as “the state of being, integrating the mind, body and spirit for the purpose of achieving and maintaining personal health” (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2009).

In the piece entitled Toward a Culture of Counselor Wellness; the authors stated, “If we believe that healing takes place in relationship (and there is much research to support this premise), then the healing of counselor impairment and the promotion of counselor wellness will also take place in relationship-not simply in the intrinsically hierarchical relationships between counselor and client, counselor educator and counselor trainee, or supervisor and supervisee, but more generally in the “between” of the relationships among all counselors in the profession” (Hazler, Kottler, Lawson and Venart, 2007).

A thoughtful counselor is one who is aware and can acknowledge their own needs to ensure they are offering quality care to their clients and beyond. It is imperative the counseling profession facilitates dialogue about the importance of *“wellness”*. Therefore, it is imperative that research is conducted to provide a voice to how vital wellness is to the counseling profession.

When looking at counselors-in-training (CIT’s) and the importance of discussing wellness while mastering clinical counseling skills, the research found that the profession can be taxing even for the most “*well*” counselors. The research furthered discussed the importance of CIT’s having the opportunity to speak with their supervisor about the potential for emotional burnout, emotional attachment to clients, coping skills of managing stress and self-care activities as a way to incorporate the discussion of wellness into their training (Trice-Black, Frink, Thompson, 2017).

The wellness of counseling students in comparison to non-counseling students was of particular interest in an article written in 2003 quantitative piece. The primary research question focused on what was the overall levels of wellness of counseling students? The authors discovered as a result of the study and data analysis that the entry-level counseling students and doctoral students reported higher scores than the general adult norm group for sense of control and work. Entry-level students, but not doctoral students reported scores that were statistically higher than the norm group on self-care. Overall; of the 19 scales measured in the WEL; 8 of these provided differences among counseling students and adult norm group and resulted in the counseling students having greater wellness. (Booth, Mobley & Myers, 2003).

A qualitative research article speaking to wellness in the form of mindfulness focused on the following 5 questions. How do you define mindfulness, what is the nature of your mindfulness practice, how did you get started with the practices, how do your mindfulness practices impact your counseling/supervision and how do your practices impact your own self-care? The researchers found through conducting interviews and thinking significantly about the topic mindfulness allowed for a pace to be fully present and more mindful in all areas of their own lives. The authors further stated that conducting the study the allowed them to have a greater sense of empathy, genuineness, clarity and connection in their lives” (Morgan & Rothaupt, 2007).

A quantitative piece looking at a pilot wellness program for counselor educators found that “whether providing simple email reminders, structured presentations, or a variety of classes and outings, the pilot-study results suggest that promoting a wellness philosophy throughout the counselor education program seemed to encourage students to address their own wellness needs flexibly” (Smith-Adcock, Thompson, E., Thompson, I and Wolf 2014).

Lastly, a research study aimed to examine the effects of a wellness focused intervention on mental health counseling practicum students whom were enrolled in a CACREP program. The findings pointed to similar research studies that seek to the importance of an ongoing wellness focus. Hence, the importance for CIT’s and professional counselors to consistently tend to their wellness due to the nature of their work (Davis-Gage, Lindo, Meany-Walen, 2016).

“The concern is that if counselors, while in training, are not encouraged to practice self-care, they may be less likely to practice personal self-care when they graduate and become new professionals. Moreover, if counselors do not focus on their own wellness needs, they may fail to address their clients’ wellness needs(Smith-Adcock, Thompson, E., Thompson, I and Wolf, 2014).

It is imperative the counseling profession speaks to the wellness of not only their clients, but also the wellness of oneself. The topic of *“wellness”* can be elusive at times, hard to understand or put into practice, but it is imperative the counseling profession is intentional about conversations about wellness to ensure well-balanced professionals.

References

Smith-Adcock, S., Thompson, E., Thompson, I., Wolf, C. (2014). Refresh your mind, rejuvenate your body, renew your spirit: A pilot wellness program for counselor education. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 70* (1) 55-75.

Trice-Black, S., Frick, M., Thompson, E. (2011). Counselor-in-training perceptions of supervision practices related to self-care and burnout. *The Professional Counselor: Research & Practice 5* (3) 152-162.

Blount, A., Mullen, P. (2015). Development of an integrative wellness: Supervising counselors- in-training. *The Professional Counselor 5* (1) 100-113.

Booth, S. Mobley, K., Myers, J. (2003). Wellness of counseling students: Practicing what we preach. *Journal of Counselor Education & Supervision, 42* (3) 264-274.

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2009). 2009 standards. Retrieved from http://www.cacrep.org/2009standards.

Davis-Gage, D., Lindo, N., Meany-Walen, K. (2016). The impact of wellness-focused supervision on mental health counseling practicum students. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 94* 464-472.

Halzer, R., Kottler, J., Lawson, G., Venart, E. (2007). Toward a culture of counselor wellness. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development 46* 5-19.

Morgan, M., Rothaupt, J. (2006). Counselors’ and counselor educators’ practice of mindfulness: A qualitative inquiry. *Journal of Counseling & Values 52 40-54*.