

Mandatory Personal Therapy and its Outcomes among Postgraduate Counseling Students in Selected Universities in Nairobi County, Kenya

Joyzy Pius Egunjobi, Ph.D., Psycho-Spiritual Institute, Marist International University College Nairobi; Stephen Asatsa, Ph.D; and Josephine Adhiambo, Ph.D.,
The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract

Personal therapy is experienced as a mandatory requirement in many counseling and psychotherapy trainings worldwide with the view that it yields positive outcomes in terms of personal and professional developments. However, some counseling students think this is not beneficial in their training. This study therefore assessed mandatory personal therapy and its outcomes among postgraduate counseling students in selected universities in Nairobi, Kenya. The target population was all the 635 postgraduate counseling students at the Nairobi University, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Daystar University, and Tangaza University College. These universities were selected from the universities training clinical and counseling psychologists using stratified random sampling techniques. There were 245 counseling students who participated in survey, while ten counseling students, five professional counselors, and five counselor educators participated in the interview. The findings showed that 91.7% of the counseling students have positive perception of personal therapy as a mandatory requirement in their training; that personal therapy as a mandatory requirement contributed to their personal development in terms of self-awareness (94%) and general wellbeing (94%); it also contributed to their professional development where they witness theories in practice (85%), learned counseling skills (93%) and techniques (85%), used personal therapy for self-care (93%). However, there were inconsistencies in the students' knowledge of the required sessions which they considered too much. It was recommended that there should be uniformity in the number of hours of personal therapy required across the universities involved in counselors' and psychologists' training.

Keywords: Mandatory Personal Therapy, Personal Therapy, Mandatory Requirement, Counseling Outcome, Personal Development, Professional Development, Counseling Students, Self-awareness, Self-care

Introduction and Background

An essential part of counselors' training is the mandatory personal therapy for counseling students. This is so true in many counseling programs across the world including Kenya. This is justifiable following the Latin adage, *Nemo dat quod non habet*, meaning, you cannot give what you do not have. There is also a proposition that one will be a better counselor having been in personal therapy to deal with personal issues. This will reflect an ancient Latin proverb, *medice, cura te ipsum*, (physician, heal thyself).

While the idea and the intention of mandatory personal therapy is plausible, mandatory personal therapy, as part of training requirement may not receive positive outlooks because it is mandatory. These may affect the counseling outcomes as well as professionalism that the program intends to instill in the counseling students. This study, therefore, assessed counseling outcomes of mandatory personal therapy among counseling students in the selected universities in Nairobi County, Kenya.

No one is immune from life challenges of a biopsychosociotechno-spiritual nature (Egunjobi, 2019a). Egunjobi also stated that, therapists who invest their time and wisdom in treating others, especially those who suffer from mental illness and challenges are themselves not immune from suffering the same or similar mental illness and challenges. This idea was portrayed by Carl Jung's wounded healer; a term he derived from the legend of a Greek doctor, known as Asclepius, who in recognition of his own wounds, established a sanctuary at Epidaurus where others could be healed of their wounds (Jung, 1970). This makes mental health profession a challenging profession since the counselor is also prone to being infected by the client's psychological wounds or having his or her psychological wounds reopened (Egunjobi, 2019b; Luton, 2019). A wounded healer who is not aware of his or her wounds can be dangerous and become a 'wounded wounder' (Egunjobi, 2019b).

Counselors are therefore encouraged to seek personal therapy to deal with their own mental health issues which they may have been suffering before taking up counseling profession or which may surface due to offering counseling services. The counselor's unresolved issues can be triggered during counseling session in form of countertransference. Hence, Sigmund Freud (1937) cautioned other analysts to manage their feelings and issues within themselves or to seek

therapy in order to deal with them. For Freud, personal therapy is the deepest and most rigorous part of clinical training. Rhetorically he asked, “where and how is the poor wretch to acquire the ideal qualification which he will need in this profession? The answer is in an analysis of himself, with which his preparation for the future activity begins” (p. 246). This analysis of the analyst is materialized in personal therapy where the therapist is a client of another therapist.

In the United States of America, while personal therapy is neither required in the training of psychologists or counselors nor required to obtain licensure in mental health disciplines such as psychiatry, clinical psychology, etc., some specific training programs may require it, and a large number of programs recommend personal therapy for their trainees (Reidbord, 2019). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) had no formal policy regarding personal counseling for students. CACREP accredited programs only require students to experience 10 hours of group counseling instead (CACREP, 2016a, Section 2, 6h). The American Psychological Association (APA, 2017) and the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014) also do not require personal therapy as an important and necessary element of licensure or certification for psychologists and counselors. Notwithstanding, many therapists themselves do seek personal therapy. As Reidbord (2019) puts it, mandated, urged, or independent choice, many practicing psychotherapists do claim experience in "the other chair".

In the United Kingdom, the British Association for Counseling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the British Psychoanalytic Council (BPC) and the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP), as part of the SCoPEd collaboration, came up with requirements for accreditation which require no personal therapy for qualified counselors, but requires personal development (a form of personal therapy) for accredited counselors (BACP, 2018).

While there are many universities and colleges of higher learning in different countries within the African continent offering mental health related courses, it is not clear how many of them require personal therapy for trainees. Studies in this regard are not readily available. One thing that is evident in counselor education is that students are required to observe a certain number of hours of practicum and on-site supervision. In Nigeria, for example, not all the universities offering psychological and counseling programs require personal therapy (Egunjobi, 2020). In Kenya, however, as Egunjobi noted, many psychological or counseling training programs at different levels: certificate, diploma, bachelor, master, or doctoral require personal therapy for

trainees. Also, counselor's personal therapy (minimum 10 sessions) is listed as part of the professional development on the webpage of the Kenyan Counseling and Psychological Association (KCPA, n.d.).

Personal therapy for either counseling students or for professional counselors seems to gear towards certain outcomes such as attainment of psychological wellbeing, acquisition of counseling knowledge, techniques, and skills, and self-care. Norcross (2010) opined that requiring therapy as part of counselor education, would teach counselors early in their careers to recognize and cope with difficult personal mental or emotional circumstances and by doing so, decrease the chances that such problems would go untended for long periods.

Although, for the Counseling students, personal therapy is a path to knowledge and skill acquisition by observing the therapist, there is the possibility of negative attitudes towards personal therapy because it is mandatory. It is assumed that every counselor should appreciate counseling and should employ the same service when facing personal life challenges. Personal therapy is one way of therapist's self-care. But when this is made mandatory, there is possibility of a therapist showing resistance or just undergoing the therapy for academic purpose. For instance, Rizq and Target (2010) found one of the participants in the interview of 12 UK qualified counseling psychologists who had practiced between 3 and 7 years expressed that "I felt anger and resistance about the mandatory nature of the therapy. This disrupted my ability to engage fully with the therapist (keeping my guard up)" (p. 5).

Bhatia and Gelso (2017) underscored that examining all variables of counseling outcomes in the studies from the therapist's perspective is prone to therapists' tendency to overestimate positive outcomes. They found that the components of a tripartite model of the therapeutic relationship: working alliance, transference configuration, and real relationship accounted for 27% of the variance in counseling outcome and only the real relationship and the working alliance predicted session outcome when all the components were looked at simultaneously in a regression model.

Studies have also indicated that, there can be negative outcomes in therapy; meaning that, some clients do get worse. Koskina (2012), for example, reported psychological distress, difficulties in relationship with the therapists, and interference of personal therapy with their therapeutic work among some Greek clients. Also, Malikiosi-Loizos (2013) and Kumari (2011) noted some studies show that personal therapy of counseling students can lead to depression, excessive

preoccupation with self-exploration, inadequate resolution of problems, relationship difficulties, and increased levels of stress. Although, this does not mean that all negative instances of outcome are due to the result of the treatment. Some clients may be on a progressive decline that a therapist is unable to stop (Psychology, 2020).

Roberts and Frenzo (2013) offered some ethical related reasons for not requiring personal therapy: First is the possibility of dual relationships between faculty and students, as well as power differential concerns; second is the student/client's confidentiality and balancing that with the ability of faculty to ensure the student is addressing the goals set by faculty; third are the aspects of the student/client meeting counseling goals in a timely manner, as well as cultural and legal concerns. In the matter of dual relationship, a faculty member who is also a professional counselor may find him/herself interacting with the student as a lecturer and a counselor; a situation which can constitute ethical dilemma when the student-client brings the class concern to counseling session. This situation may challenge the ethical principle of confidentiality as the class issue may require involving other faculty members.

Whether training program for counselors should include mandatory personal therapy continues to generate debates and raise ethical questions for some educators and students. Yet, this concern receives little research attention in recent times. The possible negative attitudes to seeking counseling and stigma surrounding mental illness create many barriers that may hinder individuals, including counseling students and professionals themselves, from seeking mental health services (Sullivan & Mancillas, 2015). If that be the case, the expected counseling outcomes may not be achieved except there is positive outlook or perception of mandatory personal therapy.

Assumption cannot be made that a desired outcome of mandatory personal therapy for training programs will produce better counselors after graduation. There is need to investigate the counseling education and training programs requiring mandatory personal therapy. This will be necessary to find out whether mandatory personal therapy is achieving what it is intended to achieve. Also, to assess if it is beneficial to the wellbeing and professional development of the students.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to assess mandatory personal therapy and its outcomes among counseling students in the selected universities in Nairobi, Kenya. The incomes are investigated in terms of personal development and professional development.

Methodology

Mixed methods concurrent design was adopted. This involved collections of both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating them, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks (Creswell, 2018).

The target population was all 635 postgraduate (Masters and Doctorate) clinical psychology and counseling psychology students from the randomly selected universities in Nairobi. These are the University of Nairobi, Daystar University, Catholic Universities of Eastern Africa, and Tangaza University College.

Yamane's (1967) formula was used to calculate the sample size with the assumption of 95% confidence level, and p value of 0.5. The sample size of this study was therefore, 245 postgraduate students of counseling psychology and clinical psychology. In order to obtain an in-depth result, 10 postgraduate students from the sample size, and 10 professional counselors and counselor educators (five each) participated in the interviews. This brings the total sample size to 255.

The quantitative data was collected via survey and was descriptively analyzed by percentages pie chart, and histogram. The qualitative data was collected using interview guides and was analyzed using content and thematic analysis.

Results

The results as presented in this study show the perception and the counseling outcomes of personal therapy as a mandatory requirement in the counselors' training in the universities in Nairobi, Kenya.

Perception of Personal Therapy as a Mandatory Requirement in Counselors' Training

The perception of personal therapy as a mandatory requirement in the counselors' training was investigated alongside the number of hours of personal therapy required. The findings are presented in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

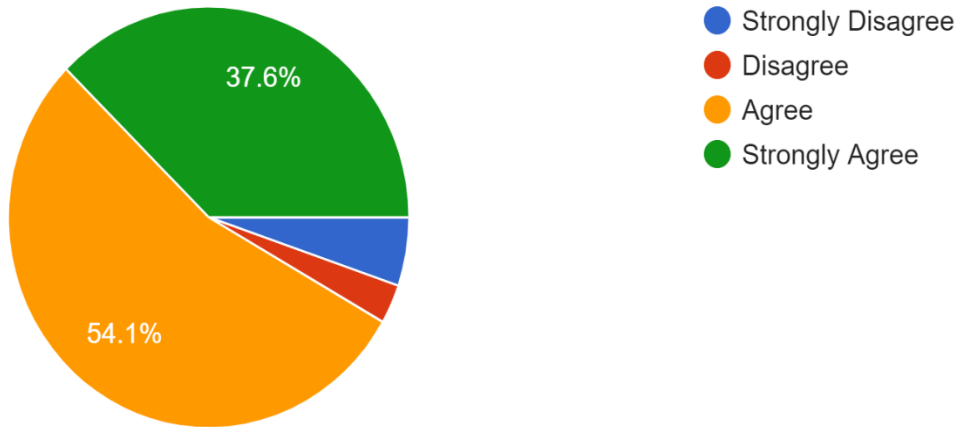


Figure 1: Perception of Personal Therapy as a Mandatory Requirement

The perception of mandatory personal therapy was sought from the counseling students. As shown in Figure 1, 91.7% of the students “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” that they had positive perception of mandatory personal therapy.

The counseling students were also asked about what they think personal therapy should be in counselors’ training, Figure 2 represents their responses.

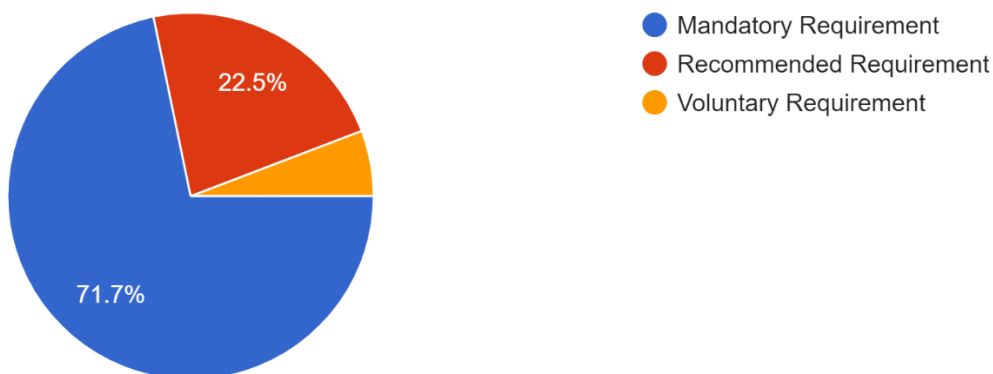


Figure 2: What Personal Therapy should be in Counselors’ Training

Majority (71.7%) of the counseling students across the selected universities hold that personal therapy should be a mandatory requirement for all counseling students as shown in Figure 2.

The reasons for the positive perception of personal therapy as a mandatory requirement were offered by the interview participants. Student 6 who is a Ph.D. student awaiting graduation expressed that,

Personal therapy is an important thing because different students will be experiencing different issues during their learning. This will be an opportunity to deal with those issues.... And again, ... they are also learning, so that it will be very important to them to learn from the same process (they too want to engage others in). (Interview, November 30, 2020).

And for Counselor 3, mandatory personal therapy is important to limit the abuse of the counseling profession which she had observed with “many psychologists who are complicated, unmanageable, emotionally immature and plain unaware of their emotions and attitudes” (Interview, November 26, 2020).

Although Figure 2 showed that about 22.5% of the counseling students hold that personal therapy should be recommended and not mandatory, Student 1 opined that while personal therapy may be recommended, it should not be voluntary as held by few students (5.8%). In the same line, Counselor 1 stated that, if it is made voluntary, “it may not, and it will not achieve the purpose for which we are training” (Interview, November 25, 2020).

Notwithstanding, if it is to remain mandatory, Educator 2 noted, it should be accompanied with very good explanation. This is because,

It is through proper information and explanation that people will be able to connect with the reason for being asked to experience personal therapy as a requirement.... If proper explanation can be given at the onset, before they engaged in those counseling sessions, counseling students will feel more comfortable.... (Interview, November 25, 2020).

Counseling students were also asked concerning the number hours required of them from the mandatory personal therapy. Figure 3 represents their responses.

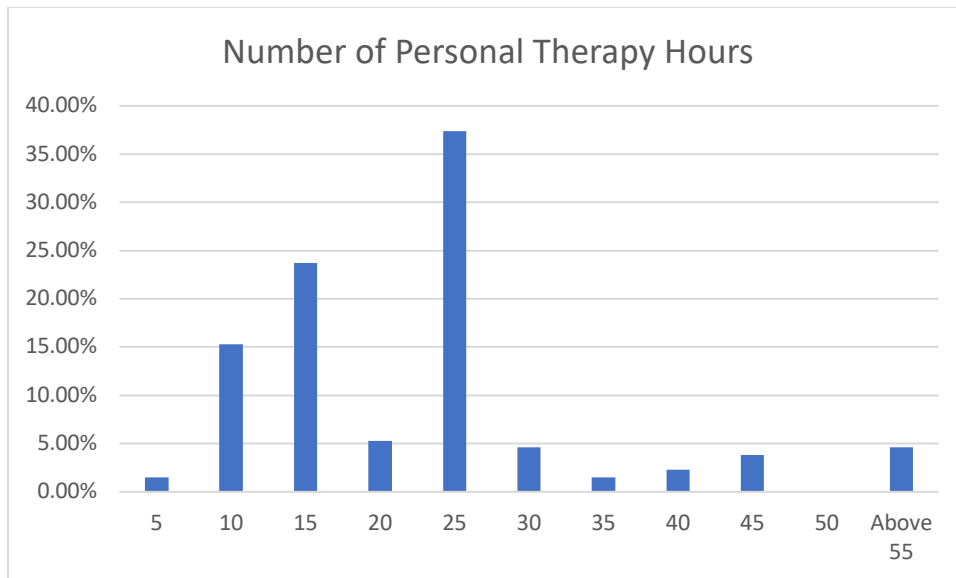


Figure 3: Number of Mandatory Personal Therapy Hours

It was found that about 37% indicated that 25 hours of personal therapy was required of counseling students before the completion of the program. Another 24% stated that the number of hours required was 15. From the responses however, it was not clear which school had 25 hours and which school had 55 hours and above. The reason for this was that there was no consistent in the number of hours from the selected universities. Meaning that different therapy hours were reported by students from the same universities. In order to understand this discrepancy, the research also investigated individual responses from the same university. In one university, the master students reported 15, 20, and 25 hours of mandatory personal therapy. Among the PhD student respondents from another university, they reported 10, 15, and 25.

It can also be inferred that counseling students are required to undergo between as little as five hours and as much as 55 hours of personal therapy during their training either as part of practicum requirement or training program. This researcher sought to understand the inconsistencies in the number of hours of personal therapy required in the selected universities and could only link the inconsistencies to lack of proper education of the students or information about what the personal therapy entails on the part of the faculty.

For those who already engage in it, they know how many hours of personal therapy are required. Those who have not, however, are likely to be students who had their undergraduate studies in another area of studies (e.g. education; sociology) and are just beginning their counseling

training at either the master’s or Ph.D. level. They may have had their undergraduate or master’s degree in psychological related studies that do not require personal therapy like those who studied applied psychology or educational psychology. Student 7, a Ph.D. student of counseling psychology expressed in an interview, “before I went for counseling psychology course, my orientation was teaching. I am a teacher by profession” (November 25, 2020).

Mandatory Personal Therapy and its Outcomes

The outcomes of personal therapy as a mandatory requirement in counseling students’ training were investigated in terms of personal development and professional development. Table 1 shows the findings in this regard.

Table 1: Mandatory Personal Therapy and its Outcomes among Postgraduate Counseling Students

	Strongly Disagree (Approx.%)	Disagree (Approx.%)	Agree (Approx.%)	Strongly Agree (Approx.%)
Personal Therapy as a mandatory requirement helped me to become more aware of myself	1	5	50	44
Personal Therapy as a mandatory requirement helped me to deal with my personal issues	1	5	63	31
My life has changed for better since I started my personal therapy as a mandatory requirement	2	9	64	25
I learned some counseling theories during my mandatory personal therapy	3	12	65	20
I learned some counseling skills during my mandatory personal therapy	4	3	66	27
I learned some counseling techniques during my mandatory	3	3	73	12

personal therapy

My experience with my therapists
has enhanced my counseling
practice

2

5

59

34

Personal therapy was a mean of
self-care during my practicum

2

5

62

31

Personal Development as an Outcome of Mandatory Personal Therapy

Counseling students were asked in the questionnaire of the influence of mandatory personal therapy on their personal development in self-awareness, resolving personal issues, and general growth. The responses of the counseling students to the online questionnaire about the outcome of personal therapy as a mandatory requirement are presented in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, 94% of the counseling students “Strongly agree” and “Agree” that attending mandatory personal therapy helped them to become self-aware. Another 94% also “Strongly agree” and “Agree” that it helped them in dealing with their personal issues. And 89% of the counseling students “Strongly agree” and “Agree” that mandatory personal therapy changed their lives for better.

From interviews, the participants reported that mandatory personal therapy contributed to their personal development. The responses were presented here in themes:

- i. ***Awareness of Self:*** The postgraduate counseling students reported becoming aware of oneself and learning to accept and relief oneself.
- ii. ***Awareness of Others:*** It was the experience of postgraduate counseling students that they gained awareness of others by becoming more attentive, understanding, and appreciating what other people are going through.
- iii. ***Empathy:*** They also learned to be empathic.
- iv. ***Wellbeing:*** The postgraduate counseling students verbalized noticing general wellbeing especially in their physical, psychological, sociological, and spiritual wellness because they were able to resolve personal issues.

- v. **Personal Growth:** Mandatory personal therapy accorded the postgraduate counseling students the ability to evaluate personal goals and growth, to relate with others more maturely, and constantly working on inferences and projections when they arise.

Although, there are a significant number of participants who saw personal therapy as a mandatory requirement contributing positively towards their personal development, there are those of great minority who do not see it so: six percent (6%) disagreed that mandatory personal therapy helped them in their self-awareness; six percent (6%) disagreed that it helped them to deal with their personal issues; and eleven (11%) percent disagreed that they experienced significant change in their lives due to mandatory personal therapy. Their disagreements were not towards personal therapy, rather, for being made a mandatory requirement. Hence, Educator 1 lamented,

It is nothing, I am telling you, it is nothing because, like I said, the approach was not really for self-discovery. If I need self-discovery and seek personal therapy, it would be more effective than pushing me for therapy sessions. It is like a proverb that says, you can force a horse to the river, but you cannot force it to drink water. So, it really did not contribute to my personal development. It was just a requirement, and you have to do it. (Interview, November 24, 2020).

Professional Development as an Outcome of Mandatory Personal Therapy

How mandatory personal therapy influenced professional development of the counseling students was investigated through questionnaires and interview guide. The responses from the questionnaire are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 revealed that, majority (between 85% and 95%) of the counseling students ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ that through personal therapy as a mandatory requirements in their training, they learned some counseling theories, counseling skills, counseling techniques, enhanced their counseling practice, and utilizes personal therapy for self-care during practicum.

These showed that personal therapy as a mandatory requirement yielded a positive outcome in the area of professional development. In other words, personal therapy as a mandatory requirement accorded the counseling students the opportunity to put what they learned in the

classrooms into practice. This was emphasized by Counselor 2 when he said, “In Kenya, mostly when people have done theories and skills and are going for practicum, that is when they are told that it is time to go for personal therapy” (Interview, November 25, 2020). Although, this depends on the university, he noted.

The findings on the professional development were supported by the interview data which can be thematized as:

- i. Awareness:* Through mandatory personal therapy, students gained greater awareness of their personal and professional identity.
- ii. Eye Opener:* Mandatory personal therapy was an eye opener to the therapeutic process and experiencing different approach to counseling from different therapist.
- iii. Learned Counseling Process:* By experiencing mandatory personal therapy students gained further insight to counselling process such as setting, sitting, exploration and intervention.
- iv. Learned Counseling Theories:* Mandatory personal therapy accorded the students the opportunity to get to know some theoretical techniques, Adlerian, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Humanistic, etc. Also, to the theories that could be used or fall back on when stuck.
- v. Learned Counseling Skills:* Mandatory personal therapy helped to grow, develop, and shape students’ skills such as listening, understanding, responding, affirming and confrontation. It has also helped some to become better active listeners and has sharpened the skills to be able to identify the real problem of the clients. The skills acquired are not only in dealing with the clients but also in dealing with the self.
- vi. Learned Counseling Techniques:* Personal therapy has assisted students in understanding how to use techniques such as empty chair, empathy, ABC Model, etc. It has also opened students to the application of several techniques and approaches that they learned in during personal therapy to many issues that they encounter in their practicum and profession as counsellors.
- vii. Self-care:* Self-care is one of the ways professional counselors or those on practicum take care of themselves to avoid stress, burnout, and ineffectiveness. Counseling students are able to identify their own personal issues being guided by their therapists.

- viii. **Role Modelling:** Mandatory personal therapy was an opportunity to model after the therapist such as picking what the counselor was using, and relating to real life practices.
- ix. **Backup:** I am able to get that backup, re-energize myself, and bounce back... because sometimes you have your own personal issues and sometimes you have issues of clients that you may want to share with your therapist...
- x. **Experiential Learning:** Personal therapy also offered students a powerful form of experiential learning in which students witness how concepts like transference play out in therapy and experience what it is like to be a client. In this case, they also learned about “reflexivity” that is, how to reflect on self and the way personal “self-material” contributes to the dynamics of therapy.
- xi. **Gained Confidence:** Students gained confidence and courage to know that they can also be a therapist. They also gained confidence in addressing some of their personal issues.

There are, however, a few students who did not see personal therapy as a mandatory requirement benefiting them in their professional development. As shown in Table 1, about 15% disagreed that they learned theories in their personal therapy, 7% did not learn skills in their personal therapy, 6% did not learn counseling techniques, 9% saw their experience with their therapists as not enhancing their counseling practice, and 7% disagreed that personal therapy was a means of self-care for them during their practicum experience.

A counselor educator (Educator 1), during the interview, also shared the same sentiment that the contribution of personal therapy as a mandatory requirement may not be that significant. This sentiment was stronger with Educator 4 who could not attribute his professional development to the personal therapy as a mandatory requirement. He said,

But I am not connecting it to my professional now; I wouldn't connect it to acquiring my master (degree) in a professional line; I don't see – but I will see a connection in my own life issues. The skills came from the college, I wouldn't say it is from counseling – even modelling, I don't counsel as she was counseling – because they were saying you can model from your counselor's way of counseling. I just did my own style of counseling. (Interview, November 30, 2020).

Although, those the percentage of counseling students who viewed personal therapy as a mandatory requirement as not contributing to their personal development was small, this would not be considered insignificant considering the purpose of personal therapy for counseling students and the expected outcome. However, this sentiment was not directed to personal therapy as a healing practice, rather to it being made mandatory.

Discussion

Requiring counseling students to engage in personal therapy is very important in counselors' training specially to accord the students to experience what it is to be on the client's seat, to utilize personal therapy for their own personal growth and to serve as a resource for professional development while in training and in their professional practice. As against what many people think, people, including psychotherapists themselves, do not need to be in problem before seeking professional audience. Psychotherapists and counselors in training do not need to neglect their own mental, physical, and spiritual self-care, or else, they may run out of 'oxygen' and become ineffective in helping their clients (Shallcross, 2011).

This study revealed that the counseling students are aware, and they appreciate personal therapy as means of personal and professional growth not only in their training but also when they begin practicing as professionals. They see it as an avenue to self-discoveries, resolving personal issues, understanding others, witnessing theory in practice, and learning counseling skills and techniques from the way and manner the therapist takes them through the process of personal therapy from contracting to termination. This is exactly how personal therapy should be for them because this is what they are being trained to do for others. This reflects the legal rule, *Nemo dat quod non habet*, which literally meaning "no one gives what they do not have" (Sinha, 2014). This positive perception was aided in part by prior experience of personal therapy by some of the students either before they started any form of counseling training or their experience in their previous certificate or diploma counseling training.

Not only that the postgraduate counseling students perceived mandatory personal therapy positively, but they equally are also of the opinion that it should remain mandatory in the training of future psychologists and counselors. This was consistent with previous study by Pope and

Tabachnick (1994) where majority of the psychotherapists whose experiences were investigated believed that personal therapy should be required in their training during graduate school.

From the findings of this study, it is clear that personal therapy is a mandatory requirement in the universities offering psychology and counseling in Kenya. Also, that personal therapy is a requirement not just for practicum completion but especially a program requirement, which many counseling students already experienced in their training program. This conforms with the Gerald's (2010) view that personal therapy has become widespread and a common practice within educational system, and with Egunjobi's (2020) study which found that 100% of Kenya counseling students who participated in the study indicated that personal therapy is required for counselors in training.

The required number of sessions of mandatory personal therapy can be as much as 55. This, in part, is similar to what is obtainable in other countries as found by Ritz and Target (2008) who found that in Britain, the Division of Counselling Psychology of the British Psychological Society requires counseling psychology students to engage in at least 40 hours of personal therapy. Also, like the practice in Greece where, according to Malikiosi-Loizos (2013), 40 hours of personal growth and development is highly recommended and/or required for post-graduate counseling psychology students. However, the number of required hours of sessions differs from university to university.

Although, majority of the respondents and participants in this study indicated practicum hours between 15 and 25 hours of personal therapy, it becomes worrisome to find students in the same program and from the same university stating different numbers of required sessions of mandatory personal therapy. Yet, some Kenya universities clearly listed the number of personal therapy hours in their program curriculum or program requirement. For example, to qualify for the award of the Master of Arts degree in counseling psychology at Kenyatta University, a candidate must have passed all required units, complete and pass the practicum and the research project, and must have completed 25 hours of personal therapy (half of which should be done before practicum experience (Kenyatta University, n.d.). At the United States International university Kenya (USIU, n.d), each master's student in counseling psychology must complete 25 hours of personal therapy prior to registering for practicum. It seems, therefore, that, although, there are different required number of mandatory personal therapy sessions by universities, there

is either a communication gap between the faculty and the students or there is no proper orientation of the students into the counseling program. This is of great concern.

As regard the counseling outcomes of mandatory personal therapy, majority of postgraduate counseling students experienced positive outcomes in the area of their personal development and professional development. For having a positive perception of personal therapy even though it is mandatory can only predict so. Of course, this was in line with previous studies such as Grimmer and Tribe (2001) who found out that mandatory personal therapy can lead to perceived positive outcomes in both professional and personal development of the counseling psychologists. Also, Von Haenisch (2011) who supported Daw and Joseph's (2007) study found that all participants recognized the important influence of personal therapy on personal growth and professional development.

In the area of personal development as an outcome of mandatory personal therapy, the postgraduate counseling students were able to experience self-awareness, awareness of others, general wellbeing and personal growth. This was, in part, consistent with Hartwell-Walker (2017) who noted that personal therapy is important in counselor's training for self-knowledge; increased empathy for clients; sensitization to countertransference; legitimization of therapy as a tool for personal growth; reduction in vulnerability to depression; provision of personal application to theory; and matter of integrity.

Also, regarding the positive influence of mandatory personal therapy on the professional development of the postgraduate counseling students, they reported that the whole experience was an eye opener and made them to be aware of such things as being in client's shoe, theories in practice, skills and technique application, and modeling the therapist among others. By implication, getting to master some theories, skills and techniques will be tantamount to the characteristics of a good counselor. These findings are in agreement with Donati and Watts (2005) who noted that the mastery of theory, techniques, research, skills and knowledge is related to personal characteristics and qualities as well as to interpersonal engagement skills. They are also consistent with Rizq's (2011) submission that personal therapy during the therapists' training leads to an enhanced improved mastery and technique, among other things.

It has also been noted by Arthur (2000) that choice of theoretical orientation as well as the decision to undergo personal therapy, and the choice of counseling techniques depends on the

character, personality, and personal philosophy of the counselor trainee. Also, using mandatory personal therapy for self-care in term of dealing with personal issues and cases of transference and countertransference was indicated in this study. This supported Daw and Joseph's (2007) study which showed that therapists utilize personal therapy as an avenue for self-care among other reasons.

The positive influence or contribution of mandatory personal therapy to personal growth and professional development was not for all. In other words, not everyone appreciated the inclusion of personal therapy in their training, and as such not everyone experienced outstanding outcomes of mandatory personal therapy. People of this experience are, however, few. That personal therapy is made mandatory, like in many other mandatory life circumstances, possibly could result to this feeling for some people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the postgraduate counseling students have positive perception of mandatory personal therapy which they considered as a practice which has contributed to their personal and professional developments in terms of self-awareness, self-care, general growth and wellbeing, learning counseling theories, skills and techniques in practice, and gaining more experiences of counseling process and practices. However, the faculty may need to do more in the area of information dissemination as it concerns the required mandatory personal therapy, the benefits of it and what the counseling students should expect. Also, since the aim of all the universities training students in psychology and counseling is to produce effective, efficient, dignified, and ethically sound counselors and psychologists, there is need for common policies on the core values of counselors' training which include personal therapy, uniform number of sessions required at the bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. levels, and consider making personal therapy both mandatory and recommended where about 5 sessions are mandatory to allow for possible personal and professional growth while the acts of any other personal therapy are highly recommended as needed.

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