

The Efficiency of Micro-Teaching Technique in Gaining Therapeutic Skills (Structuring) in Individual Counseling Course

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ABSTRACT:

In this study, the acquisition of construction skills, which is one of the therapeutic skills, by using the micro-counseling method with the fourth-year students of the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling who take the Psychological Counseling with Individuals course. In the study, five volunteer students were selected from 20 counselor candidates, and volunteer students were selected from the 3rd year students of Guidance and Psychological Counseling to assume the role of 10 clients, five primary and five substitutes. The counselor candidates were explained about micro-counseling, and the students in the client role explained their roles in the counseling process. The micro-counseling period consisted of 5 minutes of counseling, 15 minutes of assessment and 5 minutes of counseling. The data were collected using the Counseling with Individuals Assessment Form-Construction. In addition, students were interviewed during the micro-counseling practice. As a result of the study, it was determined that the counselor candidates showed the desired behaviors at the levels of time, process and goal setting, which are among the construction skills. Psychological assistance to individuals is a field that requires expertise. Especially in educational institutions, it is necessary to provide guidance services at all levels, from school adaptation to the academic success of students from different families and social environments. Well-trained guidance and psychological counselors will help students be psychologically healthy individuals and succeed in the school environment. There are many methods and approaches recommended in the training of guidance specialists. One of them is micro-counseling.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Theoretical Foundation

Guidance and psychological counseling is a field that has a unique place among the professions aiming at personal assistance services and provides services for people to develop in a more conscious, strong and creative way (Özabacı et al., 2017). In this context, guidance is the psychological help provided by experts to help individuals understand themselves, recognize the opportunities around them, make the choices, interpretations, and plans necessary for their development and satisfactory adaptations, make the right decisions, realize themselves, understand themselves, and solve problems (Baymur, 1975; Kepçeoğlu, 1999; Kuzgun, 1992; Tan, 1995). Training guidance and psychological counselors who will provide specialized psychological help is important. Although there are many problems in the training of guidance and psychological counselors, it is seen in the literature that many practices and approaches have been developed to solve these problems (Truax, 1970; Russell-Chapin & Ivey, 2004; Aladag, Yaka, Koç, 2014, Moran, Milsom, 2015).

One of the methods developed is micro-counseling. It is based on the micro-teaching method proposed by Ivey and developed by Allen et al. for use in teacher education. Micro-mentoring is conceptually based on micro-teaching. This method, developed at Stanford University for teacher education, has been used differently from when it was first developed until today. However, it is used to work with small groups and gain specific behaviors. As one of the different uses of microteaching, micro counseling was designed as a behavioral training program to teach interviewing skills to new counselors (Ivey et al., 1968). The defining feature of micro-counseling is that the trainee concentrates on learning only one interviewing skill during each training session.

Each of these skills is precisely defined in operational terms. In each case, the trainee practices the skill in a short interview session, and immediate feedback on performance is provided. To facilitate feedback, playing a videotape

recording of the trainee's interview performance has been widely used (Dickson et al., 1977). As with micro-teaching, micro-counseling consists of short 5-minute sessions that are video-recorded. These sessions focus on teaching the basic skills required in the counseling process. In micro-counseling sessions, emphasis is placed on specific therapeutic skills such as reflecting emotion or minimal encouragement. The main purpose of micro-counseling is to provide pre-practice training and thus bridge the gap between classroom knowledge and actual practice. Micro-counseling is considered an important approach as it allows counseling candidates to practice skills related to the counseling process repeatedly before they start their assignments. Micro-counseling supervision teaches the supervisee and supervisor a structured method for reviewing counseling records and providing feedback independent of theoretical orientation (Russell-Chapin & Ivey, 2004). Micro-counseling has evolved into a theoretical model that provides a basic vocabulary for discussing and researching clinical and training sessions. Furthermore, micro-counseling provides an operational framework for training helpers and examining the counseling process in a practical and verifiable way (Ivey et al., 1968).

Studies show that micro-counseling is effective in helping counselor candidates acquire counseling skills (Haase & DiMattia, 1970; Hawley, 2006; Kelley, 1971; Meydan, 2014, 2015; Moreland et al., 1973).

1.2. Aim of the Study

This study was designed to develop a training program to improve the skills of counselor candidates taking the Individual Counseling Course in the counseling process. For this purpose, the training needs of counselor candidates were determined by previous studies (Bek & Gülveren, 2021a, 2021b). It was determined that the counselor candidates were not sufficient at the expected level in the self-management dimension of the client, in the ability to progress with the client, that they lacked in using professional language during the counseling process, that they used everyday language, that although they had theoretical and empirical knowledge about the

client's problem, they could not use this knowledge sufficiently in the counseling process, that they had some basic problems while using the problem-solving stages in the process, and that they had an irregularity in using the dimensions of the developmental model.

2. Method

The main purpose of this study is to improve the counselor candidates' structuring skills using the micro-counseling method. Since the Efficiency of the micro-counseling method in developing counseling skills was not the study's main purpose, a one-group pretest/posttest experimental design was used in the study. Although the study is mainly based on quantitative data, it also has qualitative features in terms of including the experiences of counselor candidates about the application.

A multiple-choice test was prepared and applied to determine the cognitive readiness levels of the counselor candidates. According to the results obtained, it was determined that the counselor candidates had the specified behaviors at a level of 90%. This situation was interpreted as adequate in the knowledge and comprehension levels of the counselor candidates, and no additional learning activity was required.

Before the micro-teaching activity, the counselor candidates were asked to consult with volunteer students from the lower grades in the client role. This consultation, which served as a pretest, was recorded, and evaluated regarding the behaviors intended to be gained. Findings close to the study results conducted by Bek and Gülveren (2021b) were obtained. In the micro-teaching activities, these behaviors were especially emphasized.

2.1. Research Process

- ✓ Five volunteer students were selected from the 20 counselor candidates who took the Psychological Counseling with Individuals course.
- ✓ Volunteer students were selected from the 3rd year Guidance and Psychological Counseling students to take on the role of

10 clients, five primary and five substitutes.

- ✓ Counselor candidates were informed about the purpose of the study and micro-counseling practice.
- ✓ Volunteer counselors were given short training on the roles they would assume.
- ✓ Texts containing the behaviors that the client should show for the skill planned to be taught were given, and they were provided to practice them.
- ✓ The evaluation was made with the psychological counseling skills rating form in the study group.
- ✓ Since there was no special study room for micro-teaching activities, the researchers' room was organized for microteaching.
- ✓ Each counselor candidate in the group had 5-minute micro-counseling sessions with volunteer counselors randomly assigned to them.
- ✓ These sessions were video recorded.
- ✓ After the volunteer counselee left the counseling room, the other counselor candidates in the group and the supervisor watched the 5-minute session together, and an evaluation meeting was held.
- ✓ The supervisor and other counselee candidates analyzed how successful the candidate was in applying the identified skill, what his/her mistakes were, and how he/she should be. The correct behaviors and expressions were determined. These evaluation meetings lasted approximately 15-20 minutes.
- ✓ The supervisor provided Motivation and reinforcement for the counselor trainee to use the skill.
- ✓ The counselor candidate had a second session with the same client, and the interview was recorded.
- ✓ At the end of the interview, the training was completed by repeating the evaluation meeting held in the first session.
- ✓ To determine the level of the counselor candidate's demonstration of the relevant skills, a third interview was conducted

with the volunteer client and the process was completed.

- ✓ Other counselor candidates completed the micro-counseling process with different clients similarly.
- ✓ The identified skills were tried to be acquired similarly.
- ✓ At the end of the micro-counseling activities, counselor candidates were asked to conduct a full interview with a volunteer client whom they had never counseled before (during the micro-counseling training) in order to determine

the development of the counselor candidate before and after the training and to provide data for the final evaluation.

- ✓ Since the micro-counseling sessions for each student were held three times for 5 minutes each, the sessions were planned to be 75 minutes, and the micro-counseling meetings were planned to be 75 minutes, with an average of 15 minutes. With 10-minute breaks in between, the study was planned for 180 minutes.
- ✓ The micro-counseling process is given in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Micro-Counseling Process

2.2. Data Collection

The changes and developments of the candidates in the experimental group during the micro-counseling process were collected with the Individual Counseling Assessment Form-Construction developed by the researchers by reviewing the relevant literature. The form includes the skills that the candidates should have. It shows how often these skills were demonstrated during micro-counseling and how many points they received. A score of 2 indicates that the behavior is demonstrated perfectly. However, the indication that the behavior has been acquired is that it is demonstrated both correctly and often enough.

Demonstrating the behavior once is not considered a sign that the behavior has been acquired.

2.3. Data Analysis

The total scores of each candidate will be compared with those of the candidates in the control group. In addition, the observations made during the micro-counseling and the explanations on the form will provide information about the level of acquisition of therapeutic skills and the Efficiency of micro-counseling.

3. Results

The psychological counseling process was considered as duration, process and purpose and evaluations were made according to these skills.

3.1. Findings Related to Duration

Counselor candidates are expected to inform the client about the duration of the counseling process, how many sessions the counseling will consist of, how long each session will be, on which day and time of the week, and where it will occur.

Table 1. The distribution of these behaviors according to the sessions

Behaviors that are indicators of competence	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Greeted the client	5	5	5
At the beginning of the counseling, he told me how many counseling sessions would consist.	5	5	5
He made it clear how many minutes each session would be.	2	4	5
He indicated where the counseling would be.	1	3	5
He indicated which day the counseling would take place.	4	4	5
He told me what time the counseling would b.	3	4	5

In the first micro-teaching sessions, it was determined that the counselor candidates did not have any deficiencies in greeting the client and informing them about the number of sessions. In the other sessions, the counselor candidates consistently maintained these two behaviors. When the table was examined, it was observed that the counselor trainees were not successful in demonstrating other behaviors in the skill related to the use of time. At the end of the first session, it was observed that the expected behaviors were applied more in the second session, which was implemented by taking into account the criticisms

made by the supervisor and other members of the micro-teaching group over the videotape recordings. In the third and last session, it was observed that all counselor candidates fulfilled the desired behaviors. Thus, the skill related to the use of time was acquired.

3.1.1. Process Related Findings

Within the skill of giving information about the process of the doing dimension, the behaviors expected from the counselor candidates in micro-teaching sessions are given in the table.

Table 2. The distribution of these behaviors according to the sessions

Behaviors that are indicators of competence	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Defined roles in the counseling process.	2	4	5
Defined expectations in the counseling process.	2	3	5
He clarified that the client's problems would be the basis.	2	4	5
He helped the client to focus on herself.	3	3	5
He expressed what she would do in an emergency.	2	5	5
Clearly articulated the client's core problem.			
The consultation process is confidential, he said.	5	5	5
He said that the consultation process was voluntary.	5	5	5

The counselor and the client have a specific role and responsibility in the psychological counseling process. Defining these roles increases the Efficiency of the process and provides a

healthier communication environment. The first micro-teaching sessions determined that counselor candidates were insufficient in explaining roles and expectations. On the other hand, it was determined

that the counselor candidates successfully talked about the principles of counseling, did not make mistakes, and exhibited consistent behaviors in the other sessions. In all sessions, counselor candidates are informed that *"All our conversations between counseling sessions will be kept confidential and will not be shared with third parties. The counseling process is voluntary, and you have the right to end it at any time. You can talk as much as you want during counseling and express yourself as you want"*. It was determined that the counselor candidates were insufficient in providing information to the clients in the first sessions about what emergencies may occur during the counseling process. In the sessions, the supervisor made explanations about what the emergencies could be and how they should be expressed, and the clients were enabled to show the relevant behavior in the other sessions.

In the first sessions of the micro-counseling practice, it was determined that the

counselor candidates had problems focusing on themselves and the problem. The counselor candidate made a wrong application by saying, *"Yes, it is important what family members think about this issue; you should develop a solution without hurting them."* Another counselor candidate did a correct practice by saying, *"What you think, and feel is important before what others think; let's focus on yourself first, not on others."*

3.1.2. Findings Related to Aim

Clarifying the purpose of counseling in the psychological counseling process can help the counselor better understand the client's needs and reach the goals in the counseling process more effectively. Therefore, it is important for counselor candidates to have skills related to goal setting. The behaviors indicative of this skill is given in the table.

Table 3. The distribution of these behaviors according to the sessions

Behaviors that are indicators of competence	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
He has clarified the limits of consultation.	3	5	5
He asked questions that indicated that he listened and understood the client.	3	3	5
He/she gave feedback to the questions, indicating that he/she listened to and understood the client.	3	3	5
He stated that if more than one situation bothers the client, each one will be addressed individually.	4	4	5
If more than one situation bothered the client, she was asked to express the most pressing problem herself.	2	4	5
Clearly articulated the priority problem identified by the client to the client.	2	4	5

Goal setting was the skill that counselor candidates had more difficulty in the structuring dimension than other skills. In one of the micro-counseling sessions, one of the counselees (as a role play) listed all the problems he/she was experiencing in the dormitory with his/her family, friends, classes, and lecturers. Surprised, the counselor trainee was stunned and said, *"Of course, all of these are important; let's deal with them individually and develop solutions."* As a result of the meeting with the supervisor, it was determined how to behave in such a situation, and the same situation was repeated. When the other counselor candidates

were in a similar situation, it was determined that they prioritized their own situation rather than the client's situation in determining the priority and important problem for the client. The counselor trainees prioritized the problem they believed they could help the client with. For example, one of the counselor candidates said, *"I attended a long-term seminar on study techniques. I gained a lot of competence in this subject. If you want, let's start with this subject."*

In the first session, the client said, *"I act thinking that people can do something behind my back at any time. This makes me tired in my friendships. I need to*

get rid of this," and revealed the problem she was experiencing. In response to this, the counselor candidate said, "Then what we need to focus on is the problem of trust. Let's talk about this problem, what could be its sources, how it affects you and what we can do."

The client reported the problem she was experiencing by saying, "I have stress and anxiety disorder, and I cannot manage my stress on my own; I think I cannot manage stress in the right way." The counselor candidate tried to understand the problem by asking questions. She got stuck in summarizing and did not know how to continue. In the meeting held after the shooting, the correct behavior was as follows: *"The source of the problem you are experiencing is stress management difficulty. In our next sessions, we will focus on the sources of stress and ways to cope with them,"* and the session was repeated for the second time.

Observed cases where the mentee was not competent in identifying the mentor's purpose.

Client: I have a little self-confidence problem when I communicate with people at first. I don't know how to speak.

Counselor Candidate: Generally, you think you are hesitant toward people you meet for the first time.

Consultant: Let's not say very hesitant; it's due to trust problems

Counselor candidate: Can we call this self-confidence?

Counselor: We can't say no, we can say mistrust towards them.

Counselor candidate: You have a self-confidence problem, not a communication problem with other people.

As can be seen in the example given here, although the client emphasized that she did not have a problem with self-confidence but had a problem with trust in others, the client continued the counseling by saying that the problem was self-confidence. As a result of the meeting held with the group, it was deemed appropriate to continue the counseling with a statement such as *"Yes, I understand, you have a problem with trust in others in*

communication, and you are here to cope with this problem," and the session was repeated.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

For a counselor to communicate effectively with and help his/her clients, he/she should have acquired counseling skills at a high level. These skills enable the counselor to empathize with the clients, understand their problems, identify their problems and goals, develop strategies, and offer appropriate solutions to the needs of the clients. In addition, the counselor can increase the client's awareness of himself/herself and his/her environment and enable him/her to lead a better quality of life. Therefore, it is important for counselor candidates studying in the Department of Guidance and psychological counseling to acquire counseling skills. In addition to studies on legal regulations (Özyürek, 2019) and training programs (Utanır, 2005) on counseling education, methods such as the supervision approach (Kalkan & Can, 2019) and micro-skills training programs (Yaka, 2013) have been examined. Micro-counseling training, which is based on the micro-teaching approach, is one of the methods used in the development of counseling skills.

This study used the micro-counseling method to provide counselor candidates with the time, process, and goal-setting skills of structuring, one of the dimensions of psychological counseling. The structuring stage is very important in psychological counseling as it helps to create an atmosphere that makes the client feel safe and comfortable. It also provides the knowledge and skills to better understand the client's problems. The doing stage is also important as it forms the basis of the relationship between the counselor and the client. This stage enables the client to trust the counselor and establish open communication with him/her. Thus, the client can give more information about his/her problems, and the counselor can help the client better by using this information. Therefore, structuring is one of the skills that counselor candidates should acquire. In the counseling process, the client and counselor must be partners in participation. The following can be done to encourage this: meeting and

greeting a client in a way that shows that they are welcomed and respected, engaging with clients as they choose to introduce themselves and showing that you are interested in learning about them, engaging as a student who listens and responds by trying to understand the client from their perspective and in their language (Anderson, 2007). It was determined that the counselor candidates did not have difficulty learning and applying the behaviors related to determining the counseling time and process, which are among the constructive skills that are tried to be gained with the micro-counseling method. Since these skills were not complex and did not require much information, they were easily acquired in micro-counseling sessions. In terms of the related skills, the counselor candidates became more careful in the practices and were able to exhibit the necessary behaviors meticulously. In the micro-counseling meetings, without the need for supervision, thanks to the videotape recordings, the counselor trainees could see the mistakes made by themselves and the other trainees and reach a common decision on how it should be done.

It was the goal-setting stage where the counselor trainees struggled relatively more in terms of practice than in terms of knowledge. In the micro-counseling sessions, as per the scenario, the volunteer counselor candidates were told that they had more than one problem and to express them during the counseling process. In the interview with the counselor candidates outside the scope of the research, it was determined that the counselor candidates had an expectation that the clients would come with a problem and that they would only deal with it. Due to the possibility of encountering such a situation in the real counseling

process, counselor candidates must be prepared. In the micro-counseling sessions, the candidates preferred the problems listed by the client, either the problems that they knew well or the problems that they thought were easier to solve. The problem that bothers the client the most should be identified, or the counselor should identify the main problem based on the problems listed. In the micro-counseling meetings, the counselor trainees had difficulty identifying the main problem, and they got out of the deadlock with supervision. In other similar scenarios, counselor trainees were able to make more accurate decisions.

The micro-counseling practice was effective in terms of helping the counselor candidates gain awareness both about themselves and their profession. Counselor candidates learned how they make simple mistakes in applying what they know correctly and what these mistakes can lead to in micro-counseling meetings. It is important to implement micro-counseling in counselor education in order for counselor candidates to evaluate themselves, have the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others, gain the necessary skills, and gain experience before starting their professional life.

Lambert and Ogles (1997) said that simple behavioral skills can be learned quickly through instruction. Additionally, studies have found that micro-counseling skills training is a good introductory program for novice consultants but has little effect on more experienced consultants (Fyffe & Oei, 1979; Uhleman, Stone, Evans, & Hearn, 1982). Care should be taken in training programs to be organized to improve the counseling skills of counselor candidates.

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