

The Effectiveness of a Training Program Based on the Professional Skills Development Model to Reduce Performance Anxiety and Develop Telephone Interview Techniques among Psychologists

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Abstract

Objective: The study aimed to identify the effectiveness of a training program based on the professional skills development model to reduce performance anxiety (PA) and develop telephone interview techniques (TIT) among psychologists.

Methodology: In this study, 40 psychologists were selected to participate and divided into control and experimental groups. The PA scale was used to assess the effectiveness of the TIT taught during the training program. The training program used in the study comprised 14 sessions conducted in a group setting. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 27.0, with a 95% confidence interval.

Results: This study found a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the experimental and control groups regarding psychologists' PA levels and telephone interview skills (TIS). The experimental group exhibited lower PA and higher proficiency in TIT than the control group, as indicated by dimensional measurements ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, significant differences between pre and post-measurement in PA among psychologists in the experimental group in the direction of pre-measurement were also observed. Similarly, differences between pre-and post-measurement in TIS, both in terms of the total degree and specific dimensions, were observed among psychologists in the experimental group, reflecting progress over time.

Conclusion: The study concluded that the participants in the supervisory program retain the training gains after a period of time from the end of the post-application. It suggests that the training program had a lasting impact on the participants' abilities and performance.

Keywords: *Training Programs, Professional Skills Development, Performance Anxiety, Telephone Interview Techniques, Psychologists.*

1. Introduction

Psychologists working in family counseling centers and psychological counselors face some psychological and social problems during their professional practices, the most prominent of which are those related to performance, as represented in performance anxiety (PA). PA is defined as nervousness and dread of the impacts of being unable to achieve a task or performing it at a level that raises expectations of even better task achievement (Simpson et al., 2021).

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A psychologist needs to improve his competencies and professional skills to respond to individual requirements and assist in satisfying them is a precondition for his success at work and in carrying out his professional responsibilities (Rahmatullah et al., 2022). Previous research has underscored the importance of identifying psychological disorders, given their widespread occurrence. For instance, the prevalence of panic disorder has risen from 31.4% to 36.9%, while depressive disorder has increased from 24.5% to 30.2%. Furthermore, the prevalence of generalized anxiety stands at 20%, mixed depression at 28%, and 37% of individuals experience psychological stress due to an inability to fulfil their psychological needs.

Other prior studies (Heinonen & Nissen-Lie, 2020; Supriyanto et al., 2019)) have demonstrated that psychologists enhance their professional competence by acquiring counseling skills to effectively address and overcome counseling PA. This particular disorder represents a significant challenge faced by psychologists, and their proficiency in relevant counseling techniques can aid in mitigating PA and facilitating their effective role performance (Ismail, 2018).

Supervision in psychological counseling encompasses a range of supervisory activities, which include counseling, training, providing information, and evaluation. The function of supervision in psychological counseling and the training of psychologists typically entails a systematic intervention guided by a theoretical framework administered by an expert in the field to an individual with less experience in the profession (Sharifin Ahmed 2015). It has been noted that the training of experienced psychologists and the preparation and training of specialists faced a slow start that is not at the required level, and it is noticeable that supervision in psychological counseling faced confusion in his identity in the beginning. It has negatively affected the development of supervision, its models, and its slow growth and development (Kurtyilmaz, 2015).

The field of psychological counseling has seen the emergence of various supervisory models, including the differentiated model, the skill development model, the personal growth model, and the integrative model. These models have evolved from different perspectives on supervision and are rooted in counseling and psychotherapy theories. They serve as valuable frameworks for providing supervision services to psychologists, trainees, newcomers, and novices. These models draw upon counseling theories such as behavioral theory, cognitive theory, and supervision grounded in psychoanalytic theory (Hart, 1982).

(Al-Khouli, 2021) dealt with the effects of two clinical supervision programs, one based on the integrative evolutionary model and the other on cognitive-behavioral therapy, which was implemented remotely via the Internet on a sample of (N=52) psychologists. Self-efficacy, case conceptualization abilities, and the effects of the psychologist's academic background and practical experience on case conceptualization were assessed. The study's findings revealed statistically significant differences between the control and experimental group as a result of repeated measurements (pre, post, and follow-up) on the mentor's self-efficacy and the conceptual perception of the case.

(Badarneh, 2020) revealed the effectiveness of a supervisory program in reducing PA and improving the competencies of trainee counseling students at Yarmouk University. The researcher applied the PA scales and psychological counseling competencies to an available sample to achieve the study's objectives. The results of the study showed that there were statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in improving the competencies of psychological counseling students and reducing PA in all areas in favor of the experimental group, and the results also showed the continued impact of the effectiveness of the supervisory training program on measuring follow-up two weeks after the end of the supervisory training program.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study Population and Data Collection

The study included 252 psychologists employed in the Eastern Province of Dammam, as reported by Health Affairs in the Eastern Province (Dammam Health Affairs, 2022). Furthermore, all male psychologists working at the Erada Mental Health Complex in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, were included in the study. Among the psychologists, 30% (N=74) were male. After conducting statistical analysis using the SPSS statistical packages program, a subset of psychologists (N=40) was selected as the study sample. This group accounted for 6% of the total participants and met the following criteria: they obtained high scores on the PA scale, despite receiving low scores on the counseling and telephone interview techniques scales. Additionally, they held a degree in psychology or psychological counseling and possessed experience in delivering telephone psychological counseling services to counselors. All program participants were male and employed in the Eastern Province, with their counseling or supervision tenure not exceeding five years.

2.2. Study Tools

2.2.1. Professional Performance Anxiety Scale for Psychologists

In order to assess PA in psychologists, Al-Thawabta and Tannous (2012) utilized the Professional PA Scale. This scale consists of 23 phrases under a single dimension of PA. Each phrase was rated on a five-point scale, offering response options such as "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." The scale's scoring ranged from 23 to 115, with lower scores indicating lower levels of PA and higher scores indicating higher levels. The scale exhibited satisfactory reliability and validity when applied in the Jordanian context. The scale demonstrated internal consistency, as indicated by the sincerity of responses and the agreement among raters. The honesty coefficients, ranging between 521 and 857, reflected the participants' sincerity in their responses. Additionally, the scale exhibited stability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.95, indicating high internal consistency. Its validity and stability were further confirmed before employing the scale in the Saudi Arabian environment. An exploratory sample of 60 participants was used to validate the scale, similar to the current study sample. The statistical software SPSS ver. 25.0 was employed for data analysis. The results showed an internal consistency coefficient of 0.910, indicating high reliability and accuracy. It suggests that the scale effectively measures PA, evaluating the participants' performance and the relevance of the scale's items to the intended dimensions.

2.2.2. Telephone Interview Techniques Scale

The first dimension, opening techniques; the second dimension, techniques used during the telephone interview; and the third dimension, closing techniques, were divided into a scale for the counseling telephone interview techniques for psychologists. The scale was composed of 30 phrases. The (first dimension: opening techniques) consists of (10) phrases that include phrases from the numbers (1–10), (and the second dimension: Techniques during the telephone interview) of (10) phrases include phrases from (11–20), and (the third dimension: closing techniques) of (10) phrases include phrases from (21–30). These three dimensions include a variety of skills and sub-techniques, including (the first dimension: opening techniques) are of techniques (relative positioning techniques). The third dimension of closing techniques is understanding, explaining, summarizing, and ending the interview. Techniques used during telephone counseling interviews include action and behavior skills, conclusion, problem-solving, confrontation, and understanding verbal behaviors such as tone of voice, sharpness, speech pauses, and stuttering. Each paragraph had a five-point scale with the options "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," and "not strongly agree." The range between the lowest and highest

values of the scale was (30–150). Applying the scale to an exploratory sample of (n = 60) respondents as a sample similar to the current study sample enabled the validity and stability of the scale to be confirmed, as well as the degree to which the paragraphs are related to the dimensions before applying it again to the Saudi environment. The consistency coefficients were in the range of 0.515 and 0.899. It implies high internal consistency coefficients and appropriate honesty indicators. The results varied between 0.820 and 0.836, suitable values supporting the scale's internal consistency.

The following sentences and paragraphs provide details on the three factors that were obtained during the rotation process:

- The first factor represents a dimension (opening techniques) in the following paragraphs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10.
- Indicative telephone interview procedures are the second factor related to numbers 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, & 20. The third factor is the dimension (closed techniques) associated with numbers 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, & 30. Finally, Cronbach's alpha efficiency ranged between (0.901, 0.954), and the Spearman and Brown half-segmentation method indicated high values and scale stability.

3. Results

3.1. Differences in Occupational Performance Anxiety and Telephone Interview Techniques: Impact of Control and Experimental Groups among Psychologists

Table 1 demonstrates differences between the experimental and control groups in the dimensional measurement of PA among psychologists. The control group exhibited a statistically significant value ($Z = 5.347$) at a significance level of 0.05, indicating a decrease in PA among participants in the experimental group following the implementation of the training program. This decrease in anxiety was in comparison to the control group. The differences between the experimental and control groups were further evident in the dimensional measurement of telephone interview skills among psychologists. The total score in the experimental group yielded a value of ($z = 5.412$), while the values for individual dimensions were ($z = 5.421$, $z = 5.199$, $z = 5.310$), respectively. These values were statistically significant at the significance level of 0.05.

Consequently, the hypothesis is supported, indicating statistically significant differences between the average ranks of the experimental and control groups in both the PA scales and the telephone interview techniques. The control group demonstrated higher PA scores, while the experimental group displayed enhanced TIS. These findings suggest that the training program positively reduced PA in the control group and improved telephone interview techniques in the experimental group among psychologists.

Table 1. Comparison between the experimental and control group in telemetry (N = 40).

Professional performance anxiety scale		The Collection	Sample size	mean ranks	Total Ranks	Value (Z)	Sig.	Eta size (2η)
		Experimental	20	10.63	212.50	5.347	0.000	0.790
		Controls	20	30.38	607.50			
Telephone Interview	Opening technique	Experimental	20	30.50	610	5.421	0.000	0.857
		Controls	20	10.50	210			

	A technique used during the telephone interview	Experimental	20	30.10	602	5.199	0.000	0.822
		Controls	20	10.90	218			
	Closing techniques	Experimental	20	30.30	606	5.310	0.000	0.840
		Controls	20	10.70	214			
	Total	Experimental	20	30.50	610	5.412	0.000	0.856
		Controls	20	10.50	210			

*Mann and Tenney's tests were applied for comparison.

3.2. Analysis of Pre- and Post-Measurement Ranks: Impact of Measurement (Pre, Post) on Performance Anxiety and Telephone Interview Techniques among Psychologists in the Experimental Group

Table 2 shows that there are differences between pre and post-measurement in the PA of psychologists in the experimental group in the direction of pre-measurement, where the value of ($Z = 4.415$), which is a statistically significant value at the level of significance (0.05), which indicates a decrease in PA among members of the experimental group after applying for the training program.

There were also differences between the pre and post-measurement in the TIS on the total degree and dimensions of the psychologists in the experimental group in the direction of the post-measurement, where the value of (Z on the total score) was equal to (4.613). Furthermore, the value (Z) on the first, second, and third dimensions is equal to (3.983, 4.347, & 4.847), respectively, which are statistically significant values at the level of significance (0.05). It indicates that the experimental group benefited from the training program in developing TIS.

The magnitude of the impact of occupational PA was (0.699), the telephone interview the total score (of 0.730), and the first, second, and third dimensions (0.630, 0.687, 0.766), and it is clear from this that the impact of the program is high in developing TIS and reducing PA in the dimensional measurement compared to the tribal measurement.

Table 2. Comparison between pre- and post-measurement of the experimental group ($N = 20$).

	Type of ranks	Number of ranks	Mean ranks	Total ranks	Value (Z)	Sig.	Eta size (2η)
Performance Anxiety Scale	Negative ranks	8	9.25	74	4.415	<0.01	0.699
	Positive ranks	31	22.77	607.50			
	Equivalent ranks	1	-	-			

Telephone Interview Skills	Opening technique	Negative ranks	31	20.81	645	3.983	<0.01	0.630
		Positive ranks	7	13.71	96			
		Equivalent ranks	2	-	-			
	A technique during the interview	Negative ranks	29	22.05	639.50	4.347	<0.01	0.687
		Positive ranks	8	7.94	63.5			
		Equivalent ranks	3	-	-			
	Closing technique	Negative ranks	33	21.41	706.50	4.847	<0.01	0.766
		Positive ranks	5	6.90	34.50			
		Equivalent ranks	2	-	-			
	Total	Negative ranks	31	23.24	720.50	4.613	<0.01	0.730
		Positive ranks	8	7.44	59.50			
		Equivalent ranks	1	-	-			

*Wilcoxon Test was applied for comparison.

3.3. Differences between the averages of the dimensional and tracer scores of the experimental group on both the performance anxiety scales and the telephone interview techniques

It is clear from Table 3 that there were no differences between the dimensional and tracer measurement in the PA of the psychologists in the experimental group, where the value of (z is equal to (1.102), which is a statistically insignificant value at the level of significance (0.05), and this indicates that the level of PA has not changed and is still low after a period of one month of follow-up.

It is also shown in Table 3 that there are no differences between the dimensional and tracking measurement in the TIS on the total score and dimensions among the psychologists in the experimental group, where the value (z) on the total score was equal to (0.830). Furthermore, the value (z) on the first, second, and third dimensions is equal to (1.651, 1.197, 1.718), respectively, which are statistically insignificant values at the level of significance (0.05), which indicates that the experimental group members still retain the interview skills and techniques they received in the training program.

Table 3. Comparison of telemetry and Traceries techniques in the experimental group (N=20).

Performance Anxiety Scale		Type of ranks	Number of ranks	Mean ranks	Total ranks	Value (Z)	Sig.
		Negative ranks	12	11.21	134.50		
Positive ranks	8	9.44	75.50				
Equivalent ranks	0	-	-				
Telephone Interview Skills	First dimension	Negative ranks	10	8.40	84	0.830	0.406
		Positive ranks	6	8.67	52		
		Equivalent ranks	4	-	-		
	Second dimension	Negative ranks	13	10.46	136	1.651	0.099
		Positive ranks	6	9	54		
		Equivalent ranks	1	-	-		
	Third dimension	Negative ranks	13	10.54	137	1.197	0.231
		Positive ranks	7	10.43	73		
		Equivalent ranks	0	-	-		
	Total	Negative ranks	14	10.79	151	1.718	0.086
		Positive ranks	6	9.83	59.50		
		Equivalent ranks	0	-	-		

*Wilcoxon test was applied for comparison.

4. Discussion

The current study shows a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the dimensional measurement of professional PA among psychologists. It confirms the efficacy of the supervisory training program based on the model of developing professional skills and applies it to the experimental group in reducing their PA. It is accomplished by implementing behavioral theory-based anxiety reduction strategies (such as gradual sensitivity reduction, deep breathing, imagination overflow, relaxation, and mindfulness) that are represented in counseling methods, as well as by the program's contribution of allocating a supervisory training session for each strategy separately and providing adequate time to train on it with a focus on homework in counseling sessions.

It was observed that the results of the current study are consistent with studies that addressed the pressures and difficulties that psychologists face while carrying out the counseling process, including PA, such as study (Al-Khouli, 2021), (Persian, 2016), (Al-Khawaldeh, 2018), (Ismail, 2018), (Sharifin Ahmed 2015) and (Badarneh, 2020). These studies dealt with the difficulties and challenges faced by psychologists in the practical field, especially beginners who have not yet gained sufficient experience to carry out counseling, and these studies called for the need to reduce the pressures and difficulties, including PA. In addition, other studies also addressed anxiety reduction strategies, specifically PA, that hinder an individual's performance and affect their life (Sharifin Ahmed 2015) and (Al-Mahayra, 2016).

The study also explains that a significant difference was found on the indicative telephone interview techniques scale for the total degree and the sub-dimensions between the pre and post-measurement in favor of the experimental group. It confirms the effectiveness of the supervisory training program based on the model of developing professional skills in

the guidance supervision of the development. These findings are consistent with the previous study that confirms the effectiveness of the training programs in reducing PA (Biswal & Srivastava, 2022); The techniques of the counseling telephone interview are consistent with the results of the previous study (Al-Harbi, 2018). Previous Studies also validated the effectiveness of supervisory programs in developing the work of psychologists (Al-Khouli, 2021); (Sharifin Ahmed 2015).

The researcher also explains the results of the study as proving the effectiveness of the supervisory program based on the professional skills development model in training the experimental group on strategies that contributed to reducing their PA during the duration of the program due to the training of them according to the professional skills development model that earned them strategies to reduce anxiety in detail, as noted after applying these strategies with positive repercussions on their performance during the training and in the follow-up period, and also in conjunction with training them to possess the counseling telephone interview techniques, which enhanced their confidence in themselves and their performance during the program, thus reducing the PA they had before at the beginning of the program and developing the counseling telephone interview techniques.

The results of this study are consistent with the results of previous studies in this field, such as (Al-Mahayra & Taunous, 2016; Corey et al., 2020), which called for the need to reduce the pressures associated with the work of psychologists, specifically beginners, which they have as a result of lack of experience in counseling work, especially in the techniques of the counseling telephone interview.

The study results show that a statistically significant difference was not found between the averages of the ranks of the dimensional and tracking measurement of the experimental group members on both the PA scales and the telephone interview techniques. It proves the effectiveness of the counseling program they underwent in developing the counseling telephone interview techniques and the extent to which they continue to work in counseling during counseling telephone interviews. It also indicates the continued improvement of psychologists' performance, the development of their skills, and decreased PA. The results of the current study are consistent with previous (Kurtayilmaz, 2015; Tsai, 2015); (Al-Khouli, 2021). These studies examined the effectiveness of supervisory programs in enhancing psychologists' skills. The findings underscore the importance of establishing supervisory programs to support the professional growth of psychologists and facilitate their work in various settings, including mental health facilities, counseling offices, and schools. The implementation of such programs undoubtedly reinforces psychologists' positions in their workplaces.

Consequently, this positive impact extends to academic and psychological institutions and those responsible for managing these institutions, leading to a transformation and enhancement of their perception of psychological counseling. This, in turn, paves the way for expanding psychological counseling services within these institutions, focusing on its support, development, and integration in other settings, such as hospitals, through the establishment of specialized departments. The significance of supervisory programs is particularly pronounced in today's world, characterized by numerous psychological pressures and challenges. The urgent need for competent professionals, such as psychiatrists who can improve patients' mental well-being or psychologists within industrial institutions who can oversee employees' mental health, further emphasizes the necessity of these programs.

The researcher further elucidates the study's findings, which showcase the efficacy of the supervisory program rooted in the professional skills development model in educating the experimental group on strategies to mitigate their PA during the program. These strategies proved instrumental in reducing anxiety levels, as evident from the outcomes observed after implementing the recommended techniques. The participants benefited from the

comprehensive training aligned with the professional skills development model, which equipped them with meticulous strategies for reducing anxiety. Notably, they received instruction on conducting counseling telephone interviews, a skill that enhanced their self-assurance and overall performance throughout the program. This training alleviated their PA before the program's commencement and facilitated honing their communication skills.

The current study's results are consistent with previous studies' results, underscoring the importance of alleviating the responsibilities imposed on psychologists, particularly those in the early stages of their careers who may lack experience in counseling work. It pertains specifically to the protocols involved in telephone counseling interviews (Al-Khawaldeh, 2018).

5. Limitations of the study

The study was conducted within the confines of the Erada Mental Health Complex, located in the Eastern Province of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is crucial to acknowledge that the findings of this study may not have universal applicability. Additionally, the study spanned 14 weeks, comprising 14 training sessions. It is worth noting that the study's duration and intensity could impact the obtained results and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

6. Recommendations

The current study recommends implementing a supervisory program based on the skill development model. This program should be extended to other samples by establishing independent specialized academic centers to supervise psychologists. Additionally, the study recommends the creation of academic specializations in postgraduate studies to facilitate professional and academic supervision of psychologists and practitioners at centers that provide psychological and therapeutic services. Furthermore, the study proposes expanding the development of mentoring supervisory programs to train psychologists, enhance their skills, and translate relevant specialized references to enrich the Arabic library. These recommendations aim to improve the overall quality of supervision and enhance the resources available to psychologists in the field.

Statements and Declaration

Ethics approval

This study was performed per the Committee on publication ethics (COPE) principles.

Data Availability

The datasets during and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that the study holds no conflicts of interest.

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