

THE PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF COUNSELLORS-IN- TRAINING WHICH CORRELATE WITH RATINGS OF EFFECTIVENESS AND GRADES

HUGH M. LEARD and ANDREW HUM
McGill University

Abstract

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the relationship between four commonly utilized criteria of counsellor effectiveness and personalities of the students being rated. Measures of the students' personality obtained from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule and the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire were correlated with three ratings of counsellor effectiveness obtained from professors, supervisors and peers and a comprehensive examination grade. Sixty graduates of a Master's degree program in counselling were included in the study. The personality variables which were related to the criteria differed noticeably for male and female counsellors. The factors which are correlated with the effectiveness ratings of faculty members were different from those which correlated with the judgments of supervisors and peers. The final leaving examination grades were significantly correlated with some personality characteristics of the male counsellors. They were not significantly related, however, to any female personality variable or any other criterion rating for male or female students.

Résumé

Cette recherche avait pour but d'étudier les rapports entre quatre critères d'efficacité utilisés fréquemment dans l'évaluation d'un conseiller et les caractéristiques de la personnalité des étudiants évalués. Les questionnaires de personnalité administrés aux étudiants étaient: le "Myers-Briggs Type Indicator", le "Edwards Personal Preference Schedule" et le "16 Personality Factor Questionnaire". Les résultats de ces questionnaires furent mis en corrélation avec trois évaluations de l'efficacité d'un conseiller faites par les professeurs, les superviseurs et les collègues de ces étudiants, et les notes obtenues au moyen d'un examen compréhensif. Soixante diplômés d'un programme de maîtrise en "counselling" participèrent à cette étude. Les variables reliées à la personnalité qui furent mises en corrélation avec les critères d'évaluation, étaient très différentes pour les conseillers masculins et féminins. Les facteurs mis en corrélation avec l'évaluation de l'efficacité des membres de la faculté différaient de ceux qui furent mis en corrélation avec les superviseurs et les collègues. L'inclusion des notes finales des étudiants dans l'analyse amena à constater que quelques caractéristiques de la personnalité des conseillers masculins étaient en corrélation avec ces résultats. Cependant on n'obtient aucune corrélation significative entre les notes et la variable reliée aux caractéristiques de personnalité des sujets féminins et entre les notes et les critères utilisés pour évaluer les étudiants et les étudiantes.

Previous studies of counsellor personality characteristics as they relate to counselling effectiveness have often devoted much of their discussion to the personality variables while little attention has been paid to the criterion. Research designed to identify the characteristics of successful counsellors has been generally disappointing and often contradictory (Patterson, 1967; Whiteley, 1967; Rowe, Murphy, & De Csipkes, 1975). The critical problem in research of this nature is the criterion chosen to measure effectiveness. The nature of the criterion should be well

defined and intimately related to the problem being investigated by the research (Tatsuoka, 1968).

Studies in this area, however, often use vague criteria and suffer from a lack of consensus on what constitutes the effective counsellor (Patterson, 1967; Jackson & Thompson, 1971). This generally makes replication impossible and renders the conclusions of such research suspect.

The present study was designed to explore the correlates of four criteria commonly used in the

research concerned with investigating counsellor effectiveness and personality characteristics. More specifically, the study was an assessment of the criteria employed by three groups of raters or judges who often evaluate counsellor effectiveness. The data were analyzed to answer the following questions: (a) Are the counsellor's personal qualities differentially related to his or her effectiveness as evaluated by peers, faculty professors or practicum supervisors. (b) Are ratings of effectiveness influenced by the sex of the counsellor being evaluated by these three different raters? Academic achievement, was included to explore the relationship between personal characteristics and achievement. Grades have been used as an evaluative strategy (Wittmer & Lister, 1971) and, in this study, provided some contrast to the more subjective ratings of counsellor effectiveness.

Ratings of counsellor effectiveness were obtained from peers, practicum supervisors, and professors. These ratings have been frequently utilized criteria in the literature. Many studies have been reviewed by Whiteley (1967), Rowe, Murphy and De Csipkes (1976) in which a definition of this global evaluation of a counsellor's effectiveness was left entirely to the discretion of the rater. What then, are some of the factors which have influenced the judgment of the raters?

PROCEDURE

A wide variety of instruments to measure personality have been used to explore the counsellor's personal qualities. Of those available, three assessment instruments were selected for this study: the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (Edwards, 1959), the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (Cattell, 1970), and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Briggs & Myers, 1962). The inventories yielded 35 measures of personality which were collected during the initial week of the training program.

The subjects consisted of 60 individuals (22 females and 38 males) who had successfully completed a Masters degree in counselling. All of the subjects were teachers prior to their admission to the Master's program in counselling with an average age of 28.2 years. None of the subjects had any previous counsellor training or experience. The sample represented two successive graduating classes from a program for which the screening methods were considered to be a constant; the academic and supervisory staff remained the same and the course content was unchanged. The 60 counsellors were independently ranked at the completion of their nine month training program by the five professors responsible for their academic training. Ranking was done on a nine-point scale arranged so that a normalized curve

was approximated. In other words, one student was to be assigned to the highest category, another to the lowest category, two others were to be assigned to the next two extremes and so on. The ranks given by the professors were averaged for each student. These averages were the subjective ratings of counsellor effectiveness subsequently labelled professor rating in this study.

The practicum supervisors were Ph.D. or Ed.D. candidates in a counselling psychology program. Each supervisor ranked the members of his group of five counsellors on the basis of the trainee's practicum performance. The practicum was an intensive experience in a school setting. Counsellor trainees rated their peers utilizing the same nine-point scale as that used by the professors. This, again, involved subjective assessments of the myriad factors which, in the minds of the counsellor trainees, contributed to the effectiveness of a counsellor. The trainee did not include himself or herself in the rating. The mean rating so derived for each individual was called the peer rating for the purposes of this study.

Each counsellor wrote a series of comprehensive examinations at the conclusion of his Master's program. These essay type examinations were designed to test the individual's knowledge of theoretical and practical aspects of counselling psychology. They were corrected by the department faculty members who had instructed the counsellors. The identity of each student was disguised by a numbered identification system so as to prevent contamination with the professors' ratings. The mean of the three test scores for each candidate was designated as the comprehensive examination average (CEA) and was included as an additional criterion variable because of its historical importance in the professional literature.

Personality measures were correlated with the criteria using product moment correlations. Separate correlations were computed for male and female participants.

RESULTS

Pearson Product Moment correlations between the four counsellor effectiveness criteria are presented in Table 1 and 2. Table 1 presents this information for the 22 females while Table 2 reports the same data for the 38 males.

The single high correlation between ratings given by professors and peers on female participants indicated there were some common variables ($p < .01$) which each group considered important to effective counselling. The correlations between peer and professor and peer and supervisor ratings indicated a moderate degree of agreement ($p < .05$) on the variables required by effective male counsellors. There appears to be a

TABLE 1

INTERCORRELATIONS AMONG CRITERIA FOR FEMALES

CRITERION	1	2	3	4
1. Professor Rating	-	.30	.73*	.26
2. Supervisor Rating		-	.07	-.09
3. Peer Rating			-	.06
4. Comprehensive Examination Average (CEA)				-

*p < .01

N = .22

TABLE 2

INTERCORRELATIONS AMONG CRITERIA FOR MALES

CRITERION	1	2	3	4
1. Professor Rating	-	.24	.43*	.86*
2. Supervisor Rating		-	.50*	.08
3. Peer Rating			-	.44*
4. Comprehensive Examination Average (CEA)				-

*p < .01

N = 38

distinct relationship between the personality traits which enable a male to achieve a high grade point average and the traits required to obtain a high rating from his professors and to a lesser degree from his peers. This relationship did not prevail for the females in this sampling. The correlations between the four criteria being studied and the selected personality variables are presented in Table 3 and 4. Correlations between personality and criteria variables which reach a level of .40 or greater are shown. This cut-off represents a level of significance greater than .05.

Table 3 presents information for the female subjects examined by the study. The results for the male counsellors are included in Table 4. An examination of the correlations between the independent and criterion variables suggests some of the factors which appear to have had an influence upon the rater's judgments. The correlations between the personality subtest scores and the counsellor effectiveness ratings of the professors were particularly interesting. Different personality variables appear to have been utilized by professors when rating males and females. The correlations indicate that professors assigned higher ratings to those male counsellors whose scores on the personality questionnaires suggested the image of a conventional kind of person who is responsible and respects those in authority positions. Further this individual seemed to have a high tolerance for frustration and anxiety and appeared to be steady, hard working, and composed. In contrast, the females who were

TABLE 3

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CRITERIA AND PERSONALITY VARIABLES FOR FEMALES*

VARIABLE	PROFESSOR RATING	SUPERVISOR RATING	PEER RATING	CEA
EPPS Exhibitionism	.61			
EPPS Endurance	.68	.45	.41	
EPPS Autonomy		.58		
EPPS Dominance		.43		
EPPS Abasement		-.60		
EPPS Nurturance		.53	-.51	
16PF Intelligent	.70		.52	
16PF Sensitive	.51	.63		
16PF Suspecting	.58			
16PF Eccentric	.62		.51	
16PF Emotional		.51	.53	
16PF Introvert		.58		
16PF Shy		.54		
M-B Introvert		.43	.46	

* p < .05

N = 22

TABLE 4

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CRITERIA AND PERSONALITY VARIABLES FOR MALES*

VARIABLE	PROFESSOR RATING	SUPERVISOR RATING	PEER RATING	CEA
EPPS Autonomy	-.57		.50	.52
EPPS Succorance	-.56		-.46	-.65
EPPS Endurance	.40			.42
16PF Calm	.64			
16PF Poised	.44			.60
16PF Sensitive		.51		
16PF Suspecting		.41		-.45
16PF Eccentric		.43		
16PF Intelligent			.46	
16PF Submissive				.68
16PF Conscientious				.56
M-B Sensing			.46	
M-B Judging	.56		.42	.41
M-B Introverted				.50

* p < .05

N = 38

rated highest by their professors scored in such a manner as to suggest a rather independent and creative person who enjoys being the centre of attention and having others comment upon her appearance. The females tended to describe themselves as ambitious, imaginative, intelligent and hard working.

Supervisors rated highest those women who described themselves as independent and introspective. Their confidence, strong sense of concern for others and ability to be affectionate, kind and sympathetic combined to present a picture of a female possessed of those

characteristics which are often attributed to effective counsellors.

Males who enjoyed the highest supervisory ratings were friendly, easy-going, imaginative and flexible. They were somewhat analytic and were inclined to question the alleged motives of others. Although they were inclined to feel that they were, at times, unaccepted they were unconcerned and continued to carry on their general affairs in a rather impractical manner.

Peer ratings constituted the third criterion to be examined. Highest ratings were assigned to those male classmates who described themselves as self-sufficient and independent. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Scores revealed that peers rated highest those males who relied on a judging — sensing process in their environmental dealings. This contrasts with a perceptive — intuitive approach to learning.

Personality characteristics of females which were found to be related to peer rating criteria were also found to be related to ratings made by professors and supervisors. Females who were given top ratings by their peers described themselves on personality scales as being cheerful, somewhat impractical, hardworking and intelligent. They felt that they were easily annoyed, generally dissatisfied and not particularly affectionate or generous toward others.

The final criterion investigated was the average grade on the comprehensive leaving examinations (CEA). Insofar as the males were concerned, there were more correlations between this criterion and the personality variables examined than for any of the other three criteria. The male counsellors who received higher marks tended to be more autonomous, steady and composed. In general, their standards of performance were high. They regarded themselves as mild-mannered and somewhat introverted — conscientiously dealing with contemporary world problems and always planning for tomorrow. No female personality characteristics correlated significantly with this criterion.

DISCUSSION

The assumption that the four criteria frequently used in studies of counsellor effectiveness or counsellor personality characteristics were highly related was not substantiated by this research. Professor, supervisor and peer ratings bore little relationship to each other. Often found in the concluding paragraph of studies in this area, the statement that "much work remains to be done on the criterion problem in counsellor education" was given added significance as a result of this research. Different personality variables were found to be related to each of the criteria. When professors, supervisors or peers were asked to rate

the effectiveness of female rather than male counsellors, the variables which appeared to influence their judgments shifted significantly. The results confirm the fact that professors are, indeed, human and that some of the objectivity which is usually associated with their ratings is subject to question. While they assigned higher ratings to those male students who exhibited the professional behaviours expected of a well-educated, personally competent individual, personal, rather than professional characteristics, such as independence and impractical appeared quite significantly to determine the ratings assigned to females. Supervisors, it would seem, based their ratings on those personality characteristics which are often attributed to effective counsellors. Highly rated females were persuasive, affectionate and independent, while highly rated male were friendly, imaginative and flexible. Peer ratings appeared to follow lines which were conventionally established by students for their peers. Intelligence and the willingness to work hard were important to both male and female peers. A male who was independent and uncomplaining and a female in whom one could confide earned higher peer ratings.

The results reported by Myrick, Kelley and Wittmer (1972) in which they assessed the relationship of 16PF scores to supervisor ratings of counsellor effectiveness are similar to those of this study. They reported similar relationships between 16PF scores and counsellor effectiveness. The females in their study that were rated effective described themselves as casual and imaginative while the effective male counsellors were persistent, practical and conscientious.

In research of this nature, the decision as to who should judge the counsellor's "effectiveness" assumes major significance. This is especially so in view of the rather dissimilar bases of ratings obtained from the three groups often used for this purpose. It is obvious that professors, supervisors and students see and value counselling effectiveness differently.

The relationship between counsellor characteristics and counselling effectiveness has puzzled researchers for a number of years. As a result of the confusion surrounding studies in this area, some counsellor educators have suggested that the search for personal characteristics of effective counsellors be abandoned. A more satisfactory approach would now seem to be a critical examination of the criterion problem with a concentrated effort made to define counselling effectiveness more precisely.

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