

A Review of Research on Counselor Development in Korea (2006~2015)

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: This study aimed to investigate recent research trends on counselor development in Korea in order to expand more recent knowledge on this topic. **Methods/Statistical Analysis:** For this purpose, 34 domestic articles about counselor development, registered (or nominated to be) in the National Research Foundation of Korea between 2006 and 2015, were examined. Using content analysis, these studies were analyzed according to subjects of research, research themes, and the methodologies used. **Findings:** A majority of research subject in the field of counselor development studies were professional counselors. There were few studies which involved undergraduate students of counseling major, counseling clients along with professional counselors, or other participants. Research subjects were mostly females. The age range of the subjects was from 20's to 60's. Most frequently studied research theme was differences found in counselors according to their development level. Many studies also tapped into the developmental processes of counselors. With regard to methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used frequently. Only few studies used mixed method. The present study identified several changes in counselor development research. First, expansion of research focus on diverse counselor related factors were found. Active endeavors on in-depth explorations about counselor's developmental processes and counselor's subjective experiences were indicated as well. The counselor's personal domains have come to receive increased attention recently. The present study has implications in providing recent knowledge and changes in counselor development research. **Application/Improvements:** The findings of the study can provide guidance in future research endeavor in the field of counselor development such as identification of more factors in counselor development and use of various measurement to secure validity.

Keywords: Counselor, Counselor Development, Personal Development, Professional Development, Research Trends

1. Introduction

With increased needs and interests in counseling in Korea, the topic of counseling education and training has gained much attention. Consequently, scholars have shown interest in counselor development and counselor's growth. The theme of counselor development has been of primary interest in supervision and training-related research for decades. Having knowledge about counselor development and its related issues (e.g., phases and factors of counselor development) is important because it could open up critical avenues for providing implications and directions for counseling education and training¹. That is, understanding various aspects of counselor development

would assist in advancing the way we educate counselors as well as improve the quality of their supervision, which in turn, result in provision of more qualified counseling.

Counselor development is composed of two parts: professional development and personal development. Professional development of counselor stresses the process of development from novice to expert through specific phases. It focuses on acquisition of counseling knowledge and skills. Personal development of counselor, on the contrary, emphasizes non-skill-related aspects. In the discussion of counselor's personal development, emphasis is given to the "person of the counselor" and such qualities as personal growth, self-insight, counselor's experience of relating to others become important².

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The majority of studies of counselor development have mainly focused on professional development and the topic of personal development of counselor has been under-researched. However, several studies have provided evidence demonstrating the importance of counselor's personal sphere in the provision of effective counseling¹⁻⁴. Research on experienced therapists has shown that personal qualities are more crucial to the therapeutic process than counseling techniques^{2,4}, leading scholars in the field of models of counselor's development, also revealed that personal development is an essential component of professional development. The results of these studies imply that counselor's self and inner characteristics and experiences can be a critical instrument in therapeutic relationship. Moreover, these results stress the importance of balancing professional and personal aspects of development in order to have a more holistic understanding about counselor development.

In order to enhance knowledge regarding counselor development, by the same token, scholars²⁻⁴ have emphasized integrated approach. That is, both professional and personal development play an important part in development of counselor. In this sense, there is a need for research effort to examine counselor development in both professional and personal domains.

2. Related Works

Due to the scholastic significance of the topic of counselor development, research on counselor development has been constantly conducted in Korea since 1990s. However, only one study⁵ could be located that examined research trends in this area. This study reviewed domestic and international research on counselor development up to 2005 and investigated developmental models of counselor supervision and empirical studies investigating developmental differences of counselors. Main finding of this study showed that past research had almost exclusively focused on professional development of counselor and information about counselor's personal development is relatively limited. This study indicated that more emphasis needs to be given to the personal sphere of counselor development to fill the research gap.

While this study makes an important contribution to our understanding of existing research trends to date, there is a need to expand more recent knowledge on this topic. For example, recognizing the value of

personal development of counselor in the field, recent inquiries^{6,7} have begun to look beyond skill acquisition to consider personal and covert experiences that counselors undergo in depth, which is not fully investigated in the previous study⁵ mentioned above. For instance, one study⁷ explored experiences and meanings of counselors' development of their personal-self and how personal-self development and professional-self development are related. Results demonstrated that research participants experienced intrapersonally developing reflective-self and interpersonally restoring connection and becoming self-differentiated. Findings also revealed that the development experiences of counselors' personal-self and their professional-self have positive reciprocal influences on each other.

Scholastic effort to analyze research trends of a certain topic has value because it would add further research insights and potentially form the basis for research and practice. In this sense, by adding the current research trends of counseling development, this study is expected to enrich and extends findings of the previous study⁵ and knowledge in this area as well.

3. Methodology

For the purpose of analyzing recent research trends in counselor development in Korea, this study reviewed domestic articles that are registered (or nominated to be) in the National Research Foundation of Korea between January 2006 and December 2015. The time period for selection of articles was set from 2006 to 2015 because this study is extension of the previous study⁵ which examined research trends on counselor development up to 2005. The search was also filtered for articles that include "counselor development" as key word. For classification of category of the articles selected, this study referred to that of past review research in the field of counseling^{8,9}. As a result, the articles were analyzed according to subjects of research, research themes, and the methodologies used.

4. Results

The present study analyzed a total of 34 domestic articles in the area of counselor development from 2006 to 2015, using a content analysis. The results of the analysis are described in the below.

4.1 Subjects of Research

A majority of research subjects were professional counselors. They varied in age, counseling degrees, years of counseling practices and counseling career, and counseling licenses. There were two studies that specifically involved undergraduate students of counseling major. Also, there were three studies that included counseling clients as subjects in addition to professional counselors. Individuals who were not related to counseling were also recruited in one study. This study¹⁰ compared a group of counselor and non-counselors in terms of level of wisdom they possessed (Table 1). Across the studies, research subjects were mostly females, and males occupied only small percentage. The age range of the subjects was from 20's to 60's. The sample size of the 18 quantitative studies ranged from 20 to 311 individuals while the number of participants in the qualitative studies ranged from five to 40 individuals.

4.2 Research Themes

The present study categorized research in the counselor development into four different themes: developmental process, differences according to development level, program evaluation and measurement (Table 2). Among them, a theme of differences according to counselor's development level was most frequently appeared. Studies in this area tapped into counselor-related variables such as counselor's counseling competencies and counselor's training needs, training-related variables, and counseling outcome such as working alliance or counseling satisfaction in relation to counselor's development level. As for counseling competencies, factors such as countertransference management and utilization, problem-solving abilities/strategies, case formulation, self-care issue were frequently examined. For instance, ¹¹examined differences in countertransference utilization according to counselor's development level as well as the mediating role of countertransference utilization between counselor's development level and counseling outcome. There were also studies that attempted to investigate differences in counselor's problem-solving strategies in challenging counseling situations according to counselor's development level. A few studies also examined training needs of counselor at different career level. For instance, ¹²divided group therapist into beginning, middle, and skilled career level and explored differences and similarities in their needs regarding contents of group therapy supervision.

With regard to training related variables¹³, for instance, evaluated effects of differences of counselor development

according to education, counseling practice, supervision experience, and educational analysis experience.

In the area of counseling outcome, factors such as working alliance and counseling satisfaction were main topics of research. For example¹⁴, explored the relationship between counselor's adult attachment and development level and therapeutic alliance. They found counselor's adult attachment and development level are positively related with counselor's perceived therapeutic alliance.

Developmental process was another theme where a great deal of research endeavor was devoted. For instance¹⁵, examined the processes of professional development of group counseling experts and their development characteristics¹⁶. Also examined counselor's professional development in light of counselor's self-reflection. In contrast to the studies above¹⁷, explored personal growth experiences of intern counselors in their intrapsychic and relational aspects. This study revealed that personal growth experiences of intern counselors influenced their professional development as well. Likewise, research in this area were divided into ones that focused on professional dimension of development and ones that tapped into the personal development of a counselor. In terms of scope of time, some studies focused on counselor development during formal training periods. Other studies approached this topic from a more extended, life-long perspective. There were also studies that examined influences of counselor's personal factors such as certain life experiences (i.e., critical incidents, psychological healing experiences) on counselor development. For example, one study¹⁸ explored the effects of critical incidents experiences on counseling intern's development and proposed a development model. There were also studies that examined the influences of a training factor such as supervision on the counselor development. For instance, Hur and ¹⁹explored novice counselor's change process of counselor development through reflection-focused supervision. Research indicated the positive effects of reflective feedback in learning/problem solving ability²⁰.

In the area of program evaluation, only one research²¹ was found. This study measured the effect of counseling education program on the development of military leaders as para-counselors. Research regarding measurement was scarce as well.

4.3 Research Methodologies

With regard to research methodologies, quantitative methodologies were used in 18 studies while qualitative methodologies were used in 14 studies. Two studies used

mixed method approaches (Table 3). Among 14 qualitative studies, seven studies used grounded theory, four studies used phenomenological methodology, and two studies used a consensual qualitative approach. One study did not list a specific qualitative research tradition.

5. Discussion

The present study reviewed research articles in the area of counselor development over the last decade with a purpose to examine research trends in this area. Several issues were emerged as a result. First of all, it is noted that more diverse counselor related factors were examined in relation to counselor development than in the past. For instance, factors such as counselor's empathy, counter-transference management, coping and problem-solving strategies, and burnout were examined.⁵Suggested in her study the need for more diverse research focuses that tap into not only cognitive but also emotional and relational aspects of counselors. The present study was able to confirm this trend. There were also a few attempts to include counseling clients in order to investigate the relationship between counselor's development level and counseling outcome. For instance,²²attempted to see the effects of clients' expectation, working alliance, and counselor's development level on client's counseling satisfaction in the area of adolescent counseling. This study found a meaningful relationship between client's expectation and client's counseling satisfaction. However, counselor's development level was found to have little influence on client's counseling satisfaction.

In terms of research designs in the area of counselor development, more sophistication was observed. There were several studies that measured not only the main factors but also the mediating role of various factors in relation to counselor development. For instance,²³examined the difference in counselor development level, counselor burnout, and resilience according to years of counseling career. In their study, they attempted to illuminate the moderating effects of resilience on the relationship between counselor's development level and burnout.

The present study also identified more active research engagement in exploring of counselor's developmental characteristics, processes, and stages, using qualitative methodologies. The value of looking into counselor's subjective experiences in illuminating the process of

counselor development appears to be acknowledged increasingly. In relation to this, this study found more utilization of phenomenological methodology over grounded theory in recent years, which could shed light on the essence of experiential world of individuals. More specification of research focus was observed as well in this area. Studies that focused certain aspects of developmental process beyond the overall development processes of counselors began to appear. For instance,¹⁸focused on experiences of 'critical incidents' in the counselor development.¹⁶Also narrowed down their exploration of counselor's professional development with a focus on counselor's self-reflection.

Another tendency observed in the present study is that the counselor's personal domains such as self-growth and self-development have come to be perceived as an integral part of counselor development in recent years.²⁴Suggested that the personal development of counselors is as critical as the professional development in overall processes of counselor development. Increased attention on this aspect can pave the way for a more holistic understanding of counselor development as an outcome of interaction and integration between the personal and professional development.

The present study also identified expanding of the scope of research in counselor development. As an effort to cover the full spectrum of counselor development, a few research attempted to explore experiences of undergraduate students in counseling program For example,²⁵explored self-growth experiences of undergraduate students through a counseling training course.

In the area of counselor development research, the present study identified several limitations. First, while more counselor-related or counseling outcome-related factors were explored in relation to counselor development than in the past, the number of factors still appears limited. More extensive research endeavor to identify and examine diverse factors related to counselor development would have important implication on counselor training. This study also observed research investment to illuminate the developmental factors and processes of counselors in specific fields of counseling. Such investment was found to be most active in group counseling field. However, research in this area still appears in its early stage. More research would be beneficial in order to develop more comprehensive understanding on developmental processes that are specific to each field of counseling.

Table 1. Research Subjects

Professional counselors	Counselors+clients	Counselor+Non-counselors	Counseling major undergraduate students	Others	Total
27	3	1	2	1	34

Table 2. Research themes

Developmental process	Differences according to development level	program evaluation	measurement	Total
14	18	1	1	34

Table 3. Research Methodology

Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed	Total
18	14	2	34

The present study also observed a lack of consensus in the definition of counselor's level of career and development. While factors such as degrees of counseling education, years of counseling practice, level of counseling licenses, supervision experiences, and experience of receiving educational analysis were used as representing different level of counselor development, a consistency across research studies was not found. This tendency was mentioned in Choi's research⁵ earlier, but unfortunately there have not been significant changes since then. In a similar vein, the utilization of limited number of measures in assessing counselor's development level was identified as another limitation in the counselor development research. The present study found heavy dependence on a single self-reported measure (i.e. The Korean Counselor Level Questionnaire²⁶) in this⁵ also pointed out this tendency in her study, stating the possible gap between counselor's perceived and actual level of development. Inclusion of more objective measures in addition to self-reported evaluations would be recommended in order to secure research validity.

6. References

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