

Reflective practice and the conceptualization of implicit theories of counseling and psychotherapy in psychology faculty members. A qualitative perspective from the United Arab Emirates¹

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This research qualitatively characterized the subjective concept of counseling and psychotherapy of faculty working at a public university in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), in the Middle East, and how they embraced this concept when teaching psychology related courses. Using Grounded Theory Analysis as a general methodological framework, this study was based on the analysis of 14 face-to-face in-depth interviews with psychology faculty members. The results revealed that the interviewees regarded the teaching of psychology and counseling as a relational process that leads to personal growth, both for the patient/student and for the faculty/therapist, implying that both cultural and intersubjective dimensions should be considered. As further implications, it is concluded that all the psychologists interviewed stated that the relational and ethnographic dimensions of counseling should be incorporated into training psychologists in the UAE.

Key words: United Arab Emirates, reflective practice, implicit theories, concepts of counseling and psychotherapy.

Esta investigación caracterizó cualitativamente el concepto subjetivo de psicoterapia y orientación psicológica de profesores que enseñan en una universidad pública en los Emiratos Árabes Unidos (EAU) (Medio Oriente), y cómo ellos adaptaron este concepto al impartir cursos relacionados con la psicología. Utilizando el análisis de teoría fundamentada como marco metodológico general, este estudio se basó en el análisis de 14 entrevistas en profundidad, cara a cara, con profesores de psicología. Los resultados revelaron que los entrevistados consideraron la enseñanza de la psicología y la psicoterapia como un proceso relacional que conduce al crecimiento personal, tanto para el paciente/alumno como para el docente/terapeuta, lo que implica que se debe considerar tanto la dimensión cultural como la intersubjetiva. En conclusión, todos los psicólogos entrevistados afirmaron que las dimensiones relacional y etnográfica deberían incorporarse en la formación de psicólogos en los EAU.

Palabras clave: Emiratos Árabes Unidos, práctica reflexiva, teorías implícitas, conceptos de orientación psicológica y psicoterapia

Título en castellano: Práctica reflexiva y conceptualización de teorías implícitas de la psicoterapia en profesores de psicología. Una perspectiva cualitativa desde los Emiratos Árabes Unidos

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1. Background

1.1. Introduction

This research conducted an empirical analysis of the subjective voices of psychology faculty who teach counseling and psychotherapy in the UAE, especially faculty members reflective practice (RP) on psychology and counseling, and how these professors conceive the implicit theories of their practices. The general question asked in this research was, what are psychology and counseling faculty members' "implicit theories" of their practice when teaching psychology courses, and how have these theories have influenced psychology faculty members' conceptions of counseling and psychotherapy in the specific context of the UAE.

1.2. Research into Reflective Practice in Counseling and Psychotherapy

The concept of RP focuses on what psychology and counseling⁷, professionals believe and value about their field. It has been conceptualized as the personal experience of creating meaningful self-awareness, cultural compassion, and improving the therapeutic relationship with both patients and students of psychology and counseling, as well as the personal and professional change experienced throughout the years of practice (Brown 2019).

As a conceptual term, RP invites mental health practitioners to challenge their assumptions and to elaborate on their subjective perspectives. In addition, many professional counseling organizations act to strengthen counselors' professional identity to achieve parity for counselors (Heinonen and Orlinsky 2013).

⁷ It is important to mention that in the literature exists a controversy on the differentiation between counseling and psychotherapy and its adherence of the science of psychology. On the one hand, psychotherapy is regulated in some parts of the world, such as the European Association for Psychotherapy, and is conceived as a an independent scientific discipline, and its exercise is equivalent to a free and autonomous profession (Strasbourg Declaration on Psychotherapy of 1990 <https://www.europsyche.org/contents/13247/strasbourg-declaration-on-psychotherapy-of-1990>). On the other hand, Corsini and Weding (2005) have stated, psychotherapy cannot be defined with any precision, and it is not entirely clear when a supportive conversation becomes counseling or when counseling becomes psychotherapy. These authors consider both fields as unified concept, with dimensional characteristic, and this distinctions has implication into the discrete practice and licensing laws. In this research, we depart from the idea that counseling and psychotherapy are embroided in the field of psychology, and this duet forms a continuum that only serves to differentiate some tasks, but not the essential concept, which is the process helping the mental and behavioral suffering, thought language and psychological mechanisms, in the context of a licensed mental health setting/relationship. Therefore, when it is mentioned "counseling and psychotherapy", we assumed a unified identity. Also, it is important to mention that the psychology major in many the UAE universities belongs to the "Psychology and Counseling Programs or Departments".

In the field of counseling and psychotherapy research, the study of RP is gaining traction (Brown 2019) and has predictive validity in terms of professional identity and the valuation of efficacy, in both the practice of counseling and psychotherapy and its teaching (Heinonen and Nissen-Lie 2020). Although this concept is not a conclusive validator of outcomes in the field of counseling and psychotherapy, (Heinonen, Erkkiand Nissen-Lie, Helene 2020) consistent evidence has recently emerged for performance-based on RP, measured through the professional identity and interpersonal skills of practitioners and the conceptualization of their field elaborated through years of practice, especially when elicited by challenging situations. Patient outcomes were also predicted by some components of RP, including the therapists' self-professional characteristics, their implicit and explicit theories about the field, the elaboration of difficulties experienced in practice and resulting coping mechanisms, and the consideration of therapeutic work. These findings indicate that the therapist's personal reflection must be considered when researching outcomes in the field of counseling and psychotherapy.

For instance, Heinonen and Orlinsky. (2013) performed analyses of over 4000 therapists of varied nationalities, professions, and career levels, and found that therapists' self-experience is associated with their conceptualizations of the field and individual interpersonal styles, as well as their adoption of a professional approach to practice to meet the specific expectations of their target population. In addition, Campo, Gamboa, and Garcia (2018) conducted qualitative research on the characteristics of clinical psychologists' practice when performing psychotherapy, finding that psychotherapy is understood as a relational process that facilitates the individual emotional development of the patient and supports the therapist's personal growth.

The above could infer that there is a continuous separation between clinical practice in counseling and psychotherapy (Krause 2011). On the one hand, clinical practice is investigated mainly by using case studies like those of Krause *et al* (2006); on the other, academic research in counseling and psychotherapy is usually inclined to focus on comparative and correlational studies, like those conducted by Luborsky and Singer (1975). Few studies exist that investigate the faculty who teach in psychology and counseling programs, especially analyzing "their own voices", that is, how the actors involved in the process articulate their implicit theories of their own field, leading to an empirical conceptualization of their RP.

Najavits (1997) has operationalized one of the components of RP with the concept of implicit theories; it comprises the practitioner's conceptions of a mixture of personal experiences, formal training, and professional reflection, and may include the personal strategies of what should be done and not done in counseling and psychotherapy. For her, it includes the unsaid,

internal, and very private opinions a professional holds about how counseling and therapy should be practiced and the way they operationalize it effectively. Sha has found that when studying counseling and psychotherapy processes and outcomes, the combination of an explicit and an implicit theory would account for more variance than explicit (formal) theory alone.

Several authors depart from the concept of “not-knowing” (e.g. Rober 2002, 2004), as a frame to contextualize the dialogical perspective that is emerging in many helping fields, where implicit and explicit theories are intertwined to help explain how to act when supervising a student of psychology and counseling. Phrased from a dialogical perspective, this dialogue has been called the practitioner’s inner conversation (Rober 2002).

Within this view, the concept of the dialogical self as a polyphony of inner voices has been coined (Bakhtin 1981, 1984; Hermans 2004; Morson and Emerson 1990). Some practicing therapists (e.g. Anderson and Goolishian, 1988) have described the professional’s self as an inner discourse where the professional maintains a private dialogue with themselves as the starting point of the assumptions that will influence their teaching and practice.

Professional awareness of the tasks performed by faculties is considered beneficial, both for faculty members’ own personal development and for the therapeutic process itself (Norcross 2000). However, there is not a wide literature (not in western countries, much less in the Middle East) that has empirically collected the experiences and conceptions that psychologists, especially clinicians, make when they practice as counselors (Williams, Hurley, O’Brien, and DeGregorio 2003). In the UAE, there is no line of research related to the conceptualization of the clinical practice conducted by the professionals themselves, nor implicit theories of the therapeutic action associated with such practice. Therefore, intensive qualitative research is necessary to characterize practitioners’ and educators’ conceptualization of psychology and counseling in the UAE.

2. Methodological Considerations

2.1. Qualitative Approach and Grounded Theory Analysis

Qualitative case studies are common in the area of personal and subjective research (Krause et al 2006), with a relatively small number of informants⁸. According to Cuenya and Ruetti (2010),

⁸ It is important to mention that in GTA, the terms “subjects” and “informants” are used indistinctively, even though the term “informant” has a particular meaning. According to Allen, M. (2017), an informant is “a person who has specialized knowledge and/or expertise about a particular culture or members of a group. Researchers identify informants early on during the research process as a means to gain access, information, and ongoing feedback during the collection and gathering of data for interpretation. Informants are those individuals who have

and Fisher, Chew, and Leow (2015), a phenomenological-experiential approach is especially helpful for initiating insights into how psychologists teach and practice counseling and the role of RP in their field.

Because there are not validated approaches on how to measure RP in psychologists teaching counseling and psychotherapy in the Middle East region, the modality of the qualitative approach was chosen utilizing a relatively small sample (N=14).

We sought to understand phenomena in their natural context using descriptions of situations and interactions that occur during the practice of teaching counseling and psychotherapy in a public university in the UAE. Thus, the topic to be investigated was exploratory (rather than correlational or evidential), to achieve a holistic and naturalistic understanding centered on an interpretation of the meaning that psychologists gave to the central question, "how do you conceptualize counseling and psychotherapy in your everyday teaching in UAE?"

We followed the guidelines of grounded theory analysis (GTA), as postulated by Strauss and Corbin (1994, 2002). GTA is a qualitative data method, rather than a theory verification (McLeod 2001), and it is often considered appropriate for the initial exploration of a new, under-theorized domain (Burck 2005; Charmaz 1995, 2006; McLeod 2001), like the one present in this research.

Strauss and Corbin (2002) explicitly state the need to work in research teams so that the process can be discussed by asking enriching analytic questions (this explains why in this study, the team was composed of somewhat of six researchers). Also, the team enabled a triangulation process aimed at reducing the possible subjective bias of the researcher(s) and increasing the validity of the results (see above *bracketing* and *memo writing*).

Rather than testing pre-existing theoretical suppositions or hypotheses, the methodological approach of GTA generates complex and inductive material about psychological and subjective processes, such as emotions and thoughts, that are unique and personal and cannot be accessed adequately by other quantitative methods (Sbaraini, Carter, and Evans 2011).

The GTA method is appropriate for establishing the state of the art research on psychotherapy in the United Arab Emirates, given the scarce bibliography on the subject and the need to provide a foundation for future research.

been a member of a culture for some time, built relationships with others from within the culture, and are knowledgeable about what other members may think, feel, and believe." (Barrios 2015).

2.2. Ethics

An application to the Ethics Committee of the participating UAE university was made and approved. Prior to conducting the collection of data, each participant was contacted by e-mail, and an explanatory form was provided (including an explanation of research objectives, reasons for their recruitment to the sample, ethical aspects, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw collaboration at any time during the investigative process) requesting their participation and consent. Also, the concept of *bracketing* (Tufford and Newman 2010) was used as a qualitative method used especially in GTA to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions that may taint the research process. Table 1 provides a brief example of our declaration, related to our own implicit theories of counseling and psychology.

Table 1

Researchers bracketing: Our implicit theories of research in counseling and psychotherapy

Identification	Training	Conceptualization	Assumptions (Implicit Theories)
We are a team consisting of a senior psychologist with more than thirty years of experience in the profession and five students of psychology in their final year	Our 2 main leaders have postgraduate training either in clinical psychodynamically-oriented counseling and cultural psychology, The rest of the team has an interest in psychology from a humanistic perspective. All students have been trained in qualitative research, in-depth interviews, and GTA.	Our interest focuses on the practical application of counseling and psychotherapy as a set of competencies to be developed by faculties and practitioners.	We conceive the practice of counseling (and psychology) as a fundamentally human encounter, and we consider that the work of introspection and reflection is essential in the professional who performs the function of helping people. This means that, for us, the human relationship between the professional and the case, be it an individual or family, is essential to the encounter. Therefore, the relationship, countertransference, projective identifications, and intersubjectivity, more than concepts or techniques, are organizing principles that guide our practice as helping professionals and as researchers.

2.3. Sample

According to Charmaz (1990, p. 1162), the sample size used in qualitative research is often smaller than that used in quantitative research. During the planning stage, the precept of intentionally choosing participants was followed based on their interest in the investigation and applying a general procedure described by Strauss and Corbin (2002) termed *theoretical*

sampling, meaning through deep interpellation, in this case with psychologists, to understand their conceptualization of counseling and psychotherapy.

The sample, shown in Table 2, consisted of 14 psychology faculty members, teaching at a public university in the UAE, with more than four years of professional experience in the country. The condition was applied to ensure that the research participants had some “experiential” knowledge of UAE culture. The sample was intentional, according to the fundamentals of GTA recognized by Strauss and Corbin (2002). These subjects contributed initial information that was then interpreted through previously delineated open questions. Saturation was achieved when the data collection process no longer offered any new or relevant data.

Table 2 Demographic Characteristic of Interview Subjects

Informant	Time	Number of years in UAE	Age range	Gender	Ethnicity
1	30:11	5	40 - 50	Male	North African
2	19:13	4	30 - 40	Female	African American
3	15:36	5	51 - 65	Male	North African
4	21:17	10	51 - 65	Male	Northern African
5	30:12	5	30 - 40	Male	South Asian
6	30:29	5	45-50	Female	West African
7	32:47	15	45-50	Female	North African
8	20	15	42 - 50	Male	Arab - Jordanian
9	23:31	5	51 - 65	Male	Arab - Jordanian
10	Interview through e-mail	5	30-40	Female	Arab - Jordanian
11	22	5	30 - 40	Male	East African
12	31:20	5	42 - 50	Female	Canadian, North American
13	30:36	4	30 - 40	Female	South Asian
14	25:30	10	45-50	Male	UK

2.4. Instrument: in-depth, individual, face-to-face interviews

We have to acknowledge that we were not completely ignorant of the possible tracks of our questioning, therefore, the inquiries we drafted were not created in a vacuum, and were derived from the literature on the professional development of counselors and therapists such as findings made by Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003). Therefore, an in-depth, individual interview with open questions (but with a focus on the central theme of the research), using a face-to-face modality was the chosen format of the data collection instrument. In-depth interview work is not concerned with generalizing about a larger population of interest and

does not rely on hypothesis testing but utilizes a more inductive and emergent process. Appendix 1 presents a sample of the main questions utilized.

2.5. Information recording technique

The information was documented using a machine recorder: pre-tests were carried out to guarantee registration, and we ensured the full interview could be conducted without interruptions. Subsequently, detailed and meticulous transcriptions of the recordings were made, including notes on interjections, pauses (using an ellipsis), and other gestures, as well as the emotional expressions and other participant behavior during the interview.

2.6. Process: transcription, memo writing, coding

All interviews were transcribed, and once this process was completed, the researchers closely interrogated each expression and constantly compared the text to ensure an in-depth analysis.

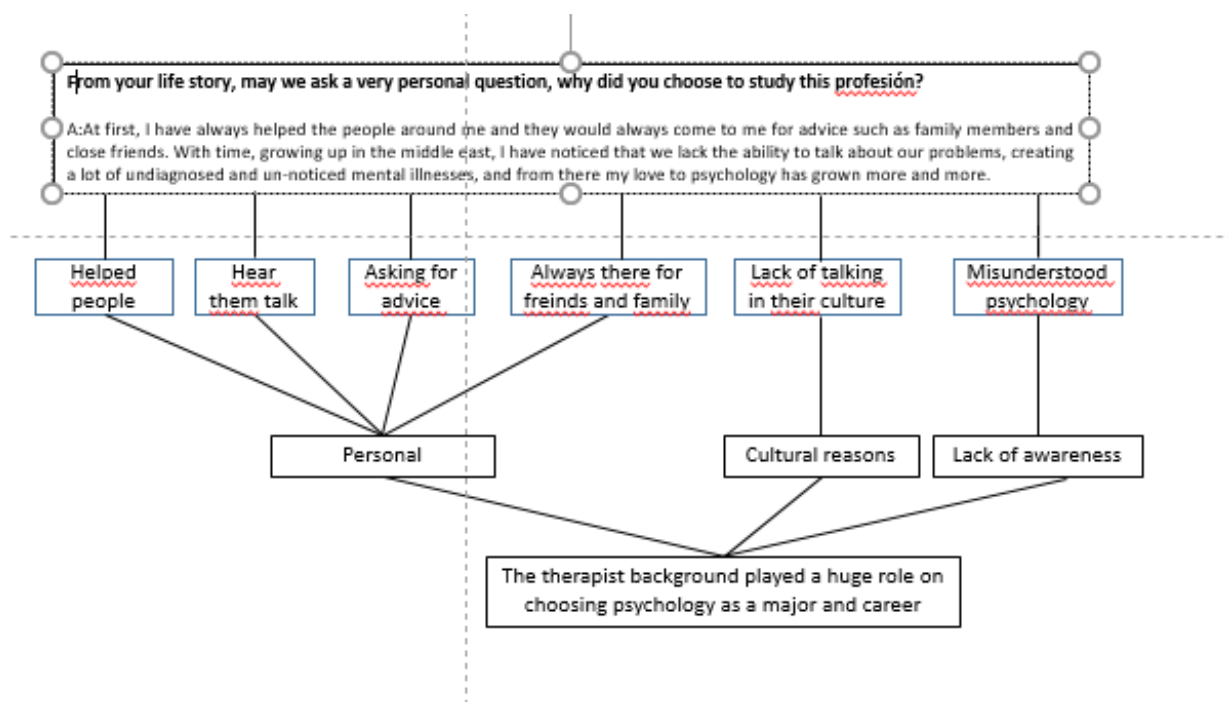
The identification of the topics and sub-themes of each interview was conducted manually, rather than using coding software. This decision reflected the researchers' desire to obtain a detailed understanding of the data and to show respect for the textual meanings of informants' verbalizations.

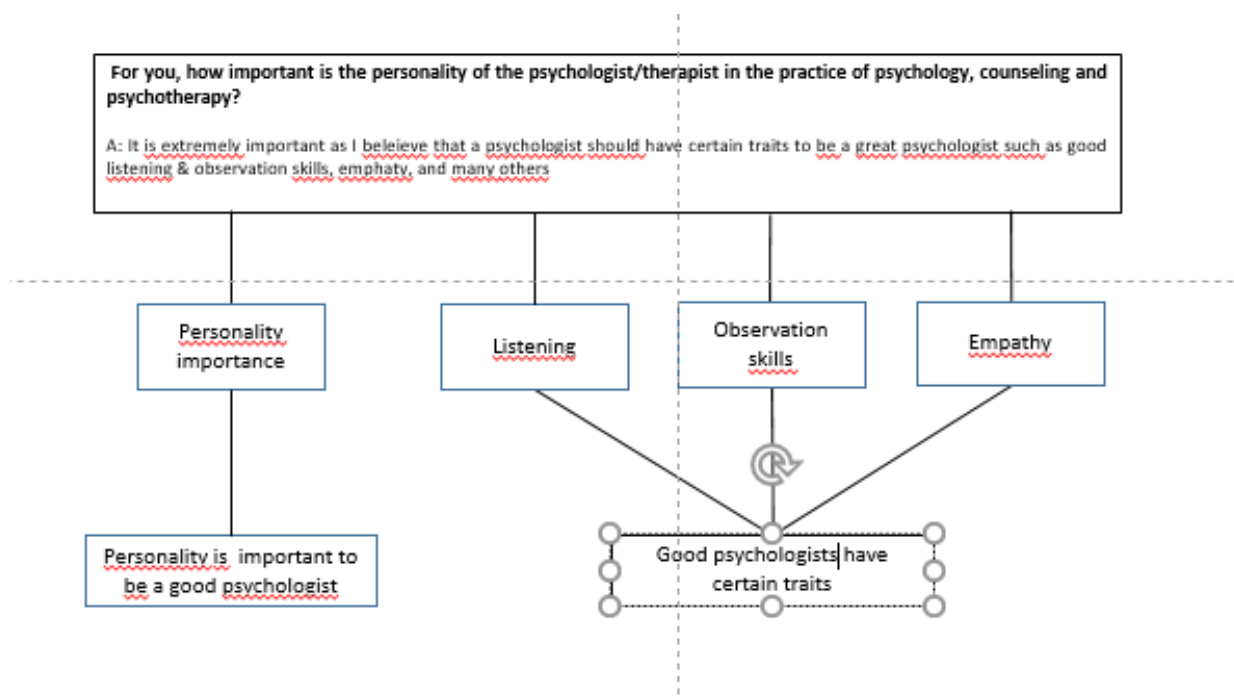
Following the guidelines of Sbaraini et al (2011), transcripts were divided into meaning units, each containing one complete idea about the faculty members' answers during their interviews (Table 3). The coding systems were first developed individually and through team meetings and discussions (six members of the research team). Next, the representative categories were named to facilitate their organization. During the encoding of information, categories were regrouped according to their relationships, so that if each one was separated before it became meaningfully linked as follows: *a) main areas of content (questions) in raw data; b) initial categories focused coding; c) indicators; and d) theoretical coding.*

The final step facilitated the development of the theory presented by the data. Selective coding identified the central category and the subsidiaries were organized around it. Coding work was graphed and derived by obtaining coordinates of the theory (Figure 1, Model). This generated greater validity and an encounter with "the truth" of the analyzed text to help minimize the theoretical preconceptions and personal conjectures of the researchers themselves. The researchers recorded ideas that emerged directly from the text by following participants' exact words.

Memo writing is another important component of the GTA process and is the intermediate step between coding and writing the document, including the provisional analysis (Charmaz and Thornberg 2020). In this study, memoing occurred throughout the exploration procedure after each interview was completed. Memos and their graphing served to resolve the fidelity of the data grounded in participants’ textual inputs, and at the same time maintained the researcher’s awareness of “a dialogic process”. Figure 1 presents some of the memo recordings.

Figure 1 - Memos: textual answers from informants and emerging ideas identified by the researchers as dialogic process.





2.7. Descriptive analysis and categorization of information

A core category was derived from the data obtained, followed by subcategories that characterized psychology faculty members' conceptualization of counseling and psychotherapy. Table 3 presents the categorization process.

Table 3 - Categorization

Main areas of content (questions): raw data	Initial coding: categories	Focused coding: indicators	Deployment: theoretical coding
What constitutes a good helping/therapeutic process? Training and practice	Main Category: The content and practice of counseling of psychotherapy need to be adapted to Middle-Eastern culture	Combination of training and integration with experience in the UAE	<i>Culture permeates every teaching task on counseling courses in the UAE, therefore, understanding the dialectics of spiritual/rational practices are essential to relate to students and patients.</i>
Therapeutic relationship and the importance you give to the practice of counseling and/or psychotherapy: Conception of counseling and psychology	Practice of counseling and psychotherapy based on the region, in the UAE, includes relational, spiritual and religious components, in addition to the traditional academic ones	Spiritual/rational epistemology	<i>Paying attention to the specific characteristics of students and patients is essential. The need to consider religion and culture should be integrated into each specific relationship.</i>

		Traditional approaches to pedagogical and psychological interventions are not sufficient to work with students and or patients in this region (UAE).	<i>Implementation of strategies according to gender should be taken into consideration</i>
What in your practice as a psychologist has contributed to change and what has hindered change, according to your view? Specific characteristics of the process of teaching counseling and psychotherapy	Therapeutic alliance is essential to teaching the counseling process	Every encounter has to be pharmed with some type of alliance, between the duplet student/patient and faculty/therapist.	<i>Metaphors help to strengthen the relationship</i>
For you, how important is the personality of the psychologist/ therapist? Objective/subjective components of counseling	The personality of the psychologist/psychotherapist is present in everyday professional practice	The psychologist as a counselor is impacted by their students/patients, and vice versa.	<i>Stories of emotional suffering provoke an emotional impact on the professor/counselor; therefore, counselors have to struggle with the hope/helpless objective/subjective continuum</i>
		The personality of the faculty/therapist permeates every task performed.	<i>In the UAE is not possible to separate the personality of the professional from professional identity</i>
Can you share with us your very "private assumptions" or your "working models", when practicing psychology or psychotherapy? Private assumptions about the practice of counseling	It is mandatory to adapt the training to the specific characteristics of students in this region	The attachment process of the binomial student/professor depends on the history of each student and professor, their cultural background, and the type of intimacy both parties have achieved.	<i>The bond with students/patients is mediated by language and social conditions</i>
		Keeping a neutral/objective attitude with students is a continuous struggle.	<i>There is a constant scuffle between being objective and considering the external needs of the audience, either the student or patient</i>
		Professor have to use their internal/emotional resources in addition to their training to perform an appropriate pedagogical and psychological intervention.	<i>Intuition and nonverbal communication are needed to teach and practice counseling</i>

3.0. Findings and discussion

We want to highlight that in qualitative studies, the difference between “findings” and “discussion” is cloudy, and in many cases, they cannot be clearly demarcated, making the distinction between these categories forced. Therefore, we decided that the best way to portray our findings is to describe each category and intertwine them with our discussion and analysis.

Our analysis of texts identified a “core” category emerged⁹, which we called “contents and practices of psychology and counseling need to be adapted to this region”. This means that the integration of training with experience in the UAE is a must. Many of our informants believed that culture permeates everything, especially when teaching counseling concepts. The term “culture” implicitly refers to Islam as a religion and source of values, together with the ancient history of the region, the shared common sense of popular knowledge and wisdom, and the new political organization of the country. For example, in all of the informants’ descriptions, the notion of culture as a “mold” was present in their conceptualization of teaching counseling and psychotherapy,

culture, religion, play a deep essential role in the decision making here

*Our training is based on theories and models that originate in a first world **western context** actually one hundred years ago the first western context which was even very different from current western context. So it comes from a **different time and place**. I mean going to certainly impose it does a Freud theory does it help you understand why somebody from this culture presents a particular symptom. Probably not. So we need new theories we need to recognize the limitations of his own theories and adapted accordingly.*

*With the personality, the personality must be first shaped by the context in which you live, like in UAE, to study the **culture**, the history, society and from of these ingredients you can develop your own strategies to adjust to the culture.*

A subcategory was derived from the need to adapt knowledge to the culture of the UAE. Culture permeates every task of teaching counseling courses in the UAE; therefore, a spiritual epistemology should be combined with a more “westernized” rationality. This is essential for relating to students and patients,

*My humble opinion I think in this context with some people who are **not necessarily attuned to a psychological way of thinking** they have struggled to do that.*

⁹ In italic font are the textual responses from the informants, and in **bold**, the concepts that lead to the theoretical categories

*The need of that society like here you when you start teaching, you must become careful how you adjust your courses, and incorporate **spiritual metaphors, so you can get to people's minds***

Also, the traditional approaches of pedagogical and psychological interventions are not sufficient for working with students or patients in this region (UAE). Implementing strategies according to UAE practices as a country and as a culture should be taken into consideration. The implementation of strategies according to students' gender should also be taken into consideration. Culturally and religiously, gender differentiation in the UAE is not considered "segregation"; on the contrary, is an integral practice performed since ancient times to preserve and transmit the culture from generation to generation. In many public universities in the UAE, gender differentiation is an accepted practice, including the separate campuses for male and female students. This has an impact on the way faculty behave and even teach. For example, our respondents commented that,

*generally, **males** in this country are even more skeptical of psychologists than females agree with but generally males are a little bit more stoic. Stoic means more confident into more serious less emotional so they're less likely to go to a psychologist if they would end up there for whatever reason they'd be less likely to engage in process based on a lack of trust. So they just have to work harder to achieve that goal.*

Hopefully, I practice in a way that is not oppressive, especially with women, a way that doesn't umm have people feel disrespected.

You've got a female psychology student, so the idea that some decisions you make consciously and some of you make unconscious.

*If I have a **male patient** in my office I can close the door and talk, but if I have a female patient then I cannot do that, yeah because in this culture we cannot stay two people you know male and female in closed doors it is considered something bad, so I try to cope with a culture and I try to make sure that I can see how genders work now if I were to practice in some other cultures then, of course, my approach to gender can be different according to that culture as it were, yeah so that's how I deal with you know diversities, okay.*

Every encounter has to be pharmed with some type of alliance between the duplet student/ faculty and/or patient /therapist, and in this context, change and learning occur. It seems that psychology faculty members have to embrace some type of sensibility where they investigate their own internal resources (beyond their training) to form strong agreements during their teaching tasks. The relationships that faculty members develop with students have a cultural component (gender for instance, as previously discussed). When trying to

understand this and to be efficient professionals, faculty members have to form some type of pact with their counterparts (students or patients). Also, it seems this alliance has a positive impact on the development of their professional identity, as such relationships lead to the personal growth of both the student/patient and the faculty member/therapist. To illustrate this idea, many examples are deployed below,

It takes two to tango

*You can also understand when the patient or the student is reacting to **you** as a **person** but also you can check the relationship, how it's going.*

I'm giving a metaphor so there are passengers on a bus or demons on a bus. All the while you're trying to ride down the road the road is the metaphor for life. The bus the metaphor for your mind. The passengers are one of those early experiences that you know are causing dysfunction, things that you worry about, niggling thoughts about other people's perceptions of you. And so I think again it links back the previous thing I see in the article. We should be doing that to accept that the demons, the passengers on the bus you can't get rid of them. Plus it's simply about accepting them and getting on with the task and getting back on the road.

Well first I try to understand the context, in which the patients is... his mind is grounded, like signs, symbols, language, culture, and everything. That's what a therapist does. When you come here you should not base therapy on judgments on translation. You must study even the dialect of that patient. Because when he's talking all these words are full of symbols.

*So the personality of the patient and the personality of the psychotherapist need to **somehow gel**.*

*The **chemistry** needs to be right. So not everybody is right for everybody even if they are technically good.*

The personality of the psychologist or psychotherapist is present in everyday professional practice. The psychologist as a counselor is impacted by their students/patients, and vice versa. Stories of emotional suffering have an emotional impact on the professor/counselor, therefore counselors have to struggle with the hope/helpless objective/subjective continuum. Also, the faculty member's or therapist's personality permeates every task performed. In the UAE is not possible to separate the professional's personality from their professional identity, as these expressions speak for themselves,

*Well, psychotherapy it's a big problem because most of the people here they are educated in the image of the theories developed for the last 300 years, so our **presence** it is very important.*

*I think that's one of the most basic questions, and well the **personality of the psychotherapist** is the basic factor in the therapy itself because the way the psychotherapists present themselves uh it will determine the success or failure of therapy if they have to feel safe and secure with YOU (emphasizes)*

You call what's what yours or not what we call nonverbal communication your facial expressions your tone of voice

*Here, in UAE, you need to have a **stable personality and a mature personality**. If not, then you may negatively influence the client. Uh uh we need also to have confidence in ourselves and our abilities to deal with client's problems. If we don't have it is better to uh transfer the client to another person.*

The personality of the faculty/therapist permeates all tasks performed and in the UAE it is not possible to separate the professional's personality from their professional identity,

*I recognize you know the culture here is completely more closed than what we have in the US. So I had to **adjust my own expectations***

*I consider myself like kind of a **construction** guy*

*We need to be here **very emotionally intelligent** and then we can help our students.*

*Trust if there is no **trust** uh between you and the patient uh the patient will not benefit.*

*I think showing that I get you, through language through **body language** through eye contact all of that makes a difference because those call those extra therapeutic factors and actually I think those count for more than the actual tools that we're using*

*What makes it more most effective is their **relationship**, Like some small changes in the, either you or something that the client can bring to the table?*

*It's the **relationship** so the genuineness, the authenticity you bring, the warmth that you bring on occasion, but rarely but sometimes, the therapist might use a personal disclosure.*

*I want to know people's **innate** feelings. But I think in a way I used to, uh, help people, help my friends*

The professor has to use his internal/emotional resources in addition to his training to perform an appropriate pedagogical and psychological intervention where intuition and nonverbal communication are both needed to teach and practice counseling,

*It goes **beyond** what you see and the, it goes beyond that. It's not also beyond what you see is not what you tell people. And I want you to talk to people and to behave. It's about what you do inside yourself as well.*

*Making a dialogue and yes it's **intersubjective** but It's not easy to look at yourself. You know, as a person you are dealing with you and every day you have to face in the night with, nobody sees you but you see what is inside and it's not easy to see what is inside.*

*You have an **eye** on the patient and the student, an eye on yourself, and an eye on the process.*

*So in the US, we have different kind of like personal boundaries and space and even just professional boundaries, whereas here, those are kind of **blurred**.*

***Boundaries**, whereas here, those are kind of **fuzzy**.*

4. Model

In this work of research, we intended to delineate a model that explains the main characteristics of the implicit theories of psychology faculty members when teaching counseling and psychotherapy (Figure 2)

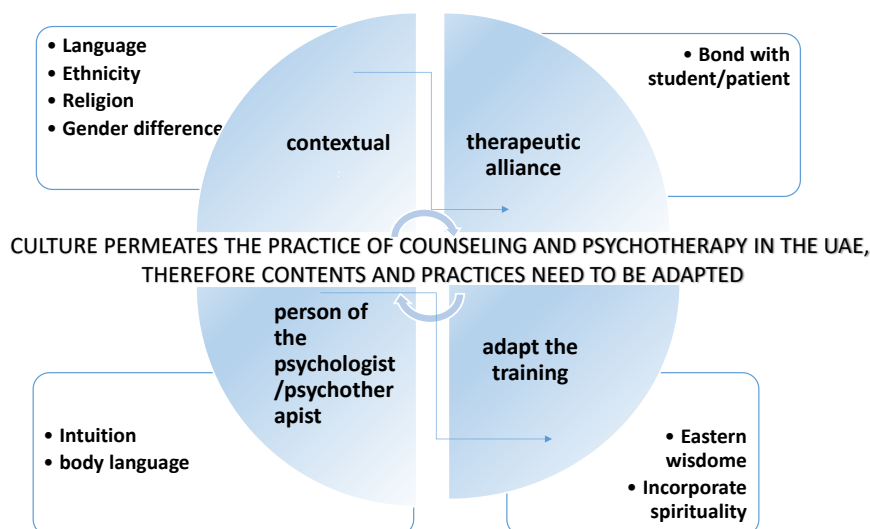


Figure 2
IMPLICIT THEORIES OF COUNSELING IN FACULTIES OF PSYCHOLOGY

Our experience in these interviews affirms that culture plays a huge role in the responses of our sample. It seems that psychology faculty members are sensible enough to recognize that in the UAE, this dimension plays an essential role, and an adaptation needs to be enforced.

All informants commented that it was important to consider ethnicity when conducting training, but it appears that the cultural dimension dominates other dimensions, like rational western thinking. The UAE's specific cultural practices permeate all activities when teaching

and practicing counseling and psychotherapy tasks. We called this characteristic the core category.

From this category, we delineated four main subcategories that were all interrelated: the context, the therapeutic alliance, the personality of the psychologist, and the need to adapt the training of professionals to this region. These categories are all imbued in the practices of psychology in the UAEU.

The context is related to language, ethnicity, religion, and gender differences. These characteristics count when teaching counseling and psychotherapy concepts.

It has been widely proven that the theoretical construct of the therapeutic alliance is the main outcome predictor in counseling practice (Kadur J (Lüdemann and Andreas 2020)). However, it seems that in the context of the UAE, it needs a special emphasis, where “non-objective and rational” components should be considered, such as intuition and body language. Of particular relevance is the recognition of the “subjective” components of counseling practice. For instance, the personality of the psychologist seems to play a huge role in implicit theories of counseling and psychotherapy. According to these statements, it appears there is a need to incorporate more “relational” and “intersubjective” components beyond the formal knowledge of theories of counseling and psychotherapy. In addition, the need to incorporate spiritual and eastern thinking is necessary. Even though this is stated in much of the syllabus, participants’ answers seemed to emphasize that this component requires a more explicit conceptualization in counseling and psychotherapy terms.

5. Further Implications

Psychology faculty members working in the UAE region need to pay continuous attention to the cultural specifications of their practice to maintain a balance between the need to be objective while considering the social dimensions of the culture. Faculty members need to reflect on their practice with patients and students frequently, especially when differences with their own cultural backgrounds are present. Studying the implicit theorizing of psychologists practicing psychotherapy contributes to the understanding of what is useful in the practice of counseling and psychotherapy.

These results revealed that interviewees conceive teaching psychology and counseling as a relational process that leads to personal growth, both for the patient/student and for the faculty/therapist, implying that the cultural and intersubjective dimension should be considered in the curricula of any psychology program. In conclusion, all of the psychologists

interviewed stated that relational and ethnographic dimensions should be incorporated in the training of psychologists in the UAE.

As with any qualitative study, precautions must be exercised about generalizations. More than seeking representative results, we have tried to obtain an in-depth understanding of the specific counseling practices that are promoted when teaching psychology in the region. More research is needed where more standardized tools are used and with larger samples. However, this research could be considered a paradigmatic study that has attended to psychology faculty members' "own voices" about teaching and practicing counseling in the UAE.

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Appendix 1

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW¹⁰

<p>General characteristics of the effective practice of counseling/psychotherapy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell us what would be a good helping/therapeutic process? • What do you think makes counseling or psychotherapy effective? • What in your practice as a psychologist has contributed to change or hindered change, in your view? • What kind of changes you have perceived in your students/patients as a result of applying your “own” skills and knowledge that you have developed over the years?
<p>Importance of the personality of the psychologist/psychotherapist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role does it play in psychotherapy/teaching psychology? • We would like to ask you if there has been a circumstance either with a patient or student outside your practice that has changed the way you practice psychology or psychotherapy, such as at what points did you think “I need to do something differently” and what caused it
<p>Private assumptions/implicit theories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you share your very “private assumptions” or your “working models”, when practicing psychology or psychotherapy? • In other words, can you explain your “unique” ideas about how you practice psychology or counseling? • For instance, can you summarize in a sentence what is your most important belief about how psychology or psychotherapy works? • We would like to ask you if there has been a circumstance either with a patient or student outside your practice that has changed the way you practice psychology or psychotherapy, such as at what points did you think “I need to do something differently” and what caused it? • Can you use a metaphor to describe how you conceptualize psychology or counseling?

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¹⁰ It is important to mention that these guidelines were used as the needs to amplify the template of questions that arises. The interviewers, after each interview, review the questions and add more in accordance with the requirements and goals of the study; therefore, not all questions were used in all interviews.