

Abstracts

School counselors' perceptions of educational counseling during COVID-19: When professional ambiguity meets an ambiguous reality

Hila Pinto and Moshe Tatar

The COVID-19 epidemic caused some significant changes in the Israeli education system, such as distant, virtual education and affected the typical nature of the counseling encounter, and posed additional major changes in counselor's work. In principle, the role of the educational counselors entails many elements of ambiguity, and when this professional ambiguity meets the ambiguity that emerged from a crisis situation- a new encounter is created. It might encourage searching and creating different ways of coping, which will enable the counselors to perform their work in accordance to the challenges and transformations of this period. Through 18 interviews with educational counselors, we have tried to understand the main complexities and diverse experiences that counselors faced in their work during the COVID-19 pandemic. We identified some of the main challenges of this period, amongst the change in the nature of the counseling encounter and the generation of blurred lines between counselors' private and their professional lives. The study's insights may encourage reexamining the existing working models and even developing more adapted ones for the counselors, as a result of the various challenges associated with times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 epidemic within the overall context of the digital era.

Keywords: covid pandemic; ambiguity; coping in crisis; digital age; school counselors' perceptions.

Generativity motives among midlife school counselors

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In the present study, the work of educational counselors is examined through Erikson's concept of generativity – the developmental challenge of middle adulthood. This challenge involves developing the desire and ability to create and care for the next generation, to provide guidance and promote its well-being, based on a cohesive personal adult identity. Given the wide range of options available to educational counselors for choosing personal emphases in their work and the role ambiguity inherent to the profession, we sought to characterize the motivations that influence middle-aged counselors in determining their personal professional paths. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 educational counselors. These were analyzed using thematic analysis. We discovered three overarching motives for generative action: the desire to improve and amend; the desire to preserve, maintain, and transfer personal and collective products; and, the desire to be meaningful to others. In discussing these motivations, we present a new perspective on the professional and personal identity of experienced educational counselors at midlife.

Keywords: school counseling; generativity; midlife; mid-career; Erikson's theory of psychosocial development.

Educators' socio-emotional learning questionnaire

Merav E. Hemi and Ronen Kasperski

Over the past few years, the Psychological-Counseling Service has been implementing social-emotional learning processes (SEL) in the education system, with the aim of promoting the well-being of students and educators. Studies indicate that a necessary condition for promoting students' SEL is the SEL competencies of educators. However, most SEL assessment tools focus on students' SEL. In an attempt to bridge this gap, the current research sought to develop a multidimensional self-report instrument to assess educators' SEL competencies. Study 1 incorporated two independent focus groups to explore SEL competencies that educators apply in complex interpersonal situations, in order to compose the *EduSEL* (Educators' Social-Emotional Learning questionnaire). Study 2 focused on preliminary validation of the *EduSEL* pilot version, based on 154 educators. Study 3 established the latent structure of the *EduSEL* based on 331 educators. In Study 4, the criterion validity of the instrument was demonstrated in three different samples of 97 educators overall. CFA provided a good model fit to the data. Internal and test-retest reliability indices were high. Internal correlations indicated a similarity between the social and emotional subscales, whereas the cognitive subscale was more distinct. External consistency values indicated a good congruence between evaluators. Taken together, the *EduSEL* psychometric properties were found to be acceptable, and suggest a reliable and valid measurement of educators' SEL competencies, that can be used by educational counselors to evaluate educators' SEL competencies, devise interventions to nurture SEL competencies, and assess educators' advancements in developing these competencies.

Keywords: socio-emotional learning (SEL); scale development; validity; school counselors.

***“I didn’t complain because he scared me to death”:
On the reasons adolescents do not report sexual abuse***

Inbar Levkovich, Michal Dolev-Cohen and Tzameret Ricon

This research seeks to understand the essence of sexual abuse as experienced by adolescents and to explore the reasons they do not report this abuse. In 2018, the hashtag #WhyDidntIReport was created and disseminated on the social networks, providing victims of sexual abuse a platform to tell their stories and describe why they chose not to lodge a complaint against their attacker. The current qualitative research study examines Hebrew texts describing the reasons adolescents do not report sexual abuse. The study included 42 texts posted on Twitter and Facebook in which the writer was an adolescent between the ages of 13 and 18 at the time of the abuse. The texts underwent content analysis and the research complied with ethical regulations.

Three main themes emerged from the content analysis: 1) "I was ashamed to tell anyone I had been the victim of an attempted rape": Failure to report due to shame and anxiety; 2) "I felt guilty for agreeing to meet him": Not reporting due to feelings of self-blame; 3) "Who would believe me? What proof do I have?": Victims' fear that no one will believe them.

The victims experienced the sexual abuse as a physical and emotional trauma that left them confused and emotionally overwhelmed. Feelings of helplessness, fear, shame and distress emerge from the texts. Some of the victims assumed responsibility for what happened, such that they internalized their outer anger toward their attacker and refrained from reporting. Moreover, after their attacker violated their trust, they were reluctant to report for fear no one would believe them. This study underscores the complex nature of sexual abuse and among adolescents and the reasons they do not report this abuse. The findings suggest that welfare and educational systems should provide suitable responses and create targeted interventions to enhance the emotional well-being of adolescents.

Keywords: #whydidntireport; #ididntreport; sexual abuse; adolescents; reporting.

Conflict between identities? Gay religious conflicts, degree of religiosity and support by family and social circles

Keren Eilat and Chaim Schreiber

The issue of self and social acceptance of the homosexual identity is still a charged and controversial issue in society in general and in conservative and traditional societies in particular.

The current study deals with the conflicts of religious homosexuals and the correlation to degree of religiosity and support by family and social circles. The hypotheses of the study were: 1) There would be a positive correlation between the intensity of conflict and the degree of religiosity; 2) There would be a negative correlation between the intensity of conflict and support by family and social circles; 3) Support by family and social circles would moderate the intensity of the conflict even in the face of a high degree of religiosity.

For the purpose of the study, 41 religious homosexuals were sampled throughout the country. They were recruited through advertising on various social networks, such as: WhatsApp, Facebook, in the age range of 16–46 ($\bar{x} = 27.05$, $sd = 6.748$), who filled out a demographic details questionnaire, a religious identity questionnaire, a questionnaire measuring conflict intensity between sexual orientation and religious identity and questionnaires measuring support by family and social circles.

The research findings showed that a higher degree of religiosity correlates with higher conflict intensity, and a higher degree of support by family and social circles correlates with lower conflict intensity. It was also found that correlation between conflict intensity and support by family and social circles is negative even when dividing between low and high degree of religiosity. However, when the degree of religiosity is low the correlation between family support and intensity of the conflict is significant and high, while at a high level of religiosity social support is more significant.

This study establishes the existing knowledge on the meaning of the conflict of religious homosexuals as a result of the collision between their different identities – sexual and religious – and on the factors that moderate and exaggerate the conflict.

Keywords: identity conflict; sexual identity; religious identity; A religious homosexual; family support; social support.

Behind the scenes of sex education in state secondary schools in Israel

Lee Chapman and Tzameret Ricon

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the discourse of SexEd in high schools in Israel, using the principles of critical discourse research. The study examined two aspects of SexEd while comparing them. One aspect is the ideology and policy of the Counseling Psychological Service (Shefi) through textual analysis of curricula and position papers. The other aspect is the counseling practice, as evidenced by the beliefs and perceptions of school counselors in semi-structured in-depth interviews. The findings of the study show that the overt and covert messages are inconsistent. Shefi's ideology is based on liberal concepts, which view sexuality as part of normative behaviors, and such is the approach of many of the counselors. However, many programs deal in fact with prevention, intimidation and indirect issues, and they do not provide an adequate response to issues that actually concern youth. It emerges that the discourse of sexual education prevailing among the school walls remains far from the vision and rationale.

Keywords: sexual education; sexuality; educational counselling; adolescents.

'She didn't dare to tell': Online sextortion and the ecology of its treatment from educational counselors' perspective

Michal Dolev-Cohen and Inbar Nezer

Sextortion is a relatively new phenomenon of sexual exploitation, which occurs when a person threatens another person with the distribution of sexual content on the Internet, in order to get more pictures, videos, money or other benefits. The current study examined how educational consultants in Israel perceive online sextortion. For this purpose, we conducted a qualitative research that entailed twelve in-depth semi-structured interviews with educational consultants working in middle and high schools in Israel, who treated girls who experienced online sextortion. The findings of the study indicate that the educational counselors had difficulty in identifying and defining treatment cases as cases of sextortion in the network and that in their perception this is only a minor injury. In addition, they tried to hang the reasons for the extortion on factors related to the victim and the background from which she came and made a distinction between those who transmitted the sexual images themselves and those from whom the images were stolen. The findings of the study show the importance of providing relevant knowledge and appropriate coping tools to educational counselors and discuss the implications for the field.

Keywords: sextortion; internet; online sexuality; adolescents; educational counselors.

Kindergarten teachers', counselors', and superintendents' perceptions of counseling services importance, promoting factors, and barriers in the ultra-Orthodox kindergarten

Osnat Abuhsira and Anat Barth

This qualitative study explores motives and barriers to the development of the ultra-Orthodox educational counseling system in kindergartens from educational and counseling staff perspectives. Early childhood is a meaningful time and educational counselors have an important part in it. Counseling is developing in the ultra-Orthodox community, after being rejected for decades. The ultra-Orthodox kindergarten counseling system was established in 2014 a process requiring extensive cultural adjustment. 12 kindergarten teachers, counselors and superintendents filled a written open qualitative questionnaire. Results show an acknowledgement in the importance of the counseling system especially due to teachers' need for knowledge and support. Counseling provides solutions for technological, familial and inclusion challenges along with professional development. Counseling successes and barriers depends on cooperation of exterior factors such as supervision, counseling hours budgeting and staff training and interior factors including staff openness to counseling. The study's main recommendations are increasing staff awareness to counseling and counseling budgeting.

Keywords: educational counseling; ultra-Orthodox; kindergartens; ultra-Orthodox district.

"A special education kindergarten sounded like a nightmare to me": The placement of children in a special education kindergarten, the parental perspective

Bilha Paryente and Yael Barak Levy

The purpose of the current study was to understand parents' emotions and coping strategies regarding their child's placement in an Israeli special education kindergarten. Proper placement is essential to effectively support children with developmental disabilities (DD), yet parents tend to approach assessment procedures with dread. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with 60 parents of children with DD (ages 4–6) who underwent placement procedures in the previous two years. Qualitative content analysis revealed three themes: external emotions of worry about the future, shame, fear of stigma, and trust issues towards professional staff; internal coping strategies of rationalisation and denial; external coping strategies of concealment and search for help. Findings revealed parents' emotions were directed towards their surroundings, whilst coping strategies were directed both inwards and outwards. Therefore, the majority of the parents' emotions and coping strategies focused on external social aspects. This in-depth understanding of parents' reactions to the placement process may help educational councilors focus their support on external attributes, thereby strengthening the staff-parent partnership and easing the entry process of children with DD into special education kindergartens.

Keywords: parental coping strategies; parental reaction to placement in special education; parent-teacher partnership; children with special needs.

Serenity Rooms': Therapeutic program in Israeli ultra-Orthodox kindergartens in combat areas

Dorit Cohen and Anat Barth

'Serenity Rooms' (Khadrey Shalva) is an effective school-based program combining students, parents, teachers and consultants which give an emotional holistic response to children suffering from violence, trauma or risk. This qualitative study explores the programs' implementation in ultra-Orthodox kindergartens in a combat area in Israel from the out-look of the educational and consultation staff and is important due to the need for developmental and cultural programs' adjustments. Results show that the program helps kindergarten-teachers to cope better in risk situations. It helps kindergarten-teachers, students and parents in developing an emotional language. It also has a positive effect on the relationship between the kindergarten-teachers and her staff as well as students' parents. On a macro level the program develops culturally sensitive therapeutic tools that suits ultra-Orthodox culturally needs. The study stresses the importance of investment in early childhood emotional-education and the possibility to accommodate educational programs to the ultra-Orthodox culture.

Keywords: 'serenity rooms'; early childhood; ultra-Orthodox; risk.

"To reach out and barely touch": Educational counselors' perceptions of eating disorders among adolescent girls

Zohar Elyoseph and Inbar Levkovich

Educational counselors have a significant role in identifying Eating-Disorders in the early stages, referral for treatment and follow-up. In addition, they directly support the adolescent, his parents, and the educational staff. The present study examines the experience and perceptions of counselors in post-primary schools in relation to Eating-Disorders. Data was collected through a semi-structured interview, based on an interview guide. The interviews were transcribed and subjected using thematic content analysis. Counselors felt lacking in the knowledge and professional ability to detect and accompany adolescence with Eating-Disorders. In addition, they report a lack of up-to-date prevention, accompaniment, or treatment programs. In addition, they describe the difficulty in meeting parents who often do not cooperate and refuse treatment. Finally, counselors reported personal distress, excessive concern that their private children would develop eating disorders. This study suggests that there is a need for clear training and explanation regarding eating disorders for the counseling staff that includes ways of locating and accompanying. The study also offers practical tools for detecting adolescents with eating disorders.

Keywords: eating disorders; adolescents; educational counseling; prevention programs.

Ostracism among students: Characteristics of the phenomenon and its implications for school counseling

Anat Korem and Itzhak Gilat

There is a shortage of empirical knowledge regarding social ostracism at school. Therefore, a retrospective research was conducted with 500 young adults, who reported on a well-remembered event of ostracism from their childhood and responded to a structured questionnaire. The findings reveal that ostracism is most common in grades 4-6 and that the characteristics of the ostracized students are not specific. The long-term implications of the event are related to depression, anxiety, and impairment in the ability to trust others. It was also found that a significant percentage of the parents did not know about the ostracism. The research shows that ostracism is a severe phenomenon in students' lives that may damage their developmental process. Based on these results, school counselors are offered operative suggestions as to prevent and intervene in cases of ostracism.

Keywords: ostracism; social rejection; social status; social competence; social skills; social emotional learning – SEL.

"To live you must feel pain'': Experiences of educational counselors in helping adolescents who engage in self-injury

Inbar Levkovich and Keren Amitai

In recent years self-injury has become more and more prevalent among adolescents in Israel and worldwide. This qualitative study examined the experiences of 18 high school counselors while helping adolescents who attempted to injure themselves. The study examined the counselors' perceived roles under such circumstances, their patterns of coping and the dilemmas they face in helping these teenagers. We conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews, which were recorded, transcribed and underwent content analysis.

Analysis of the findings indicates that discovering a case of self-injury was upsetting and emotionally overwhelming for the counselors. They described feelings of shock, helplessness and guilt. Beyond their sense of confusion and chaos, they also faced dilemmas regarding whether to report the incident and how to deal with it. The educational counselors felt a need to restore their own sense of control in order to manage the crisis situation. Most of the counselors stated they felt empathy and compassion for the teenager and developed a meaningful and ongoing counseling relationship in order to help. A minority of the counselors described feeling angry and repelled by the teenager's actions and wanting to refer the teenager for outside counseling. The relationship between the counselors and the parents was noted as a major component in therapeutic progress. Some of the parents cooperated with the counselors despite their pain and sense of failure, while others tended to minimize the incident and blame the educational staff. This study underscores the complexity of counseling adolescents who attempt to injure themselves and recommends giving the counselors support and training. It points to the importance of working with a multidisciplinary treatment staff and of developing intervention means for educational counselors along with assessment studies.

Keywords: suicidal tendencies; self-injury; adolescents; educational counselors.

Metacognitive knowledge, locus of control and understanding of mathematical jokes in teaching mathematics among students with learning disabilities and students without learning disabilities

Saied Bishara and Avikam Gazit

This study examined the relationship between metacognitive knowledge and locus of control and understanding mathematical jokes in mathematics teaching among students with learning disabilities and students without learning disabilities. For the purpose of the study, 60 ninth grade students were sampled: 30 students diagnosed with learning disabilities and 30 students without learning disabilities. The students were tested using three tools: a metacognitive knowledge questionnaire, a locus of control questionnaire and a mathematical joke comprehension questionnaire. The research findings indicated the existence of distinct relationships between the three variables: metacognitive knowledge, locus of control and understanding mathematical jokes. Also, in all the indices tested, students with learning disabilities demonstrated lower performance compared to students without learning disabilities. In light of the obvious disparities between the two research populations, it is important to put emphasis on the population of students with learning disabilities and try to nurture them in relation to the tested indicators – metacognitive knowledge and locus of control, for the purpose of promotion both in the education system and in the wider population. This may affect a variety of other phenomena related to the pedagogical field, such as reducing the dropout phenomenon, promoting student achievements in various subjects and improving social relations.

Keywords: metacognitive knowledge; locus of control; mathematical jokes; learning disabilities.