



Professional Counselor Profile Analysis Based on Expert and User Expectations

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ABSTRACT

The ultimate goal of the present research is to develop profiles and characteristics of professional counselors and their educational attainment as expected by experts and users so that standards for counselor education programs can be developed to produce professional counselor candidates. The specific objectives are (1) to describe the profile of a professional counselor having personal, social, and professional characteristics based on the expectations of experts and users; (2) to classify the sources of acquiring the profiles and characteristics expected by experts and users; and (3) to develop the standards for counselor education program.

Keywords: counselor profile, counselor characteristics, experts, and graduate users

INTRODUCTION

The existence of guidance and counseling in schools has been quite long, at least formally, since the 1980s. However, since its existence, it has often been heard statements, complaints, criticisms, or even criticism from the users of the counselor's performance. Such criticisms are expressed in everyday conversations and official forums, such as seminars, workshops, or upgrading. Many still complain that most school counselors are "unprepared"[1], even reported that several schools claimed not to require guidance and counseling activities and counselors [2][3][4].

Such a situation indicates that school counselors do not have a vital function, so searching for the causative factors is necessary. Indeed, such conditions are only partially caused by unprofessional counselors since there are still other causative factors; for example, confusion and misunderstanding among the users about the function of guidance and counseling in schools [5][6]. It is indicative of the numerous duties that are given to counselors that are outside of their scope of responsibility or even those that are contrary to their intended roles and functions. Just for comparison, such conditions were also experienced by counselors in the United States at the beginning of guidance and counseling in schools in the 1970s. Counselors there became ineffective as a result of it [7][8].

However, attributing the cause of such conditions to the users is apologetic and irresponsible. After all, the professional performance of counselors is a significant factor among many other contributing factors. It is not to mention the existence of counselors in schools who have varied backgrounds and competencies, which can be broadly grouped into three groups [13][14]. Firstly, subject teachers who have never received training through upgrading or workshops on guidance and counseling, but due to various limitations in the school concerned, are assigned

as "counselors." Secondly, subject teachers, due to their personality, closeness to students, or the subjects they teach are close to fostering personality or character, are sent to workshops on guidance and counseling, then assigned as "counselors" in the school. Thirdly, the officers are prepared through counselor education, graduates of the Guidance and Counseling Study Program. In addition, the absence of a professional counselor profile that can be applied as a guideline for policymakers in appointing or assigning someone to become a counselor in schools still needs to be clarified. It must still be accompanied by intensive and sustainable coaching if schools are completed with professional school counselors [15]. In order to be a professional counselor, there must be at least three crucial factors: (1) professional counselor profile standard, (2) ongoing intensive practice or training, and (3) the counselor has practiced being a good client so that they can understand their clients when they become counselors [9].

Counselor education, in this case, the Department/Program of Guidance and Counseling Studies, is a formal institution that carries the main task of educating and preparing its graduates to be qualified in Bachelor of Guidance and Counseling and, in turn, able to become professional counselors when they enter the world of work. As a formal institution for counselor education that bears this responsibility, it must be open to receiving input from experts and graduate users. These inputs can be used as feedback to improve the quality of the lecturing process. It will minimize the gap between counselor education providers, experts, and users [15].

With the above in mind, this study was conducted to gather information from experts and users regarding their expectations of the profile of professional counselors.

The present research concerned the profile of professional counselors and the education program to produce them. Therefore, the main research problem is formulated as "What are the profiles and characteristics of professional counselors based on the expectations of experts and users?"[13]

This problem is fundamental to be solved because the existing experience has shown that there are still many complaints about the performance of counselors in schools, meaning that the existing counselor education has been less successful. The existing counselor education needs reforming and reorganizing.

The answer to the above problems must be comprehensive and involve various parties. However, this study intends to answer only some aspects of the problem but instead focuses on developing a professional counselor profile based on users' expectations.

Based on this premise, the research problem is elaborated into the following research questions:

- a) What personal profiles and characteristics are expected to be possessed by professional counselors according to experts and users so that they can be used as references in developing the standards for professional counselor profile?
- b) What kind of social profile and characteristics are expected by professional counselors, according to experts and users, to be used as a reference in developing the standards for professional counselor profile?

- c) What professional profiles and characteristics are counselors expected to have, according to experts and users, so that they can be used as references in developing the standards for professional counselor profile?
- d) Among the personal, social, and professional profiles and characteristics that professional counselors are expected to have, which ones should be acquired before education, during education, and through experience after carrying out duties as counselors in schools?

METHODOLOGY

Research Subjects

The research subjects were (1) three guidance and counseling experts who all have a doctoral degree and have the academic position of Professor, (2) Guidance and Counseling Teachers of SMP/MTs and SMA/SMK/MAN, (3) Heads of SMP/MTs and SMA/SMK/MAN, and (4) Subject teachers of SMP/MTs and SMA/SMK. The research was located in Pontianak City, Mempawah Regency, Singkawang City, and Landak Regency.

Research Implementation Framework

This research was conducted through the following procedures [10]. Firstly, the research was conducted to find a professional counselor profile that describes personal, social, and professional characteristics through the consensus intended by experts and users. Secondly, the description of these characteristics was then analyzed and grouped based on the expectations of the acquisition, namely obtained before education, during education, and after carrying out duties as a school counselor. Thirdly, based on the grouping of these gains, a standard for a professional counselor profile is then developed. With this way of working, this research design is descriptive-analytic research.

Data Collection Technique

The data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire. It was based on a conceptual-theoretical study of the secondary school counselors profile coupled with the findings of previous research on ideal and effective counselors [11][16]. On that basis, twenty ideal characteristics of school counselors were developed, along with the explanation and content of each characteristic [12].

The closed part of the questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate whether or not they "expect" each characteristic. Furthermore, on the expected characteristics, the respondents were asked to identify the source of their acquisition. The closed part of the questionnaire asked the subjects to respond about "expect or not" each characteristic. In contrast, the open part of this questionnaire included two sections, namely partial comments and general comments. The respondents were asked to respond to each characteristic in the partial comments. In contrast, in the general comments, the respondents were asked to provide comments on the profile of school counselors in general and additional characteristics if they think it is necessary [10].

Data Analysis Technique

There were two data groups obtained in this study, nominal data and narrative data. The nominal data were in the form of "expect or not expect" responses to each characteristic and the acquisition source of the expected characteristics. These nominal data were analyzed quantitatively using percentage calculations. The analysis procedure covered tabulating all

respondents' "expect or not expect" responses and computing the percentage of "expect or not expect" responses for each characteristic. The percentage of "expect" characteristics was determined using a benchmark of 90%. With this benchmark, a characteristic was said to be "expected" if 90% of all respondents expected the concerned characteristic. All characteristics expected based on respondent consensus were then refined based on comments from respondents. The characteristics that were expected by less than 90% of the respondents were not automatically discarded but continued with the analysis of their comments, as was done for the expected characteristics.

The narrative data in the present research were in the form of respondents' comments. These data were analyzed using content analysis. It is an analytical technique for reducing complex narrative information into more straightforward, explicit, meaningful formulations [10]. The content analysis was applied to comments on characteristics that respondents expected (i.e., those that reached 90%) and those that respondents did not expect (those that were less than 90%). This content analysis determined whether the expected characteristics were fully expected or expected with certain additions or subtractions. After being subjected to content analysis, respondents' comments were used to refine the expected characteristics.

The same analysis was done for the "unexpected" characteristics. What respondents mean by "unexpected" will be clear from their comments. Content analysis can determine more clearly whether a characteristic is not expected or is expected but with specific changes. If based on the content analysis, it is not expected, then the characteristic should be removed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The profiles and characteristics of professional counselors as expected by experts and users from the results of this study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profiles and Characteristics of Professional Counselors Based on Expectations of Experts and Users and their Sources of Acquisition

No.	Competencies and Characteristics of Counselors	Source of Acquisition		
		A	B	C
1.	Mature personality:			
	a. Responsible	x	x	x
	b. Independent	x	x	x
	c. Recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses		x	x
	d. Dare to take risks	x	x	x
	e. Having a high work ethic	x	x	x
	f. Objective		x	x
	g. Trustworthy	x	x	x
	h. Having emotional stability		x	x
	i. Ethical	x	x	x
2.	Exhibit intellectual ability:			
	a. Having an IQ above average	x		
	b. Creative	x	x	x
	c. Innovative	x	x	x
	d. Mastering thinking methods		x	x
	e. Critical	x	x	x

	f. Able to argue g. Able to communicate well	x	x x	x x
3.	Empathetic: a. Sensitive to the feelings and behaviors of others b. Able to internalize students' feelings c. Able to show his/her appreciation verbally and non-verbally	x	x x x	x x x
4.	Attractive: Demonstrating an attractive appearance, both physically and psychologically	x	x	X
5.	Positive outlook: a. Believing in others' abilities b. Being open c. Free from prejudice	 x x	 x x x	 x x x
6.	Showing the ability to establish relationships: a. Sociable b. Helpful to others c. Able to establish relationships with students d. Tolerant	 x x x x	 x x x x	 x x x x
7.	Being professional: a. Understanding the professionalism of guidance and counseling b. Understanding and complying with the professional code of ethics c. Improving their professional quality d. Participating in professional activities		 x x x x	 x x
8.	Having insight into guidance and counseling: a. Understanding the concepts of guidance and counseling b. Understanding the functions and objectives of guidance and counseling in various settings c. Understanding the philosophical, pedagogical, psychological, and sociocultural foundations of guidance and counselling d. Understanding the problems of education and guidance		 x x x x	 x
9.	Understanding the human personality, especially adolescents: a. Understanding the structure, dynamics, and development of personality b. Understanding the characteristics and tasks of adolescent development c. Understanding students' personal, social, learning, and career problems d. Understanding "healthy" and problematic adolescent behavior		 x x x x	 x

10.	Mastering counseling theory and practice: a. Understanding the nature, purpose, and principles of counselling b. Understanding contemporary counseling theories c. Understanding the strengths, weaknesses, and potential implications of various counseling theories for secondary school students d. Selecting and deciding on suitable approaches for secondary school students e. Understanding the stages of counselling f. Skilled in using counseling interview techniques g. Skillfully using therapeutic techniques h. Skillfully conducting individual and group counselling i. Developing counseling tips in line with his/her personality		x x x x x x x x x	 x x x x x
11.	Mastering individual understanding techniques: a. Understanding various non-test and test techniques in understanding individuals b. Understanding psychological test procedures and techniques c. Skillfully using non-test techniques d. Skillfully using test techniques e. Understanding the use of psychological measurement results for guidance and counselling f. Able to utilize simple psychological measurement tools (non-test)		x x x x x	 x x x
12.	Socializing and actualizing guidance and counseling in secondary schools: a. Formulating and communicating the functions and responsibilities of counselors in secondary schools b. Able to refuse assignments and requests for assistance that may interfere with the effectiveness of guidance and counselling c. Actively approaching students		x x	x x x
13.	Administering the guidance and counseling program: a. Planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating the program. b. Involving related parties		x x	x x
14.	Managing the types of services in guidance and counseling: a. Understanding the basic concept of each type of service b. Skillfully identifying the necessary materials c. Skillfully identifying and involve relevant parties d. Skillfully leading the implementation of each service		x x x x	 x x x
15.	Mastering the implementation of career guidance: a. Understanding the basic concepts of career guidance b. Understanding career planning theory c. Understanding career guidance procedures and techniques d. Skillfully using career guidance techniques e. Having extensive information about education and positions f. Skillfully implementing career guidance		x x x x x x	 x x x
16.	Organizing consultations for teachers, principals, and parents of students: a. Understanding the problems of teachers, principals, and parents of students b. Understanding consulting procedures and techniques		 x x	 x x
17.	Mastering research methodology:			

	a. Understanding the basic concepts of educational research and guidance		x	
	b. Understanding quantitative and qualitative approaches		x	
	c. Skilled in designing, conducting, and reporting research results		x	x
	d. Understanding the implications of research for education and guidance in secondary schools		x	x
	e. Carrying out field, laboratory, and clinical research		x	x
	f. Able to utilize research results for guidance in secondary schools		x	x
18.	Mastering the learning process:			
	a. Understanding the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating learning		x	x
	b. Understanding teacher-student interaction in the learning process		x	
	c. Understanding learning problems		x	x
	d. Skilled in diagnosing learning difficulties and remedial		x	x
	e. Skilled in teaching psychological skills to high school students		x	x
19.	Collaborating with other school personnel and parties outside the school:			
	a. Understanding the principles and procedures of cooperation		x	
	b. Collaborating with teachers in co- and extra-curricular activities			x
	c. Collaborate with teachers and school principals in student placement			x
	d. Collaborating with parents of students in helping students			x
	e. Collaborating with individuals and institutions outside the school for guidance purposes			x

Notes: A = Before taking counselor education; B = During counselor education, C = experience after carrying out duties as a counselor in schools.

Based on the research results listed in Table 1, they can be analyzed and described as follows: Empirical research involving experts and graduate users as a field scale has identified eight personal-social-professional profiles and characteristics that secondary school counselors are expected to have. The respondents also identified the source of each characteristic in their expected profile. The discussion of the study findings demonstrates how important it is for secondary schools to have professional counselors on staff who can offer guidance and counseling to students. The standards for secondary school counselor education program require that in the counselor education program, a balanced emphasis is given between aspects of guidance and counseling techniques and tips with aspects of theoretical knowledge and philosophical thinking underlying guidance and counseling. The learning opportunities envisioned by this counselor education program standard should be focused on assisting prospective secondary school counselors in cultivating innovative thinking, a research-minded attitude, and a commitment to ongoing professional development.

Another alternative is the Professional Counselor Education program, which requires one year to complete after earning a Bachelor's degree (S1) in the Guidance and Counseling Study Program/Major.

The education process emphasizes the experience of guidance and counseling practice by handling various cases, managing, and organizing guidance and counseling in schools.

Participants who graduated from the S1 Guidance and Counseling Study Program/Department must follow the whole education process. However, those who have graduated from the Master

of Guidance and Counseling Study Program/Department only follow some crucial aspects of handling cases; they do not need to attend lectures in full as those who have graduated from the Bachelor of Guidance and Counseling Study Program/Department. Additionally, those who hold a doctoral degree (S3) in guidance and counseling are no longer required to complete the counselor's professional education because it is presumed that such individuals are already qualified to practice guidance and counseling or have already attained this status.

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Following their degree of education, government agencies that deal with the employment market guarantee school counselors a job. Clear employment status will greatly help secondary school counselors internalize their self-concept as secondary school counselors, which will also affect the development of professionalism and service delivery by secondary school counselors.

Counselor education institutions are expected to test the results of this research, both in terms of the profile of secondary school counselors, program development standards, and alternative programs proposed. It is imperative because the results of this study have yet to show empirical evidence of the maximum achievement of the profile. In addition, the program standards found in this research can be used as material for program evaluation for later improvement and refinement. Counselor education institutions also need to conduct in-service training programs using the profile of secondary school counselors from this study as reference material.

The profile of secondary school counselor teachers resulting from this study can be used as a basis for actual profile research to identify the gap between the ideal profile and the actual profile in the field. This research is beneficial for preparing in-service training programs for secondary school counselors who have served in schools. The personality characteristics that were developed in this study are also founded on American research findings in a number of ways. Whether such personality characteristics are also empirically determinants of successful school counseling in Indonesia still needs further in-depth research. In addition, research is still significant for further research to determine the distinctive characteristics of secondary school counselors that distinguish them from subject teachers and the characteristics of effective and ineffective secondary school counselors.

The competency standards, profiles, and characteristics of secondary school counselors that were developed as a result of this study can be used to help individuals comprehend and create professional secondary school guidance and counseling teacher education programs.

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