

**The evaluation of a helping skills training programme for
psychometrists**

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COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The editorial style as well as the references referred to in this mini-dissertation follow the format prescribed by the Publication Manual (6th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA). This practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University (Potchefstroom) to use APA style in all scientific documents as from January 1999.
- The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article. The editorial style specified by the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (which agrees largely with the APA style) is used, but the APA guidelines were followed in constructing tables.



26 November 2010

Hiermee verklaar ek, **me Cecilia van der Walt**, dat ek die taalversorging van die verhandeling van **me Jani du Preez**, getitel *The evaluation of a helping skills training programme for psychometrists*, behartig het.

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DECLARATION

I, Jani du Preez, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation titled, “The evaluation of a helping skills training programme for psychometrists” is my own work and that the views and opinions expressed in this work are those of the author and relevant literature references as shown in the references.

I further declare that the content of this research will not be handed in for any other qualification at any other tertiary institution.

Jani du Preez

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ABSTRACT

Title:

The evaluation of a helping skills training programme for psychometrists

Key terms:

Helping, helping skills, facilitation, intrapersonal awareness, psychometrist, training programme

Psychometrists have to be capable of stimulating growth and of assisting employees during psychometric assessments, seeing that the content of the instruments used might bring about psychological trauma. Graduate psychometrists often lack the interpersonal skills and knowledge, as well as the intrapersonal awareness, to sufficiently fulfil a helping role in the workplace. The objectives of this research were to conceptualise helping and the competencies associated with helping from the literature, to investigate what the content and methodology of a helping skills training programme should include, and to evaluate the effects of a helping skills training programme for psychometrists.

The participants were Industrial Psychology Honours students from the School of Human Resource Sciences at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. The entire population comprising 22 ($N = 22$) students were utilised. The stratified random sampling technique was used to divide the participants into the experimental and comparison groups. Three measuring instruments (Carkhuff scales, Personal Growth Initiative Scale and the Scales of Psychological Well-being) were administered before and after the training programme. The training programme in helping skills was administered to the experimental group first, where after their interpersonal skills and intrapersonal awareness were assessed during the post-tests.

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha coefficients, correlations and an Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were used to analyse the data. The ANCOVA analysis confirmed the statistical and practical significance of three core dimensions of helping, namely empathy, respect and genuineness among the members of the experimental group, as well as the improvement in the helping skills of Responding to content and Personalising meaning. However, the

dimension of concreteness did not show significant improvement. There was also no statistical or practical significant differences between the experimental and comparison group for personal growth or psychological well-being. However, one dimension of psychological well-being, namely purpose in life, improved in the experimental group.

OPSOMMING

Titel:

Die evaluering van 'n opleidingsprogram in hulpvaardighede vir psigometriste

Sleutelbegrippe:

Hulpverleningsvaardighede, hulpvaardighede, fasilitering, intrapersoonlike bewustheid, psigometris, opleidingsprogram

Psigometriste moet in staat wees om groei tydens psigometriese toetsing by werknemers te stimuleer en hulp aan hulle te verleen, aangesien die inhoud van hierdie meetinstrumente potensieel psigologiese trauma kan meebring. Afgestudeerde psigometriste kom dikwels interpersoonlike vaardighede en kennis kort, asook intrapersoonlike bewustheid om hulp suksesvol in die werkplek te kan verleen. Die doelwitte van hierdie studie was om hulpverlening en die bevoegdhede wat met hulpverleningsvaardighede gepaard gaan, uit die literatuur te konseptualiseer, om ondersoek in te stel na die inhoud en metodologie van 'n hulpverleningsprogram, en om die effek van 'n opleidingsprogram met die oog op die aanleer van vaardighede vir hulpverlening op psigometriste te ondersoek.

Die deelnemers was Bedryfsielkunde Honneurs-studente van die Skool vir Mensehulpbronwetenskappe aan die Noordwes-Universiteit, Potchefstroomkampus. Die totale populasie bestaande uit 22 studente ($N = 22$) is vir die studie gebruik. Die gestratifiseerde ewekansige steekproeftegniek is gebruik om die populasie in 'n eksperimentele en kontrolegroep te verdeel. Drie meetinstrumente (Carkhuff skale, *Personal Growth Initiative Scale* en die *Scales of Psychological Well-being*) is voor en na die opleidingsprogram aangewend. Die eksperimentele groep het die opleidingsprogram eerste ondergaan, waarna die interpersoonlike vaardighede en intrapersoonlike bewustheid tydens die na-toetse geassesseer is.

Beskrywende statistiek, Cronbach alfa-koëffisiënte, korrelasies en 'n ANCOVA (Kovariansie)-analise is gebruik vir die analisering van die data. Die ANCOVA-analise het bevestig dat die resultate van die eksperimentele groep statisties en prakties beduidend verskil het met betrekking tot drie dimensies van hulpverlening, naamlik empatie, respek en egtheid,

sowel as in die twee hulpvaardighede naamlik, Respondering op inhoud en Personalisering van gevoel. Die dimensie van konkretheid was egter nie statisties beduidend nie. Die persoonlike groei- en psigologiesewelstand-konstrukte het geen statisties beduidende verskille tussen die twee groepe aangedui nie. Alhoewel een dimensie van psigologiese welstand, naamlik sin in die lewe, wel statisties en prakties betekenisvol verskillend was.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation is presented in the form of an article titled *The evaluation of a helping skills training programme for psychometrists*. The main aim of the study is to enhance the helping skills of graduate students in industrial psychology, by means of the Carkhuff model and the micro training skills of Ivey. Key words utilised in this research include *helping, helping skills, counselling, psychometrist, helper and training programme*. In this chapter, the problem statement and the research objectives (including the general and specific objectives) are discussed, followed by the research method and an overview of the chapters.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Graduate students in the behavioural sciences are expected to assist employees and stimulate growth when they start working. They often lack the appropriate interpersonal skills and knowledge and intrapersonal awareness to fulfil the facilitating role (Rothmann & Van Aardt, 2002). Practitioners in the helping profession can expect to deal with problems in the workplace that relate to trauma, HIV/AIDS, listening to employees' personal problems and dealing with depression and anxiety amongst employees (Augelli & Levy, 1978; Rothmann & Van Aardt, 2002). Furthermore, utilising opportunities to assist employees to develop to their full potential is challenging. Empowering employees to deal with their problems and to facilitate a learning opportunity in the process requires very specific skills from the helper. Baumgarten and Roffers (2003) state that helping skills are essential for any professional working with people. Studies, however, indicate that students are not well equipped during their training to apply helping skills effectively (Adcock, Duggan, Nelson & Nickel, 2006; Rothmann & Van Aardt, 2002).

Helping can be viewed as the process whereby acquired interpersonal skills are applied in order to interact with the helpee and guide him/her through their problems, as well as to become more aware and in control of his/her intrapersonal functioning (Carkhuff, 2000). Furthermore, helping entails bringing about an accommodating climate and the release of the

self-actualizing tendency whereby personal learning and growth is obtained (Cilliers, 2000). In addition, creating an accommodating climate during assessment feedback so as to convey feedback in a caring manner can be viewed as one of the essential skills needed by a psychometrist (Health Professions Counsel of SA, 2010a).

Psychometrists are responsible for conducting psychological assessments and for giving feedback (Health Professions Counsel of SA, 2010a). An interrelated part of psychological assessment is giving feedback to the client on the outcome of the assessment (Health Professions Counsel of SA, 2010a). Assessment measures that tap into very personal constructs should especially be controlled and regulated in South Africa, since it might cause psychological trauma to the person being assessed. When one looks at the potential harmfulness of these assessments, the feedback process becomes all the more crucial, seeing that the feedback and overall handling of the client could prevent or enhance traumatic psychological reactions, depending on how it has been dealt with (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2009). Therefore a responsible psychometrist should convey feedback in a caring and sensitive manner to avoid doing harm. Helping skills are essential and needed by psychometrists in the field of Industrial Psychology in South Africa (Health Professions Counsel of SA, 2010a).

According to the scope of practice (HPCSA, 2010a) and the Health Professions Act 56 of 1974, psychometrists are allowed to use only certain psychological tests as part of their work activities. Measuring devices that assess intellectual or cognitive abilities, interests, aptitude and personality functioning are included in a psychometrist's scope of practice. In accordance with the scope of practice, the psychometrist may select, administer, score, interpret and report on these measures, provided the appropriate training and necessary competencies have been obtained (HPCSA, 2010b). These competencies include good communication and interpersonal skills to deal with sensitive issues that may arise due to the nature of the devices (HPCSA, 2010b). The psychometrist should be skilled to address the needs of the client and should know when to make a referral to another appropriate professional (HPCSA, 2010c). Therefore it is necessary to equip psychometrists with helping skills that are valid, dependable and reliable to enable them to provide assistance to a client.

The helping profession and approaches have been changing focus from being problem-focused to a more strength-focused perspective (Seligman, 1999; Smith, 2006). The strength-based perspective falls within the domain of positive psychology and centres on the discovery

and development of a person's strengths. These strengths consist of an individual's natural innate talents, with the help of additional skills and knowledge, to excel at life. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) points out that becoming an expert at discovering, describing and applying skills will lead to lasting satisfaction for the professional person. It is important to first uncover natural inborn talents so as to lead a strength-based life, and then refine them with experiential and theoretical knowledge, as well as skills of the relevant profession (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). Hence an effective training programme should develop the personal strengths of the helper, while conveying the necessary skills and knowledge.

Rogers (1980) refers to the Person-centred theory's definition of helping, being that it provides a positive climate in which the client can address systems that are detrimental to him/her. Carkhuff's theory on helping (2000) states that the essence of helping is seen as a process whereby people are guided to discover as well as utilise their own strengths and skills, with a view to grasp and manage their problems more efficiently. The person-centred theory of Rogers and Carkhuff's theory on helping should thus be included in a training program to develop personal strengths. These approaches focus on uncovering and utilising the individual's unique strengths, in order to solve his or her problems. The essence of the Helping Model is to achieve results by making use of interpersonal skills to relate to the client at an interpersonal level (Carkhuff, 2000). Training in specific micro-counselling skills should also be incorporated in the training programme, since a relation exists between interpersonal skills and knowledge on the four core dimensions of helping, namely empathy, respect, sincerity and concreteness (Ivey, 1988; 1993). By using Carkhuff's model interchanged with the micro-counselling skills of Ivey, personal growth can be accomplished through the discovery of the helper's unique strengths (Carkhuff, 2000; Rothmann & Van Aardt, 2002).

An effective helper must possess the necessary intrapersonal awareness, to acquire appropriate cognitive, conative and affective behaviour during the helping process (Robitschek, 1999). In accordance with the principles of psychological well-being, a helper must have the necessary intrapersonal awareness at his or her command before he or she can help others. Therefore an important goal of a helping skills training programme should be to improve the helper's intrapersonal awareness as a self-as-a-helper (Korn, 1980). Although intrapersonal awareness can be studied from different perspectives, within different models,

the perspectives of Robitschek (1999) and Ryff (1989) will be combined for purposes of this investigation with a view to study the psychological well-being of the helper.

Robitschek (1999) defines *personal growth initiative* as a person's active and intentional involvement in changing and developing as an individual. This indicates a positive change in the individual and a move towards being fully functional (Patterson & Welfel, 1994). By being aware of one's perceptions, feelings and emotions, and dealing with this massive internal responsibly can be seen as a state of being fully functional (Cilliers, 2000). According to Rogers (1980) an individual that functions intrapersonally aware is in a process of constant growth while having constructive interaction with his/her surroundings. Ryff (1989) describes psychological well-being as the individual's well-being at a particular moment in time. Well-being is measured in terms of six dimensions, namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff,). Ryff further stated that psychological well-being is the presence of something positive instead of the absence of illness (Van Dierendonck, Diaz, Rodriguez-Carvajal, Bianco & Moreno-Jime'nez, 2008). According to Ryff the six dimensions used in the scales of psychological well-being form the elements of a healthy psychological person (Springer & Hauser, 2003). The helper must function optimally in terms of these six dimensions, which are directly linked to psychological well-being, before he or she can begin to help others.

It is thus clear that an effective helper and psychometrist should possess sufficient helping skills and function intrapersonally aware to be able to assist clients within a strength-based perspective. Currently, no research is available in the field of Industrial Psychology addressing helping skills for Psychometrists from a strength-based perspective.

Based on the problem statement, the following research questions arise:

- How are the terms helping and competencies associated with helping conceptualised in the literature?
- What should be included in the content and the methodology of a training programme in helping skills for Psychometrists?
- What are the effects of a training programme in helping skills for Psychometrists?

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives are divided into a general objective and specific objectives.

1.2.1 General objective

The general objective of this research is to develop and evaluate a helping skills training programme for psychometrists.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this research are:

- to conceptualise the terms helping and competencies associated with helping, from the literature;
- to investigate what should be included in the content and the methodology of a helping skills training programme; and
- to evaluate the effects of a helping skills training programme for psychometrists.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Research approach

The research falls within experimental and descriptive research. Experimental research refers to the manipulation and control of an experiment with a view to answer a cause-and-effect question, whilst descriptive research merely aims at describing a specific phenomenon at a certain point in time (Maree, 2007). A randomised pre-test-post-test comparison group design is utilised (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2005). Utilising two groups, namely the comparison group and the experimental group, is unique to this particular research design. In accordance with the design, the two groups receive the same pre-and post-test, but the comparison group does not participate in the helping skills training programme. The experimental group receive the helping skills training programme with the aim of using the results to assess the effect of the independent variable, namely the helping skills programme,

on the dependant variables during the post-test. The same measuring instruments are administered, to both the comparison and experimental groups at two different occasions (with a one-month interval). The comparison group receives the training after the post-test to ensure fair research practices and provide the comparison group with an equal learning opportunity.

2.2 Research method

2.2.1 Literature review

In Phase 1, a complete review is done of a helping skills training programme for graduate psychometrist students. The sources consulted included the following:

- Internet-based search engines such as Google Scholar and Yahoo.
- Article databases, which include EBSCOHOST, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, SAePublications, Sabinet Online and Emerald.
- Relevant textbooks.
- Journal articles from various publications, including *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*; *The Academy of Management Journal*; *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*; *Journal of Personality Assessment*; *Australian Journal of Psychology*.

2.2.2 Research participants

The population consists of Honours students from the School for Human Resource Sciences at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, specialising in Industrial Psychology with the aim of registering as Psychometrists. In accordance with the research design, an experimental group is utilised, as well as a comparison group, including the entire population consisting of 22 students ($n = 22$). The stratified random sampling technique is used with a view to select the participants for the experimental and comparison groups.

2.2.3 Measuring instruments

The following measuring instruments are utilised in the research:

A *demographic questionnaire* is utilised in order to compile a profile of the demographic characteristics of the population. Characteristics such as gender, race, age, language and the individual's qualification level are measured with this questionnaire. Secondly *the Carkhuff scales* are used to determine the level of helping skills demonstrated by the participants in terms of Carkhuff's four-phase Helping Model (Carkhuff, 1978; Rothmann & Van Aardt, 2002). The intrapersonal awareness component of the participants, which is based on the strength perspective, is assessed by means of two personality measuring instruments, namely the *Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS)* and the *Scales of Psychological Well-being*. The PGIS is a nine-item self-report measure aimed at assessing a person's active and intentional involvement in changing and developing as a person (Robitschek, 1999). High scores indicate a high level of personal growth initiative. The Scales of Psychological Well-being is an 84-item self-report questionnaire measuring the individual's well-being at a particular moment in time in terms of six dimensions, namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance (Ryff & Singer, 1998).

2.2.4 Research procedure

An information session, explaining the research project and the relevance of the research, once the necessary approval has been received from the NWU Ethics Committee is given to the entire group of 22 participants. During the information session, students' written consent is obtained in order to ensure that the data is gathered ethically. In accordance with the pre-test-post-test comparison group design, the group is randomly divided into a comparison group and an experimental group. Both groups are subjected to the two pre-test assessments. The Carkhuff scales are firstly administered by means of a role-play exercise. The role-play exercise consists of the participant assuming the role of a psychometrists, and a role player undergoing a work-related problem which can be typically experienced by psychometrists. The applicant is briefed before the role-play by means of a memorandum. The two independent judges, who are registered Industrial Psychologists, assess each role-play by means of the Carkhuff scales. The remaining two instruments (the Personal Growth Initiative Scale and the Scales of Psychological Well-being) are administered by means of an assessment booklet handed out to the participants.

The experimental group then receive the helping skills training program, while the comparison group will not undergo the training as yet. The training programs mainly consists

of a series of workshops dedicated to the development of interpersonal skills (Carkhuff's helping model and Ivey's micro-skills) and intrapersonal skills (psychological well-being and the identification and development of character strengths and talents). Methodology utilised to stimulate these skills include lectures, self-read-and-do method, behaviour modification, role-play and assignments. Once the helping skills training programme has been administered the entire group undergoes the post-test. The Carkhuff scales are administered once again by means of a different role-play scenario. Thereafter the test booklets, containing the remaining three instruments, are administered. Only once the post-test has been administered will the comparison group undergo the helping skills training programme.

2.2.5 Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis is carried out using SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2009). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) are used to analyse the data. The ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) is used to establish the significance of differences between the experimental and comparison groups and also pre-and post-testing.

2.2.6 Ethical considerations

According to Struwig and Stead (2001), research ethics ensure that researchers conduct research in a morally acceptable manner by providing them with a code of moral guidelines. Unethical activities such as plagiarism, failing to respect participants' confidentiality, forcing the population to participate, deceiving people and falsely reporting results, are sought to be prevented by the ethical code (Neuman, 2000). In addition to the code of ethical behaviour, the American Psychological Association found it necessary to include the following five principles in their ethics code: a) a researcher must be competent and qualified to undertake research, b) all research must be executed with integrity, including an honest, fair and respectful researcher, c) the specific profession of the researcher must be respected, and the researcher must be willing to be held accountable for his/her actions, d) researchers must at all times respect the participants' rights, privacy, cultural preferences, gender and racial heritage, and ensure that discrimination based on any grounds does not take place during the research, and finally e) the research project must do no harm, and must benefit the participants (American Psychological Association, 2009). Ethical codes are thus designed to

protect the participants, fellow researchers as well as research conducted within the social sciences.

To properly conduct the proposed research, the researcher must first have a thorough knowledge of the code of ethics and align all the research activities accordingly. Proper ethical authorisation and permission need to be obtained from the Ethics Committee of the NWU as well as from the population. The participants should be thoroughly informed of their rights as well as the design and aim of the research. It would also be beneficial if the participants knew the aim and goals of the research, why they are chosen as participants, how the research benefits them, and also if they receive feedback on the research results. Participants should be afforded the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any stage if they so choose, and the information obtained from the participants must be kept confidential at all times. Finally, in order to ensure that the research is conducted ethically, all the research activities and initiatives generated by the research must be able to answer to the general norm of “do no harm”. If at any stage the intervention research or activities should harm the participants, the researcher or the institution hosting the research, the programme should immediately be revised or discontinued.

3 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In Chapter 2, the differences regarding the scores between the experimental and comparison groups are examined. Chapter 3 deals with the discussion, limitations, and recommendations of this study.

4. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided a discussion of the problem statement and research objectives. Furthermore, the measuring instruments and the research method were explained, followed by a brief overview of the chapters that will follow.

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE EVALUATION OF A HELPING SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR PSYCHOMETRISTS

ABSTRACT

Graduate psychometrist students are expected to stimulate growth and assist employees when they start working. These students often lack the appropriate interpersonal skills and intrapersonal awareness to assist employees. Therefore the objectives of this research were 1) to conceptualise the terms helping and competencies associated with helping, from the literature, 2) to investigate what should be included in the content and methodology of a helping skills training programme, and 3) to evaluate the effects of a helping skills training programme for psychometrists. A randomised pre-test-post-test comparison group design was used to evaluate the programme. Participants were selected from the North-West University's School for Human Resource Sciences on the Potchefstroom Campus. The entire population comprised 22 graduate students, of whom 12 formed part of the experimental group. The remaining 10 participants served as the comparison group in accordance with the research design. Measurement with the Carkhuff scales as well as Personal awareness instruments indicated improvement in the core dimension skills of empathy, respect and genuineness, as well as in the participants' ability to Respond to content and Personalise meaning. Participants were also found to have grown intrapersonally in terms of their sense of purpose in life.

INTRODUCTION

In the words of Prof Strumpher (2007; p. 1), "*industrial psychology is psychology*". Industrial psychology can be viewed as general psychology applied in the industry and organisation. It is imperative that all industrial psychology students obtain introduction and training in psychopathology, personality courses and counselling (Strumpher, 2007; Wissing & Van Eeden, 2002). Students in the helping profession, however, often lack efficient skills to deal with taxing workplace problems (Adcock, Duggan, Nelson & Nickel, 2006). Once graduate students enter the workplace they need specific helping skills to assist troubled employees as well as to provide growth opportunities to employees seeking development (Rothmann & Van Aardt, 2002).

According to Cilliers (2000), helping can be described as the creation of an accommodating climate and an opportunity for the release of the actualising tendency. The actualising tendency implies providing opportunities for personal learning and growth (Cilliers, 2002). It can thus be concluded that helping is viewed as the experience of acquiring intrapersonal, interpersonal and group behaviour skills within a compliant context (Baumgarten & Roffers, 2003; Carkhuff, 1978; Cilliers, 2000). Carkhuff (2000) summarises the essence of helping as the application of acquired skills in order to interact with helpees and to facilitate them in exploring and understanding their problems, goals and opportunities.

Helping skills is very important for graduate students in the Honours programme, in the field of Industrial Psychology who register as psychometrists. An important part of a psychometrist's work relates to the use of psychological assessment measures and conveying feedback (Health Professions Counsel of SA, 2010a). According to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (2010b), assessment measures should be controlled in South Africa because the item content of some psychological assessment measures might tap into very personal information, which might cause psychological trauma to the person being assessed. This implies that a caring professional should assist the person to work through any traumatic reactions during the assessment (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2009). Furthermore, practitioners, and particularly psychometrists, need to convey feedback in a caring and sensitive way in order to prevent any emotional or psychological trauma (HPCSA, 2010a). It is therefore imperative that psychometrists in particular obtain training in psychopathology and counselling (Strumpher, 2007; Wissing & Van Eeden, 2002). The utilisation of these helping skills is specifically needed by psychometrists in the field of Industrial Psychology while using psychological assessment measures (Health Professions Counsel of SA, 2010a).

Psychometrists in South Africa

The work activities of psychometrists are regulated by the Health Professions Act 56 of 1974 and the scope of practice (Health Professions Counsel of SA, 2010a). According to the scope of practice, a psychometrist is permitted to use certain psychological tests in order to select, administer, score, interpret and report on the measure. The practitioner can practice as a psychometrist, provided appropriate training has been obtained and the necessary practical competencies related to the tests used have been developed (Health Professions Counsel of SA, 2010b). The use of a psychometric measuring device that assesses intellectual or cognitive ability, aptitude, interest and personality functioning is constituted as being a

psychological act (Health Professions Counsel of SA, 2010a). The psychometrist should be skilled to address the needs of a client and should know when to make a referral to a psychologist or another appropriate professional (Health Professions Counsel of SA, 2010c). The core competencies that regulate good assessment practices of psychometrists indicate that practitioners should have good communication and interpersonal skills to deal with sensitive issues (Health Professions Counsel of SA, 2010b). It is therefore imperative that a psychometrist should be equipped with helping skills that are valid, dependable and reliable (i.e. authentic), thereby enabling him/her to efficiently provide assistance to a client.

Helping skills

The science of helping as well as the approaches to helping people have been changing (Seligman, 1999). More specifically the helping profession in general is evolving from a problem-focused perspective to that of focusing on strength (Smith, 2006). This movement is due to the fact that research indicates that psychology is more than just the study of weakness, but also the study of strength and virtue (Seligman, 1999). Marcus Buckingham (2001, p. 3) states: *“to excel in your chosen field and to find lasting satisfaction in doing so, you will need to become an expert at finding and describing and applying and practicing and refining your strengths.”* The strength-based perspective falls within the domain of positive psychology and centres on the discovery and development of a person’s natural innate talents, with the help of additional skills and knowledge, in order to excel in life. Buckingham postulates that a person should discover his natural talents first, and then refine them with skills and knowledge in order to lead a strength-based life.

An effective training programme for helpers should therefore not only focus on skills and knowledge, but also develop the personal strengths of the helper. Carkhuff’s theory on helping (2000) emphasised that the essence of helping is a process whereby people are guided to realise as well as utilise their own skills and strengths in order to understand and manage their problems and goals. The person-centred theory defines helping as providing a positive climate in order for the client to address systems that are detrimental to him/her (Rogers, 1980). Therefore the person-centred theory of Rogers and the theory of Carkhuff on helping both focus on uncovering and utilising the individual’s unique strengths with a view to solve problems.

The Helping model of Carkhuff is designed to help helpers realise their own human potential and consists of four distinct phases, namely attending, responding, personalising and initiating. The first phase of the Helping model (Carkhuff, 2000) consists of attending. This phase involves preparing the client in terms of the context (environment). The helper personally attends to the client by observing appearance and behaviour, and by listening effectively by suspending judgment and recalling themes. The next phase consists of responding. During this phase the helper recalls facts and paraphrases these effectively (responding to content). Furthermore, the helper responds to feeling by showing empathy and reflecting the feeling of the client. Next, the helper responds to meaning by capturing the content and feeling of the conversation and responding interchangeably. The third phase consists of personalising; by firstly personalising meaning, the helper identifies common themes during the conversation, the implications thereof and assumptions made. Next, the helper personalises problems, goals and feelings by conceptualising, internalising and specifying deficits, assets and feelings. During the fourth and final phase the helper defines goals and initiates steps. This implies that the helper defines standards, assists the client in developing programmes, schedules, and steps to be taken to implement the programmes/schedules.

Carkhuff (2000) stated that the last stages of the model are more focused on experienced helpers. Carkhuff further points out that an inexperienced helper will rather focus on attending and responding, seeing that the next phases are acquired and perfected during practical field experience. During each phase the helper must apply the four dimensions of sensitive relationship building (empathy, defined as an accurate understanding of the helpee's deepest feelings, thoughts and intentions in terms of his/her framework, respect, which is defined as appreciation, regard and recognition of the helpee's rights and value as a unique individual irrespective of culture or creed, sincerity, described as the degree of congruency and transparency reached between what is communicated to the helpee and the true feelings and intentions of the helper, and concreteness, can be seen as the extent to which the information communicated back to the helpee is factual, clear and specific.) in order to thoroughly guide the individual through the helping process. The essence of the Helping Model is to relate to people interpersonally by using various interpersonal skills, to achieve end results (Carkhuff, 2000). According to Ivey (1988), a relation exists between interpersonal skills in, and knowledge of the four core dimensions of empathy, respect, sincerity and concreteness. In addition to the core dimensions, training in specific micro-

counselling skills should also be incorporated in the training (Ivey, 1993). Ivey postulated a pyramid of skills, starting with basic skills, such as reflecting and paraphrasing, then moving towards more complex skills, such as challenging the individual, which enables the helper to better explore and understand the helpee's context (Ivey, 1993). Therefore Carkhuff's model, interchanged with Ivey's skills creates a context in which interpersonal relation is applied in order to ultimately achieve personal growth, due to the discovery of one's unique strengths (Carkhuff, 2000; Rothmann & Van Aardt, 2002).

The personal development of the helper seems to form an important part of a helping skills training programme. In a study conducted by Korn (1980), the Carkhuff Helping Model was utilised to train undergraduates interested in the helping profession – the training increased the students' intrapersonal skills. Several studies aiming at improving interpersonal skills have been conducted in South Africa. A study conducted by Cilliers and Wissing (1993) showed positive results in the stimulation of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills of managers and trainers. A study by Cilliers (2000) showed an increase in the intrapersonal awareness and interpersonal skills of trainers. Jorgensen and Rothmann (1998) included personal development as part of their study and yielded positive results in terms of changing interpersonal efficiency of trainers in the South African Police Service.

Intrapersonal awareness

An important part of a helping skills training programme would be to raise the helper's intrapersonal awareness (self-as-a-helper) (Korn, 1980). By being more aware of one's own intrapersonal functioning, the helper could also acquire appropriate cognitive, affective and conative behaviour during the helping process (Robetschek, 1999). An effective helper must therefore possess the necessary intrapersonal awareness, which is in accordance with the principles of psychological well-being, in order to be capable of helping others.

Intrapersonal awareness can be studied from different perspectives, utilising different models. Robetschek (1999) states that a person's active and intentional involvement in changing and developing as a person can be viewed as *personal growth initiative*. This change can be viewed as positive and as moving towards a direction of being fully functional (Patterson & Welfel, 1994). Cilliers (2000) describes being fully functional as an awareness of one's emotions, perceptions and feelings, and the ability to deal with this internal mass responsibly and wisely. In addition, Rothmann (1996) describes intrapersonal awareness as psychological

optimacy, being a process of constant growth and living to the fullest, while having constructive interaction with those surrounding the person. Ryff (1989) found that psychological well-being represents the presence of something good instead of only being the absence of illness. Thus Ryff describes psychological well-being in terms of six dimensions, namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, which represents the individual's well-being at a particular moment in time. These are also the six dimensions which are measured in the scales of psychological well-being, which are seen as the elements that make up a healthy psychological person (van Dierendonck, Diaz, Rodriguez-Carvajal, Blanco, & Moreno-Jime'nez, 2008). In order to effectively help others, the helper must function optimally in terms of these six dimensions, which are directly linked to psychological well-being. For purposes of this study, the perspectives of Ryff (1989) and Robetschek (1999) will be combined in order to study how the psychological well-being of the helper should be simulated in a training programme.

Training programme

According to Erasmus, Loedolf, Mda and Nel (2006), a training programme can be defined as a systematic process aimed at modifying the knowledge, skills and behaviour of participants in order for them to be able to achieve certain end results. An effective training programme should be able to ensure that knowledge and skills are thoroughly transferred to the participant, in order for his/her behaviour to change. Research indicates that the content and methodology of an effective training programme should include the self-read-and-do method, lectures, behaviour modification and role-play (Jorgensen & Rothmann, 1998; Rothmann & van Aardt, 2002).

From the afore-mentioned it is clear that an effective helper and psychometrist should have effective helping skills available, should function intrapersonally aware and should be able to assist clients from a strength-based approach. Currently no research is available in the field of Industrial Psychology addressing helping skills for psychometrists from a strength-based perspective.

Research questions

The specific questions of this research were:

- How are the terms helping and competencies associated with helping conceptualised in the literature?
- What should be included in the content and the methodology of a training programme in helping skills for psychometrists?
- What are the effects of a training programme in helping skills for psychometrists?

Expected contribution of the study

The use of psychological assessment measures is under statutory control in South Africa (Health Professions Council of SA, 2010a). This implies that a law restricts the use of psychological assessment measures to only be utilised by appropriately registered psychology professionals. Various categories exist within the psychology profession pertaining to who may utilise psychological assessment measures (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2009), namely psychologists, registered counsellors and psychometrists (Independent practice) (Health Professions Council of SA, 2010a).

According to HPCSA (2010c: p1), the International Guidelines for Test-use state that

a competent test user will use tests appropriately, professionally, and in an ethical manner, paying due regard to the needs and rights of those involved in the testing process, the reasons for testing, and the broader context in which testing takes place. This will be achieved by ensuring that the test user has the necessary competencies to carry out the testing process, and the knowledge and understanding of tests and testing which inform and underpin that process.

In order to ensure that psychometrists stay true to this definition, the Health Professions Council of SA (2010c) identified core and derived competencies a psychometrist needs to demonstrate. It is clear from the core competencies that the psychometrist needs to display effective helping and intrapersonal skills to ensure that a practitioner displays interpersonal sensitivity. The Health Professions Council of SA's code of conduct specifically stipulates the responsibility of psychometrists to be trained and capable of handling helping situations ethically. Therefore the proposed helping skills training programme did not not only focus on the development of psychometrists' intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, but also on

contemporary issues in the South African workplace, such as trauma debriefing and HIV counselling and will provide graduates with skills to address these issues in the workplace.

More specifically the research was aimed to conceptualise the terms helping and competencies associated with helping, from the literature, to investigate what should be included in the content and methodology of a helping skills training programme, and to evaluate the effects of a helping skills training programme for psychometrists.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

The research falls within experimental and descriptive research. A randomised pre-test-post-test comparison group design was utilised (De Vos, Strydom, Fouchè, & Delpont, 2005). This particular research design utilised two groups, namely the comparison group and the experimental group. The comparison group and the experimental group received the same pre- and post-test, but the comparison group was not given the training programme in helping skills. The independent variable, namely the helping skills programme, was then introduced to the experimental group, where after the effect of the independent variable on the dependant variables was assessed during the post-test. The same measuring instruments were administered, at two different occasions (with a one-month interval), to the comparison group as well as the experimental group. The comparison group only received the training after the post-test in order to afford the group the opportunity of undergoing the training and to ensure fair research practices.

Research method

This section consists out of the research participants, measuring battery, research procedure, statistical analysis and the ethical considerations. Furthermore research question one will be answered during the literature review.

Research participants

The population consisted of students from the North-West University’s School for Human Resource Sciences on the Potchefstroom Campus, specifically Honours students studying Industrial Psychology with the aim of registering as psychometrists. The entire population, comprising 22 students ($N = 22$), was included in the study. In accordance with the research design, a comparison group as well as an experimental group were utilised. The stratified random sampling technique was used in order to select the participants for the experimental and comparison groups. Table 1 gives an indication of the characteristics of the participants in the study.

Table 1
Characteristics of the Participants (N = 22)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	4	18%
	Female	18	82%
Ethnicity	Caucasian	22	100%
Age	20-22 years	15	68%
	23-25 years	6	27%
	26-28 years	1	5%
Language	Afrikaans	21	95%
	English	1	5%
Level of Honours degree qualification		22	100%

Table 1 indicates that the majority of the participants (82%) were female, and Afrikaans speaking (95%). The population (all the available participants) only included Caucasian individuals, since there were none from any other ethnicity enrolled for an Honours degree in Industrial Psychology. In total, 15 (68%) of the participants were between ages 20 and 22 years, whilst 7 (32%) were older than 23 years. The characteristic distribution of the population was hindered by the limited availability of students, seeing that the entire population was utilised, which unfortunately did not consist of a varied group of individuals.

Measuring battery

The following measuring instruments were utilised in the research:

A **biographical questionnaire** was used in order to gather demographic information concerning the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, preferred language, current qualification, institution and previous helping skills experience.

The **Carkhuff scales** developed by Carkhuff (1978) were used to evaluate the level of helping skills demonstrated in terms of the four phases of the Carkhuff helping model. The evaluation also included the ability to depict the four core dimensions of sensitive relationship building, namely empathy, respect, sincerity and concreteness (Rothmann & Van Aardt, 2002). Every participant participated in a role-play of 10 minutes with a client. The interview was recorded onto a DVD, where after the levels of the core dimensions of sensitive relation forming was evaluated by independent judges (registered industrial psychologists). Previous research (Rothmann & van Aardt, 2002) indicated acceptable inter-rater reliability of 0.95 for the four scales.

The **Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS)** is a self-report measure developed by Robitschek (1998), which results in a single scale score for personal growth initiative. Personal growth initiative can be viewed as a person's active and intentional involvement in changing and developing as a person. The PGIS consisted of nine items and was scored on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*definitely disagree*) to 6 (*definitely agree*). "I take charge of my life", "I have a plan for making my life more balanced" and "I can choose the role I want to have in a group" were typical items found in the instrument. High scores indicate a high level of personal growth initiative. Robitschek (1999) found internal consistency scores ranging from 0.78 to 0.90 for this instrument, as well as acceptable alpha coefficients of 0.87.

The **Scale of Psychological Well-being** was developed by Ryff (1989) as a self-report questionnaire that aims to assess the individual's well-being at a particular moment in time, in terms of six dimensions, namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance (Ryff & Singer, 1998). This instrument consisted of 84 items and was scored on a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging

from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). “I like most aspects of my personality” and “I tend to worry what other people think of me” were typical items found in the instrument, where high scores indicate well-being on that particular dimension. Van Dierendonck, Dı́az, Rodrı́guez-Carvajal, Blanco, and Moreno-Jime´nez (2008) found acceptable alpha coefficients for this instrument, ranging from 0.71 to 0.82.

Research procedure

In order to statistically and ethically gather data for the research, the participants were exposed to an information session concerning the research project after approval had been obtained from the North-West University’s Ethics Committee. Students’ consent was also obtained and thereafter the group was randomly divided into a control and experimental group in accordance with the pre-test-post-test comparison group design. The entire group was subjected to two pre-test assessment opportunities. During the first assessment, the Carkhuff scales were administered to the entire group by means of a role-play exercise. The role-play related to a work-related problem unique to an assessment scenario for psychometrists. Two independent judges, registered industrial psychologists, were then asked to assess the role-play by means of the Carkhuff scales. The remaining two instruments (Personal Growth Initiative Scale and the Scales of Psychological Well-being) were then administered.

The experimental group was subjected to the training programme, whilst the comparison group received no training. The training programme mainly consisted of a series of workshops dedicated to the development of interpersonal skills (Carkhuff’s helping model and Ivey’s micro-skills) and intrapersonal skills (psychological well-being and the identification and development of character strengths and talents) and a personal coaching session. The programme was presented by means of lectures, self-read-and-do method, behaviour modification, role-play and assignments. A personal development report was given to each participant during the coaching session. Once the training programme had been presented, the entire group underwent the post-test. This entire group was again first assessed by means of the Carkhuff scales and then the remaining two instruments. The comparison group only underwent the training programme after the post-test had been administered.

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2009). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) were used to analyse the data. The ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) was used to establish the significance of differences between the experimental and comparison groups corrected for the pre-tests. The statistics will be presented in the following format; the mean and standard deviation (SD) for the experimental group (EG) and the comparison group (CG), and, the statistical significance (Sig.) and the practical effect size (partial eta squared value) of the results. The practical effect size will be reported in accordance with Cohen's (1988) guidelines of; $d \geq 0,2$ for a small effect size, $d \geq 0,5$ for a medium effect size and $d \geq 0,8$ for a large effect size. For the descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha coefficients, correlations, the mean and standard deviation were used. ANCOVA was used to determine the statistical and practical significance between the two groups for the post-intervention. The usage of ANCOVA was decided upon in order to eliminate the covariate effects between the two groups. The pre-test's scores were therefore corrected by eliminating the covariates in order for both groups to commence at the same level, so as to statistically calculate the effect of the independent variable on the dependant variable (Miller & Chapman, 2001). Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure that there was no violation of the assumptions of equality of variance (Sig. $\geq 0,05$) (Pallant, 2007).

Ethical considerations

The principles set out in the American Psychological Association's ethics code (American Psychological Association, 2009) were followed to ensure that the research was conducted in a morally acceptable manner. All the research activities and initiatives generated by the research answered to the general norm of "do no harm". Authorisation and permission to conduct the study at the North-West University was first obtained from the North-West University's Ethics Committee as well as from the participants, where after the participants were thoroughly briefed with regard to the design, aims and goals of the research, as well as concerning how the research would benefit them. The participants were allowed to withdraw from the research at any stage if they so chose and the data obtained was kept confidential.

RESULTS

The main objectives of the study were; 1) to conceptualise the terms helping and competencies associated with helping, from the literature, 2) to investigate what should be included in the content and the methodology of a helping skills training programme, and 3) to evaluate the effects of a helping skills training programme for psychometrists. The following section gives an account of the results of the study. First, the content and methodology of the training programme in helping skills will be reported, followed by the descriptive and inferential statistic results generated from the three measuring instruments utilised in the study.

Table 2 depicts the content, objectives, methodology and length of the training programme in helping skills for psychometrists.

Table 2

The content and methodology of the helping skills training programme for psychometrists

WORKSHOP	TITLE	OBJECTIVE	METHOD	LENGTH
1	Session 1: Basic understanding of helping	The participant should be able to understand the <i>personality profile</i> (personality characteristics, skills and knowledge) of an effective helper; The participant should be able to understand the characteristics and principles of helping.	Lecturers Self-read-and –do Role-play Group work and assignments	5 hours
1	Session 2: Micro-skills	The participant should be capable of displaying the core dimensions of sensitive relationships (respect, empathy, genuineness and concreteness) in his/her helping behaviour. The participant should be able to demonstrate the basic micro-skills.	Lecturers Self-read-and –do Role-play Assignments	5 hours

1	Session 3: Helping Skills	The participant should be capable of combining the knowledge obtained in workshop 1 and 2 by displaying an increased awareness of his/her functioning in an interaction process; The participant should be capable of describing the personality profile (personality characteristics, skills and knowledge) of an effective helper. The participant should be capable of explaining and demonstrating the basic helping process and specific strategies of helping;	Role-play Written exercises from workbook. Group work	8 hours
2	Session 1: Personal development	The participant should be capable of demonstrating knowledge on character strengths and virtues during a helping process;	Role-play Written exercises from workbook. Group work	4 hours
2	Session 2: Combining all skills	The participant should be capable of applying the basic skills of helping to stimulate psychological growth in the helping process.	Role-play Group work	4 hours
3	Session 3: Individual coaching session	The participant should participate in a personal coaching session during which he/she will be afforded the opportunity of asking questions and clarifying thoughts within a safe environment. The participant will be made aware of his/her functioning during an interaction process.	Personal development session	1 hour

The training programme comprised of two workshops and a personal coaching session. The workshops were presented on a weekly basis. Each workshop involved specific objectives and methods. A workbook was handed out to the participants that included training exercises to guide the participant. The workbook can be viewed in Addendum A. An example of a

personal coaching report that was given to each participant during the session can be viewed as Addendum B.

Next, the results of the core dimensions of helping as well as the helping skills as measured by the Carkhuff-scales will be reported. An inter-rated reliability of between 0,85 and 0,88 was found for the core dimensions, and between 0,81 and 0,77 for the helping skills, which are exceptional according to statistical principles (Pallant, 2007). The results of the core dimensions of helping as measured during the role play are presented in Table 3:

Table 3

The significance of the differences between the pre-and post-test scores for the core dimensions of helping as measured by the Carkhuff- scales during the role play (N = 22).

ITEM	EG (N = 12)		CG (N = 10)		ANCOVA	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>F</i> (1,18)	Sig.
Empathy	3,48	0,41	2,10	0,56	13,28	0,002*
Respect	3,40	0,56	2,05	0,51	5,27	0,034*
Genuineness	3,46	0,57	2,08	0,51	9,66	0,006*
Concreteness	3,27	0,62	1,93	0,43	0,73	0,405

*Difference is statistically significant at $p \leq 0,05$

As can be seen from the results in Table 3 the corrected group means for three of the core dimensions of helping, namely; Empathy, Respect and Genuineness were statistically significant with a small effect size. There seems to be a significant difference between the groups at post-intervention on Empathy [$F(1,18) = 13,28$ $p = 0,00$, partial eta squared = 0,43], Respect [$F(1,18) = 5,27$, $p = 0,03$, partial eta squared = 0,23] and Genuineness [$F(1,18) = 9,66$, $p = 0,01$, partial eta squared = 0,35]. There was no significant difference between the groups at post-intervention on the Concreteness variable [$F(1,18) = 0,73$, $p = 0,41$, partial eta squared = 0,04]. The results of the helping skills as measured by the Carkhuff-scales are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

The significance of the differences between the pre-and post-test scores for the helping skills as measured by the Carkhuff-scales during the role play (N = 22).

ITEM	EG (N = 12)		CG (N = 10)		ANCOVA	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>F</i> (1,18)	Sig.
Attending	1,13	0,11	0,90	0,12	0,14	0,710
Responding to content	0,34	0,05	0,22	0,48	4,48	0,048*
Responding to feeling	0,32	0,07	0,21	0,04	0,61	0,446
Responding to meaning	0,32	0,07	0,18	0,04	0,69	0,416
Personalising meaning	0,30	0,07	0,17	0,03	5,32	0,033*
Personalising problems, goals and feelings	14,42	5,37	14,20	3,12	0,36	0,554
Defining goals	0,31	0,06	0,17	0,03	2,05	0,169
Initiating steps	0,23	0,07	0,17	0,03	3,91	0,064

*Difference is statistically significant at $p \leq 0,05$

As can be seen in Table 4, there seems to be a significant difference with a small effect between the groups at post-intervention on the helping skills of Responding to content [$F(1,18) = 4,48$, $p = 0,05$, partial eta squared = 0,20] and Personalising meaning [$F(1,18) = 5,32$, $p = 0,03$, partial eta squared = 0,23]. The remaining helping skills of, Attending [$F(1,18) = 0,14$, $p = 0,71$, partial eta squared = 0,01], Responding to feeling [$F(1,18) = 0,61$, $p = 0,45$, partial eta squared = 0,03], Responding to meaning [$F(1,18) = 0,69$, $p = 0,42$, partial eta squared = 0,04], Personalising problems, goals and feelings [$F(1,18) = 0,36$, $p = 0,55$, partial eta squared = 0,02], Defining goals [$F(1,18) = 2,05$, $p = 0,17$, partial eta squared = 0,10] and Initiating steps [$F(1,18) = 3,91$, $p = 0,06$, partial eta squared = 0,18] were all not statistically significant during the post-intervention.

Next, the intrapersonal awareness instruments, Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS) (post-test), as well as the Scales of Psychological Well-being (post-test) corrected for both pre-

tests, will be discussed. The results of the Personal Growth Initiative Scale are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

The significance of the differences between the pre-and post-test scores for the intrapersonal awareness skills as measured by the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS) (N = 22).

ITEM	EG (N = 12)		CG (N = 10)		ANCOVA	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F(1,18)	Sig.
Total for PGIS (54 items)	43,83	5,97	38,50	9,95	0,47	0,501

*Difference is statistically significant at $p \leq 0,05$

According to Table 5 the results of the PGIS were not statistically significant. There are no significant differences between the groups at post-intervention [$F(1,18) = 0,47, p = 0,50$, partial eta squared = 0,03]. Next, the results of the Psychological Well-being scales is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

The significance of the differences between the pre-and post-test scores for the intrapersonal awareness skills measured by the Scales of Psychological Well-being (N = 22).

ITEM	EG (N = 12)		CG (N = 10)		ANCOVA	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F(1,18)	Sig.
Autonomy	61,75	10,31	63,80	11,51	0,02	0,902
Environmental mastery	69,50	8,42	65,30	10,68	1,46	0,242
Personal growth	74,08	6,61	76,10	5,32	0,27	0,610
Positive relations	72,75	8,43	73,30	7,88	0,90	0,355
Purpose in life	72,58	8,43	68,30	5,52	4,71	0,043*
Self-acceptance	68,08	10,38	69,00	8,00	0,29	0,599

*Difference is statistically significant at $p \leq 0,05$

As can be seen from Table 6, of the six dimensions measured by the Scales of Psychological Well-being only one dimension, Purpose in life, were statistically significant with a small effect [$F(1,18) = 4,71, p = 0,04$, partial eta squared = 0,21]. The remaining five dimensions, Autonomy [$F(1,18) = 0,02, p = 0,90$, partial eta squared = 0,00], Environmental mastery [$F(1,18) = 1,46, p = 0,24$, partial eta squared = 0,08], Personal growth [$F(1,18) = 0,27, p = 0,61$, partial eta squared = 0,02], Positive relations with others [$F(1,18) = 0,90, p = 0,36$, partial eta squared = 0,05] and Self-acceptance [$F(1,18) = 0,29, p = 0,60$, partial eta squared = 0,02] were not statistically significant for the groups during post-intervention.

DISCUSSION

This study focused on developing and evaluating a helping skills training programme, from the strength-based perspective. The main aim was to improve the helping skills of graduate psychometrists, as well as their intrapersonal awareness. The code of conduct of the Health Profession Counsel of SA specifically stipulates that the psychometrist should be able to efficiently assist clients during any helping situation which may arise during the process of psychometric assessment. Therefore the helping skills training programme aimed to develop the intrapersonal and helping skills of graduate psychometrists, in order to be better equipped to deal with helping situations in the workplace. The results indicated that the helping skills training programme stimulated the development of three of the four core dimensions of helping, namely; empathy, respect and genuineness. Furthermore, two helping skills, namely, Responding to content and Personalising meaning improved significantly. The programme did not seem to stimulate the core dimension of concreteness or any of the remaining helping skills. Also one dimension of psychological well-being, purpose in life significantly improved. The programme did not seem to improve the other levels of personal growth, or psychological well-being. These findings are consistent with research done by Carkhuff (2000), Rothmann and Sieberhagen (1997) and Rothmann and Van Aardt (2002).

Concerning the first objective of this study, which was to conceptualise the terms helping and competencies associated with helping from the literature, the literature indicated that helping can be conceptualised as the acquisition of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills within a compliant context (Baumgarten & Roffers, 2003). Carkhuff (2000) summed up the essence of helping as a process whereby skills are applied in the interaction with helpees, in order to guide them through the exploration and understanding of their problems.

The content and methodology of a training programme in helping skills for psychometrists as second objective of this study resulted in the development of two workshops and one personal coaching session. The first workshop consisted out of three sessions, while the second workshop consisted out of two sessions. For purposes of this study, the first workshop entailed a basic understanding of the helping process. This involved understanding the personality profile of an effective helper as well as the basic helping process and specific strategies of helping. The core dimensions of sensitive relationships (respect, empathy, genuineness and concreteness) were introduced to the participants and they had to be capable to demonstrate the basic skills of attending, responding, personalising and initiating in facilitative helping. During the second session of the workshop the micro skills were discussed and stimulated by means of assignments and role-play. During the third session the participants had to apply all the skills of counselling to stimulate psychological growth in the helping process. Furthermore, they had to be capable of identifying personnel requiring referral and understanding the referral process.

During the second workshop the strengths-based perspective of Marcus Buckingham and Clifton (2001) was discussed. The participants were encouraged to demonstrate knowledge on character strengths and virtues during a helping session by means of the workbook and role-play sessions. The personal coaching session entailed an individual session that was held with each participant. This session provided a growth opportunity to each participant. Growth areas were discussed and possible ways of addressing these issues identified. After the post-test, each participant received a detailed report on his/her performance during the workshop.

Concerning the results of the third objective of the study, which was to evaluate the effects of a helping skills training programme for psychometrists; an improvement was noted in the core dimensions of respect, empathy and genuineness amongst the experimental group. It seems that the experimental group gained a deeper insight, understanding and respect for the individuality and circumstances of others they will have to assess in the future. The development of respect could be ascribed to the fact that these graduate students do not come into contact with real life situations on a daily basis, and therefore were only subjected to narrow personal experiences. When, through the helping skills training programme, they were subjected to a role play concerning a persons' problems, emotions and situations, their immediate reaction was shock, later on a deeper respect and warmth for the client was portrayed. This was manifested in the quality of attention given during the post-test role play.

The experimental group also seemed to gain a deeper understanding and insight into the emotions, thoughts and behaviour patterns of helpees' after the training programme. This describes the improvement in their empathy levels. Lastly, the experimental group also learned to establish more congruence between the behaviour they portray and their true inner feelings, thoughts and reactions. Cilliers (2000) also found improved levels of empathy, respect and genuineness after a training programme was presented to trainers.

The core dimension of concreteness did not improve significantly throughout the entire programme. This can be ascribed to the fact that insight into problems and the directive formulation and expression of responses can only truly be acquired with practical experience in the workplace. Seeing that these students were subjected to a helping scenario for the first time (by means of the role play), they will need more practical experience to perfect their skills and learn concreteness. These results are in line with findings of Rothmann and Van Aardt (2002) on graduate students.

The results further indicated that the experimental group improved in their Responding to content- and the Personalising meaning-helping skills. This indicates that the participants learned to listen to the facts being conveyed and then to reflect back what was said with accuracy, in order to help clarify the elements of the problem. They also learned how to assist the helpee identify common themes during the conversation, and accurately identify the implications these themes and assumptions have for the helpee.

Concerning the remaining helping skills, the experimental group did not improve significantly after the training programme. In line with the findings from Carkhuff (2000) it can be expected that the participants improved in terms of the beginner skills such as responding, seeing that the later phases of the Helping model are only truly acquired and perfected with experience.

With regards to personal growth, no significant difference was detected between the control and experimental group. It would seem that the helping skills training programme did not stimulate personal growth amongst the participants. Robitschek (2003, p. 497) found that personal growth initiative is strongly related to independent self-construal. She defines Independent self-construal as *'a focus on the self, as distinct from other people, and possessing one's own goals and attributes'*. Thus people define the goals towards which they

will intentionally try to grow. This could explain why it was difficult to stimulate intrapersonal cognitive, behavioural or affective change within the experimental group, seeing that they defined growth as the acquisition of physical or mental goals. This was particularly found during the personal coaching sessions, where the experimental group immediately referred to career goals or helping skills when they were asked to define personal growth for themselves. This caused the experimental group to interpret change and growth in a singular helping skills context, and not in an intrapersonal manner. The experimental group did not define personal growth in terms of intrapersonal attributes, and were only focused on the attainment of physical skills, such as the helping skills.

Since personal growth initiative is also strongly positively related to psychological well-being (Robitschek, 2003), the experimental group did also not undergo significant improvement with regards to the dimensions of psychological well-being. They only seemed to have slightly improved with regards to their purpose in life. It would seem that the helping skills training programme stimulated a deeper sense of meaning and purpose amongst the experimental group. They now believe that everything happens for a reason and appear more goal-directed and focused. With regards to the remaining five dimensions; autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, positive relations with others and self-acceptance, the experimental group did not improve significantly. Bowman (2010) found that psychological well-being, specifically the six mentioned dimensions, tend to change in response to life transitions. His findings were especially applicable to graduate students undergoing extreme life changes at the end of their studies, seeing that they will make important changes and adjusting in choosing a career or furthering their studies. This was the case with the participants of this study, since they are honours students at the end of their honours year facing life transitions. Some applied to further their studies in the Magister programme while others were entering the workplace. The emotional maturity of the experimental group in dealing with these life changes also impacted on their psychological well-being (Aspy, Aspy, Russel & Wedel, 2000).

In accordance with the finding of Bowman (2010), dimensions such as autonomy and environmental mastery tend to decrease amongst young individuals. The findings indicate a greater need for the stimulation of intrapersonal awareness, specifically psychological well-being, amongst graduate students in order to start preparing and developing them at an early stage for when they face life transitions. Thus when they enter into the workplace as

psychometrists they will be able to deal with the pressures of the new environments as well as the demands of working with clients in an emotionally mature manner. The research proved that an increase in maturity and experience will lead to improved skills and capabilities to handle the demands of the psychometrist profession amongst graduate psychometrists who enter the workplace. One possible reason could be that the needed intrapersonal skills are not stimulated or developed amongst students from a young age (Rothmann & Van Aardt, 2002).

Although the helping skills training programme did not significantly improve the participants' personal growth or psychological well-being, it improved their helping skills and awareness of the occurrence and nature of helping situations they will have to face. It appeared that the participants defined growth or improvement solely in terms of the helping skills, and did not recognise or incorporate the intrapersonal awareness dimension. It is very important to teach graduate psychometrists the necessary helping skills as well as stimulate intrapersonal awareness skills in order to efficiently equip them for their role and responsibility in accordance with the HPCSA code of conduct. Aspy, Aspy, Russel and Wedel (2000) stated that a counsellor whom is constantly growing is the most potent growth stimulator in other individuals.

The helping skills training programme for psychometrists seemed to enabled graduate psychometrists to start seeing the value and necessity of developing on an intrapersonal level. The programme did efficiently increase participants' ability to deal with helping situations professionally and ethically. The results further reiterate the necessity to include psychopathology, personality courses and counselling in the curriculum of the industrial psychology student (Strumpher, 2007).

The following limitations were noted during the study:

- The length of the training programme was not ideal for the stimulation of intrapersonal awareness. Given the life transitions these students are faced with, it would be recommended that the programme should be presented over a longer period of time in order to develop intrapersonal awareness.
- The population only consisted out of students from one university, which implies that the results cannot be generalised to students from other universities.

- The demographic characteristics of the population were not ideal. Although the entire Industrial Psychology honours class was utilised for the study, the group mainly consisted out of Caucasian, Afrikaans speaking females between the ages of 22 and 24. This implies that the results cannot be applied cross-culturally or used to determine the influence of maturity on the measured helping skills.
- The sample size was also especially small, which results in the fact that the results cannot be generalised.

The following recommendations can be made with regards to helping skills training programmes for psychometrists:

It is recommended that the programme should be presented for a longer period of time, for example as part of a semester course, to be able to stimulate intrapersonal awareness as well as evaluate the longitudinal effects of the programme.

Tertiary institutions training psychometrists should actively incorporate helping skills and the stimulation of intrapersonal awareness into the curriculums, in order to better prepare the students for helping situations. During the programme it became clear that the graduate students were not emotionally nor experientially prepared for the reality that will face them when they start their careers. Thus concluding that there is a need to develop these students' helping skills as well as their intrapersonal awareness, in order to stimulate growth and maturity. The helping skills training programme should be presented to a larger population varying in demographic characteristics and include students from multiple universities. This would enable researchers to generalise the results and thus create an extensive scope of the level of skills and intrapersonal awareness portrayed by graduate psychometrists.

It would also be beneficiary to look into the cross-cultural effects of a helping skills training programme on individuals from different ethnic groups. The helping skills training programme could also be expanded to include all Human Resource related professions. It is imperative to have efficient helping skills when one's job involves being responsible for people. Finally, longitudinal research with regards to helping skills would also be recommended in order to test the long term effects of a helping skills training programme on graduate psychometrists.

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, conclusions regarding the study are given according to the general and specific objectives. The limitations of this research are discussed, followed by recommendations for the organisation and future research.

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

The general objective of the study was to improve the helping skills as well as the intrapersonal awareness of graduate psychometrists within a strength-based perspective. The results of the helping skills indicated that the experimental group showed more empathy, respect and genuineness, while responding to the content given and personalising the meaning of problems. However, the training programme did not seem to stimulate intrapersonal awareness effectively.

The first objective of this research was to conceptualise helping and the competencies associated with helping from the literature. Cilliers (2000) explains that helping can be viewed as providing opportunities for learning and growth within an accommodating climate. Furthermore, helping is described as the acquisition of intrapersonal, interpersonal and group behaviour skills within a compliant context (Baumgarten & Roffers, 2003). Carkhuff (2000) summarised the essence of helping as the application of interpersonal skills in order to interact with helpees and guide them through the exploration of their problems. Given the definition of helping it is important to note that helping and the approaches to helping people have been evolving from a problem-focused to a strength-focused perspective (Smith, 2006). This development occurred due to research findings, which indicated that psychology is more than merely the study of weaknesses but also the study of strengths and virtues (Seligman, 1999; Smith, 2006). The strength-based perspective utilised in this study was developed by Marcus Buckingham (2001) and falls within the domain of positive psychology. This perspective centres on the discovery and development of one's innate talents, with the help of additional skills and knowledge, in order to excel in life (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

The competencies associated with helping should include the necessary interpersonal skills and knowledge, while also developing the personal strengths of the helper. The theory on helping, developed by Carkhuff (2000), stipulates that the essence of helping can be viewed as a process of guiding people to realise and utilise their own strengths and skills with which to manage their problems. The Helping Model of Carkhuff (2000) consists of four phases, aimed at relating to people interpersonally by using various interpersonal skills as well as the core dimensions of sensitive relationship building. Another important competency of an effective helper is that he/she should also be a person who is fully functional (Cilliers, 2000; Patterson & Weifel, 1994), constantly growing as an individual to stimulate growth in others, while functioning intrapersonally aware and in constructive interaction with his or her surroundings (Aspy, Aspy, Russel, & Wedel, 2000; Rothmann, 1996).

Although there are a number of perspectives available on intrapersonal awareness, for the purpose of this study the perspectives of Ryff (1989) and Robitschek (1999) were utilised to stimulate psychological well-being. Ryff (1989) defined psychological well-being as the individual's well-being at a particular moment in time, in terms of six dimensions, namely autonomy, purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, self-acceptance and personal growth. Robitschek (1999) defined psychological well-being in terms of personal growth initiative, which can be viewed as a person's active and intentional involvement in changing and developing as a person. In conclusion, helping and the competencies associated with helping were viewed from a strength-based perspective. The main focus is on the helper as a person with efficient interpersonal helping skills, derived from Carkhuff's Helping Model and Ivey's micro counselling skills, while being a healthy psychological person with a high personal growth initiative.

The second research objective of the study was to determine the content and methodology of a training programme in helping skills. According to Erasmus, Loedolf, Mda and Nel (2006), an effective training programme should be able to modify the skills, behaviour and knowledge of the participants in order to achieve specific end results. Hence an effective training programme in helping skills should ensure that interpersonal knowledge and skills are thoroughly transferred to the participants, in order for them to provide better help to others. Research indicated that the content of an effective training programme should include lectures, the self-read-and-do method, behaviour modification and role-plays (Jorgensen & Rothmann, 1998; Rothmann & van Aardt, 2002). Focusing and stimulating the helper's

intrapersonal awareness should be an important part of a helping skills training programme (Korn, 1980). Several studies (Aspy, Aspy, Russel & Wedel, 2000; Robitschek, 1999; Rothmann, 1996; Ryff, 1989) indicated that an effective helper must function intrapersonally aware, therefore a helping skills training programme should include stimulation of intrapersonal awareness among the participants. The content of an effective helping skills training programme should not only focus on the acquisition of interpersonal skills, but also raise the helper's intrapersonal awareness, in order to acquire appropriate affective, conative and cognitive behaviour during the helping process.

The third research objective of this study was to evaluate the effects of a training programme in helping skills for psychometrists. According to the results it appears that the training programme significantly and practically stimulated the helping skills of *Responding to content* and *Personalising meaning*. The participants learned to listen to content and reflect back with accuracy the content disclosed by the helpee. This skill enables the helper to understand the events causing the problem. The participants became comfortable with looking for the content of the problem, but still struggled to seek for deeper meanings behind the physical events. They also managed to identify themes and personally relate these themes back to the helpee. These results are unique in that no other training programme reported on the helping skills. The remaining helping skills of attending, responding to feeling, responding to meaning, personalizing problems, goals and feelings, defining goals and initiating steps did not improve significantly. It seems that the participants are unfamiliar with helping situations and will therefore need much more practical experience with which to attain more helping skills.

The training programme statistically and practically stimulated three core dimensions of helping, namely respect, empathy and genuineness. Given the quality of attention given during the post-test role-play it appears that the experimental group gained a deeper insight, understanding and respect for the employees they will have to assess in the workplace. Seeing that they were introduced to a realistic helping situation during the programme, their respect for others' situations increased. The participants gained a deeper empathy for the thoughts, feelings and circumstances of helpees in that they learned to care about others in spite of the mistakes they make or problems they face. Lastly, the experimental group learned congruence between their true inner emotions, thoughts and actions and the behaviour they display to the helpee. They learned through the helping skills programme to become

comfortable in a helping situation, to be genuine in their behaviour, empathetic and caring without inappropriate affections. These findings are consistent with research done by Cilliers and Wissing (1993), Cilliers (2000) and Rothmann and Van Aardt (2002), who also found improved levels of respect, empathy and genuineness after administering training programmes.

The dimension of concreteness did not show significant improvement through the training programme. This can be ascribed to the inexperience of the participants and it indicated that they would have to practise the skills they acquired in order to gain, by experience, a deeper insight into people and into how to communicate effectively with helpes. In their study among human service paraprofessionals, D'Augelli and Levy (1978) also found that an increase in concreteness is positively related to practical experience.

The results further indicated that psychological well-being and personal growth did not improve significantly among the participants. It appears that the experimental group was faced with extensive life changes, which negatively influenced their autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, positive relations with others and self-acceptance. These transitions include the beginning of a new life phase by either applying for Master's degrees or starting a career at the end of their studies. These findings are in accordance with results from a study of Bowman (2010), indicating that life transitions tend to negatively influence psychological well-being. In spite of these factors, one dimension of psychological well-being did indeed improve significantly, namely purpose in life. It seems that the helping skills training programme improved the experimental group's sense of meaning and purpose. They now believe everything happens for a reason and appear more focused.

In respect of personal growth, Robitschek (2003) found that a person would grow actively and intentionally towards that which he or she defines as important. This was clearly manifested in the experimental group, seeing that they defined growth solely in terms of the attainment of helping skills, and did not incorporate intrapersonal awareness. During an individual coaching session, none of the participants defined growth as intrapersonal awareness but merely as the attainment of physical helping skills or career goals.

3.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

With regard to the limitations of the present study, the following can be outlined:

Firstly, the length of the training programme was not ideal for efficient stimulation of the core dimension of concreteness, or intrapersonal awareness. According to Rothmann and Van Aardt (2002) the stimulation of concreteness and intrapersonal awareness, which leads to change in behaviour, can only effectively be stimulated by means of practical experience and feedback. Therefore the training programme should be extended in order to allow proper skills practice, which will stimulate concreteness as well as the acquisition of intrapersonal awareness.

Secondly, the results may not be representative of all graduate psychometrists in South Africa due to the convenience sampling. The sample only consisted of students from the North-West University, specifically those of the Potchefstroom Campus, which implies that the results cannot be generalised to students from other universities.

The demographic characteristics of the population can be viewed as a third limitation of this study. The population consisted mostly of Caucasian, Afrikaans-speaking females; there were no individuals from other ethnic groups enrolled for the honours programme. This implies that the results of the study could not be generalised to other cultural or ethnic groups.

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite these limitations, the research findings have important implications for organisations concerned and future research.

3.3.1 Recommendations for the organisation

Psychometrists employed in organisations need efficient helping skills in order to ethically deal with sensitive assessment results and feedback. The Health Professions Council of SA's code of conduct stipulates that psychometrists should convey feedback in a caring and

sensitive manner in order to prevent emotional or psychological trauma. The psychometrists will inevitably represent the organisation they work for when they assist clients and convey feedback. Efficient training becomes all the more important for psychometrists to ensure they are capable of dealing with any helping situation or of ethically assisting people during psychometric assessments. It is evident that psychometrists need efficient helping skills, seeing that helping situations will arise in the process of psychometric assessments. Thus concluding that, graduate psychometrists not only need training in psychometrics but also need to be trained in helping skills. It would be recommended that graduate psychometrists undergo an intensive semester course in helping skills in order to be equipped as an effective helper.

3.3.2 Recommendations for future research

It is recommended that future research include participants from other universities in order to be able to generalise the results. It would also be beneficial to include participants from various ethnic and cultural groups in order for the cross-cultural effects of a helping skills training programme for master students or registered Industrial Psychometrists to be assessed.

The length of the course should be extended to a semester, seeing that interpersonal skills as well as intrapersonal awareness can only be truly stimulated and acquired with efficient practice and feedback (Rothmann & Aardt, 2002). Therefore it would be strongly recommended that the training programme be extended to a semester course to ensure that the skills are practised, and that intrapersonal awareness is stimulated.

Lastly, it would be beneficial to future research to investigate the longitudinal effects of the training programme by incorporating a post–post-test to establish the long-term effect of the programme

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