Psychology

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**Introduction**

Counseling is a process that occurs when a counselor and a client set aside time to determine and explore difficulties such as the stressful and emotional feelings of a client. A counselor is an individual that has proper training in counseling. The field of counseling is diverse and many counselors specialize in a specific area such as addiction, relationship, and bereavement counseling, etc. A professional counselor is someone that has the proper training for a certain vocation. However, a professional person is not only defined by his or her attitude but by the adherence to specific behavior inherent in a particular profession. This is because every professional group has sets of rules and regulations that stipulate what is admissible within a specific behavior. This paper will compare and contrast the ACA code of ethics with the American psychological association along with a personal reflection of how ACA will facilitate in shaping my professional identity and plans for self-care strategies.

**ACA and APA**

The ACA Code of ethics contains six ethical principles that are autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, veracity, and fidelity. In contrast, the APA code of ethics contains five ethical principles that are non-maleficence, beneficence, integrity, justice, fidelity, responsibility and respect for people’s rights and justice (Donald & Ng, 2014). APA and ACA codes are similar in the sense that they both protect the process of counseling. The ACA codes derive their ethical standards on its principles and values. According to the ACA code of ethics, these codes are the foundation for ethical behavior and the process of decision making. In contrast, according to the APA, the ethical principles are unenforceable rules that serve as a guide for psychologists so that they can attain the highest ideals of psychology.

Discussing other differences in both codes, the emphasis on the word client in the APA code is significantly lower than that of ACA codes. This is because in ACA codes of ethics, the word client is used 293 times while in APA, the word client is used only 67 times. Similarly, the word counseling is used only 4 times in APA codes of ethics while the word is mentioned 157 times in ACA codes (Ponton & Duba, 2009). APA ethical codes are based on a medical model and are focused more on psychology while ACA ethical codes are based on a wellness model that is more focused on counseling that is highly important as the model defines the relationship between the client and the counselor.

Another major difference between the ACA and APA codes of ethics is that according to the ACA Code of ethics counselors should avoid imposing their values, beliefs, and attitudes. Also, counselors should refrain from referring clients based on counselor's personally held attitudes and beliefs. In contrast, the APA codes of ethics are silent on the issue of imposing values and referrals based on the values and beliefs that are inconsistent with the client’s values and beliefs (Ponton & Duba, 2009).

**Personal Identity and ACA codes**

Regardless of the same basic training, every counselor is different when it comes to practicing. An individual must follow proper rules and regulations to treat the patients effectively. By following the ACA code of ethics I can embrace a cross-cultural approach in support of the dignity, diversity, and uniqueness of people within their cultural and social context. Behaviors are developed out of personal dedication yet still there is a need for proper guidance. ACA codes of ethics will guide me in improving my behavior when dealing with the client so that I can treat them effectively. Also, I can use these codes in real life to shape my personality and become more culturally competent. The ACA codes not only provide a foundation upon which psychologists build their scientific and professional work but also facilitates an individual to handle the diverse situations that he encounters daily. I can treat clients by using the ACA codes as they will guide me so that I can facilitate them in developing informed judgments and choices that are concerned with human behavior so that patients can attain progress in their lives.

**Personal Strengths and Areas of Growth and Improvement**

In any healthcare profession, the healthcare professional must understand and respect the cultural beliefs of the people to treat them effectively. In counseling as well, the cultural background and environment where the client is living, has great influence on his or her condition. Growing in an environment where people around me were of different cultural backgrounds, I think that I have developed an attitude where I can easily relate with people of different cultural backgrounds. Being culturally competent is the greatest strength that I can utilize in my professional life while I treat the clients. According to the research published by the author, Shamshad along with fellow researchers, the author discussed that due to the increase in the population, various ethnic minority groups need culturally competent counselors (Zalaquett, 2011). According to the ACA Code of ethics Section C, it is the responsibility of the counselor to practice in a non-discriminatory manner within the boundaries of both personal and professional competencies and have the responsibility to abide by the ACA codes. As counselors actively participate in all local, national and state-level associations that help them in developing and improving the quality of life for individuals and groups, it is their responsibility to remove the cultural barriers so that patients can be treated effectively.

Despite being culturally competent, I think that I need some improvement in resolving ethical issues and learning more about the evaluation and assessment techniques. The author, Poornima, in her research paper highlighted several challenges faced by the counselors (Bhola & Raguram, 2016). She specifically discussed digital ethics related to the therapist-client interface on the internet. I think that I need some improvement in understanding the role of technology and how to integrate it while counseling people. Additionally, the author, Poornima also emphasized the role that assessments play while counseling patients that have a mental illness. I think that when clients participate actively in the assessment process, they can tell more about themselves and counselors can use this information to know more about their clients and determine the counseling approach that is more suitable for the clients. As every client is different, therefore, assessment tools should be different for every client. I believe that I still need some improvement in understanding the assessment tools that can be used for different clients.

**Self-Care Strategies**

Self-care can be described as the actions that an individual takes to reach optimal mental and physical health. Counseling is not an easy job as everyday counselors have to face various challenges and due to the immense stress, their health deteriorates quickly. So it is important to implement self-care strategies to mitigate stress and burnouts. In the research conducted by the author Denis, he described a seven-part model for self-care. The first step of the model is to develop a consistent plan to indulge in mentally and physically nourishing strategies. The second step is to schedule restorative rejuvenation when in stress. The third step is to develop the strategies for unanticipated stress while the fourth step is to engage in a social gathering with peers for support. The fifth step is to evaluate counselor-specific professional challenges while the sixth step is to maintain a record of the successes. Lastly, the seventh step includes self-compassion.

To de-stress myself, I have decided to maintain a record of the successes and indulge more in social and physical activities. I have decided to maintain a healthy lifestyle by exercising and meditating to relieve stress. I have also decided to develop self-empathy and avoid concentrating on a single self-care approach.

**Reasons for Pursuing a Degree**

Since childhood, I was very intrigued by the healthcare profession as I like to help others. I always like to facilitate people in every way possible. Due to this, I decided to pursue a career in healthcare. Counseling is a very diverse field. This is because counselors can specialize in multiple fields such as addiction and mental health, etc. Also, counselors have to deal with multiple patients that are different from each other. The main reason for pursuing the degree is that I always wanted to create a positive change. A career in counseling will ensure that I am creating a positive change in the life of clients by advising them and guiding them to overcome their problems. Additionally, I am a very good listener so pursuing a degree in counseling will help me in acquiring counseling skills that I can incorporate in my existing set of skills.

Another reason for pursuing this degree is because of my interest in psychology. I am curious to learn about the intra-psychic or interpersonal dynamics and what motivates individual actions and behaviors. The degree will facilitate me in learning various counseling and psychotherapeutic interventions along with problem-solving techniques and behavior modification methods that I can implement in my professional life to counsel the clients effectively.

**Conclusion**

A professional counselor is someone that has the proper training for a certain vocation. In counseling, ethics play a vital role due to which it is necessary to act upon certain principles of ethics that can aid in counseling patients effectively. ACA is the code of ethics that provides a foundation for ethical behavior and the process of decision making. These ethical principles are unenforceable rules that serve as a guide for psychologists so that they can attain the highest ideals of psychology. Thus, counselors must follow the code of ethics and should be culturally competent to counsel clients effectively.

References

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