

ABSTRACT

Developing a Professional Counselor Identity: A Qualitative Study of Graduate Student Interns

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The purpose of this study is to explore the confidence levels of graduate counseling students by incorporating a pre-post assessment. The pre-post assessment will measure the self-assured levels within their counseling skills, theoretical knowledge, application of techniques, assessment and values of ethical practice, management of boundaries, personal strengths, and the ability to advocate for their clients. Qualitative interviews will be conducted to glean the personal input from the counseling student interns.

The post practicum assessment will be given at the end of the academic semester to assess any differences prior to the start of their practicum experience. The information analyzed at the end of the assessment will allow the researchers to identify themes that will assist in synthesizing academic training into the practicum experience.

In this study, the researchers will use open ended questions which were thoughtfully developed in order to discuss the experiences of the participants, and explore their journey through their counseling practicum experience. Interviews will allow for the collection of insights and experiences from the participants. The objective of the researchers and this study was to correlate the students' practicum experiences with their level of professional confidence.

It is anticipated that the research data will provide counselor educators who are working with these students clearer insight as they seek to improve the graduate counseling program. By

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making certain the academic and practical aspects of the program are effectual, it will be anticipated that practicum students will have a higher level of professional self-confidence.