

Postgraduate Research in Counselling Psychology in Greece

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The European Journal of Counselling Psychology, 2016, Vol. 5(1), 1–3, doi:10.5964/ejcop.v5i1.125

Published (VoR): 2016-12-23.

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Over the past two decades there has been a remarkable progress in Greece in the field of Counselling Psychology (Malikiosi-Loizos & Giovazolias, 2013; Malikiosi-Loizos & Ivey, 2012). This is evident both from the successful operation of two major graduate programs, as well as the parallel development of professional and research activity in the field. In addition, and despite the fact that in Greece there is no formal certification of any specialty in Psychology, the Division of Counselling Psychology of the Hellenic Psychological Society (<http://elpse.com/symvouleutikh-psychologia/>) has a significant number of active members, organizing nationwide conferences with high participation, against unfavorable surrounding socio-economic conditions. Through research and applications presented in these conferences, there is fortunately a continued development of the professional identity of Greek counselling psychologists.

On the occasion of the last conference of the Division of Counselling Psychology of the Hellenic Psychological Society held in Patras, in November 2014, and from the position of academics, who supervise a number of theses in the field of counselling psychology, we came up with the idea of editing this special issue focusing on counselling research conducted in Greece at Master's and/or Doctoral level. This issue can be regarded as a continuation of a former issue in this Journal (Vol. 4(1) titled: "Counselling Psychology Research in Greece" by Vassilopoulos & Malikiosi-Loizos); however, the current issue is comprised solely by recent research conducted at postgraduate level (MSc and/or Doctoral) in Greek Universities. Each of the articles hosted in this issue negotiates a different theme (i.e., substance abuse, career development, life or marital satisfaction, spirituality and chronic illness), with serious psycho-social consequences to the individual and his/her family, as well as important implications for the counselling process and the design of counselling interventions. Each article also addresses a different group of people, such as unemployed adults, women, married couples, university students and children, who are found in distinct stages of life and express very different needs. Furthermore, from a methodological point of view, the papers included in this special issue employ a variety of research methods and techniques ranging from purely qualitative to quantitative and experimental.

More specifically, the first paper by Polyxeni Antonellou and Kalliope Kounenou, following a quasi experimental research design, assessed the effect of a career counselling intervention in elementary school students, between 8 and 11 years old. Results showed the significant impact of the intervention in children's self-confidence, self-esteem and extraversion, highlighting, thus, the importance of adopting career oriented exercises in schools at an early age.

In a similar vein, as far as methodology is concerned, the second paper by Dorothea Loizou and Ariadni Stogianidou investigated the effect of a preventive psycho-educational intervention against substance abuse on 75 university students. The intervention consisted of small group meetings, which lasted 30 hours and focused on the enhancement of personal and social skills, in addition to the information about cigarettes, alcohol and illicit drugs. Overall, results showed a positive change of the students' views regarding substance abuse, as well as an improvement of their social skills, which confirms the implementation of preventive interventions against risky behaviors during college years.

The third paper by Marialena Kostouli, Despoina Xanthopoulou and Christina Athanasiades, investigated, through dyadic analyses, the relationship between economic strain and life satisfaction among married couples with children. It also focused on how marital satisfaction and parental self-efficacy mediates the above relationship. Results were very interesting, particularly in terms of the gender dimension, which proved to determine the way economic strain relates to husbands' and wives' life satisfaction. For example, the husbands' deterioration of their financial situation proved to be negatively related to their wives' marital satisfaction and parental self-agency. The above findings have important implications for individual and marital counselling, especially in times of financial turmoil and economic recession.

The fourth paper by George Kleftaras and Evdokia Vasilou, explored whether spirituality relates to depressive symptoms and loneliness, as well as other personality factors, among unemployed individuals. According to results, significant correlations were found between loneliness, personality factors and various dimensions of spirituality. However, it seems that the beneficial role of spirituality is difficult to emerge when people face serious economic difficulties due to unemployment and labour market exclusion.

The last paper by Ifigeneia Koutri and Evrinomy Avdi, using a qualitative methodology, investigated women's narratives of their experiences of living with breast cancer. Particularly, authors focused on the way illness is constructed as an entrance into a state of liminality where the women's sense of self seems to be "suspended". This new and rather alternative narrative type in breast cancer is considered, by authors, as very helpful in the design of health care policies in Greece and counselling interventions for female cancer patients in general.

In conclusion, the above articles highlight primarily the developmental and preventive nature of Counselling Psychology's approach, as well as its current identity, which is characterized by multiple evidence-based practices in a variety of places and groups of people. Our wish is to trigger even more research in the field by young scientists who would like to join the Division of Counselling Psychology in the future.

March, 2016

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Funding

The authors have no funding to report.

Competing Interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Acknowledgments

The authors have no support to report.

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doi:[10.1111/j.1556-6676.2012.00016.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1556-6676.2012.00016.x)