Exploring and evaluating a solution-focused counselling programme for industrial psychology practitioners

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- The editorial and reference format used in this mini-dissertation are in accordance with 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 guidelines as writing 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express the following recognitions:

DECLARATION

I, Ashley Kriel, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation entitled "Exploring and evaluating a solution-focused counselling programme for industrial psychology practitioners" is my own work and that the views and opinions expressed in this work are those of the author, and relevant literature references as cited in the manuscript.

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

Ashley Kriel

December 2016

LANGUAGE EDITING STATEMENT

6 December 2016

I, Ms Cecilia van der Walt, hereby confirm that I took care of the editing of the mini-dissertation of Ms Ashley Kriel titled Exploring and Evaluating a Solution-Focused Counselling Programme for Industrial Psychology practitioners.

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SUMMARY

Title: Exploring and evaluating a solution-focused counselling programme for industrial psychology practitioners

Key words: Industrial-Organisational (I-O) psychologist, counsellor, workplace counselling, Solution-focused counselling, qualitative research.

The industrial and organisational psychology (IOP) practitioner is often faced with workplace situations which require provision of counselling within their professional capacity. However, research has indicated that the IOP practitioner does not receive sufficient training in specific counselling skills whilst studying towards their Masters degree, which impedes the provision of effective workplace counselling. This study therefore endeavoured to explore and evaluate the value of a specific counselling approach namely, solution-focused counselling with the prospect of developing a unique counselling training programme for the IOP profession.

The general objective of this study was to explore and evaluate a solution-focused counselling training programme for the industrial psychology practitioner as workplace counsellor. A qualitative research approach was used in the study with social constructivism and phenomenology as philosophical underpinnings. The study made use of a case study design along with a combination of convenience and snowball sampling as non-probability sampling techniques. The targeted sample group comprised registered, practising industrial psychologists (*N*=13).

The results showed that the participants favoured the probability of utilising Solution-focused counselling within the IOP context. Participants expressed that they acquired a new framework to refer to during counselling as well as for various other tasks relating to the IOP context. A unique finding from the study revealed that the participants indicated Solution-focused counselling is an approach which would be appropriate within corporate environments for various professions and, to address interdisciplinary cases. In relation to the training they received, participants recommended the approach be utilised conjointly with other compatible approaches along with providing further practical recommendations for the future training of IOP practitioners in a Solution focused counselling training programme.

Conclusively, this research established that an adapted Solution-focused counselling training programme should be included in the curriculum of the IOP Masters programme.

OPSOMMING

Titel: Eksplorering en evaluering van 'n oplossing-gefokusde beradingsprogram vir bedryfsielkunde-praktisyns

Sleutelwoorde: Bedryfsielkundiges, berading, werksplek-berading, oplossing-gefokusde beradingsprogram, kwalitatiewe navorsing.

Die bedryfsielkunde-praktisyn word dikwels gekonfronteer met situasies in die werksplek waarvoor berading vanuit hul professionele kapasiteit nodig is. Vorige navorsing het egter bewys dat bedryfsielkunde-praktisyns ervaar hulle is nie voldoende opgelei in beradingsvaardighede tydens Meestersgraad-studies nie. Dit het 'n invloed op die effektiewe diens wat gelewer kan word ten opsigte van werksplek-berading. Hierdie studie fokus daarop om die waarde van 'n spesifieke beradingsbenadering, oplossing-gefokusde berading, te eksploreer en te evalueer in 'n opleidingsprogram vir die bedryfsielkunde-professie.

Die algemene doelstelling van die studie was die Eksplorering en evaluering van 'n oplossing-gefokusde beradingsprogram vir bedryfsielkunde-praktisyns. 'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering is in die studie gevolg met sosiale konstruktivisme en fenomenologie as filosofiese onderbou. 'n Gevallestudie is tydens die studie gebruik met 'n kombinasie van gerieflikheid- en sneeubal-steekproefnemingstegnieke. Die steekproefgroep het bestaan uit 'n groep geregistreerde bedryfsielkundige praktisyns (*N*=13).

Die resultate het gewys dat die deelnemers ten gunste is van die oplossing-gefokusde beradingsprogram vir bedryfsielkundige praktisyns in die beradingskonteks. Die deelnemers het gemeld dat hulle nou oor 'n nuwe verwysingsraamwerk beskik wat toepaslik gebruik kan word vir berading sowel as vir verskeie ander take binne die bedryfsielkunde-konteks. 'n Unieke bydrae van die studie is dat die deelnemers ervaar het dat die oplossing-gefokusde beradingsbenadering goed gebruik kan word binne die korporatiewe omgewing sowel as vir interdissiplinêre sake. Met verwysing na die opleidingsprogram het die deelnemers voorgestel dat die benadering gepaard met ander beradingsbenaderings gebruik word. Addisionele praktiese voorstelle was dat toekomstige opleiding van bedryfsielkundiges die oplossing-gefokusde beradingsbenadering moet insluit.Ter afsluiting, die navorsing het

vasgestel dat 'n aangepasde program by oplossing-gefokusde berading ingesluit behoort te word in die bedryfsielkundige se Meestersgraad- kurrikulum.

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation focuses on exploring and evaluating a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the industrial psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor. The first chapter includes the problem statement and discussion of the research objectives, the research design is explained together with the division of chapters.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Ray (2011) states that employees spend approximately one quarter of their lives within work settings. Seeing that employees spend the majority of their time at the workplace it can be expected that stress could lead to problematic experiences (Aydogdu & Uzel, 2010). That being said, stressful incidents are unavoidable. However, the detrimental effects thereof are indeed preventable (Ivancevich & Ganster, 2014). Stress is often to blame for the poor psychological well-being from which employees suffer (Aydogdu & Uzel, 2010). Consequently, stress frequently serves as the drive behind declining performance rates, displayed by employees (Aydogdu & Uzel, 2010). Chopra and Dossey (as cited in Seaward, 2015) define stress as "the inability to cope with a perceived (real or imagined) threat to one's mental, physical, or spiritual well-being, resulting from a series of physiological responses and adaptations" (p. 3). In the latter instance, a situation, circumstance or any stimulus regarded as a threat is defined as a stressor (Seaward, 2015). Ivancevich and Ganster (2014) define a job stressor as an event within the workplace which, in due course, strains the individual. Ivancevich and Ganster (2014) continue that strains can be of a physical, psychological or behavioural nature and manifests by means of an individual displaying signs of poor health or wellbeing.

Psychological support is said to be the most important resource to stressed employees (Bisen, 2010). Ray (2011) explains that counselling is considered a means by which employees can enhance their mental as well as emotional wellbeing. Aydogdu and Uzel (2010) define *workplace counselling* as brief psychological therapy provided to employees within an organisation – the latter being for the account of the employer. Ray (2011) states that by means of counselling a system is created whereby employees are held and heard and consequently assisted towards attaining career growth.

Counselling benefits employees by assisting those who are distressed by training them to apply methods for managing their lives better, re-evaluating their social and professional responsibilities along with decision making and ultimately executing these acts (Ray, 2011). Carrol and Walton (as cited in Aydogdu & Uzel, 2010) suggest that workplace counselling services should be rendered continuously and within brief time periods. If counselling were to be made available to employees, problems can be addressed as well as resolved more quickly; within every environment they possibly manifested (Ray, 2011). One way in which to provide workplace counselling is by training industrial psychologists in effective counselling approaches (Barkhuizen, Jorgensen, & Brink, 2015), seeing that industrial psychologists are mostly responsible for the rendering of workplace counselling (Bisen, 2010).

Industrial psychologists as workplace counsellors

As indicated by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (2011), "industrial psychologists plan, develop and apply paradigms, theories, models, constructs and principles of psychology to issues related to the world of work in order to understand, modify and enhance individual, group and organisational behaviour well-being and effectiveness" (p. 1). When analysing the term 'Industrial Psychology', industrial refers to "that part of social life whose function is to provide civilized man with the material goals that his condition of life demands" whereas psychology is "the science of behaviour in relation to its environment" (Bisen, 2010, p.1). Thus Bisen (2010) summarises that industrial psychology constitutes the scientific study of human behaviour at the work. Behaviour at work can be either productive or counterproductive and would typically pertain to aspects such as attraction and socialisation with regard to the work context, work-non-work interface, motivation, stress, employee health and well-being, organisational culture and climate, beliefs and attitudes towards work, team dynamics and organisational processes as well as individual or organisational change and development (Jex & Britt, 2014).

On examining the general scope of industrial psychology, as Bisen (2010) explains, the following was noted: Industrial psychology undertakes the selection and placement of candidates by utilising scientific tests; industrial psychology sees to the proper division of work, thus the latter division is based on abilities, skills and aptitudes of employees; the profession is concerned with conceptualising practical suggestions to address and minimise the wastage of human effort; it sees to the provision of an adequate working environment

which enables the flourishing of labour welfare and strives to enhance human relations by means of outlining aspects such as leadership, employee participation and communication (to name but a few). Industrial psychology does not only aim at studying the attitudes of both the employee and employer but also ultimately develop industrial relations within an organisation (Bisen, 2010). Lastly, industrial psychology is concerned with attaining the primary goal of any organisation which is that of gaining the best possible output with the available resources (Bisen, 2010).

Within South African legislation the scope of practice for industrial psychology includes the skilful application of research methodology; personnel psychology, which entails selection, placement and training of employees; organisational psychology which is concerned with the organisation's functioning as a whole; career psychology, which includes career counselling, planning as well as development; ergonomics, pertaining to the physical aspects to the work itself; consumer psychology which ensures an effective communication channel between the producer and consumer; labour relations which uphold employee rights as depicted by legislation and lastly occupational mental health, which is concerned with ensuring the psychological health and wellbeing of employee (HPCSA, 2011).

The American Psychologist Association, Division of Industrial Psychology recognised seven main areas of concern relating to the specialisation area of industrial psychology (Bisen, 2010). These read as follows: selection and testing, management development, employee motivation, human engineering, marketing research, public relations research and last but not least counselling (Bisen, 2010, Landy & Conte, 2016). In order to render workplace counselling, a range of approaches are available for employing them, namely Existential therapy, Person-centred therapy, Gestalt therapy, Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), Reality therapy and Solution-focused therapy, to name only a few (Shoai, 2014).

Solution-focused Counselling Approach

The application of a Solution-focused mind-set enables individuals to focus on changing their behaviour (Lightfoot, 2014). The strength of this approach lies in its brevity, where approximately five sessions have proven to be successful (Lightfoot, 2014). Furthermore, this counselling method proves to be valuable when viewed from a diversity perspective seeing that the client is seen as the expert on their own lives and therefore their perspectives are determinate and not the counsellor's (Lightfoot, 2014).

Solution-focused therapy as counselling approach aims at establishing what the client's plan of action is they wish to achieve during and towards the end of the session or sessions (Corey, 2014). This is followed by "problem free talk", during which the counsellor may pose questions unrelated to the problem, allowing the counsellor to identify hidden resources (Corey, 2014). Scaling questions are specifically asked enabling clients to assess themselves in terms of rating their problem difficulty on a numeric scale from one to ten (Corey, 2014). Another type of question, namely the miracle question enables the client to envisage a day when their problem no longer exists. The miracle question will typically be phrased as outlined by Macdonald (2011):

> I'd like to ask you a strange question: suppose you go to bed tonight as usual, and while you are asleep a miracle happens, and the problem that brought you here today is solved. But you are asleep and do not know that the miracle has happened: what will be the first small signs when you wake up in the morning that the miracle has happened and that the problem is solved? (p. 21).

Furthermore, during the entire course of the session the counsellor actively listens and is vigilant in identifying past, goals, solutions and exceptions to the problem (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007). The task of the counsellor is to enthusiastically bring attention to the latter and elicit a sense of hope in the client (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007). Thereafter, a midsession break is called either physically or temporarily, allowing the counsellor opportunity to prepare a summary of the session, construct compliments and to formulate appropriate homework tasks (Nelson & Thomas, 2012). Compliments form an integral part of Solution-focused counselling, seeing as it validates effective behaviour which is currently employed and acknowledges the difficulty the employee is facing (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007). By giving compliments, it conveys that the counsellor was actively listening and prompts employees to bring about change (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007). As mentioned, in this approach, tasks in the form of homework are often given; thus providing an opportunity for the client to learn something new (Corey, 2014). It is recommended that the homework be constructed collaboratively between the employee and counsellor to award the employee a sense of ownership (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007). Usually the said homework is firmly based on something the client is currently physically employing or either thinking or feeling, which is guiding them towards their end goal (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007).

Conclusively, the aim of this study will be to explore the prospect of training industrial psychologists in practising Solution-focused counselling, along with evaluating the effectiveness thereof when acting as workplace counsellors.

Consequently the research questions that arise from the problem statement are:

- How to conceptualise the terms *industrial and organisational psychologist, workplace counselling* and *Solution-focused counselling* as defined by literature?

- How is the content and the methodology of a Solution-focused counselling training programme evaluated for the industrial and organisational psychology practitioner as workplace counsellor?

- What are the experiences of the industrial and organisational psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor after a Solution-focused counselling training programme?

- What recommendations can be made for future training of the industrial and organisational psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor in a Solution-focused counselling training programme?

1.2 EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Contribution to Industrial/Organisational Literature

By means of studying a training programme in Solution-focused counselling, for industrial and organisational psychologists as workplace counsellors, new knowledge concerning the latter topic will be added to the field of industrial and organisational psychology. Moreover, evaluating a Solution-focused counselling programme for industrial psychology practitioners may lead to future opportunities of developing a Solution-focused counselling programme for industrial psychology practitioners. Lastly, the study aims at filling a gap in literature indicating that industrial psychologists should be more thoroughly trained in effective counselling skills.

Contribution to the Organisation

This study will make a contribution to organisations by providing them with insight into the value of solution-focussed counselling as intervention approach for industrial psychologists, acting as workplace counsellors. The benefits for organisations that employ workplace counsellors can be viewed as establishing a constructive, confidential and easily accessible

method which employees can utilise in order to address their problems (Mintz, 2014). Moreover, cost saving may ensue due to a decrease in unproductivity caused by situations which could have been successfully addressed by means of counselling (Mintz, 2014). Lastly, availing such a valuable service such as workplace counselling to its employees leads to the cultivation of a favourable reputation for an organisation (Mintz, 2014).

Contribution to the Individual

This study will assist trainees in constructively utilising Solution-focused counselling within a work environment along with recognising the benefits thereof. In addition, the individual will gain more insight, knowledge and a possible appreciation with regard to Solution-focused counselling. The individual will be exposed to an effective form of counselling, thereby adding on to their existing counselling skills and empowering the individual as a workplace counsellor. The latter may result in the optimal functioning of the individual as a workplace counsellor.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this study are divided into a general objective, along with specific objectives respectively.

1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of this study is to explore and evaluate a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the industrial psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study are as follow:
- To conceptualise the terms *industrial and organisational psychologist, workplace counselling* and *Solution-focused counselling* as defined by literature.
- To evaluate the content and the methodology of a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the industrial and organisational psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor.

- To explore what the experiences are of the industrial and organisational psychology practitioner, as a workplace counsellor, after a Solution-focused counselling training programme?
- To determine what recommendations can be made for future training of industrial and organisational psychology practitioners as workplace counsellors in a Solution-focused counselling programme.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

1.4.1 Research Approach

Due to its explorative nature a qualitative research approach was employed for this study. According to Cassell and Symon (as cited in Husserl, 2014) qualitative research can be conceptualised as:

A focus on interpretation rather than quantification; an emphasis on subjectivity rather than objectivity; flexibility in the process of conducting research; an orientation towards process rather than outcome; a concern with context – regarding behaviour and situation as inextricably linked in forming experience; and finally, an explicit recognition of the impact of the research process on the research situation (p. 7).

The philosophical worldview undertaken in this study is social constructivism (Creswell, 2009). Social constructivism holds the assumption that people seek to understand the unique world in which they function (Creswell, 2009). It is further assumed that individuals attach subjective meanings to their lived experiences (Creswell, 2009). The latter meanings are characterised as being diverse and multiple, therefore the researcher pursues to identify the complexity thereof in this instance (Creswell, 2009). Ultimately, the aim of the research is to compile findings primarily based on the viewpoints held by the participants with regard to the topic being studied (Creswell, 2009).

Furthermore, a phenomenological approach will be followed. This strategy of inquiry aims at describing the unique lived experiences, depicted by participants, pertaining to a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2009).

1.4.2 Research Strategy

A case study research strategy was utilised for this study. More specifically, an instrumental case study was conducted (Yin, 2011). The latter being a case study, concerning a unique phenomenon, conducted due to its probable applicableness to other similar situations (Yin, 2011). Conclusively, the aim will be to identify and only focus on the issue at hand; hence an exemplar case, where after every effort is made to comprehensively explain it by utilising a case study (Veblen, 2014).

1.4.3 Literature review

The primary goal of the literature review was to investigate the use of Solution-focused counselling, for the industrial psychologist as a workplace counsellor, which was thus conducted accordingly. Publication dates of all relevant articles as well as books that were utilised ranged from 2010 to the present with the use of older references as the exception. In order to require relevant data, numerous databases were reviewed. In the instance of conducting computer searches, search terms were effectively used such as the following, 'Industrial-organisational (I-O) psychologist', 'counsellor', 'workplace counselling', 'Solution-focused counselling' and 'qualitative research'.

In order to conduct the literature review, specifically the following sources were consulted: Ebscohost, Academic Search Premier, Google, Google Scholar, SAePublications, Science Direct and South African Journal of Industrial Psychology.

1.4.4 Research Setting

Practising industrial and organisational psychologists, located in the North-West, Gauteng, and Free State provinces in South Africa were approached to participate in this study. The venue where the training programme and data collection processes commenced was a guesthouse situated in Potchefstroom. The said guesthouse proved to be ideal due to the availability of sufficient meeting space, comfort as well as privacy. A private conference room on site was utilised for all the proceedings, namely the presentation of the Solution-focused training programme where after the data were collected by conducting a focus group.

1.4.5 Entrée and establishing researcher roles

Participants who formed part of a previous study were considered suitable candidates and were thus approached to participate in the study at hand. The previous study (Barkhuizen et

al, 2015) interviewed Practising industrial and organisational psychologists (IOP) on their view of workplace counselling and the suitability of their training for this purpose. Since most of the participants indicated that more efficient counselling training is necessary for IOP students, these participants were deemed suited to evaluate SFC as a workplace counselling method, and were thus invited. The researcher's supervisor provided a means of access to the aforesaid group of participants.

Participants were contacted via email correspondence whereby they were provided with an informed consent letter. The latter served as a formal invitation, explained the nature of the study and its content, stated the prerequisites and the specifics relating to the data collection as well as communicated the planned use of a voice recorder, and stipulated the contact details of those involved in the study.

The researcher fulfilled various roles during the course of this research study (Strydom, 2011). Firstly, and most importantly, the researcher ensured adequacy in terms of the skills and competencies necessary to successfully conduct the research study (Strydom, 2011). The researcher ensured that all procedures relating to the research study commenced in an ethical manner (Strydom, 2011). In addition the researcher practised objectivity at all times and ensured that no value judgements were made (Strydom, 2011). Furthermore, the researcher ensured that all the activities pertaining to the study conveyed a sense of respect towards all participants and their respective professions and contexts (Strydom, 2011). Lastly, the researcher took into consideration potential risk associated with the particular study and ensured contingency plans were in place (Strydom, 2011).

1.4.6 Sampling

A non-probability sampling technique was utilised in this study, namely convenience sampling (Yin, 2011). Those identified to form part of the said sampling group were chosen solely due to being readily accessible (Wright, 2014; Yin, 2011). In addition, snowball sampling was employed. Snowball sampling occurs in the instance where new participants are sourced stemming from consequential aspects relating to the original group of participants (Yin, 2011). In the said study, the purposive reason which required reference to snowball sampling was the fact that participants who confirmed their attendance failed to attend the data collection event.

Industrial psychologists practising within the North-West, Gauteng and Free State provinces were approached. In addition, a requirement was participation in a previous study, wherein the said participants indicated that they do engage in workplace counselling. It was expected that 12 participants would suffice when data saturation was reached.

Participants' primary inclusion criterion was their participation in the said previous study. However, in addition, it was ensured that all participants complied with the following criteria:

- Participants should be practising IOPS and registered as such at the HPCSA.
- Participants should be actively involved in rendering workplace counselling within their respective work contexts.
- Participants should be willing to have the focus group voice recorded.
- Participants should be willing to participate voluntarily in the research study.
- Participants should be proficient in the English language.

1.4.7 Data collection methods

Two methods of data collection were employed for purposes of this study, namely a qualitative survey and a focus group. The qualitative surveys served as a pre- and post-test method. Thus, the data collection process occurred as follows: 1) pre-test by means of qualitative survey, 2) presentation of Solution-focused counselling training programme and 3) post-test by means of conducting the focus group and thereafter the 4) qualitative survey. The duration of the Solution-focused counselling training programme was one day including the focus group. The participants were required to complete the qualitative survey before the programme commenced and after the focus group was completed. A specialist in Solution-focused counselling was invited to present the training programme.

1.4.7.1 Qualitative Survey

A qualitative survey consists of open-ended questions, in which space is provided for participants to note their responses which reflect their unique opinions (Hancock, Windridge, & Ockleford, 2009). Consequently, the said responses were analysed quantitatively (Hancock et al., 2009). The rationale for administering the qualitative survey was to establish the needs of the participants as was indicated in the previous study, as well as to obtain additional information as to how the participants experienced the Solution-focused counselling training programme. The qualitative survey served as a pre- and post-test method; thus, needed to be

completed before and after both the Solution-focused counselling training programme and the focus group.

The qualitative survey comprised the following aspects:
1. How often and in what instances do you render workplace counselling?
2. If so, please briefly describe the approach you generally follow.
3. To what extent do you consider your current approach adequate?
4. Please comment on your familiarity with the Solution-focused counselling approach.
5. Have you received any kind of training in the Solution-focused counselling approach? Please elaborate.

1.4.7.2 Focus Group

A focus group entails initiating a group discussion, whereas the latter is focused on a specific topic. A focus group is typically guided by a facilitator whose role entails encouraging on-going discussion along with ensuring that the focus is constantly maintained (Nieuwenhuis & Smit, 2012).

The focus group enabled participants to build on each other's ideas and opinions, allowing the generation of in-depth views and perceptions (Nieuwenhuis & Smit, 2012). To further ensure that rich data was obtained, diversity was encouraged by ensuring that the group of participants was homogenous in terms of variables such as age, gender and race (Nieuwenhuis & Smit, 2012). Lastly, the aforesaid proceedings were voice recorded.

The Focus Group included the following questions:
1. How did you experience the training programme?
2. What is your opinion regarding the content of the training programme?
3. What is your opinion regarding the method of presentation of the training programme?
4. How do you experience Solution-focused counselling as a counselling approach? Would you consider Solution-focused counselling as an adequate counselling approach to conduct workplace counselling in the industrial psychology profession? Please elaborate.

1.4.8 Data analysis

The data analysis process employed for this study comprised a linearly outlined process of Creswell's analytical spiral, integrated with the process established by Marshall and Rossman (as cited in Schurink, Fouche, & de Vos, 2011). These steps, however, only guided the data analysis process, since it can be expected as well as it is acceptable if, in some instances the steps overlap or proceed in a different order (Schurink et al., 2011). Moreover, when these steps are executed they tend to move in circles (Schurink et al., 2011). The steps included are (Schurink et al., 2011):

1. The researcher diligently planned this research study in order to ensure the successful conduction of both the data collection and the data analysis process.
2. Data was collected by means of a pre- and poste-test qualitative survey as well as a focus group discussion.
3. All the hard copies of the data obtained were organised by hand where after it was transcribed and saved in one folder.
4. The captured data was thoroughly analysed to ensure a comprehensive understanding thereof.
5. The researcher there after scrutinised the data and sought instances of internal consistency, thereby identifying categories, themes and patterns.
6. The categories and themes were then finalised and a coding scheme was applied in order to mark passages in the data.
7. The researcher then aimed at testing the data by evaluating the latter in terms of their adequateness in answering the research questions at hand.
8. In the abovementioned process the researcher was vigilant regarding alternative explanations and thoroughly reflected on which was the most plausible.
9. Lastly, the chapters that constituted the final research report were determined and consequently compiled in text form and where applicable, tables were included.

1.4.9 Strategies used to ensure quality data

In order to ensure that the data presented in this study is considered trustworthy as well as credible the following three objectives were pursued while conducting the said research (Yin, 2011):

- Transparency: Due diligence was employed in order to document the research procedures followed in this study along with safely storing the data obtained, in case the need for inspection arises.

- Methodic-ness: This research study was conducted by following a comprehensive set of research procedures. Furthermore, every effort was made to ensure that bias or distortion by no means occurred when carrying out the research. Lastly, the research study was completed in a thorough manner along with cross-checking the procedures followed and data obtained.

- Adherence to evidence: The conclusions derived in this study are in direct accordance with the actual data collected from the participants. Thus explicit evidence is available to verify the results of this research study.

1.4.10 Reporting

In order to report on the findings of this research study, a qualitative writing style was employed. Consequently, a descriptive essay was compiled, including the distinctive headings and subheadings along with comprehensive paragraphs. The main themes were formulated to be in accordance with the questions posed during the focus group. Ultimately, the participants' precise answers during the focus group as well as with the qualitative survey served as a means to derive subthemes.

1.4.11 Ethical considerations

This research study stems from an existing project; hence an ethics number was available (NWU-00084-10-S4). The latter number was assigned by the tertiary education institution.

The following aspects were adhered to by upholding ethical standards during this research study (Strydom, 2011). Every effort was made in order to avoid harming participants in either a physical or emotional manner as far as was foreseeable (Strydom, 2011). Participants were accurately and comprehensively informed about all aspects pertaining to the study, and they were afforded an opportunity to communicate questions or concerns (Strydom, 2011). The latter enabled participants to make an informed choice with regard to their participation (Strydom, 2011). Informed consent was obtained in verbal and written form and no form whatsoever of deception was inflicted upon participants (Strydom, 2011). Participants were informed that confidentiality can only be ensured partially due to the nature of the focus

group. However, all information obtained remained anonymous and was kept confidential at all times. Moreover, due diligence was exercised in ensuring that the researcher could competently and adequately conduct the said research study, and lastly, the researcher made sure to compile the research report accurately and objectively in a clear an unambiguous manner (Strydom, 2011).

1.5 CHAPTER DIVISION

The chapters in this mini-dissertation are presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Research article

Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring and evaluating a solution-focused counselling programme for industrial psychology practitioners

Orientation: The IOP practitioner provides short-term counselling in the workplace and should therefore be equipped accordingly to effectively address counselling situations that affect the employee.

Research purpose: The general aim of this study was to explore and evaluate a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the industrial psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor.

Motivation for the study: This study was motivated by foregoing research, which findings reported that IOP practitioners were not adequately trained in counselling techniques and approaches.

Research design, approach and method: A qualitative research design was utilised with a combination of convenience and snowball sampling of 13 participants. Participants practising across various business sectors across the North-West, Gauteng and Free State provinces comprised the sample group. Data was collected by conducting a focus group discussion along with obtaining verbatim answers via a qualitative pre- and poste-test survey.

Main findings: From the results it was evident that the participants favoured the prospect of utilising Solution-focused counselling within the IOP context. Participants expressed that they were provided with a new framework of reference, which they found valuable, not only for counselling but also for various other tasks relating to the IOP context. A unique finding concerning Solution-focused therapy was that the participants were of opinion that this approach would be appropriate within corporate environments for various professions to address interdisciplinary cases. While reflecting upon their training in the said counselling approach, participants recommended the approach be utilised conjointly with other compatible approaches along with providing further practical recommendations for the future training of IOP practitioners in a Solution-focused counselling training programme. Participants indicated that a Solution-focused counselling training programme should be included in the curriculum of the IOP Master's programme.

Practical implications: The role the IOP practitioner fulfils as counsellor within the organisation requires effective training accordingly in order to optimally function as a workplace counsellor. It is recommended that Solution-focused counselling should occur at tertiary level.

Contribution/value add: This research study provides new knowledge with regard to effective counselling approaches for the IOP context. This study provides IOP practitioners with a new skill set by exposing them to an effective form of counselling. In turn, this research aims at providing for a well-rounded IOP practitioner acting as a workplace counsellor, who can optimally address counselling situations within an organisation.

Key words: Industrial-Organisational (I-O) psychologist, counsellor, workplace counselling, Solution-focused counselling, qualitative research.

Introduction

Over the past few decades much has been published about employees who experience stress, distress and challenges in the workplace (Ajayi & Abimbola, 2013; Colligan & Higgins, 2005; International Labour Organization, 2014; LaMontagne & Keegel, 2012; Leca & Gabriela, 2015). Most scholars agree that workplace stress can be viewed as the process (LaMontagne & Keegel, 2012) by means of which an employee's physical or mental state undergoes transition so as to respond to either perceived challenges or threats experienced within the workplace (Colligan & Higgins, 2005; International Labour Organization, 2016). Employees typically experience physical or mental strain when they perceive that they are not adequately equipped in terms of capabilities and resources to cope with the demands they encounter within the workplace (International Labour Organization, 2016). Strain experienced in the workplace may be caused by various factors such as poor interrelationships, strenuous working hours (Ajayi & Abimbola, 2013; International Labour Organization, 2014; LaMontagne & Keegel, 2012; Leca, & Gabriela, 2015), harassment (LaMontagne & Keegel, 2012), lack of career growth (International Labour Organization, 2014; Leca, & Gabriela, 2015), no autonomy (Ajayi & Abimbola, 2013; LaMontagne & Keegel, 2012) and conflict (Ajayi & Abimbola, 2013; Leca, & Gabriela, 2015). The on-going encounter with stressors leads to the unfortunate event of employees being exposed to the possibility of developing physiological and psychological disorders (Colligan & Higgins, 2005; Leca & Gabriela, 2015). Consequently this may result in undesirable common occurrences such as an upsurge in absenteeism and employee turnover, the dysfunction of an organisation and declining levels of work productivity (Ajayi & Abimbola, 2013; Colligan & Higgins, 2005; International Labour Organization, 2014; LaMontagne & Keegel, 2012; Leca, & Gabriela, 2015).

In order to address the mentioned psychological and mental health problems typically experienced by vulnerable employees, a common support intervention that is employed is that of workplace counselling (LaMontagne & Keegel, 2012; McLeod, 2010). Workplace counselling is defined as the act by which a person approaches someone else with regard to an experienced difficulty that is preventing the optimal daily functioning of the first-mentioned to prevail, where in the aforementioned interaction the goal is to firstly explore, consequently understand and ultimately resolve the problem at hand (McLeod & McLeod, 2011). According to Hughes (2015), counselling, as a support intervention within an

organisational setting, focuses on the employee and generally occurs over a short-term period as a resource that is both independent and specialised in nature (Hughes, 2015). It is a resource that should be available to all employees functioning within their respective work contexts (Hughes, 2015). The counselling process enables an employee to freely express themselves regarding any issue causing them distress, in this way allowing the counsellor to provide guidance and ultimately equip employees to either identify better coping mechanisms or formulate their own solutions with regard to their difficult situation (Hughes, 2015). Human (2008) supports the aforesaid with regard to the role of the professional providing counselling within the workplace, being that of assisting employees in realising as well as maximising their potential.

In organisations, the responsibility for identifying and addressing workplace issues experienced by employees along with employing the said support intervention of counselling often lies with an industrial psychologist. Riggio (2013) conceptualises industrial psychology as the branch of psychology that is primarily concerned with the study of human behaviour within the work context. Portuguez (2014) adds that industrial psychologists consult and ultimately apply psychological principles within the workplace. Summarising the purpose of industrial psychology, Rucci (2008) suggested that it is "to enhance the dignity and performance of human beings, and the organisations they work in, by advancing the science and knowledge of human behaviour" (p. 18). One way to assist vulnerable employees in regaining dignity after stressful events is by means of counselling.

Short-term counselling approaches relating to industrial psychology can be provided from a range of psychology perspectives, of which Solution-focused counselling is one such approach (Hughes, 2015). This approach might be particularly effective within the work context due to the brevity of the model, ultimately enabling a quick response and acting upon the needs of employees (Kelly, Kim, & Franklin, 2008). Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore and evaluate a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the industrial psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor.

Industrial psychologists as workplace counsellors

The industrial and the organisational psychologist (IOP) often find themselves in organisations facing employees in distress or being unwell (Olson-Buchanan, Bryan, & Thompson, 2013). According to Meyers (2007), industrial psychology is generally   regarded
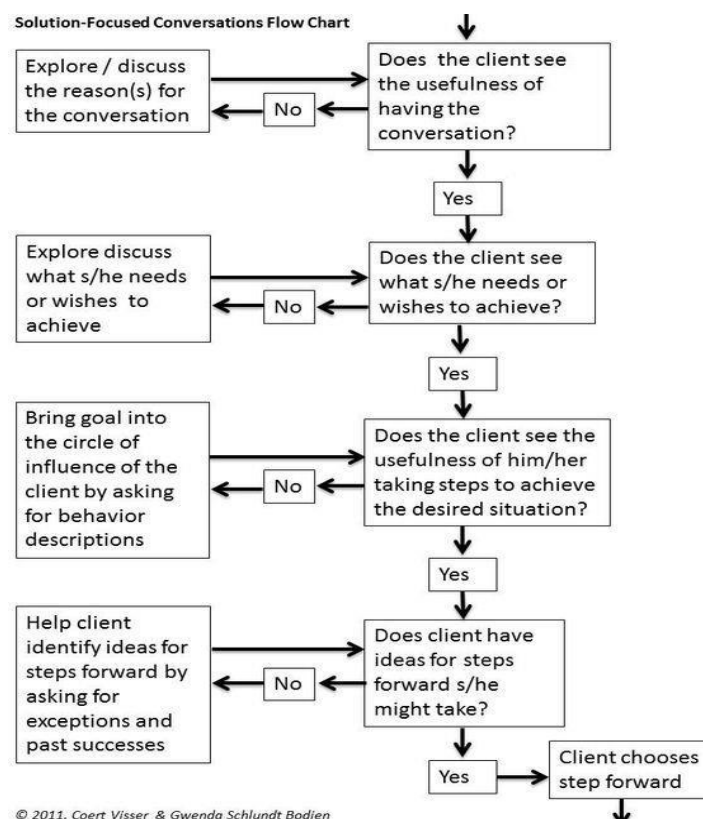
as an applied psychology with the primary concern being the human factor throughout industry, being representative of all occupations, regardless of profession or the rank an employee holds (Meyers, 2007). The Health Professions Counsel of South Africa (HPCSA) (2011) view the role of an IOP to "plan, develop and apply paradigms, theories, models, constructs and principles of psychology to issues related to the world of work in order to understand, modify and enhance individual, group and organisational behaviour well-being and effectiveness'' (p. 1). The goal of the profession of an IOP is to establish a working environment that accommodates all the needs of an employee to function optimally (Meyers, 2007). This includes aspects such as identifying an excellent fit of employee and occupation, employing the most competent employees, employing strategies to limit fatigue and boredom, identifying required motivation to complete work activities, the triggers and possible solutions to address factors of a psychological nature (Meyers, 2007). The Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa (2014) states that the goal of the IOP is to attend to the welfare of the employee, the organisation and the community. The aforesaid is achieved by integrating psychology as a science and practices within the working environment (SIOPSA Future Fit Working Committee, 2014). Such efforts include understanding, measuring and modifying workplace behaviour and striving for high levels of productivity, social relations and wellbeing (SIOPSA Future Fit Working Committee, 2014). It is also important to identify the optimal execution of work tasks as well as continuous training, taking into consideration the ergonomics of the work space as well as the space being accommodated in towards the physical wellbeing of the employees for example temperature control and adequate lighting (Meyers, 2007).

The training requirements for intern industrial psychologists indicate that career psychology and employee wellness/wellbeing should be included as a training domain during the internship period of the IOP intern (HPCSA, 2011). The guidelines for the domain of career psychology and employee wellness/wellbeing specifically require the inclusion of counselling activities such as basic counselling, diagnosing workplace-related psychopathology and general psychopathology along with appropriate referral procedures if the need for further diagnosis and treatment is evident (HPCSA, 2011). Other counselling activities the intern should be competent in, include conducting individual and group career counselling interventions and reporting on physical and psychological health challenges that have definite implications for the wellbeing of employees (HPCSA, 2011). In light of the aforesaid it is evident that industrial psychologists should have counselling skills and operate

from a relevant counselling framework and model. However, in a study by Barkhuizen, Jorgensen and Brink (2015) industrial psychology practitioners reported that the preparation they received during their Master's studies in terms of counselling was not effective. The participants from the study made practical recommendations for training IOP practitioners and students in effective counselling models and counselling theories, such as providing an effective model from which to conduct counselling.

Solution-focused Counselling Approach

Solution-focused therapy as a counselling approach originated fairly recently in the 1980s flowing from the work of the team members of the Brief Family Therapy Center (Visser, 2013). Iveson (2002) states that Solution-focused therapy predominantly focuses on formulating a solution instead of solving the problem at hand. Consequently, resources clients have at their disposal and the possible cultivation of hope, in conjunction with the past, are investigated. According to Standish (2013) the assumptions regarding Solution-focused therapy are based on the fact that clients do indeed have strengths as well as resources they can apply in specific situations. The latter assumption is in congruence with the IOP profession seeing that the scope of practice indicates that the role of the industrial psychologist is to develop the strengths of employees. The focus of IOP practitioners is primarily on development and growth and not necessarily on a therapeutic approach, making this approach particularly suitable for the IOP profession. The value of this approach is evident in the relation between the counsellor and the client where change occurs inevitably and constantly – even small changes evolve into larger changes. Standish (2013) indicates that the value of the approach lies in the client realising the importance of clear-cut goals in which the client is considered the focal point.

Solution-Focused Conversations Flow Chart

Explore / discuss the reason(s) for the conversation — Does the client see the usefulness of having the conversation? | No
↓ Yes

Explore discuss what s/he needs or wishes to achieve — Does the client see what s/he needs or wishes to achieve? | No
↓ Yes

Bring goal into the circle of influence of the client by asking for behavior descriptions — Does the client see the usefulness of him/her taking steps to achieve the desired situation? | No
↓ Yes

Help client identify ideas for steps forward by asking for exceptions and past successes — Does client have ideas for steps forward s/he might take? | No
↓ Yes → Client chooses step forward

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Figure 1: Overview of Solution-focused counselling process

According to de Jong and Berg (as cited in Corey, 2014) the process of Solution-focused counselling can be briefly outlined as follows:

Firstly, clients are welcomed and asked how the counsellor can be of use to them where after they explain the current difficulty which they are experiencing. It is then sought to formulate goals as soon as is considered possible. In order to formulate the goals, the clients are asked to consider how their life would differ if the difficulty at hand were to be solved. Hereafter, clients are prompted to consider times at which their problem did not yet exit or was of a lesser degree. This enables clients to identify and explore what resources or strengths they then had and consequently drew from, that brought about the latter exceptions.

At the end of a Solution-focused conversation, the counsellor provides summarised feedback, offers words of encouragement as well as compliments and suggests homework tasks that would further aid the employees in obtaining their end goal – the latter homework tasks being either behavioural or observational in nature. Lastly, throughout the Solution-focused counselling process the employee and counsellor constantly evaluate the progress made by means of the employee rating their current stance on a numeric scale from one to ten. The employee will then be posed questions such as how they managed to achieve the mentioned

rating and what needs to happen for them to progress on the scale. In addition, the latter can be employed by exploring the other relevant party's view of the client progress, which will elicit a new thought pattern.

Solution-focused counselling has several advantages as a counselling approach (Standish, 2013): firstly the short-time limit in which this approach can be applied, making the approach effective for the IOP in the work context. The approach identifies and employs the positive traits of clients as the focal point. The latter is an important consideration for the IOP profession and seems to link well with the scope of practice indicating that an IOP will 'apply the principles of psychology to issues related to the work situation of relatively well-adjusted adults in order to optimise individual, group and organisational well-being and effectiveness' (Nicholas, 2009, p. 8).

Literature indicates that Solution-focused therapy applied to the work context reveals several positive outcomes (such as effective group functioning, career enrichment and wellbeing) which make this approach ideal for the IOP setting (Burns, 2005; Burwell & Chen, 2006). Burns (2005) elaborates that Solution-focused therapy techniques can be successful when applied within a group setting such as personnel training, whereas, Burwell and Chen (2006) report career enrichment and well-being as an outcome of Solution-focused therapy when applied within career counselling.

Although it is worthy to note that despite there being sufficient literature of the aforesaid counselling approach within a clinical environment, limited literature is available regarding counselling methods utilised by industrial psychologists within the workplace and even less, specifically on Solution-focused counselling within the workplace. Thus, the aim of this study was to explore and evaluate a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the industrial psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor.

<u>Research Objectives</u>

The research objectives of this study are divided into a general objective, along with specific objectives respectively.

General objective

The general objective of this study was to explore and evaluate a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the industrial psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

- To conceptualise the terms industrial and organisational psychologist, workplace counselling and Solution-focused counselling as defined by literature.
- To evaluate the content and the methodology of a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the industrial and organisational psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor.
- To explore what the experiences of the industrial and organisational psychology practitioner, as a workplace counsellor, are after a Solution-focused counselling training programme?
- To determine what recommendations can be made for future training of an industrial and organisational psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor in a Solution-focused counselling programme.

Research Design

Research Approach

Due to the explorative nature of this study a qualitative approach was utilised. Qualitative research can be conceptualised by understanding its primary goals, being that of attempting to gain a new understanding with regard to a specific aspect of social life as well as being generally provided with data in word form instead of numbers when qualitative methods are utilised to gather data (Bricki & Green, 2015).

This study utilised social constructivism underpinning the assumption that understanding, significance as well as meaning evolves by means of collaboration between human beings (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Based on the theory of Vygotsky's social learning theory, Liu and Chen (2010) continue saying that the belief was cultivated that psychological phenomena ensue when social interaction occurs. Furthermore, a phenomenological approach was used

which included the endeavour to thoroughly comprehend the unique perceptions, perspectives and understanding people have with regard to a specific situation (de Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011). Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012) continue by saying that this approach is ascertained by stipulating those lived experiences of individuals who are uniquely confronted with a specific phenomenon. Fundamentally, phenomenology is solely concerned with defining an individual's experience (Wagner et al., 2012).

Research Strategy

A case study research strategy was used in this study. Particularly, an instrumental case study was utilised, due to its testing of theory or its possibility of leading to the construction of new theory (de Vos et al, 2011). According to de Vos et al. (2011) the utilisation of an instrumental case study will ultimately enable the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the theory in relation to how it is experienced in real-life situations, as is the goal of this study.

Research Method

5.3.1 Literature review

A comprehensive literature review was conducted regarding the use of Solution-focused counselling for the industrial psychologist as a workplace counsellor. Specific reference was made to all relevant articles as well as books, which have been published between 2010 and the present, with the use of older references as the exception. Various databases were consulted in order to obtain the aforesaid data. When conducting computer searches the following keywords were utilised, namely 'Industrial-organisational (I-O) psychologist', 'counsellor', 'workplace counselling', 'Solution-focused counselling' and 'qualitative research'.

Sources consulted included: Ebscohost, Academic Search Premier, Google, Google Scholar, SAePublications, Science Direct and South African Journal of Industrial Psychology.

Research Setting

The study was conducted among industrial and organisational psychologists practising in different business sectors across the North-West, Gauteng, and Free State provinces in South Africa. The setting for the data collection was a guesthouse based in Potchefstroom. The said

guesthouse offers sufficient meeting space providing the utmost of comfort and ease while conducting the data collection process. The private conference room on site was utilised to present the Solution-focused training program. Afterwards the focus group was held within the same conference room.

A sign was attached to the door, indicating that research is in progress, in order to minimise disturbance. Arrangements were made in advance in order to ensure that the room was sufficiently furnished, comfortable, had ample lighting and was air-conditioned. Further to this, all the technological equipment required to present the training programme was provided, i.e. a screen in order to view the presentation. Furthermore, the participants were provided with all the stationary needed to participate in the data collection. A white board was available for use if the need for it arose. Lastly, the participants were provided with refreshments during the allocated break.

Entrée and establishing researcher roles

Access to the group of participants was gained from an existing research project from the researcher's supervisor. Participants of a previous study in the project were invited to take part in the current study. The participants were contacted via email, thoroughly informing them of the nature and content of the study and thereby presenting them an invitation to attend the training session.

Further information included in the email entailed the contact details of all parties involved in the study, prerequisites for taking part and the approximated timespan of the proceedings. In addition to the aforesaid an informed consent document was also sent to the participants, thereby notifying them in advance of what they would be agreeing to on the said day. In addition, the latter document informed participants about the intended use of a voice recorder during the focus group discussion.

The researcher had various roles to undertake during the entire course of the research project. Strydom (2011) describes such roles as being equipped with the required skills and competence in order to commence with the research project. The researcher ascertained that all components of the research project adhered to ethical obligations (Strydom, 2011). The researcher maintained a firm sense of objectivity and refrained from making any value judgements whatsoever (Strydom, 2011). Strydom (2011) continues that all actions of the

researcher should have displayed evidence of respect towards the participants as individuals as well as towards their profession as a whole in order to ensure utmost cooperation. Strydom (2011) concludes that the researcher should have duly noted and contemplated all possible advantages as well as risks associated with the research project.

In addition, the researcher took on roles required by the focus group discussion. Firstly the researcher had to be knowledgeable with regard to the group of participants, the context as well as the topic of discussion (Carey & Asbury, 2012). The researcher ascertained that the pre-determined questions were addressed along with exploring emergent relevant information (Carey, & Asbury, 2012). Furthermore the researcher made arrangements with regard to all the logistics required for conducting this focus group, such as arranging the meeting space, recording the discussion and having relevant contingency plans in place (Carey & Asbury, 2012). Lastly the researcher ensured to embody a calm mental state in order to effectively carry out the challenging task of guiding the said group interaction (Carey & Asbury, 2012).

Sampling

Convenience sampling as a non-probability sampling technique was employed for purposes of this study – the sole characteristic of a convenience sample being the availability of the respondents (Struwig & Stead, 2001). Respondents selected in order to compile a convenience sample adhered to the criteria of being both accessible and articulate (Struwig & Stead, 2001). Furthermore, snowball sampling was also employed (Yin, 2011). Snowball sampling occurs when other potential participants are sourced based on information either obtained from or pertaining to the initial group of participants (Yin, 2011). The latter was required due to participants from a previous study who were initially invited not being able to attend the data collection event. Therefore new participants adhering to the required inclusion criteria had to be sourced.

Practising industrial psychologists in the North-West, Gauteng, and Free Sate provinces were included due to the accessibility of the provinces. The inclusion criteria for the study were IOP practitioners who formed part of a previous study in which they indicated that they render workplace counselling within their respective work contexts. Approximately 12 participants were predicted to be adequate in order to reach data saturation.

Although the main inclusion criteria were their participation in the previous study, it was of essence that it was ascertained that they still adhered to the following criteria:

- Participants should be practising IOPS and registered as such at the HPCSA.
- Participants should be actively involved in rendering workplace counselling within their respective work contexts.
- Participants should be willing to have the focus group conversations voice recorded.
- Participants should be willing to participate voluntarily in the research study.
- Participants should be proficient in the English language.

Ultimately, the population in terms of the sourced sample group comprised 13 participants (*n*=13). Table 1 provides an overview of the characteristics of the research participants.

Table 1

Characteristics of research participants (n=13)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	9	69%
	Male	4	31%
Age	18-24 years	3	23%
	25-30 years	3	23%
	31-40 years	0	0%
	41-50 years	7	54%
Language	Afrikaans	10	77%
	English	1	8%
	Setswana	1	8%
	Sesotho	1	8%
Race	Black	2	15%
	White	11	85%

Table 1 indicates that there were 13 participants in this research sample. In terms of gender the sample was divided into 69% female and 31% male. The majority of the population group was between ages 41 and 50 years, 54% of the group being represented by this age category. The remaining participants were between ages 18 and 24 (23%) and 25 and 30 years (23%) respectively. The participants were mostly Afrikaans-speaking (77%), with an equal distribution of English- (8%), Setswana- (8%) and Sesotho- (8%) speaking participants. Lastly, the population group was represented by 85% white participants, and 15% black participants.

Data collection methods

The data collected for this study was gathered by applying two methods. Firstly data was collected by means of a qualitative survey and then a focus group was used to gather data. Subsequently the proceedings took place as follows: 1) pre-test by means of qualitative survey, 2) presentation of Solution-focused training programme and 3) post-test by means of conducting a focus group and thereafter the 4) qualitative survey. The presentation of the Solution-focused training programme as well as the focus group was conducted over a one-day period, whereas the qualitative survey had to be completed both prior to and after the aforesaid proceedings. The Solution-focused counselling training programme was presented by a specialist in the said counselling approach, who was consequently significantly skilful in this regard.

Qualitative Survey

A qualitative survey ensured that verbatim statements were obtained from participants (The Research & Planning Group, 2011). The nature of the questions posed was open-ended; thus enabled participants to provide answers stemming from their distinctive context in which they functioned, resulting in accumulating the richest form of data (The Research & Planning Group, 2011). In this instance, the qualitative survey served as a means to establish the participants' needs as obtained from the previous study in which they participated.

The qualitative survey was presented along with a cover letter – the latter explaining the purpose of the qualitative survey and the manner in which questions should have been answered, i.e. as truthfully and thoroughly as possible. The qualitative survey was sent to the participants in advance, allowing sufficient time to read through the cover letter as well as the qualitative survey, permitting opportunity for any questions to be posed and ensuring that all participants were confident about the proceedings. Participants were allowed to complete the qualitative survey at their own pace, on their own time, whereupon they were required to send back the completed qualitative survey on the indicated date. As mentioned, the qualitative survey had to be completed prior to and subsequent to the day of presentation of the Solution-focused training programme as well as the focus group discussion.

The qualitative survey included the following questions:
1. How often and in what instances do you render workplace counselling?
2. If so, please briefly describe the approach you generally utilise?

3. To what extent do you consider your current approach adequate?
4. Please comment on your familiarity with the Solution-focused counselling approach?
5. Have you received any kind of training in the Solution-focused counselling approach? Please elaborate.

Focus Group

A focus group is aimed at gathering data which can be characterised as both rich and detailed (Carey & Asbury, 2012). Therefore, a moderator conversed with the group of participants to prompt responses which reflected their unique opinions of the pre-determined questions (Yin, 2011). In the latter instance the moderator ascertained to provide minimal yet sufficient direction to the conversation (Yin, 2011). This data collection method is particularly appealing due to the assumption that people like to express themselves verbally along with knowing that someone is taking a genuine interest and concern in the latter (Carey & Asbury, 2012). However, it is important to note that this data collection method is focused on the pre-determined topic of discussion and not on the group interaction process (Carey & Asbury, 2012).

The following advantageous outcomes linked to focus groups served as motivation to employ the said data collection method (Carey & Asbury, 2012). A focus group discussion allows for participants to explain their context and perspective which enables a holistic understanding of different viewpoints (Carey & Asbury, 2012). This method of data collection grants participants an opportunity of effectively and comprehensively voicing their respective points of view (Carey & Asbury, 2012). The group synergy served as a means to consequently elicit rich information (Carey & Asbury, 2012). In addition, the inevitable instance of comparison between different viewpoints as well led to gaining in-depth insight (Carey & Asbury, 2012).

The focus group discussion included the following questions:
1. How did you experience the training programme?
2. What is your opinion on the content of the training programme?
3. What is your opinion on the method of presentation of the training programme?
4. How do you experience Solution-focused counselling as a counselling approach? Would you consider Solution-focused counselling as an adequate counselling approach to conduct workplace counselling in the industrial psychology profession? Please elaborate.

Recording of data

Prior to the actual recording of the data participants were informed that only partial confidentiality could be ensured due to the nature of the focus group discussion. However, it was stressed that all the gathered data would remain anonymous, and would be kept confidential at all times. Thereafter, data was documented by voice recording the focus group discussion along with obtaining verbatim answers provided via the qualitative surveys. Furthermore, voice recording was transcribed verbatim. The latter transcripts as well as the qualitative surveys were then organised in preparation for analysis which were to follow the recording process. All the data obtained during the execution of the research study, were stored in a password protected storage unit based at the tertiary education institution. In addition only the researcher and her supervisor had access to the said data. Lastly, all the gathered data, including the digital recording, was destroyed as soon as it was utilised for its indicated intended purpose.

Data analysis

The data analysis process was conducted with the aim of making sense of the data collected by means of establishing sequence, structure and meaning with regard to the aforementioned (de Vos et al., 2011). Creswell (as cited in Schurink, Fouché, & de Vos, 2011), is of opinion that the data analysis and interpretation process can best be outlined by means of an image of a spiral. The researcher progressed in analytical circles instead of making use of a fixed linear approach (Schurink et al., 2011). The researcher started off with data made up of text and ended off with an account, whereas in between analytical facets were refined (Schurink et al., 2011). Subsequently the researcher neared the completion of the process by moving in a circular motion (Schurink et al., 2011).

Due to the nature of this study, the data analysis process conducted constituted an integration of Creswell's analytical spiral along with the process as depicted by Marshall and Rossman (as cited in Schurink et al., 2011), which is presented in a linear form. However, when these steps are carried out, they are known to move in circles (Schurink et al., 2011). Next data analysis process followed, as mentioned, namely the integration of Creswell's analytical spiral and the process by Marshall and Rossman (as cited in Schurink et al., 2011):

1. Planning for recording data: the researcher took both the research setting and the
   participants into consideration when planning for the recording of data. The aforesaid

should have enabled systematic commencement of data collection, ultimately contributing to the facilitation of the data analysis process that was to follow.

2. Data collection and preliminary analyses: data was collected by means of the qualitative survey and focus group. The researcher was mindful to and consequently made notes of any analytical insights that might have occurred during the data collection process.

3. Managing and organising data: the data obtained were organised by hand, thereafter converted to folders on a computer by retyping the data. The distinct themes along with their subthemes were stored in separate folders. Moreover, backup copies of all the data were made and stored in a safe place.

4. Reading and writing memos: the data was read several times in order to ensure familiarity in terms of the whole database.

5. Generating categories, themes and patterns: as categories of meaning came to light, the researcher consequently sought out those that displayed internal consistency and on the other hand evidence of external distinction.

6. Coding the data: in this phase categories and themes were generated, where after some coding scheme was utilised in order to mark passages in the data.

7. Testing the emergent understandings: the researcher aimed at evaluating the data in terms of their usefulness in answering the research questions at hand. Furthermore the centrality of the data in relation to the social phenomenon being explored was determined.

8. Searching for alternative explanations: as categories and patterns emerged in the data, the researcher actively sought for unapparent, probable explanations of the aforesaid and explored the possible connections among them.

9. Representing, visualising: the final phase entailed identifying and outlining the chapters that were to be included in the final research report. Subsequently, the aforesaid report presented the data in both text, and where applicable, tabular form.

It should however be noted that the abovementioned steps can never be performed rigidly and thus only served as a guideline during the data analysis process (Schurink et al., 2011). In some instances the said steps could have either overlapped or been carried out in a different order (Schurink et al., 2011).

Strategies used to ensure quality data

In order to ensure quality data, that can be presented assuredly and trustfully, the researcher ascertained to comply with the following criteria as explained by Riazi (2016):

- Credibility: The researcher compiled the research findings by ensuring that the conclusions were logically derived conclusion from the data and analysis.

- Transferability: The researcher conscientiously went about all proceedings relating to this study along with thoroughly noting all of the latter in order to ensure that the results obtained in this study could be extended to contexts that share similarities with the said study.

- Dependability: The researcher made every effort to specify the research design, data and interpretations in a detailed, unbiased and verifying manner.

- Confirmability: The researcher ascertained that the reported findings clearly and accurately resembled the data collected. The latter ensured an objective compilation of the reported findings.

Reporting

A qualitative writing style was utilised when reporting on the findings of this research study. The findings of this study were presented in a descriptive essay style under distinctive headings and sub-heading, the latter elaborated on, in compressive paragraphs. The questions posed to the participants served as the main themes of investigation. The subthemes were deduced from the direct responses provided by the participants during the focus group discussion as well as from the direct entries made in the qualitative survey.

Ethical considerations

This study formed part of an existing project for which an ethics number assigned by the tertiary education institution was available (NWU-00084-10-S4). As with any qualitative research study there were ethical complexities that might have required some attention, therefore the researcher was mindful of ethical considerations by adhering to the following ethical issues, especially applicable to this specific study.

First of all, the researcher ensured that she was skilled to the extent that she was able to competently undertake the said research project (Strydom, 2011). When obtaining informed consent, participants were thoroughly informed about details of all aspects relating to the particular study via email correspondence (de Vos et al., 2011). Both verbal and written informed consent were obtained prior to the data collection process, meaning that the informed consent letter was sent in advance, followed up via telephonic communication by a third relevant party who ascertained that all the indicated information was understood and

agreed to. Written informed consent was required via email in order for participants to partake in the said research study.

Furthermore, confidentiality was only partial due to the nature of the focus group. However, bearing in mind the aforementioned, the information gathered remained anonymous and was treated with the utmost confidentiality. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of this study; thus emphasising that they were in no way obliged to participate and that they were allowed to discontinue participation at any given moment (de Vos et al., 2011). Supporting the abovementioned, the researcher took all possible measures to ensure that the participants were in no way whatsoever exposed to any kind of physical and/or emotional harm as far as was foreseeable (Strydom, 2011). Furthermore, participants were in no way whatsoever, misled by representing facts incorrectly of withholding vital information related to the study (de Vos et al., 2011). A debriefing session was held with participants after the data collection process, affording the participants the opportunity of reflecting, asking questions and discussing and ultimately clarifying arisen misconceptions or uncertainties (de Vos et al., 2011). Furthermore, every effort was made in order to formulate the findings of the research project accurately and objectively, ultimately ensuring a compilation of a clear and unambiguous research article (Strydom, 2011).

Findings

The findings are presented in two sections. First the results obtained from the qualitative survey will be discussed followed by the results from the focus groups.

Qualitative survey
The pre-test results of the qualitative survey are discussed next, followed by the results from the post-test.

Table 2

Qualitative Survey: Pre-Test

Theme	Subtheme	Response
Knowledge of Solution-focused counselling	Fairly familiar	"Solution-focused counselling is based on positive psychology and moves away from the 'what is wrong' view to 'how can we solve it'." (Female, 24 yrs) "I am sure elements thereof will be familiar, but I need to brush up. I know that the aim is to have an impact within less than 8 sessions." (Male, 43 yrs)
	Not familiar	"I am not well informed about the Solution-focused counselling approach…." (Male, 27 yrs) "The name appears to be self-explanatory. However, I am not familiar with this approach." (Female, 49 yrs)
Exposure to Solution-focused counselling	Training	"Yes, I received two-day training from a Solution-focused counselling training practitioner." (Female, 25 yrs) "…I attended a Solution-focused workshop… Extensive practical exercises were lacking. The workshop was very informative." (Female, 24 yrs)
	No training	"I have not received training." (Female, 49 yrs) "Not really training, but more of a theoretical overview." (Male, 43 yrs)

Table 2, displays the themes extracted from the data pertaining to how well participants were acquainted with the Solution-focused counselling approach.

The first theme refers to how knowledgeable participants were with regard to the Solution-focused counselling approach. The majority of the participants indicated that to an extent they are fairly familiar with the approach, mostly from a theoretical perspective. In turn a few participants indicated to have no knowledge with regard to the Solution-focused counselling approach; thus the approach is unfamiliar to them.

The second theme refers to the type of exposure if any participants have had to Solution-focused counselling. A fair amount of participants indicated to have had training in the approach either by means of attending either formal training or workshops. In addition, other participants indicated to have had exposure to the approach in terms of receiving a theoretical overview as well as by word of mouth. However, most participants reported to have had no training in the said approach, whatsoever.

Qualitative Survey: Post-Test

Once the focus group was concluded, the participants were requested to repeat the qualitative survey. Participants indicated that the training programme was insightful, specifically the participants who were unfamiliar with the approach indicated that a new world was opened. This can be gathered from the response from female 24 years; "The training for Solution-focused counselling opened a new world for me". It seems that after the training the participants were consequently much more familiar with the said approach.

However, participants indicated they do need to employ further research as well as exercise the practical elements thereof, in order to be sufficiently familiar therein. This was evident from male 28 years who indicated: "I have an understanding of the theory, but still need practice for familiarity and to gain confidence with the counselling approach." Participants indicated that they would likely require as well as benefit from further training in the said approach. Additionally, a few participants noted that they do regard Solution-focused counselling to have a place within the IOP context as was gathered from the response of female 49 years; "…I believe there is a place for it in IOP" Conclusively, some participants indicated they would indeed seek to incorporate elements of the Solution-focused approach within their current paradigm of reference. This was gathered from the response of Female 24; "I do consider my approach as adequate to an extent. However, after the Solution-focused training I have realised that my approach can be adapted to be more effective".

Next, the results from the focus group conversations are presented.

Focus group

After the data from the focus group had been analysed, 11 themes were extracted. The themes were further characterised into 3 main spheres which related to the three focus areas of the research questions. The focus areas being, the opinions of the participants relating to the content and the method of presentation of the training programme, how the participants experienced Solution-focused counselling as a counselling approach for the industrial psychologist as a workplace counsellor and lastly, the recommendations made for future training of IOP students in Solution-focused counselling. Figure 1 gives an indication of how the themes were categorised into the three spheres:
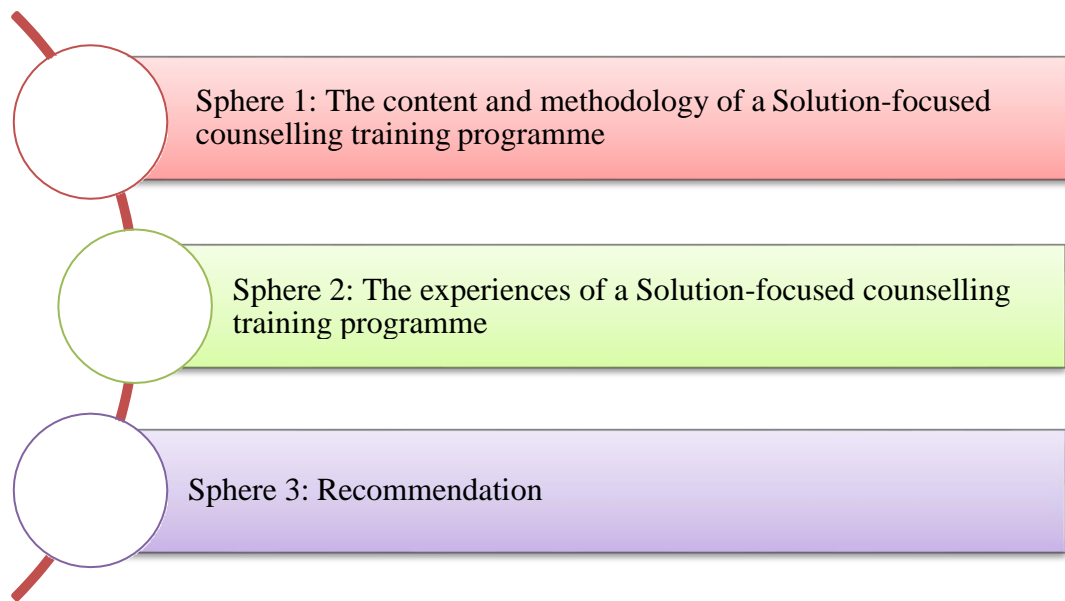
Figure 1: Overview of spheres and themes of the focus group

A detailed discussion of each sphere follows with the responses of the participants indicated by identifying them as e.g. Female, 24 years:

Sphere 1: The content and methodology of a Solution-focused counselling training programme

Table 3 indicates the main themes, sub-themes and original responses derived from the respondents' explanations of their experiences of the *content* of the Solution-focused counselling training programme.

Table 3

Participants' opinions relating to the content of the Solution-focused counselling training programme

Theme	Subtheme	Response
New Approach	New framework	"…I don't only have theoretical knowledge now, but to some extent, I have a new skill. A new set of questions, a new practical skill to actually apply." (Female, 24 yrs) "…we would be illiterate psychologists in terms of our toolkit if, if we didn't have exposure to this, strengths-based kind of mechanisms." (Male,

		43 yrs)
	New focus	"So it's not that the past is completely disregarded, it's that the past is used in a new sense to bring a new focus for the future." (Male, 28 yrs) "You should use this approach to bring a place of hope in how to deal with what is in you, what underlying strengths do you have to stand up to the bully or to deal with the bullying situation." (Female, 44 yrs)
Value	Growth and strength	"… and the growth coaching model's actually something I attach to my counselling model. And this fits in better than the growth because growth is what do you want, where are you now, what's the difference, how are you going to get it and do that? It doesn't go find your pieces of strength on its own unless you modify it a bit. So I found that very valuable and I'm actually going to adapt my counselling approach." (Male, 45 yrs) "It's really strengths-based and I think it's a valuable tool." (Male, 28 yrs)
	Powerful	"I can really see the value, it's light, it's positive, but you cannot underestimate it. It's powerful as well, but it focuses a bit on the strengths and the affirmation. And what worked for you and how we can, use this going forward." (Male, 43 yrs) "…and the fact that it really takes on a positive approach, it's simplistic, but yet so powerful, I especially like the miracle question. It's such a simple question, but no one ever goes and sits and thinks, how a perfect day would be so I think it's a fun way to go about problems. I also like the scaling question a lot, because even if a person tells you I'm a 2 on the scale, you can still ask them why not a 1. (Female, 23 yrs)
Link with developmental areas	Insight into problem	"You have to let the client understand the problem. His part in the problem and then gain awareness of that, gain insight, before you can take action, before you can find a solution." (Female, 24 yrs) "…I also felt I would like to investigate the problem or to get a feel of where this person is coming from. But I'm very much excited about the Solution-focused approach and the tools that he gave us there, the training he gave us, in how to ask and the type of questions." (Female, 44 yrs)
	Address weaknesses	"…but I actually think that counsellors should be careful not to miss the weaknesses or the developmental areas. And I think it can easily turn out to be an airy fairy kind of model, which only focuses on the strengths whereby it doesn't go deeper." (Female, 24 yrs) "…I think when you build up strengths it naturally works on your weaknesses. It's almost like filling a cup of water. As you fill it, you know it's going to overpower the weaknesses." (Female, 49 yrs)
	Link between the three	"…the first few psychological approaches focus on the past, then you have the second approaches and they focus only on the present. Then we

	areas	have the last focus and they focus only on solutions. But there's no link…for me it doesn't seem to be an approach that uses or that focuses on all three areas." (Female, 24 yrs) "…I want to explore more. It is actually a nice way, that bridge between the past, the present and the future… that is lacking" (Female, 44 yrs)

The three main themes extracted from the data consist of the following: new focus, value as well as link with developmental areas and are discussed next.

Participants indicated that a new focus was stimulated by means of the Solution-focused counselling approach providing them with a new framework to utilise during their counselling sessions. Participants were of opinion that this strength-based approach added value to their existing set of skills. In addition, participants recognised the different means by which the past can be utilised instead of it being disregarded. This approach views the past in a new sense – that new sense being to elicit a new focus for the future. Participants furthermore indicated that this approach allows for a means to identify and draw from underlying strengths in order to effectively deal with their experienced difficulty.

Participants reported on the value that they ascribed to the Solution-focused counselling approach. Participants reported that they find the approach valuable seeing that it enables them to build on strengths and to elicit growth. Participants indicated that although they experienced the model as simplistic, the approach is powerful, especially the types of questions to be utilised during the approach, namely the miracle and scaling question.

Participants were of opinion that the Solution-focused approach lacks the adequacy to thoroughly investigate the problem. Furthermore, participants indicated that although building on strengths naturally works on addressing the weaknesses, this model does not adequately address developmental areas. It seems that the participants felt that some developmental areas take a lot of effort to address, which the said model does not adequately allow for. The participants further indicated that the three phases (past, present and future) of the approach does not provide for a proper linkage. Lastly, one participant indicated that the Solution-focused counselling approach should be combined with other compatible counselling approaches; thus it should be added to their 'toolkit'.

Next, Table 4 indicates the main themes, sub-themes and original answers derived from the respondents' perception of the method of presentation of the Solution-focused counselling training programme.

Table 4

Participants' opinions relating to the method of presentation of the Solution-focused counselling training programme

Theme	Subtheme	Response
Practical application	Apply skills	"…what I enjoyed or felt was good is after each phase we were given, time to do it practically. After each phase, he gave us time to actually practice our skills in that specific phase. And then afterwards we get a combination of the whole, therapy process. So you could actually see how it all fits together. That was quite nice for me." (Female, 24 yrs) "We were so happy that we had practical experience after every step and to round it off, we had a whole process together. But the thing that we did say is it would have been ideal if we had more time for practical, because this toolkit is a toolkit that you have to practice". (Male, 28 yrs)
Structure of programme	Group cohesion	"What specifically stood out for me today or my experience is the intimacy of the training that was placed today… That was a bit more personal and you could learn a lot from each other because we could speak openly, whereas if it's thirty people you don't have time for thirty people's opinions." (Female, 25 yrs) "…I enjoyed the trust that we had with each other in sharing our problems and being able to dig deep easily with each other." (Male, 45 yrs)
	Presentation	"I also found the session very well-structured, very energetically presented." (Male, 45 yrs) "…in effect he did make it understandable, accessible…" (Female, 49 yrs)

The two main themes extracted from the data consist of the following; practical application and structure of programme.

Participants indicated that in terms of practical experience they enjoyed and valued the opportunities to practically apply the skills being taught during the training programme. The latter enabled participants an opportunity to moderately round off the respective skills after each phase was explained, which in turn allowed them to understand the approach as a whole.

Participants indicated that the group cohesion in fact contributed to the successful presentation of the Solution-focused counselling training programme. The smaller group allowed a sense of intimacy whereby participants were able to speak openly, share opinions and learn from each other on a deeper level. Participants also referred to the method in which the training programme was presented. The participants experienced the presenter of the training programme to play a vital role in the training of this approach, being that the training programme was well-structured and energetically presented in an understandable, accessible manner.

Sphere 2 - The experiences of a Solution-focused counselling training programme

Next, Table 5 indicates the main themes, sub-themes and original answers derived from the respondents' experiences of the Solution-focused counselling training programme.

Table 5

Participants' experiences of the Solution-focused counselling training programme

Theme	Subtheme	Response
IOP Applicability	Counselling	"…I think it's a very effective counselling model for industrial psychologists. Giving them the perspective of strength-based, to empower and enable and bring hope to the employees." (Female, 24 yrs) "I think this technique of counselling is going to be effective to counsel, a person in the workplace." (Male, 27 yrs)
	Coaching	"There's a lot of elements, such as the miracle question and some other questions that we as industrial psychologists use not only in a counselling session, but in a coaching session or just in a normal conversation with an employee, in the whole, which I think we can use. But I also don't think that this should be the only one to use." (Female, 24 yrs) "…we all connect with different aspects of each model and I think it's necessary for industrial psychologists to be trained in different kinds of coaching, or counselling models for this purpose, for you to be comfortable and to choose." (Female, 24 yrs)
	Well-being	"…as a manager to develop this model to enhance wellbeing in an office setting." (Female, 44 yrs) "But just from a line manager, I've had people in my office, wanting to commit suicide and one's wife was driven over by a truck this

		weekend... So I think in the workplace things can happen where you need a solution for now. I think this is the way of getting there, but not all the way." (Male, 45 yrs)
	Performance management	"I also felt that this could work quite well with teams. Teams experiencing problems." (Male, 43 yrs) "…I work in an engineering department of about sixty people. We find cases of bipolar diagnosis and schizophrenia and a number of similar things. And what happens is that person is inside the company, the company's procedure in dealing with that is either ill health or poor performance which can be up to two years depending on what the doctor say etc. And then you might actually for extended periods have to deal with that person even when they're not functioning very well." (Male, 45 yrs)
	Interdisciplinary	"I think in a corporate environment this will go down very well with engineers, CAs, even medical specialists." (Male, 45 yrs) "Performing teams, but not high performing teams. You know as a fresh alternative to maybe what was done in the past. So I can really see the applicability." (Male, 43 yrs)
	Management	"…it's that strength of okay, you know what, this is an external factor that I don't have any control over. So what strengths can I apply or do I have already that will enable me to really effectively manage these external factors? So I think in that way, it will work then perfectly." (Female, 25 yrs) "But I do think there are some excellent questions to use as a manager to develop this model…" (Female, 44 yrs)
IOP Suitability	Non-pathology driven	"…the model is not for deep rooted psychological issues." (Female, 44 yrs) "…I do think in the workplace there is a place for this, and it might work wonderfully, but not for pathology. ." (Male, 43 yrs)
	Sole usage (must be combined)	"…I would never use it on its own. For coaching I would definitely put it in with CBT..." (Female, 49 yrs) "…I think whenever the situation arises and you see that this now actually going towards a situation where, something needs to be a bit more explored you can probably then use your different tools, your skills set and get to that. It is quite compatible with CBT." (Male, 43 yrs)
	Strength-based driven	"Let's say for example you have an employee who is referred to you for, conflict, bullying people etc. You're going to build on their strengths, but you're not going to work on their developmental areas, which is actually a problem that needs to be identified and worked on along with

		his strengths in order to develop." (Female, 24 yrs)
		"…it's usually the people that not get promoted, the people that are not in leadership positions… they get forgotten, and sometimes their development gets forgotten. And just to go to them and say you know, but I see there's strength in you. I think how you empower them… I think it can really make an impact on the people that get missed, in a big organization." (Female, 24 yrs)
	Developmental focus	"…I think this is a quite powerful tool that can be used, especially for helping people reach growth potential or their optimal levels, or actualization point that you want." (Male, 43 yrs) "But more of a growth, developmental strength related model?" (Female, 44 yrs)
	Compliments IOP's scope of practice	"…and it actually still emphasizes the role of the industrial psychologist in the workplace..." (Male, 28 yrs) "…it's such an easy going approach, that the client won't feel inferior or intimidated, I think it will help them to put them at ease, in a difficult situation. And with regard to work, our scope of practice is work-related." (Female, 24 yrs)

The two main themes extracted from the data consist of the following; IOP applicability and IOP suitability.

Participants reported that Solution-focused counselling could be particularly applicable to the IOP environment in the following instances: some participants indicated that the approach would be effective in order to render workplace counselling, ultimately enabling industrial psychologists to empower, enable and instil hope within employees. The participants further felt it to be equally as adequate for coaching purposes or either less formally within daily conversations. The results revealed that in terms of employee well-being, this model might be effective in addressing crises immediately, whereas long-term well-being might consequently follow. Another sub-theme that was evident from the results was performance management, which indicates that in the instance where employees are circumstantially not functioning optimally, this approach might help in regulating performance management. The said performance management can be altered and directed towards an individual or either a team. Some participants indicated that this model might prove effective in addressing interdisciplinary cases, especially within a corporate environment. Furthermore, the approach has excellent questions which could be effectively employed by those fulfilling a managerial role.

Further to this, participants reported on the suitability of the Solution-focused counselling approach to the IOP environment. Participants indicated that the approach is non-pathology driven and thus not adequate to address deeply rooted psychological issues. Participants indicated that they would refrain from utilising this model on its own and would lean towards incorporating it with a compatible counselling approach in order to optimally fulfil their role as IOP practitioners. Participants further reported on the approach being strength based, thus enabling a developmental focus which in turn strives towards an actualisation point. Participants indicated that the model emphasises the role of the industrial psychologist by enabling them to empower, enable and bring hope to the employees; thus adequately complimenting the IOP scope of practice.

Sphere 3 - Recommendations

Next, Table 6 indicates the main themes, sub-themes and original answers derived from the respondents' recommendations with regard to future presentations of the Solution-focused counselling training programme.

Table 6

Recommendations made for the future training of IOP students

Theme	Subtheme	Response
IOP training	Master's curriculum	"I think this is a model that should be, taught for industrial psychologists, in the Masters year. It represents one way of psychology, positive psychology… and what makes you a more rounded, counsellor and facilitator." (Male, 43) "…I believe that it's a good idea to have it as part of the curriculum." (Male, 45 yrs)
Content	Practical examples	"I like examples... because they explain how powerful that one exception moment was. I like examples like that because it's usually that, that sticks with you…" (Female, 23 yrs) "…to see an example of how it should be done." (Female, 44 yrs)
	Combine with other approaches	"…how about lecturers choose three or four max approaches which fit in together and they intensively, train us in those three approaches and we focus on them and we are effective in them and it's in your scope and we have the ability to do all three and incorporate and adjust it to each situation?" (Female, 24 yrs)

		"…I most definitely would use quite a number of the aspects of it in conjunction with other theory." (Female, 49 yrs)
	Cross cultural applicability	"One of my expectations was the applicability in a cross-cultural sense. So I think that wasn't necessarily covered and that's a bit definite in the workplace." (Male, 28 yrs)
		"…especially in South African context." (Female, 44 yrs)
Presentation Method	Visual stimulation	"I would also like a bit more visual stimulation in terms of video and all." (Female, 23 yrs)
		"Yes, I agree, for all the visual learners." (Female, 25 yrs)
	Manual	"…about the practical aspect is to get a manual so I can reference back…" (Female, 25 yrs)
		"…I just want to add to the manual, maybe if we got it prior to the workshop and were maybe given a section to read through." (Female, 23 yrs)
	Training setting	"What specifically stood out for me today or my experience is the, if you can call it the intimacy of the training that was placed today." (Female, 25 yrs)
		"...I enjoyed the trust that we had with each other in sharing our problems and being able to dig deep easily with each other." (Male, 45 yrs)
Suggestions/Critique	Length of workshop	"Not only practice to sharpen, to understand because I think the strength of this thing lies in its ability to efficiently get you from A to B. And so I think maybe a bit more time another day." (Male, 28 yrs)
		"Two days." (Female, 44 yrs)
	Structure of practical exercises	"…maybe rotating and giving out one-on-one, attention to each of the groups that would have been even better." (Female, 23 yrs)
		"I realised there is more value because there's more practice and you have to work harder to get a sense of their strengths which is this perfect scenario of our clients, we're not going to know our clients. So that is valid." (Female, 44 yrs)

The four main themes extracted from the data consist of the following; IOP training, content and presentation method as well as suggestions and critique.

In most of the participants' opinion, industrial psychology students should be trained in the Solution-focused counselling approach for workplace counselling. Participants elaborated

that the latter should occur during their Master's studies and should thus be added to the Master's curriculum of industrial psychology students.

Participants indicated that more practical examples should be provided during the presentation of the Solution-focused counselling training programme. More specifically, the distinctive skills pertaining to Solution-focused counselling should be demonstrated practically or either explained by utilising practical examples. Participants further suggested that other approaches with which the Solution-focused counselling could effectively be incorporated, be taught. Moreover, participants advised that the cross-cultural applicability of Solution-focused counselling should be included, the latter being particularly applicable to the South African context.

Participants indicated a preference for more visual stimulations during the training programme an example being displaying applicable videos. Participants perceived the smaller group to be more advantageous due to the latter ensuring a sense of intimacy. Furthermore participants reported that the physical layout of the tables namely a U-shape conference setting, added to the effectiveness of the training programme. The latter enabled participants to properly see, hear and thoroughly experience the presence of each other which favourably influenced their experience of the training programme.

Participants indicated that more time should be allocated towards presenting the Solution-focused counselling training programme, more specifically two days are perceived to be sufficient. The latter will enable an opportunity to thoroughly understand and to sharpen one's skill with regard to this approach. Moreover participants reported on the structure of the practical exercises. They indicated that participants should rotate more between the exercises in order to be exposed to different people, which will allow for exposure to an unfamiliar person, which will be the case in real-life situations. In addition to this, the presenter/facilitator should rotate as well; thus providing all the participants with individual, expert attention.

Discussion

The general objective of this study was to explore and evaluate a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the IOP practitioner as a workplace counsellor. From the

results it was evident that the participants favoured the prospect of utilising Solution-focused counselling within the IOP context. Participants expressed that they were provided with a new framework of reference for providing counselling, which they found valuable, not only for counselling but for various other tasks relating to the IOP context. While reflecting upon their training in the said counselling approach, participants recommended the approach be utilised conjointly with other compatible approaches along with providing further practical recommendations for the future training of IOP practitioners in a Solution-focused counselling training programme. Participants indicated that a Solution-focused counselling training programme should be included in the curriculum of the IOP Master's programme.

In order to ascribe the results to the initial four objectives of this study, four questions were posed to the participants and are presented in the discussion below.

The *first objective* of the study was to conceptualise I-O psychologist, workplace counselling as well as Solution-focused counselling according to the literature. The IOP practitioner's role is comprehensively summarised by the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology (2014) which states that "industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology is the scientific study of the workplace. Rigor and methods of psychology are applied to issues of critical relevance to business, including talent management, coaching, assessment, selection, training, organizational development, performance, and work-life balance" (p. 1).

Ajila and Adetayo (2013) further define workplace counselling as a brief psychological therapy which is utilised in order to assist employees in an organisation in terms of experienced problems. That said, workplace counselling is a means of assisting an employee by enabling him to help himself (Ajila & Adetayo, 2013). Organisations should be able to effectively address any employee's concerns be it either personal or work-related, which might be counterproductive in achieving desired states of performance (Ajila & Adetayo, 2013).

Guterman (2014) explains that the assumption underpinning Solution-focused counselling is that people are healthy and competent to the extent that they have strengths within them as well as resources at their disposal which can be drawn from in order to affectively address their issue of concern (Guterman, 2014). The said resources are referred to as exceptions within the context of Solution-focused counselling and if identified and built on effective

change will inevitably follow (Guterman, 2014). The latter is considered a simplistic yet very powerful approach to use as framework in the instance of rendering counselling (Guterman, 2014). Corey (2014) explains that the Solution-focused counselling approach "concentrates on small, realistic, achievable changes that can lead to additional positive outcomes" (p. 367). Some of the key techniques that comprise the Solution-focused counselling process are the exception questions, scaling questions as well as the miracle question (Corey, 2014).

The *second objective* of this study was to evaluate the content and methodology of a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the IOP practitioner. From the results it was evident that the participants acknowledged that Solution-focused counselling could be viewed as a new approach for IOPs. Participants reported that the set of questions pertaining to Solution-focused counselling equipped them with a new framework of reference which they can practically apply. Cheung (2009) confirms that the latter skills are known to be of such a nature that they are easily teachable. Participants also reported on the new focus this approach stimulates. This finding is in accordance with similar findings from Guterman (2014) who states that in Solution-focused counselling current behaviour and thoughts are emphasised which are constructively assisting the client in addressing the problematic experience instead of analysing those which prove to be ineffective; this method thus differs from traditional counselling methods which are problem-focused. The past is utilised in an alternative manner, being to stimulate a renewed perspective towards the future. Guterman (2014) supports this finding by explaining that exception times are explored in favour of bringing about future change behaviour, exceptions referring to those times where the problem was either non-existent or when the employee employed strengths and resources to address the latter. In addition the results showed that this approach allows for the identification of existing strengths, thus strengths the employee already has within their grasp. This finding is supported by Corey (2014) and Guterman (2014) who explain the role of the counsellor as being to facilitate the client in identifying strengths well as resources they are currently equipped with and then to construct solutions making use of the latter.

Participants ascribed the model the characteristic of being very powerful, despite its simplistic nature. The results are in accordance with Corey (2014) explaining that from the very first contact session the counsellor will initiate a climate which will facilitate the process of bringing about change as well as challenge employees to cultivate a new though pattern with regard to their respective problem. In this study specific reference was made to the

miracle questions as well as the scaling questions which participants considered to have a possible positive effect when employed. Corey (2014) supports this finding by stating that the miracle question is considered powerful due to the following reasons: when contemplating on the thought of a miracle occurring new possibilities are elicited; employees are granted an opportunity to dream about their desired future; its future focus enables employees to visualise and start working towards the change they desire and lastly, this method shifts the focus from pondering on past difficulties to striving towards future possibilities. Corey (2014) further explains that the scaling questions in turn help clients evaluate their current behaviours as well as what is needed in order to achieve the circumstances they desire.

Participants reported on the adequacy of the approach when linked to developmental areas. The participants were of opinion that more emphasis should be placed on exploring the problem, thus assisting the employee in understanding the problem along with his part in the latter, before a solution can be aspired to. Interestingly, this finding is in contrast to what de Shazer (as cited in Corey, 2014) says, namely that it is not necessary to understand the problem or the cause thereof in order to construct a solution, seeing that there may be no relationship between the latter. Corey (2014) continues saying that it is not a requisite to analyse problems in order to initiate and ultimately bring about effective change. However, according to MacDonald (2011) many do regard this approach as "too short, emotionally shallow and gimmicky" (p. 190). Participants further, reported that the model should be adapted in order to address developmental areas in a more concise manner. Participants advised that the model be adapted by establishing a clear linkage between the past, present and future.

Furthermore, participants reported on the method of presentation of the Solution-focused counselling training programme. When referring to the structure of the programme, participants reported on the advantageous intimacy that goes conjointly with smaller groups. Meo (2013) supports the latter by stating that smaller training groups provide for more interaction and relationship building which in turn provides for a deep learning experience. Participants reported on the importance of having a presenter who energetically and articulately communicates the content of a Solution-focused training programme. This is supported by Reece and Walker (2016) who states that the role of the presenter is to facilitate learning and not to merely covey information.

The *third objective* of this study related to exploring the experiences of the IOP practitioner, as a workplace counsellor, after having been exposed to the Solution-focused counselling training programme. Firstly, participants reported on the applicability of the counselling approach to the IOP context. Participants reported to consider this model appropriate for rendering counselling within the workplace due to the model operating from a strength-based perspective. Furthermore, participants felt this approach to be well suited to be employed in the instance of coaching. In both the above instances of counselling and coaching, findings support that this approach differs from other approaches and consequently owes its effective outcome to the fact that individuals are recognised as already competent to address their concerns and are thus facilitated accordingly (Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2010).

In addition, participants reported that an IOP practitioner can even more so fulfil their role within the workplace by means of employing this approach in an informal conversation as well. Corey (2014) supports the latter by stating that continuously talking about problems will result in the on-going occurrence of problems whereas the same goes for conscious solution-talk. Participants reported this approach to be adequate in maintaining well-being, especially in the instance where a problematic situation needs to be addressed immediately. This finding is in accordance with Guterman (2014) stating that "when you understand Solution-focused principles, then a wellness perspective becomes a logical consequence" (p. 6). The participants reported the Solution-focused approach to be effective for addressing individual or team performance management, a finding supported by Corey (2014) and MacDonald (2011) who report that Solution-focused group counselling is advantageous due to it being both a practical and time-effective approach. Corey (2014) and MacDonal (2011) continue that employing this approach in group counselling ensures a larger input with regard to resolving concerns. A unique finding concerning Solution-focused therapy was that the participants were of opinion that this approach would be appropriate within corporate environments for various professions, to address interdisciplinary cases. Lastly, when operating from a managerial role, participants reported various questions from this approach, such as the miracle question as well as scaling questions to be suitable to employ when in a management position. This finding is supported by Pichot and Dolan (2013) indicating that Solution-focused counselling is of value with regard to tasks that are of a supervisory nature. The aforementioned is due to Solution-focused therapy's strong emphasis on goal setting, being in congruence with the characteristic of a manager having to be proactive (Pichot & Dolan, 2013).

Participants secondly reported on the suitability of Solution-focused counselling approach with the IOP context. Participants reported that they do not perceive Solution-focused counselling adequate to address pathological issues. This is supported by findings which state that Solution-focused counselling does not take on a pathological view of the individual; competencies are identified and capitalised on and not deficits (Cheung, 2009; & Corey, 2014). Participants further reported that they would most likely not solely employ Solution-focused counselling, but rather elements thereof in conjunction with compatible approaches. This finding is supported by Lapworth et al. (as cited in Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011) who states that although the majority of counselling training only provides isolated training of the respective theories many counsellors will often intersperse between theories or either formulate a unique model comprised of theories with which they are familiar, with training they received in order to effectively address a identified field or client need. In addition, the positive, strength-based and simplistic nature of this approach perfectly complements the scope of practise of the IOP. This is supported by Corey (2014) stating that the essence of the approach "involves building on clients' hope and optimism by creating positive expectations that change is possible" (p. 365).

Limitations and recommendations

The following limitations were identified in this research study. The researcher was faced with the challenge of IOP practitioners who cancelled their attendance on short notice. Snowball sampling was employed as a means to address this challenge. Secondly, the findings of the study cannot be generalised across the rest of South Africa. The latter in turn, influenced the desired equity, unfavourably as well. Lastly, although the use of a voice recorder during the focus group was consensual, the thought of being recorded might have influenced the way in which participants answered the questions.

The *final objective* of this study was to make recommendations for future training of IOP practitioners as workplace counsellors in a Solution-focused counselling training programme. The participants indicated that being equipped with the Solution-focused counselling approach would contribute to the establishment of a more, well-rounded industrial psychologist as a workplace counsellor. Thus participants reported that the Solution-focused counselling approach should be incorporated in the Master's programme of industrial psychology students by means of a Solution-focused counselling training programme. This

finding is in accordance with the findings of Barkhuizen et al. (2015) who reported that the IOP practitioner does not receive sufficient training with regard to specific counselling skills and models during their tertiary education with specific reference to the applicable Master's programme.

Participants made recommendations with regard to the content of a Solution-focused counselling training programme. Firstly, participants indicated the importance of including practical examples of the said approach, seeing that the latter enables a better grasp and are usually remembered, thus the most learning sprouts from it. The latter finding is supported by Reece and Walker (2016) who states the process of actual learning taking place is more effective when it is directly experienced or if one is exposed to the detailing of others' lived experiences. Participants indicated that it would be useful to have an expert demonstrate the skills embodied by this approach.

Participants further reported that other counselling approaches with which Solution-focused counselling is compatible should be taught as well, more specifically how the latter can be employed in conjunction with Solution-focused counselling. This findings is supported by Einarsen, et al. (2011) who suggested that "whilst there is no evidence to support one a particular model of counselling, some models lend themselves more easily to the organisational need for a clearly define process, ease of access, and speed of recovery" (p. 390). Norcross and Arkowitz (as cited in Einarsen, et al., 2011) adds to the latter by stating that the construction of integrative counselling approaches have emerged due to the lack in research which supports the significant supremacy of one counselling approach above others. Dryden (as cited in cited in Einarsen, et al., 2011) further states that a certain freedom of practice goes conjointly with adapting an integrative counselling approach, seeing that it altered to best suit your work context. Dryden (as cited in cited in Einarsen, et al., 2011) concludes that integrative counselling approaches are of the most popularly employed in present-day counselling practice.

In addition, it was recommended that students be educated in the cross-cultural applicability of this approach, due to the topic's applicability within the South-African context. MacDonald (2011) indicated that "so far, Solution-focused work appears to be appropriate for many countries and cultures" (p. 192). Nonetheless, due to globalisation it is of the

essence that the context of South Africa be kept in mind and that trainees are educated in the cross-cultural applicability of such a counselling approach (Landis & Brislin, 2013).

Participants made further recommendations with regard to the method of presentation of the Solution-focused counselling training programme. Participants reported that the training programme should be more accommodating towards the different learning styles and should thus include more visual stimulations. The findings are supported by Chen and Sun (2012) stating that multimedia instead of text-based materials are employed in order to elicit and maintain better focus and attention. Different visual multimedia, include static text and image-based material, video-based material as well as animated interactive material which could be incorporated (Chen & Sun, 2012).

The provision of a manual along with pre-course work was also recommended by participants. Hwang (2011) explains the latter finding by stating that pre-reading refers to reading or either studying prescribed work prior to the actual class. Thus, the desired outcome is to establish one's learning readiness by means of completing pre-reading (Hwang, 2011). Furthermore, it was advised to train smaller groups in order to provide an in-depth experience. This findings is supported by Meo (2013) by stating that many advantages are linked to smaller group interactions, such as active participation, the effective conduction of team work activities, retention of information as well as does it contribute in keeping students focused. In addition, it was communicated that a favourable physical layout of the tables, namely a U-form, contributes to the latter.

In terms of additional suggestions, participants recommended that the training programme be presented over a two day period in order to obtain and in-depth comprehension of the approach by means of being exposed to theory and then sufficient time to apply the latter. Participants also commented on how they feel the practical exercises should be adapted. It was advised that the participants should rotate during the course of the day and thus conduct exercises with different people, in order to mimic the case as it would be in real life. This is supported by De Jong and Berg (as cited in Corey, 2014) who reported that counsellors should refrain from categorising clients and rather reflect on the kind of relationship which is evolving between employee and counsellor. In addition, it was recommended that the presenter should continuously rotate between groups, therewith ensuring that all percipients benefit from exposure to expert attention.

Practical implications

This research study aimed to explore and evaluate the prospect of a Solution-focused training programme for the industrial psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor. Thus participants were trained in the Solution-focused counselling approach, where after the value in terms of IOP applicability of the training was assessed. The participants made practical recommendations with regard to the content, methodology as well as for the future training of IOP practitioners in a Solution-focused counselling training programme. The data obtained can aid in developing a Solution-focused counselling training programme for industrial psychology students towards their training as workplace counsellors. Consequently, the IOP practitioner will be provided with a tailor-made counselling framework of reference to apply in the work setting. The latter will ensure a well-rounded IOP practitioner as a workplace counsellor, who can optimally assist employees in the instance of rendering counselling.

Conclusion

Literature indicates that counselling form part of the main areas which constitutes the IOP's domain of functioning (Bisen, 2010). However literature also shows that the IOP profession are not sufficiently trained in counselling techniques (Barkhuizen, et al., 2015). Therefor this study focused on evaluating a specific counselling approach namely Solution-focused counselling to determine how the approach could be employed within the work context of the IOP. Participants reported this approach to be suitable to employ within the workplace in the following instances, namely, counselling, coaching, to maintain well-being, performance management, interdisciplinary cases as well as to apply in a managerial role. Overall, the results showed that being trained in the Solution-focused counselling training programme benefitted the industrial psychology practitioner since the counselling approach is suitable for the workplace counselling setting.

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Within this chapter the conclusions derived in this study are discussed by aligning the conclusions with the research objectives respectively. Furthermore the limitations noted in this study are outlined along with presenting practical recommendation for future research and practice.

3.1 Conclusion

The goal of this study was to explore and evaluate a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the industrial psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor. From the results 18 themes emerged which were consequently categorised into three spheres. These are outlined below:
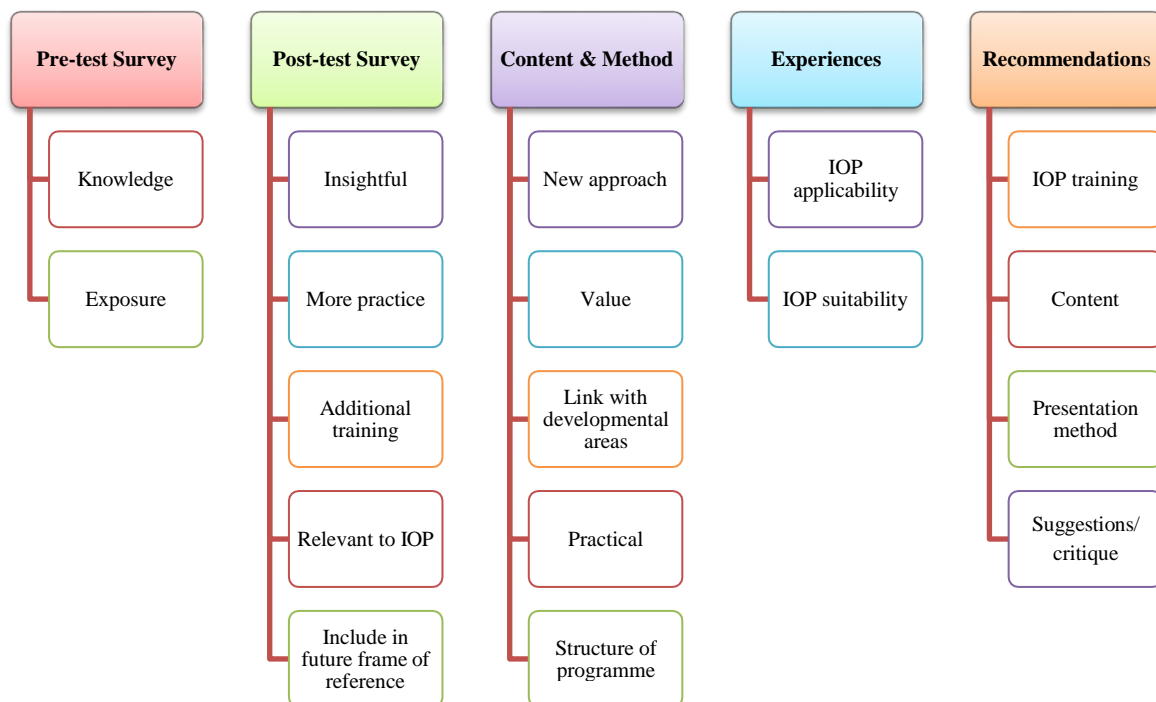
Figure 3: Overview of spheres and themes of the study

Next, the findings of the study are summarised, in accordance with the specific research objectives.

Specific objective 1: To conceptualise the terms **industrial and organisational psychologist, workplace counselling** *and* **Solution-focused counselling** *as defined by literature*

The first objective of the study was to review current literature in order to determine how the (abovementioned) terms were conceptualised in terms of the latter. Concerning the *industrial and organisational psychologist*, literature showed that the primary role of the IOP practitioner pertains to the scientific study of human behaviour within the context of the organisation (SIOPSA Future Fit Working Committee, 2014; van Vuuren, 2010). Van Vuuren (2010) and Meyers (2007) further elaborate by stating that the IOP attempts to understand as well as alter human behaviour within the organisations accordingly in order to provide for an optimal fit between the workforce and the organisation in which they function.

Workplace counselling refers to a discussion with regard to an emotional difficulty an employee is experiencing with the end goal of providing some sense of relief by facilitating the client towards a possible solution (Ajila & Adetayo, 2013; McLeod & McLeod, 2011). Mortesen and Schmuller (as cited in Ajila & Adetayo, 2013) reported that workplace counselling has the following beneficial outcomes, namely to provide insight with regard to a deeper sense of self; to resolve crisis situations; to reduce physical tension that is a result of stress and lastly to enhance an individual's problem-solving skills and level of resiliency. Maree (2013) further adds that counsellors make use of various counselling theories as a basis to render workplace counselling so as to assist employees in a manner which upholds their best interest. Maree states that "in the 21st century, best practice involves instilling in people the ability to think critically, deal with challenges creatively, construct and advise themselves, and make sound decisions" (2013, p. 1).

Corey (2014), McLeod (2010) and Guterman, (2014) summarise assumptions adopted by the Solution-focused counselling approach as follows: individuals do possess the capacity to function effectively; it is advantageous to adopt a positive approach towards identifying solutions; reference to exception times when the problem at hand did not exist or were less severe exists for all problems; the counsellor has to explore the other side of individuals' stories which are not presented; acknowledge that no problem can exist eternally; therefore change is anticipated; focussing on a collaborative approach towards solutions employed

between the individual and the counsellor and lastly each individual will adopt and respond to their uniquely formulised solutions.

Specific objective 2: To evaluate the content and methodology of a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the industrial and organisational psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor.

This objective aimed at exploring the relevant content and methodology to be included in the instance of developing a solution-focused counselling training programme for the IOP context. The themes and sub-themes relating to the *content* of such a training programme are illustrated below in figure 4:
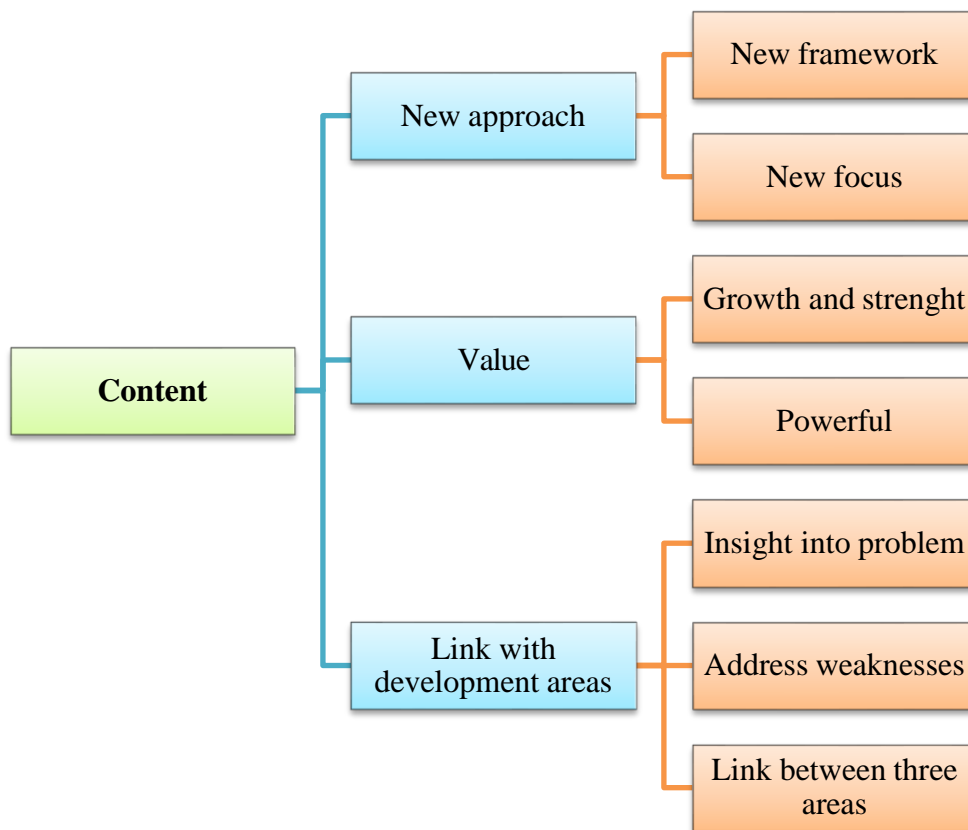
Figure 4: Overview of the content of a Solution-focused counselling training programme

Participants found that this approach provided for a new focus to their frame of reference pertaining to counselling, the new focus being a future-oriented, strength-based approach (Guterman, 2014) Participants reported that this approach provided them with a new set of practical skills which they can add to their current skills set (Cheung, 2009). Participants

further reported on the value of the Solution-focused counselling approach, namely that the power of this approach lies in its ability to identify, draw from and build on strengths which ultimately stimulate growth (Corey, 2014).

Although in contrast to what de Shazer (as cited in Corey, 2014) reported, being that insight into the problem is not necessarily important in a counselling approach, participants seemed to differ. One reason could be that the participants did not yet grasp the finer detail of the counselling approach. (A future study could explore how problems can be explored deeper than the approach currently allows for). Participants reported that a means should be established as to address individual weaknesses, at the very least making the individual aware of their part therein. This finding refers to locus of control which plays an eminent part in the IOP profession and could be a reason for the participants' view.

To follow is an illustration of the themes as well as subthemes relating to the *method* of presentation of a Solution-focused counselling training programme, in figure 5:
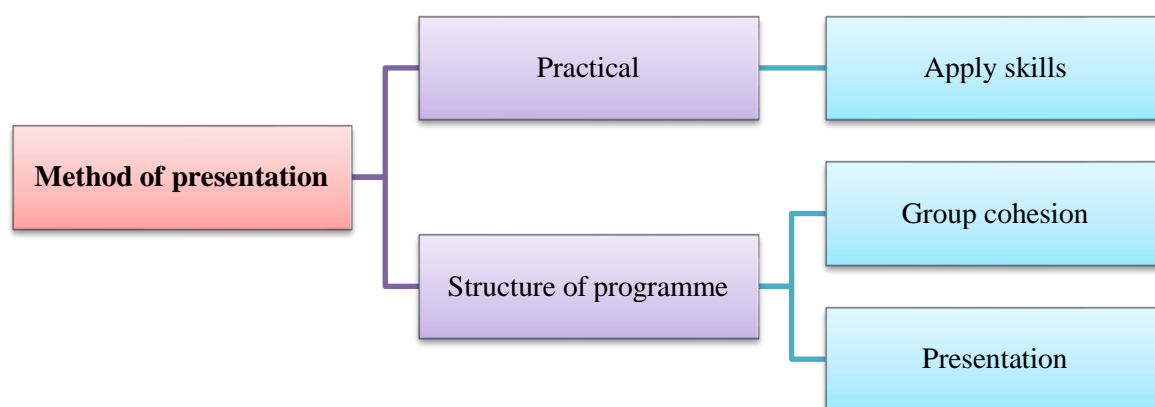
Figure 5: Overview of presentation method of a Solution-focused counselling training programme

The participants' evaluation of the method of presentation of the programme revealed that more practical exercises would have indeed assisted in gaining a better grasp of this approach

to counselling (Reece & Walker, 2016) In terms of how the programme was structured the participants reported beneficial outcomes due to having been trained in a small group. Similarly Meo (2013) reports advantages of a smaller training group being that more interaction is possible among the group whereas this lends a certain intimacy to the experience. Participants further noted the importance of having a presenter who actively presents the training programme in an easily comprehendible manner (Reece & Walker, 2016).

Specific objective 3: To explore what the experiences of the industrial and organisational psychology practitioner, as a workplace counsellor, are after a Solution-focused counselling training programme

Another important focus of this study was to explore what the *experiences* are of the participants of the Solution-focused counselling programme in relation to their context of IOP. Participants primarily reported positive experiences; they indicated that Solution-focused counselling is considered to be effective not only for counselling but for various other tasks which fall within the IOP scope of practice. To follow is an illustration of the different instances within IOP the participants indicated Solution-focused counselling to be applicable of:

Figure 6: Overview of Solution-focused counselling's applicability to the IOP context

First and foremost this approach was considered to be an empowering approach to use as a reference when rendering counselling (Corey, 2014). The same was found by Cox et al. (2010) who elaborate that Solution-focused coaching can be applied within an array of coaching settings such as skills and performance coaching, developmental coaching as well as executive and leadership coaching. Furthermore, it was reported that adopting a Solution-focused view when engaging the individuals, in whichever instance, their well-being will inevitably be enhanced (Guterman, 2014). Participants indicated that this approach can be applied equally effective in addressing individual or group performance management (Corey, 2014 & MacDonald, 2011). Participants thought this approach good in the stance of having to address cases of interdisciplinary nature as could be found within various corporate environments such as with engineers, CAs, as well as medical specialists. Lastly, it was found that a Solution-focused approach will greatly aid in the instance of conducting managerial tasks (Pichot & Dolan, 2013).

In addition, the approach was found to be particularly suitable to the IOP context due to it being strength-based driven with consequently developmental outcomes (Cox et al., 2010). It was, however, found that this approach would not be suitable to address issues of a

pathological nature (Cheung, 2009; Corey, 2014). Whereas in order to best apply the Solution-focused approach participants, in accordance with findings by Lapworth et al. (as cited in Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011) deemed it fitting to incorporate only elements of Solution-focused counselling with other approaches (such as Cognitive behaviour therapy and Persons centred approach) of preferences instead of solely employing Solution-focused counselling. To conclude the objective, the participants in this study confirmed that the principles on which this approach is based is in accordance with the role the IOP practitioner fulfils (Corey, 2014).

3.2 <u>Limitations</u>

The following limitations came to light during the course of this research study. The first and most substantial limitation occurred when a sample group was sourced. The initial idea was to invite individuals who participated in a forgoing study, which indicated a need for the endeavour of exploring and developing counselling training programmes for the IOP practitioner as a workplace counsellor. This could have provided continuance from the previous study, and it would have been interesting to explore their experiences on a specific counselling approach, since this was their recommendation. Due to their participation in the aforementioned study along with having had their experience from practice it was considered that the said sample group would be of great value in the current study. However, due to busy schedules most of the latter sample group were unable to attend the data collection, and were replaced by colleagues whom they referred to the researcher (fitting the inclusion criteria). Consequently, the population did not comprise a very diverse sample group; therefore the findings cannot be generalised across the whole of South Africa. Lastly, another aspect which could have served as a limiting factor was the voice recording of the focus group discussion which might have influenced the level of individual participation.

3.3 <u>Recommendations</u>

The recommendations section is provided with reference to the last objective of this study:

Specific objective 4: To determine what recommendations can be made for future training of an industrial and organisational psychology practitioner as a workplace counsellor in a Solution-focused counselling programme.

This study revealed valuable data in terms of recommendations to guide future research in developing a Solution-focused counselling training programme for the IOP practitioner as a workplace counsellor. To follow is an illustration outlining the recommendations this research study brought about:

IOP Training	**Content**	**Presentation Method**	**Suggestions**
•Master's curriculum	•Practical examples •Cross cultural applicability •Combine with other approaches	•Visual stimulation •Manual •Training setting	•Structure of practical exercises •Length of workshop

Figure 7: Overview of recommendations for future training

Although participants responded favourably to the Solution-focused counselling as an approach for the IOP profession, concerns were raised and recommendations were made accordingly.

In terms of the programmes' *content* participants indicated they would greatly benefit from; more practical examples either practised or being informed about others' practical experiences (Reece & Walker, 2016); that they deem it necessary to be educated in the cross-cultural applicability of the counselling approach at hand (Landis & Brislin, 2013); and that being educated in counselling frameworks compatible with Solution-focused counselling (such as Cognitive behaviour therapy and Persons centred approach) would be of utmost value seeing that, according to Dryden (as cited in Einarsen, et al., 2011), they would most likely be inclined to incorporate elements thereof in their approach of preference.

With regard to the *method* of presenting the programme participants indicated that visual stimulation would further aid in an effective presentation seeing that interest and focus would be held when the latter is employed (Chen & Sun, 2012). Participants indicated that a manual along with pre-course work would stimulate learning readiness (Hwang, 2011). Further recommendations with regard to the presentation method were to make use of a favourable physical layout of the training setting along with presenting the programme over a two-day course at the minimum.

Another recommendation's importance was stressed by participants, namely that during the course of such a training programme individuals should rotate regularly and thus interact with unfamiliar people continuously. This will enable the participants to practise the new counselling approach more effectively. According to de Jong and Berg (as cited in Corey, 2014) this is particularly applicable to the context of rendering Solution-focused counselling seeing that a Solution-focused counsellor will have the task of identifying strengths quickly and accurately in individuals they are not acquainted with.

Ultimately, it is recommended that further research be employed in order to address the above recommendations to develop a Solution-focused counselling training programme which provides for an optimal fit between the said programme and context of the IOP practitioner as a workplace counsellor. To conclude, this study's overall recommendation is that it is of importance that tertiary institutions consider incorporating a tailor-made Solution- focused counselling training programme in the Master's curriculum of IOP students. This will aid in effectively preparing the emerging IOP practitioner as a workplace counsellor,

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ADDENDUM A

INFORMED CONSENT

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

(Please complete all information required on this form. It will be treated as confidential)

Surname: _____

Name: _____

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Race: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Highest Qualification: _____

Home Language: _____

Language medium
Educated In: _____

Contact Details:

Home Tel. Number:	Cell Phone Number:
Work Tel. Number:	E-mail Address:

This research study is conducted in fulfilment of a mini dissertation as part of the requirements for the completion of the Master's degree programme in Industrial Psychology at the North-West University.

Title of research study:

Exploring and evaluating a Solution-focused counselling programme for industrial psychology practitioners.

Ethics number: NWU-00084-10-S4

Researcher: Ashley Kriel

Address: North-West University

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Private bag X6001

Potchefstroom

2522

Invitation:

You are hereby cordially invited to participate in this research study. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this research study. It is of utmost important for you to be fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved.

Purpose of the Study:

The aim of this research study is to explore and evaluate a training programme in solution-focused counselling, for the industrial psychologist as a workplace counsellor.

What this research study is all about:

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To investigate what should be included in the content and the methodology of a solution-focused counselling training programme for industrial and organisational practitioners;

- To explore what the experiences of industrial and organisational psychology practitioners are after a solution focused-counselling training programme:

- To determine what recommendations can be made for future training of industrial and organisational psychologists in a solution-focused counselling programme.

Why you are invited to participate:

- You are invited to participate in this research study since you are considered a specialist in the concerned study field (workplace counselling) and as a result your participation would greatly contribute to the successful completion of the said study.
- You have also complied with the following inclusion criteria:
  - practising Industrial Psychologist and registered as such at the HPCSA;
  - actively involved in rendering workplace counselling within your respective work context;
  - willing to have the focus group voice recorded;
  - willing to participate voluntarily in the research study;
  - proficient in the English language.

Procedure:

The data collected for this research study will be gathered by means of two methods.

Firstly, data will be collected by means of a qualitative survey and then a focus group session will be held to gather data. Consequently the proceedings will take place as follows: 1) pre-test by means of qualitative survey via email, 2) presentation of solution-focused training programme and 3) post-test by conducting the focus group and thereafter the 4) qualitative survey via email. The presentation of the Solution-focused training programme as well as the focus group will be conducted over a one-day period. The qualitative survey will have to be completed both prior to and after the aforesaid proceedings. You will be provided with all the necessary stationary etc. required in order to participate in the data collection process. Refreshments will be provided during the allocated break.

Participant Role:

During the distinct data collection methods the participant will have the responsibility to:

Qualitative Survey:	Provide verbatim statements to five questions via email.
Solution-focused Training Programme:	Actively participate in training programme.

Focus Group:	Engage in a discussion by means of, conveying your unique and valued conversation points.

All questions posed in the said methods relate to the research topic.

Risks/Costs:

The researcher will take all measures possible to ensure that you as a participant are in no way whatsoever exposed to any kind of physical and/or emotional harm as far as is foreseeable. There will be no costs related to your participation in this research project. Please note that you as a participant will be liable for any costs unrelated to the data collection process itself, namely travel, guesthouse expenses etc.

Benefits:

By studying a training programme in solution focussed counselling for industrial and organisational psychologists as workplace counsellors, new knowledge on the latter topic will be added to the field of industrial and organisational psychology. Moreover, evaluating a solution-focused counselling programme for industrial psychology practitioners would lead to future opportunities of developing a solution-focused counselling programme for industrial psychology practitioners. This research study will furthermore contribute to providing organisations with insight into the value of solution focussed therapy as intervention approach for industrial psychologists, acting as workplace counsellors. In addition, the participant will gain more insight, knowledge and a possible appreciation with regard to solution-focused counselling. The participant will be exposed to an effective form of counselling, thereby adding to their existing counselling skills and empowering the individual as a workplace counsellor. The latter may result in the optimal functioning of the participant as a workplace counsellor.

Payment:

You will receive no payment/reward for your participation in this research study.

Questions:

You have the right to ask questions prior to and/or after having given consent. Thorough attempts will be made to answer any questions you may have relating to this research study.

Nature of Participation:

Please take note that participation in this research study is voluntary and understand that you may stop said participation at any given time before or during the execution of the research study. You will not be penalised in any way whatsoever, should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this research study.

Who will have access to the data?

All the data obtained during the execution of the research study will be stored in a password-protected storage unit based at the tertiary education institution. In addition, only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the said data. Lastly, all the gathered data, including the digital recordings, will be destroyed as soon as it was utilised for its indicated intended purpose.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality will only be partial due to the nature of the focus group. However, bearing in mind the aforementioned, the information gathered will at all times remain anonymous and be treated with the utmost confidentiality. You are furthermore informed that your results will be utilised for research purposes only.

Enquiries:

Should you require any additional information with regard to the said research study, please do not hesitate to contact one of the parties involved, namely:

Researcher: Ashley Kriel
Email: ashleykriel@live.co.za

Supervisor: Prof. Lené Jorgensen
Email: lene.jorgensen@nwu.ac.za

Any concerns/issues/comments that you would like to bring under the attention of the researcher:

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Acknowledgement and Informed Consent:

I hereby acknowledge that I have been granted the opportunity of carefully reading this document to ask, and have answered, any questions or concerns I have about it or arising from it. I further acknowledge that I have read and understood the information contained in this document. I consent voluntarily to participate as a participant in this research

Full Name of Participant: _____

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   **Date**

Declaration by Researcher:

- I explained the information in this document to ……………………………………….
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above

Full Name of Researcher: _____

_____   _____

Researcher's Signature   **Date**

ADDENDUM B

QUALITATIVE SURVEY: PRE-TEST

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Pre-Test Qualitative Survey

Dear Participant

This qualitative survey is conducted so as to contribute to conducting the research study, titled *Exploring and evaluating a Solution-focused counselling programme for industrial psychology practitioners.*

The use of a qualitative survey will ensure that verbatim statements are obtained from you as a participant. The nature of the questions posed are open-ended; thus enabling you to provide answers stemming from your distinctive context in which you function, resulting in accumulating the richest form of data (The Research & Planning Group, 2011). In this instance, this qualitative survey serves as a means for establishing the needs of industrial psychologists as identified in a previous study conducted, namely: *A critical review of the industrial- organisational psychologist as counsellor.*

Please take a few minutes to answer the enclosed confidential qualitative survey. It is encouraged that you answer the questions as truthfully and thoroughly as possible in order to obtain in-depth data. This qualitative survey is completed anonymously and all answers will be treated with utmost confidentiality. This qualitative survey consists of five questions which you are to complete at your own pace within the allocated time frame.

As an industrial psychologist, by completing this qualitative survey would contribute greatly to the successful completion of the said research study.

Please do not hesitate to communicate questions if any uncertainties arise.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and thoughtful responses.

Yours sincerely,

Ashley Kriel
Researcher

Noted by:
Prof Lené Jorgensen
Supervisor

Questions

6. How often and in what instances do you render workplace counselling?

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7. If so, please briefly describe the approach you generally utilise?

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8. To what extent do you consider your current approach as adequate?

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9. Please comment on your familiarity with the solution-focused counselling approach.

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10. Have you received any kind of training in the solution-focused counselling approach? Please elaborate.

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ADDENDUM C

QULITATIVE SURVEY: POST-TEST

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Post-Test Qualitative Survey

Dear Participant

This qualitative survey is conducted in order to contribute to conducting the research study titled *Exploring and evaluating a Solution-focused counselling programme for industrial psychology practitioners.*

By using a qualitative survey will ensure that verbatim statements are obtained from you as a participant. The nature of the questions posed are open-ended; thus enabling you to provide answers stemming from your distinctive context in which you function, resulting in accumulating the richest form of data (The Research & Planning Group, 2011). In this instance, this qualitative survey serves as a means to establish the needs of industrial psychologists as identified in a previous study conducted, namely: *A critical review of the industrial- organisational psychologist as counsellor.*

Please take a few minutes to answer the enclosed confidential qualitative survey. It is encouraged that you answer the questions as truthfully and thoroughly as possible in order to obtain in-depth data. This qualitative survey is completed anonymously and all answers will be treated with utmost confidentiality. This qualitative survey consists of five questions which are to be completed at you own pace within the allocated timeframe.

As an industrial psychologist, completing this qualitative survey you would contribute greatly to the successful completion of the said research study.

Please do not hesitate to communicate questions if any uncertainties arise.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and thoughtful responses.

Yours sincerely,

Ashley Kriel
Researcher

Noted by:
Prof Lené Jorgensen
Supervisor

Questions

11. How often and in what instances do you render workplace counselling?

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12. If so, please briefly describe the approach you generally utilise.

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13. To what extent do you consider your current approach adequate?

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14.Please comment on your familiarity with the solution-focused counselling approach.

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15.Have you received any kind of training in the solution-focused counselling approach? Please elaborate.

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