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Through The Eyes Of Experts: Mental Health Professionals' Lived Experiences With Mental Health Patients

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Abstract: **Introduction:** To offer insights that help enhance practitioner well-being and patient care, this study investigates the difficulties mental health practitioners encounter in their day-to-day contact with patients, looking at the psychological, mental, and professional demands of working in this field. **Methodology:** The lived experiences of mental health professionals dealing with patients in various settings are explored in this qualitative study using a phenomenological method. The study aims to understand how these professionals view and handle daily professional, emotional, and mental challenges when interacting with patients. **Results:** The three major themes, Psychological Progression, Therapeutic Evolution, and Supportive Formation, emphasize the significant aspects of the experiences of mental health professionals, such as mental and emotional growth, techniques for coping with emotional stress, and approaches to improving patient involvement and social engagement. **Discussion:** Psychological progression fosters growth through resilience, self-care, and professional development. Therapeutic evolution enhances mental health care through improved strategies, resilience, and continuous professional growth. Supportive development in mental health counseling fosters resilience, ethical care, and professional balance to enhance client outcomes and practitioner well-being. **Conclusion:** This study explores the many challenges that mental health professionals face. It explored the challenges of mental health professionals with their mental health, as well as their coping and emotional regulation techniques. It discussed mental health professionals' self-care and how they follow specific standards to maintain their personal and professional ethics.

Index Terms - Mental health, professionals, well-being, therapy, phenomenology.

I. INTRODUCTION

Recognizing the obstacles that mental health professionals encounter when engaging with patients is essential for improving the standard of mental health services and creating impactful interventions (Stringer, 2024). In recent years, the prevalence of mental health issues has significantly increased, necessitating a closer examination of the daily experiences of those who provide care and support (World Health Organization, 2022). Mental health issues are diverse and can manifest in various ways (Gopalkrishnan, 2018). Human experience is a continuous journey marked by change, adaptation, and growth. As individuals encounter life's complexities, they are compelled to respond, reflect, and eventually transform. These moments, often born from discomfort, curiosity, or introspection, gradually shape one's understanding of the self and the world. While this progression may appear subtle, it carries profound implications for how people relate to their inner lives and external realities. Through this natural unfolding of awareness and response, patterns of development emerge, offering meaningful insight into the ways individuals learn, heal, and grow throughout their lives.

The challenges mental health professionals face are multifaceted and arise from the unique demands of their profession. These professionals must navigate issues like stigma, communication barriers, and the constantly evolving nature of a patient's mental health (Knaak et al., 2017). The dynamic nature of mental health requires nuanced approaches that address both the emotional and cognitive dimensions of the patient's conditions, making it crucial to understand the daily realities faced by these professionals. Mental health workers often engage in deeply personal and challenging work, requiring them to balance professional boundaries with empathy, manage emotionally charged situations, and support individuals experiencing distressing conditions (Roennfeldt et al., 2021).

Research suggests that while the experiences of mental health professionals differ significantly across clinical, institutional, and community-based settings, recurring patterns and shared themes are consistently identified. For example, mental health professionals working in community care settings often report challenges related to the lack of resources, high caseloads, and the difficulty in providing individualized care (Modi et al., 2022). In addition, mental health professionals often encounter resistance or reluctance from patients, which complicated the therapeutic relationship and required strategies to engage and motivate individuals to seek help. A study discussed how labeling patients as "treatment-resistant" led to objectification and abandonment, highlighting the importance of viewing resistance as a collaborative challenge (Putman, 2024). Moreover, managing patients' expectations, particularly in settings where the demand for services exceeds the available resources, is a challenge that professionals face regularly. A study revealed significant differences between patients' and clinicians' expectations, emphasizing the need for clinicians to rationalize patients' expectations concerning treatment outcomes, which is often a source of strain (Li, 2024).

Additionally, mental health professionals must navigate the emotional weight of their work. Managing personal emotional responses to patient care while maintaining professionalism is a constant challenge (Helmich et al., 2017). The moral distress that comes from witnessing suffering and being unable to alleviate it entirely is an aspect of this strain (Morley et al., 2017). Furthermore, stigma surrounding mental health also affected professionals in the field, influencing their interactions with patients. Mental health professionals experienced stigmatization from their colleagues, which impacted their ability to empathize with patients and address their needs effectively. These stigmatizing attitudes also affected the self-esteem and motivation of healthcare providers, contributing to burnout and emotional exhaustion (Sunderji et al., 2017).

Despite the increasing recognition of mental health conditions, there is a scarcity of research that explores the lived experiences of mental health professionals in their day-to-day work with patients (King et al., 2020). This study aimed to explore these challenges from the perspective of mental health professionals, offering insights that could contribute to both practice and policy. Specifically, this study addresses the central question: "What characterizes the strategies developed by mental health professionals in response to the lived experiences they encounter with their patients?" and the specific question: "How do the lived experiences of mental health professionals influence their strategies in addressing the challenges that arise in their daily interactions with patients?" Using a phenomenological approach, the study looks into the interactions between mental health professionals and their patients to investigate the personal and professional challenges these mental health professionals face. By exploring the lived experiences of mental health professionals, the researchers discovered how different interactions influenced mental health professionals' perceptions and coping mechanisms.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to bridge the gap in existing literature regarding the everyday experiences of mental health professionals. The findings helped identify specific challenges that mental health professionals face, such as dealing with emotional exhaustion, coping with challenging patient behaviors, and managing the complex relationships between physical and psychological health (Sunderji et al., 2017). This study aimed to provide actionable insights that informed the development of training programs, interventions, and support systems designed to improve the well-being of both professionals and patients. Through a deeper understanding of the challenges and strategies employed by mental health

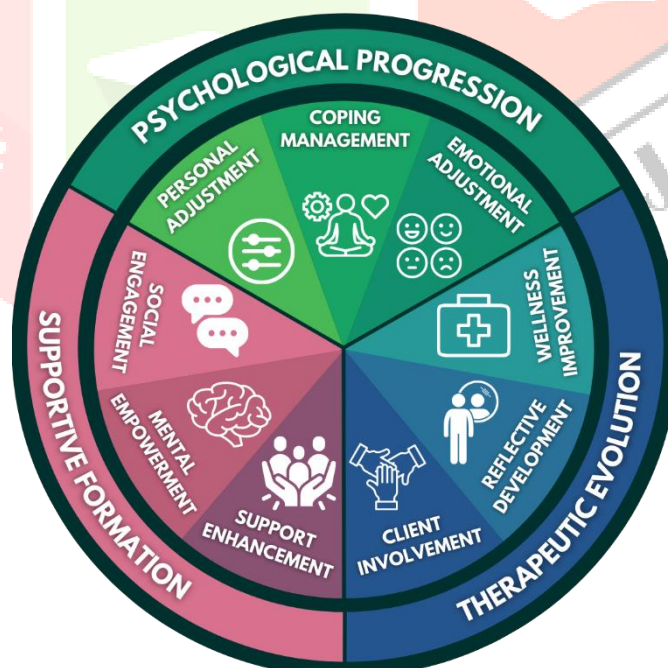
professionals, the research enhanced the overall effectiveness of mental health care, improving patient outcomes.

I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological approach to explore the participants' lived experiences. The methodical examination of social phenomena in unstructured situations is known as qualitative research (Tenny et al., 2022). These phenomena are not limited to how people perceive various parts of their lives, how people behave separately or in groups, how organizations operate, and how interactions shape individual relationships. In a qualitative study, ethical considerations have a particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process (Mohd Arifin, 2018). The concern of ethical issues becomes crucial when conducting face-to-face interviews with vulnerable groups of participants (Memela, L., 2021). Qualitative research is an iterative process in which the scientific community gains a better knowledge of the phenomena under study by making new meaningful distinctions as they get closer to it (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Phenomenology is another type of qualitative research investigating people's real-world experiences. Phenomenological research focuses on how individuals perceive or interpret their environment as real or significant (Wilson, 2015). A phenomenological research approach was applied in this study as it aims to understand the participants' experiences as mental health professionals working with patients in different circumstances.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1. Strategies that the Mental Health Professionals developed in response to the lived experiences they encounter with their Patients



This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of mental health professionals based in Qatar and the Philippines as the researchers navigate the professionals' interactions with patients. It aims to understand the strategies, directly addressing the central question: **“What characterizes the strategies developed by mental health professionals in response to the lived experiences they encounter with their patients?”** Additionally, the study investigates the specific question: **“How do the lived experiences of mental health professionals influence their strategies in addressing the challenges that arise in their**

daily interactions with patients?". The diversity of patients' circumstances has led mental health professionals to develop adaptive strategies to cope with the complexity of the roles.

Based on the responses of mental health professionals in both Qatar and the Philippines, the key to forming the strategies based from experiences with patients lies within three main themes: (1) **Psychological Progression** – the process of emotional, cognitive, and mental development that individuals experience, which plays a pivotal role in the treatment; (2) **Therapeutic Evolution** – strategies used by professionals to manage the emotional and mental toll of the profession; and (3) **Supportive Formation** – how professionals enhance patient involvement and social engagement.

Figure 1 shows the simulacrum presenting the three major themes: **Psychological Progression**, **Therapeutic Evolution**, and **Supportive Formation**. These themes signify the core aspects of the mental health professionals' experiences with patients, namely, the evolution of mental, emotional, and cognitive growth, the strategies used to manage the emotional strain of the profession, and the methods employed to strengthen patient involvement and social engagement. Additionally, different sub-themes were recognized, specifically, **Personal Adjustment**, **Coping Management**, and **Emotional Adjustment** under **Psychological Progression**; **Wellness Improvement**, **Client Involvement**, and **Reflective Development** under **Therapeutic Evolution**; and **Social Engagement**, **Mental Empowerment**, and **Support Enhancement** under **Supportive Formation**.

Psychological Progression

The first central theme explored patient interactions' profound influence on mental health professionals, leading to significant personal and professional development. This theme is characterized by the cultivation of personal adjustment strategies, the strengthening of emotional resilience, and the development of effective coping mechanisms. Such growth is essential for the professional's well-being as well as enhancing the ability to provide empathetic and effective care to patients. The evolution of the professional practices reflects an ongoing process of learning and adaptation, where personal challenges and successes enrich professional ethos and methods.

Psychological Progression underscores how mental health professionals experience growth through patient interactions, highlighting a journey of self-awareness, emotional management, and coping mechanisms. The unique experiences shared by the participants illustrate the transformative impact of the profession, which significantly affects not only the patients but also themselves. These interactions often lead to a symbiotic relationship in which both caregivers and recipients are shaped by verbal and nonverbal exchanges, enhancing the understanding of the reciprocal nature of mental health care.

Exploring Psychological Progression provides valuable insights into the intrinsic link between personal experiences and professional practices among mental health professionals. This theme serves as a cornerstone for understanding the broader impacts of mental health work, illustrating how it affects both patients and caregivers. The study reveals how professionals adapt, manage emotions, and develop resilience over time by examining the three critical subthemes of Personal Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment, and Coping Management. Through these subthemes, the study highlights the dual pathway of influence that these interactions facilitate, underscoring the symbiotic relationship between personal growth and professional efficacy.

. Personal Adjustment

Personal Adjustment is essential for mental health professionals as it involves developing strategies to handle stress, manage countertransference, and maintain emotional stability. This sub-theme emphasizes the need for professionals to cultivate resilience and effectively separate personal and professional lifestyles to ensure provision of optimal care without compromising well-being. One participant reflected on the evolution of her approach to work-related stress, stating:

"Initially, in the school setting with young children around, I found myself upset by thoughts of them facing bullying, mirroring fears for my children. Now, I maintain a clear separation between professional responsibilities and personal concerns, ensuring I approach each situation with the necessary objectivity and calm" (P7)

This transition highlights the dynamic process of adapting personal coping strategies to meet professional demands, an essential part of maintaining effectiveness as a mental health provider. Building on the importance of boundary setting, two participants underscored the role of self-awareness in maintaining these boundaries:

"I have learned to recognize my feelings and not allow them to influence my professional judgment. It is about understanding that my role is to support, not to become emotionally entangled with the client's issues." (P2)

"Maintaining professional boundaries has been instrumental. I remind myself that I am there to facilitate healing, not to absorb or reflect the client's emotions." (P4)

This reflection demonstrates how mental health professionals must continuously monitor their emotional responses to maintain a supportive yet professional relationship with clients. Moreover, it bridges the discussion to the challenge of managing transference, which significantly impacted the therapeutic relationship if not carefully handled. The complexity of dealing with transference is articulated by a participant, who noted:

"I strive to remain aware of the transference dynamics at play, which helps me avoid becoming overly involved or affected by the emotional depth of the sessions." (P6)

This awareness is crucial for therapists to maintain professional detachment and provide objective, supportive care without being overwhelmed by the emotional intensity of the interactions. Acknowledging the ongoing need for personal and professional development, another professional highlighted the benefits of continual emotional growth:

"Continually working on my emotional growth has allowed me to manage the pressures of the job better and support my clients more effectively." (P9)

This statement connects the individual's development to practical coping strategies that enhance resilience and prevent burnout. On the topic of coping strategies, another participant shared her approach:

"I use mindfulness and meditation to keep a clear distinction between my personal emotions and professional duties, which helps in managing stress and avoiding burnout." (P8)

This technique underscores the proactive measures to ensure emotional well-being and stability, which is vital for sustained professional practice. Recognizing the limits of the emotional capacity is another critical aspect of personal adjustment. One participant candidly shared:

"It is to acknowledge when a case affects me more than usual and to seek supervision or peer support to discuss these feelings safely." (P3)

This participant acknowledges when the case of a client affects her and understands when to seek supervision or peer support.

This openness to seeking help helps the risk of burnout and promotes a healthy work environment. Concluding the discussion on personal adjustment, a participant summarized the importance of regular self-care:

"Ensuring that I engage in regular self-care activities helps me recharge and maintain the emotional stamina needed to be fully present for my clients." (P1)

This statement encapsulates the theme by reinforcing the necessity of self-care as part of the ongoing process of personal adjustment, which ensures both personal well-being and professional efficacy.

The participants' narratives reveal that distinguishing personal concerns from professional obligations is fundamental to maintaining objectivity and empathy in therapeutic settings. Mental health professionals emphasize the importance of recognizing and managing transference and countertransference, which are pivotal in preventing personal emotions from clouding judgment. This awareness allows them to approach each case with the necessary professional detachment, ensuring emotional responses do not compromise the care they provide to clients.

Moreover, continuous engagement in personal development activities and adopting mindfulness and stress management techniques play significant roles in helping these professionals navigate the emotional demands of the profession. Regular self-care and seeking peer or supervisory support are also emphasized as essential practices for replenishing emotional reserves and sustaining the capacity to serve clients effectively.

Overall, Personal Adjustment in mental health professionals is a dynamic process of self-reflection and active management of personal and professional boundaries. This enhances the ability to deliver empathetic and effective care and protects the professionals' mental health, ensuring long-term effectiveness and satisfaction in the role as a mental health professional.

B. Coping Management

Coping Management is a critical theme for mental health professionals, highlighting the range of strategies they deploy to manage the intense emotional demands of the work. This theme underscores the importance of resilience and effective care and stresses safeguarding personal well-being to prevent professional burnout.

One primary strategy is the clear demarcation between personal and professional lives, as highlighted by the participants. For example, one participant describes the necessity of leaving work-related issues at the office to protect mental health, stated by the participant:

(P1) *"I have not to carry the burden of my clients' issues beyond the office to protect my mental health."*

This compartmentalization is vital for maintaining emotional health and ensuring personal concerns do not cloud professional judgment or effectiveness. Additionally, physical activity is recognized as a potent stress management tool. One participant notes,

"Engaging in regular exercise has been crucial for managing my stress and maintaining my mental health." (P3)

Regular physical activity helps dissipate stress, promotes better sleep, and boosts overall mood, all essential for mental health professionals who regularly engage in emotionally taxing work. Peer support also plays a significant role in coping strategies. Discussing complex cases with colleagues provides emotional relief and fosters a sense of community and support among professionals. One participant explains,

(P5) *"Discussing challenging cases with colleagues helps me to gain new insights and emotional relief."*

Such interactions offered new perspectives and strategies for handling complex cases, enhancing professional growth and emotional resilience. Continuous professional development is emphasized through ongoing training in stress management techniques. As one participant puts it,

"Continuous training in stress management techniques is essential for keeping up with the emotional demands of our work." (P6)

These programs equip mental health professionals with the latest tools and knowledge to handle stress more effectively and stay updated on best practices in mental health care. Mindfulness and emotional regulation techniques are also crucial, as they help professionals manage emotional responses during sessions:

"I use mindfulness techniques to remain centered and avoid taking on the emotional weight of my sessions." (P7)

Such practices ensure that professionals maintain a calm and focused demeanor, which is crucial for effective therapeutic engagement. Supervision is another key component, where seeking guidance when feeling overwhelmed ensures that the quality of care remains high, as described by one of the participants:

"Consulting with my supervisor when I feel overwhelmed ensures that I do not compromise my professional efficacy." (P9)

Supervision provides a safety net, offering a space to explore personal reactions and feelings about cases in a structured and supportive environment. Lastly, engaging in hobbies and personal interests is highlighted as an essential aspect of self-care, helping to maintain a balance between work and personal life.

"Painting on weekends allows me to express myself creatively and recharge for the coming week." (P10)

Such activities provide necessary breaks from work demands, allowing mental health professionals to replenish energy and return to work refreshed and ready to engage.

In summary, coping adjustment for mental health professionals involves a comprehensive suite of strategies that support their ability to manage emotional stress and maintain effective care without compromising well-being. Essential to this is the clear demarcation between personal and professional lives, with professionals emphasizing the importance of not carrying the emotional weight of clients beyond the office to preserve mental health. Regular physical activities are also crucial, serving as a vital outlet for stress relief and overall well-being. Additionally, the value of peer support is evident as professionals discuss complex cases with colleagues, gaining emotional relief and new insights that contribute to professional growth and resilience.

Further enhancing coping strategies and ongoing professional development through workshops and training provide mental health professionals with up-to-date stress management techniques, which are essential for keeping up with the emotional demands of their work. Mindfulness and supervision are also pivotal, helping professionals maintain objectivity and manage emotional responses effectively during sessions. Lastly, engaging in hobbies and personal interests provides a necessary break from work, allowing professionals to recharge and return to the field refreshed and ready to provide empathetic care. Collectively, these strategies ensured that mental health professionals maintained a healthy balance between personal well-being and professional responsibilities, ultimately fostering both personal resilience and professional longevity.

C. Emotional Adjustment

In the demanding field of mental health, professionals such as guidance counselors, mental health nurses, and mental health providers are required to navigate the complex emotional states of their patients on a daily basis. This involves not only providing therapeutic support but also managing their own emotional responses to prevent burnout and maintain objectivity. The ability to regulate personal emotions while offering empathetic care is essential, as it directly influences both the effectiveness of their professional practice and their overall psychological well-being.

Emotional Adjustment is pivotal for mental health professionals as it involves refining the ability to manage one's emotions within the therapeutic setting. This sub theme focuses on how professionals develop the capacity to maintain emotional equilibrium in the face of the often intense emotional climates they navigate daily, ensuring that personal feelings do not interfere with the efficacy of the interventions.

A key aspect of emotional adjustment is distinguishing between personal emotions and professional responsibilities. One participant highlighted the strategy involved:

"I have the importance of not carrying the emotional weight of my clients' stories beyond the therapy session. I must leave those emotions at work to maintain personal well-being and provide objective care." (P2)

This practice is crucial for preventing emotional overflow into personal life, which leads to burnout. Additionally, another participant emphasized the technique of emotional compartmentalization as a form of self-protection:

"By compartmentalizing my emotions, I can focus on my clients' needs without personal feelings clouding my judgment. This allows me to remain effective in my role and safeguard my emotional health." (P6)

These strategies demonstrate how mental health professionals actively work to create boundaries that help them manage the emotional aspects in the field. Another facet of emotional adjustment involves developing specific coping strategies to handle the intense emotions that naturally arise during therapy sessions as stated by one of the participants:

"I employ relaxation techniques and structured reflection after particularly challenging sessions, which helps me decompress and prevent residual emotional strain from affecting my personal life or other professional interactions." (P8)

This method not only aided immediate stress relief but also contributed to long-term emotional resilience. Similarly, mindfulness is frequently mentioned as a beneficial tool for managing emotions.

"Practicing mindfulness has taught me to observe my emotions without getting overwhelmed by them, which is invaluable in a profession where emotional triggers are common." (P1)

This approach helps professionals maintain a calm demeanor in the face of emotional challenges, enhancing the ability to support clients effectively. Peer support is also recognized as an essential component of emotional adjustment, as stated by one participant:

"Discussing difficult cases with colleagues provides a sense of shared experience and relief from the isolation that can accompany our work. This peer feedback is vital for emotional processing and resilience." (P3)

Such interactions allow for emotional burdens to be shared and understood within a supportive community, reducing the potential for emotional fatigue. The acknowledgment of emotional limits plays a critical role in the maintenance of professional efficiency, as claimed by another participant:

"Recognizing when a case is too emotionally taxing and knowing when to seek supervision or refer the client elsewhere is crucial for maintaining my effectiveness and emotional health." (P5)

This awareness prevents professionals from becoming overwhelmed and ensures they remain competent and caring practitioners. Finally, the integration of professional training and personal emotional management is seen as crucial for sustained effectiveness.

"Continuous professional development in emotional management not only enhances my skills but also builds my capacity to handle emotional challenges more adeptly." (P9)

This ongoing learning process is integral to maintaining high standards of care and personal emotional stability.

Emotional Adjustment is crucial for mental health professionals, who must skillfully navigate emotions to maintain professional effectiveness and personal well-being. This process involves developing strategies to

manage the intense emotional climates they encounter in therapeutic settings without allowing personal feelings to interfere with professional responsibilities. Maintaining emotional equilibrium is vital, and ensured professionals provided empathetic and effective care while protecting self mental health. Techniques such as compartmentalizing emotions, employing relaxation methods, and practicing mindfulness enable professionals to observe and manage emotional responses without becoming overwhelmed.

Moreover, mental health professionals recognize the importance of peer support and professional development in fostering emotional adjustment. Sharing experiences and challenges with colleagues provides crucial support, reducing feelings of isolation and emotional fatigue. Recognizing emotional limits and seeking supervision when necessary are essential practices that help maintain emotional resilience and prevent burnout. These strategies collectively contribute to a sustainable practice where mental health professionals thrive professionally and personally, continually adapting to meet patients' needs and emotional health requirements.

Therapeutic Evolution

The second theme discusses how therapy evolved to improve the methods of dealing with patients in the mental health field further. The participants in this study, guidance counselors, mental health nurses, and mental health providers, have witnessed firsthand how approaches to mental health care have evolved over time. Through their professional experience, they have adapted to emerging practices and shifting societal perspectives, allowing them to provide more effective, compassionate, and patient-centered care to individuals with diverse mental health needs. Instead of using outdated methods, the mental health professionals of the current time used these new methods to figure out the issues of a patient more accurately, the factors of a patient's issues, the needs of the patient, and ways to get those needs. Evolution in therapy has also improved the communication between the mental health professionals and the patients, ensuring that the professional understands the patient that the mental health professional is handling. The sub-themes from this central theme are Reflective Development, Client Involvement, and Wellness Improvement.

• Client Involvement

Working in mental health requires partnership; the client and the practitioner must cooperate to foster mental well-being. Since clients may be reluctant to speak up, rapport-building is crucial. One participant emphasized how crucial patience is to building trust:

"Sometimes, individuals are not ready to open up immediately. Building trust takes time, and patience is key." (P1)

Readiness also plays a role in the same process:

"It all comes down to readiness. Some individuals are hesitant to open up, while others are more willing to share their concerns." (P8)

Providing clients with space to process emotions helped create a peaceful and safe environment:

"Sometimes, I give these to my clients when they need a moment to calm down or when I need to reset after a particularly intense session. It provides the client and me with mental space and helps create a peaceful environment. Both the client and I can benefit from this as we take a moment to center ourselves." (P8)

These observations highlight the importance of coping mechanisms, patience, and preparedness during mental health sessions. Professionals better understand their client's concerns and provide more effective help when both parties feel safe. Understanding a client's emotions is crucial, especially for children who may not always express feelings directly. One participant stated:

"Instead of what they say, focus on what they are not saying. This will truly test your communication skills. Verbal and non-verbal cues come into play. A simple gesture, like looking away instead of directly at you, can reveal a lot." (P10)

The guidance office plays a vital role in providing a safe space for students:

"The belief that no school can thrive without the guidance office is rooted in the fact that it is the heart of the school. When things get tough, students know they can turn to the guidance office or the counselor, a safe space to express themselves without fear of judgment and be truly heard." (P2)

According to another participant, mental health professionals should continue to use a client-centered approach and refrain from depending too heavily on her own experiences:

"As a therapist, your lived experiences can only take you so far. You should never rely solely on them. If you do, you start functioning from a very personal perspective." (P7)

Although personal experience is significant, experts must also employ training, research-based methods, and continuous training to offer unbiased assistance. Another crucial component of counseling is establishing lasting relationships with clients:

"The more I interact with clients, the more I relate to them. Some clients go back several years and occasionally reach out, reminding me of our shared experiences. As I continue working with students, this connection bridges the past with the present. Despite the generational differences, we are all human at our core, and fundamentally, nothing is truly new under the sun." (P4)

This insight highlights the lasting connections formed in counseling. Mental health professionals may foster significant, long-lasting changes in the clients' lives by building trust, prioritizing clients, and utilizing professional expertise and experience.

B. Reflective Development

A crucial aspect of the mental health field is ensuring patients' well-being is achieved and maintained. However, wellness is important not only for patients but also for mental health professionals themselves. A way of achieving this wellness for them is to take breaks sometimes from their occupation to fulfill their necessities and do leisure activities to reduce stress. One of the participants discussed:

"What do you mean by a rest? Sleeping, leisure, eating. Rest means a change of preoccupation. If you are working here and want to rest, do something else, and then return. When I work for 1 week, I need to rest after that and be with my family." (P4)

This statement highlights the importance of shifting focus as a form of rest. Proper rest does not necessarily mean inactivity but rather engaging in different activities that allow the mind and body to recover. Wellness in the mental health field is essential for patients and professionals, as they must take breaks and engage in leisure activities to prevent burnout and maintain effectiveness. By setting boundaries, practicing self-care, and prioritizing rest, mental health professionals sustained their well-being while providing quality care for others. In speaking of providing quality care for others, one of the key components of providing this care to mental health patients is listening attentively to the patients. One of the participants stated:

"Listening skills involve understanding what is said and thinking about what to ask next. You might have a question, but your listening skills are tested when unexpected answers arise. You must read between and beyond the lines, as clients may not open up immediately." (P10)

This statement discusses the importance of having listening skills and how that factors into better understanding the patient. As mentioned in the statement, listening skills need a mental health professional to thoroughly read between the lines of the statements the patient discusses, as not everything is presented at face value. There are topics that a patient might avoid directly talking about due to a multitude of possible reasons, so it is the job of the professional to dig deeper, take mental notes of both the clearly discussed and seemingly hidden topics, and then ask further questions to the patient to give more context of what information may have been initially left out. The ways of working in the mental health field and achieving wellness for patients vary in method as the years go by, and it is important to keep up to date on one's knowledge of these methods because of that. One of the participants mentioned:

"It is essential to remain relevant because the generation keeps evolving. What worked with students 10 or 20 years ago may not be effective with today's generation. Continuously upgrading counseling skills is necessary, as this generation is evolving rapidly." (P2)

This statement shows that mental health professionals should be aware of the evolving atmosphere regarding the skills needed in the field and update skills to adjust to that evolving field. For example, counseling methods

that have previously worked may not be as effective now due to newly obtained widespread information on methods deemed more effective for patients. Because of that, counselors must learn to develop that skill set and then learn possible new skill sets that the future might need.

Being a guidance counselor is not just about offering advice but truly understanding people. Every person who walks through the door comes with a different story, and no single approach works for everyone. One participant shared:

"You need to be observant and knowledgeable about different approaches. For example, suppose you think a client's issue is self-esteem. In that case, you may use certain strategies, only to discover that self-esteem results from another underlying issue during the session." (P2)

This highlights a fundamental reality in the practice of mental health care: the issues presented on the surface are not always the root concern. A client may speak of present insecurities, yet beneath those words often lie years of unresolved emotional experiences. Mental health professionals, particularly guidance counselors, are trained not only to listen but also to discern meaning in what is left unsaid. The therapeutic process is not a linear procedure, but rather an unfolding journey of understanding and insight.

Beyond the application of techniques, however, lies a deeper lesson that many guidance counselors come to learn through experience: the importance of not taking things personally. It is a natural human response to feel affected when a client reacts with resistance or when visible progress seems temporary. Yet, as one participant shared, a piece of advice helped her navigate such moments with grace and resilience:

"That emotional rush has calmed down a bit over time. I learned this from a senior, Michelle Ma'am, who taught me not to take things personally. Often, their frustration comes through, and it is not always about you, not just with clients but in general." (P8)

A participant noted a shift in their emotional responses over time, emphasizing the importance of not taking things personally. Through experience, the participant came to understand that expressions of frustration are often a reflection of an individual's internal struggles rather than a direct response to others. This realization contributed significantly to the development of their emotional resilience, particularly in professional interactions.

Such an insight is not limited to those in the mental health field. Individuals across various roles, whether as educators, counselors, or peers, regularly encounter others who may be carrying unspoken stress, trauma, or emotional burdens. These emotions may inadvertently manifest in interpersonal exchanges. Recognizing this dynamic and refraining from internalizing every reaction is essential to sustaining emotional composure and maintaining a compassionate approach in both professional and personal settings.

Another challenging yet valuable lesson is the cultivation of patience. There is often a strong inclination to resolve an individual's difficulties as quickly as possible; however, the process of healing is neither immediate nor linear. One participant offered a reflection on this:

"It showed me that many challenges are not about providing quick solutions. It is about being calm and having a steady presence. Helping students through emotional crises is a slow process that requires trust and patience." (P3)

Sometimes, being there for someone does not mean solving their problems; walking them through it takes time.

However, the learning does not stop with clients. One of the most surprising things about working in mental health is how much one learns about oneself. One participant put it in an honest and slightly humorous way:

"It broadens your understanding of others and yourself. As you encounter different personalities, you also get to know your own. Unless, of course, you have a disorder. However, that is just having multiple personalities, like you see in the movies." (P4)

It is true that when a mental health professional spends time understanding how people think, they start to reflect on your thoughts, reactions, and emotions. Every client, conversation, and challenge teaches something new, not just about psychology but about being human.

At its core, reflective development in the mental health field is about balance. It involves caring for others while also caring for yourself. Knowing when to listen, when to step back, and when to keep going. Counselors do not just help people heal; they grow alongside them, becoming more assertive, wiser, and more compassionate.

C. Wellness Improvement

Therapeutic practices in mental health counseling focus on continuous skill development, emotional resilience, and maintaining a strong sense of purpose. Mental Health Professionals navigate these elements while striving to improve overall wellness for themselves and their clients. One participant reflected on how overcoming challenges contributes to professional growth:

"As a mental health professional, these challenges have contributed to my growth by allowing me to refine my skills as a guidance counselor." (P2)

Each professional challenge presents an opportunity to develop expertise and adaptability. Another participant echoed this sentiment:

"Every challenge I have had, whether with my students or dealing with diverse patients, has been an opportunity for growth." (P9)

Beyond skill development, guidance counselors find motivation in past successes and the impact they make. A participant expressed how these experiences reinforce her dedication:

"These experiences continue to fuel my passion for this profession, reaffirming my dedication to helping others grow emotionally and mentally." (P9)

The mental health field goes beyond individual growth to promote communal well-being. One participant emphasized the overall impact of his work:

"One of the most meaningful aspects of my work is my mission to help clients and educate future professionals. My biggest goal is to transform communities, one step at a time." (P6)

Helping others provides an intrinsic sense of fulfillment, strengthening the professional's commitment to the role. A participant described the rewarding nature of her work:

"The true essence of helping in the guidance counseling lies in the sense of fulfillment it brings. Seeing students happy, healthy, and enjoying life reinforces my purpose and strengthens my commitment to this role." (P1)

Many professionals overcome personal struggles by directing efforts to support clients through trauma. One participant reflected on this sense of privilege:

"I feel privileged to contribute positively to the lives of others, especially students who need emotional or mental support, despite the challenges." (P9)

Balancing passion with professional detachment is essential in preventing burnout and ensuring practical guidance. A participant shared her perspective on maintaining enthusiasm for the field:

"I just have a passion for what I do. I just believe in what I do. I enjoyed it and I never admired it." (P7)

Motivation is also sustained through strong support systems. One participant emphasized how his passion, rather than material incentives, drives the work:

"My motivation comes from that. Moreover, they say everything else will follow if you have this motivation. You do not think about the salary. You do not think about material things. Because if you love what you do, everything else will follow." (P4)

While passion is a key driver, balancing work and personal life is crucial. A participant explained his approach to managing stress and recharging:

"What do you mean by a rest? Sleeping, leisure, eating. Rest means a change of preoccupation. If you are working here and want to rest, do something else, and then return. When I work for 1 week, I need to rest after that and be with my family." (P4)

Self-care is essential to maintaining a long-term career in mental health counseling. Another participant shared her method when dealing with emotionally draining situations:

"In the past year at PSD, I balanced things by eating. When a case started to get to me, I would eat, even if it meant depriving myself." (P10)

The ability to adapt to new challenges and learn regularly is a defining feature of professional development in mental health. Mental health practitioners frequently face unexpected situations that require them to stay adaptable while maintaining ethical and emotional boundaries. This adaptability improves the ability to direct clients effectively and ensures well-being. Mental health practitioners understand that accepting change and fresh ideas allows them to improve the approach to better serve patients.

In addition, developing a strong support network within the professional community is critical for maintaining motivation and resilience. They employ collaboration, shared experiences, and training to manage the intricacies of the profession. By continuing education, obtaining peer support, and reflecting on progress, they improve their capacity to offer compassionate and effective treatment. The exchange of knowledge and emotional reinforcement within the field helps them maintain their passion and devotion to the objective.

Continuous learning, emotional resilience, and a commitment to wellness contribute to therapeutic evolution. Mental health professionals improve effectiveness and personal well-being by honing abilities, finding inspiration in the work, and prioritizing self-care. Ultimately, dedication contributes to transformative change within individuals and communities, ensuring the lasting impact of the profession.

Supportive Formation

The last central theme discusses the supportive strategies or processes that help mental health professionals deal with emotional and mental challenges in the field. Emotional turmoil could be left unchecked in a counseling session. They come from the clients or the mental health professionals themselves. These could slow the process of help that a client needs and reduce the effectiveness of a counseling session. *Supportive Formation* deals with the preventive or protective strategies and the emotional coping mechanisms of mental health professionals when working in their field. These measures reduce the risk of burnout, emotional fatigue, stress, and other mental or emotional concerns in the workplace for these mental health professionals. The sub-themes from this main theme are Support Enhancement, Mental Empowerment, and Social Engagement.

. Social Engagement

When looking at how important it is to study coping mechanisms, support systems are crucial for navigating the emotional and mental demands in a mental health professional's line of work. Mental health professionals creating or implementing their own emotional and coping strategies during or after the session are essential in offering them time and space to process and manage their emotions and stressors. As recounted by three participants:

"Learning different ways to manage them, such as becoming an expert in handling violence or aggression, is crucial. Continually de-escalating situations and applying repetitive de-escalation techniques help and should be continued when dealing with other patients in the future." (P5)

"Breathing techniques are crucial. I do not just apply them during counseling; I use them everywhere, at home and in everyday life, because they help a lot." (10)

"Regarding limitations, working as a mental health professional means you cannot operate solely based on personal judgment. You function within an institution's framework, adhering to rules and regulations." (P8)

One way is to process emotions with the help of colleagues working in the same field. These may be in the form of advice or guidance from a higher or more experienced colleague, as experienced by one participant:

"This motivated me to grow both professionally and personally by attending training and seminars and striving to be the best version of myself." (P1)

Pushing for policy changes that benefit both client and mental health professionals can prove significant in helping the professional manage concerns, such as burn-out or fatigue. As shared a participant:

"My motivation comes from seeing how our services have improved over time here on the island. There are challenges, but when I take a step back and assess our progress, I realize how much we have accomplished and how many goals we have already achieved since the beginning of our journey." (P6)

Prioritizing a "work-life balance" type of environment and requesting more flexible schedules can all prove beneficial in managing the work with clients. In addition, with more open communication with clients and the workplace and addressing specific concerns of the mental health professionals, the professionals are reassured about the different kinds of help they can get. By having open communication with both the clients and the workplace, professionals can address the concerns about work-life balance and boundary setting between professional life and personal life, as a few of the participants stated:

"...If there is no improvement after a set number of sessions, you must let it go. It does not mean you are not a good counselor; it just means you might not be the right counselor for that person." (P10)

"...When you are younger, you feel the need to solve everything. But as you grow older in this field, you realize you are not a superhero. There are limitations, and that is part of the profession." (P1)

Considering all of this can provide mental health professionals with the help they need while ensuring they can still help clients in the field.

B. Mental Empowerment

Ethical considerations in mental health counseling focus on upholding professional boundaries, mental resilience, and a client-centered approach. While navigating these ethical dimensions, counselors ensure that their work remains supportive and free from personal biases. One participant thought about how important simple gestures of comfort are within counseling:

"Seeing how the student left my office feeling calmer and more prepared to face the situation reminded me why I do this job. Even small moments of comfort that I can provide are worth the challenges." (P3)

This emphasizes how crucial emotional support is in mental health, as even brief instances of comfort can greatly impact someone's well-being. However, emotional engagement also requires the counselors to manage their emotions and responses. A participant went into further detail on the difficulty:

"Sometimes, when you see a client crying, you feel the urge to cry. It is a challenge because, as a human being, you are not exempt from these emotions. Counselors must learn how to handle such situations." (P2)

It showcases that balancing empathy and keeping professionalism is crucial. Another participant emphasized how emotional expression affects their ability to carry out their role as a counselor:

"Tears will make you more emotional even if you feel something else already. Once it pours, that is it. you will not be able to deliver well, but if you can hold it in, even if there is a pinch of emotion, you will be able to deliver well." (P10)

In addition, upholding professional advocacy is a fundamental role in mental health. One participant emphasized the significance of prioritizing children's well-being over individual recognition;

"It was just doing something different that would benefit the children. Keeping emotion out of it, and not taking, and not doing anything for personal glory. It is never about me ever." (P7)

Understanding parental perspectives is another major challenge when handling underage clients. Instances where clients deny or misunderstand their child's needs. Counselors need to handle these circumstances with patience and sensitivity. The same participant shared her gratitude to her client helps them stay committed to their mission as a counselor:

"To hear a 14-year-old say that she saw me as an advocate for children, it truly touched me. I did not realize kids saw me that way. I was just doing what felt natural to me." (P7)

To maintain emotional stability, counselors prioritize self-care and set boundaries to prevent burnout. A participant explained their approach:

"For me, balance is important. If I feel vulnerable, I take a step back and give myself some 'me time.' If I still feel overwhelmed, I inform my colleagues or supervisor and ask for help." (P5)

Another participant reiterated the importance of setting boundaries as well as taking care of oneself:

"I make time for self-care and try to focus on small victories. I also set boundaries to avoid burnout."
(P3)

Ultimately, the sense of fulfillment from supporting others goes beyond monetary gain. The deep connections formed through advocacy and counseling are often the most rewarding aspects of the work.

In summary, mental empowerment in counseling is built upon ethical considerations that guide counselors in delivering efficient and compassionate care. Counselors adhere to fundamental ethical standards in their profession by prioritizing self-care, maintaining professional detachment, and advocating for clients. While maintaining objectivity is not always observed due to human nature, the commitment to fairness, empathy, and professional integrity guarantees that the support is meaningful and impactful.

C. Support Enhancement

Flexibility, rapport-building, and trust in patient interaction are significant in building social engagement. Counselors must adapt their approaches to ensure meaningful connections and effective support. A participant highlighted the necessity of flexibility when managing patients:

"Nobody wants to be in the same position they are in, especially in psychiatry. However, we have to work with the patient alongside them. That is why building rapport is crucial in establishing a strong working relationship with our patients." (P5)

Building rapport is essential for fostering trust and understanding. One participant emphasized the importance of recognizing a patient's progress without claiming success as the counselor:

"You should always think about your patient's progress. It is important not to credit yourself for their improvement. They are the ones who made the decisions and took the steps. You are simply there to guide them along the way." (P10)

Effective counseling also entails listening to a client's thoughts and responding accordingly. A participant highlighted how adaptation in conversations promotes a patient's well-being.

"I always have to ensure I know the client's disposition. Our conversation will depend on how they are feeling. If they are happy, we can talk about happy things. However, if they are not in the mood for jokes, we stick to their emotional state and work with that. Being careful about their mood is essential." (P4)

"This experience stood out because the student was distraught but trusted me enough to open up. I knew being there for him and listening without judgment made a difference in that stressful moment. It showed me how powerful it can be when students feel heard and supported." (P3)

Celebrating small accomplishments with clients plays a crucial role in reinforcing their progress. A participant reflected on the confidentiality practices that create a safe space for clients:

"The rule we follow is: 'What you say here stays here, unless someone is hurting you, you want to hurt someone, or you give me permission to tell a trusted adult.'" (P8)

When an underage client needs specialist support, it is critical to know when to recommend them to another counselor. One participant described her internal conflict with fulfilling her client's needs:

"...one thing that I struggle with is always kind of thinking, 'Am I giving them what they are here for?', 'Do they feel heard?', 'Do they feel listened to?' or 'Do they feel that coming to me is helping them?'. That is something that I kind of struggle with sometimes." (P7)

The generational gap also influences counseling effectiveness. As society evolves, so do the approaches needed to connect with younger clients. A participant shared the need to stay updated with the generational changes:

"...many changes have already taken place. The generation gap is accelerating, and what worked six years ago may not resonate with today's youth. Staying relevant is critical." (P2)

In conclusion, social engagement in counseling requires a balance between professional adaptability and emotional sensitivity. By fostering trust, recognizing patient progress, and staying relevant to generational

changes, counselors foster a supportive environment that enables clients to navigate their mental health journeys successfully.

DISCUSSION

Mental health professionals experience a continuous process of psychological and professional growth, shaped by their interactions with patients and the evolving nature of therapeutic practice (Opland & Torrico, 2024). The findings of this study highlight how these professionals develop essential skills such as emotional resilience, empathy, and adaptive coping mechanisms, which are crucial for maintaining both their well-being and the quality of care they provide (Alodhialah et al., 2024). Additionally, the results emphasize the significance of support networks, ethical considerations, and ongoing professional development in sustaining their effectiveness in the field. By navigating complex emotional landscapes and refining therapeutic approaches, mental health professionals not only enhance their ability to support clients but also experience profound personal growth (Opland & Torrico, 2024). The key themes that emerged from the study underscore the reciprocal nature of the therapeutic relationship, demonstrating that while professionals guide patients toward healing, they, in turn, cultivate deeper understanding, resilience, and fulfillment in their practice.

Professionals in mental health undergo a continual process of psychological development that significantly influences growth on both personal and professional levels (Rønnestad et al., 2018). Interactions with patients foster the development of critical skills such as emotional resilience, empathy, and coping techniques, which are essential for patient development. To maintain objectivity and deliver quality care, mental health professionals must confront and manage emotional responses while navigating complex emotional landscapes (King, A. et al., 2020). Through continuous self-reflection, professional development, and peer support, practitioners enhance the ability to adapt to the ever-changing needs of clients, thereby improving the capacity to provide empathetic and effective therapeutic interventions. This reciprocal nature of the therapeutic relationship ensures that while clients benefit from care, professionals also experience substantial growth, deepening understanding and practice within the field (Ferguson et al., 2020).

The concept that the development of therapy and support networks is crucial for the welfare of professionals and the efficiency of work is central to mental health practice (Rønnestad et al., 2018). Over time, the evolution of therapeutic techniques has led to better communication, greater trust, and more individualized approaches to care, all aimed at addressing clients' changing needs. This shift is complemented by a focus on supportive development, which enables professionals to maintain emotional equilibrium through coping strategies, self-care, and continuous professional development (Jeon et al., 2020). Furthermore, ethical concerns play a significant role in shaping how therapists interact with clients, as these are essential for maintaining therapeutic boundaries and fostering an atmosphere of empathy and trust. As mental health professionals continually enhance skills, not only is professional efficacy improved, but greater personal fulfillment is also experienced, enabling challenges of the demanding work to be confronted with resilience and a strong sense of purpose (Tjin A Tsoi et al., 2018). Thus, the following points have been emphasized:

Psychological Progression

The findings of this study emphasize the dynamic psychological growth that mental health professionals experience as they navigate their roles. Their work demands a balance between empathy and objectivity, requiring continuous self-reflection, coping strategies, and professional development (Hobeika et al., 2020). The results highlight key themes, including the significance of emotional resilience, the necessity of setting boundaries, and the role of peer support in managing the emotional toll of patient interactions (Alodhialah et al., 2024). Additionally, the study underscores the reciprocal nature of therapy, where professionals not only aid their clients but also undergo personal and professional evolution. By integrating self-care, mindfulness,

and adaptive coping mechanisms, mental health practitioners enhance their ability to provide compassionate and effective care while safeguarding their own well-being (Posluns et al., 2019).

A key component of mental health therapy is **psychological progression**, which affects the development of both patients and practitioners. Mental health professionals aid individuals in dealing with emotional and cognitive challenges so that growth and resilience are fostered (Foster et al., 2018). Since the changing psychological demands of patients must be acknowledged, practitioners must constantly adapt. Mental health practitioners may manage complex emotions and behaviors by reflecting on experiences, asking probing questions, and honing skills. The treatment process, where empathy and tried-and-true methods converge, is improved by integrating professional training and life experience.

The ability of professionals to manage emotions while maintaining objectivity is crucial to psychological growth. Mental health professionals frequently deal with strong emotions, calling for empathy and objectivity (Gerace et al., 2016). Coping, emotional management, and personal adjustment skills must be acquired to avoid burnout and ensure quality patient care. By becoming resilient and self-aware, self-care can be maintained just as others are cared for. Therapy techniques are improved through ongoing education and peer collaboration, ultimately benefiting patients.

The work of mental health practitioners significantly affects both career and personal growth (Roennfeldt et al., 2021). Psychological development occurs through client interactions that foster efficient coping mechanisms, emotional resilience, and personal adjustment techniques. This development promotes personal growth and enhances the capacity to deliver practical, compassionate care. Since both parties are influenced by interactions, the mutual structure of the counselor-client relationship is essential to its development. Through these interactions, mental health practitioners influence patients and develop comprehension and utilization of therapeutic approaches.

The personal adjustment that mental health practitioners must make is crucial to psychological evolution. This entails developing coping mechanisms for stress, controlling countertransference, and keeping personal feelings apart from work obligations. Setting limits and developing self-awareness help professionals stay emotionally stable to provide the best treatment possible without compromising personal health. Long-term effectiveness depends on modifying personal coping mechanisms to satisfy work expectations. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance protects mental health and professional competence (Bardhoshi et al., 2021). This is achieved through regular self-care and seeking help when necessary.

For mental health practitioners, emotional adjustment remains another crucial component. It entails honing the capacity to control intense emotions in a therapeutic context (Faustino et al., 2020). In order to deliver successful treatments without allowing personal feelings to interfere, emotional equilibrium must be maintained. Various strategies are employed to separate emotions, exercise mindfulness, and relax in order to establish the impartiality required for professional efficiency. Peer support is also essential for managing emotional difficulties; discussing challenging situations with colleagues fosters understanding and lessens emotional exhaustion (Byrne, et al., 2019). Recognizing emotional boundaries and seeking supervision is essential to avoiding burnout and ensuring ongoing professional development.

A vital aspect of the ability of mental health practitioners to handle the emotional demands of work is coping adjustment. This involves drawing a distinct line between personal and professional lives to prevent well-being from negatively impacting the emotional burden of clients' problems (Simpson et al., 2018). Exercise is also a stress-reduction strategy because physical activity helps release tension and improve mood (Kandola et al., 2020). Retaining emotional resilience requires both continuous professional development and peer support. Outside work, hobbies, and interests provide essential opportunities to detach from the emotional strain of counseling, allowing professionals to refuel and return to work with renewed enthusiasm.

To summarize, coping techniques for mental health practitioners include various behaviors that support professional effectiveness and emotional well-being. These include establishing limits, exercising, and

seeking support from peers. Stress and emotional reactions during sessions can also be better managed by practicing mindfulness and receiving continual training (Scheepers et al., 2019). Furthermore, scheduling personal time and engaging in hobbies allows for maintaining strength and productivity at work. Combining these practices helps mental health professionals develop a more positive mindset, both personally and professionally, by allowing better management of responsibilities.

Overall, navigating the difficulties of working in the mental health field requires constant emotional and personal adjustment. Stress must be managed, impartiality must be maintained, and mental well-being must be safeguarded. By utilizing self-care, mindfulness, and peer support, empathetic and effective care can continue to be delivered while personal well-being is preserved. These tactics support sustained achievement and contentment in the field of mental health.

Therapeutic Evolution

The findings of this study highlight the continuous evolution of therapeutic approaches in mental health practice. As treatment methods advance, professionals refine their strategies to better address patient needs, fostering improved communication, trust, and overall care (Sheehan et al., 2021). The results emphasize the importance of emotional resilience, professional adaptability, and self-care in sustaining a long-term career in mental health counseling. Additionally, the study underscores the collaborative nature of therapy, where client involvement and therapist preparedness play crucial roles in achieving successful outcomes. By prioritizing continuous learning, self-awareness, and wellness, mental health professionals enhance their ability to provide effective interventions while maintaining their own well-being.

The second theme centers on the **therapeutic evolution** of treatment to better address mental health concerns. As time passes, earlier approaches become more effective strategies for treating a range of mental health patients, ensuring better support and care. Modern mental health professionals employ these advancements to recognize issues better, understand patient requirements, and implement effective interventions. As therapy has evolved, a higher degree of trust and understanding has also resulted from enhanced communication between patients and professionals. The following sub-themes emerged from this main topic: wellness improvement, client involvement, and reflective development.

In mental health counseling, therapeutic approaches emphasize emotional strength, a strong sense of purpose, and ongoing skill improvement. In order to improve their own and their clients' well-being, mental health practitioners manage these factors (Posluns et al., 2019). A participant reflected on how overcoming challenges helps them in their work. Every obstacle presents an opportunity for adaptability and professional growth. In addition to improving their abilities, counselors find inspiration in their successes and the impact they make. The field of mental health includes both individual growth and societal well-being. Many professionals concentrate on assisting clients in overcoming personal obstacles by supporting them through trauma. Finding a balance between professional objectivity and enthusiasm is necessary to avoid burnout and maintain effectiveness (Galaiya et al., 2020). Another participant underlined the importance of mental motivation. Maintaining a lengthy career in mental health counseling requires self-care.

Therapy requires a cooperative relationship between the therapist and the client. Building a relationship with clients is crucial as they could be hesitant to share information. One participant emphasized the importance of patience. Preparedness is another aspect of this process. Allowing clients to process their emotions creates a safe and peaceful environment. Mental health practitioners also need to be aware of nonverbal cues. The guidance office is crucial to providing students with a secure atmosphere. It is also important for therapists to balance their personal and professional lives.

Mental health professionals must prioritize their own and their clients' well-being. Self-care and taking breaks are essential for preventing burnout. The ability to listen is crucial in therapy. Mental health professionals also need to stay current on evolving therapy techniques. The key is to be adaptable and observant. Counselors

must also develop their ability to be impersonal. Patience is also crucial in the industry. Finally, another facet of therapy is self-discovery.

Therapy advancement depends on continuous learning, emotional resilience, and commitment to wellness. Mental health practitioners become more effective by honing their expertise, maintaining motivation, and prioritizing self-care. Ultimately, their commitment creates revolutionary transformation in individuals and society, guaranteeing the profession's lasting impact.

Supportive Development

The results highlight the crucial role of supportive development processes in helping mental health professionals manage the emotional and mental challenges of their work. Strategies such as support networks, ethical considerations, and advocacy efforts play a significant role in maintaining professional effectiveness while ensuring emotional resilience. The findings emphasize the importance of setting boundaries, practicing self-care, and fostering strong counselor-client relationships to prevent burnout and sustain motivation. Additionally, adapting to societal changes and maintaining ethical responsibility further contribute to the effectiveness of mental health practitioners (Posluns et al., 2019). Overall, these insights reinforce the need for continuous personal and professional development to enhance both counselor well-being and client outcomes.

The third central theme focuses on the **supportive development** processes that encourage mental health professionals to deal with their field's emotional and mental challenges. The supporting procedures that help mental health practitioners cope with the emotional and mental difficulties in their line of work are the subject of the third central theme. This covers the protective measures and tactics that mental health practitioners use in their work and their emotional coping techniques. These reduce the likelihood of emotional exhaustion, mental burnout, stress, and other emotional and mental issues (Posluns et al., 2019). A client's need for assistance may be delayed, and the effectiveness of a counseling session may be decreased if mental health practitioners cannot carry out their responsibilities to the fullest extent possible.

Support networks, for example, are essential coping strategies for managing the mental and emotional demands of a mental health professional's job. Support and direction from coworkers in the same industry can help the expert handle emotions more effectively (King et al., 2020). There will inevitably be difficulties, such as advocating for policy changes that benefit patients and mental health providers. Nonetheless, this can help the expert handle problems efficiently; requesting more flexible scheduling can help prioritize a "work-life balance" environment and manage client work productively (Peprah et al., 2020). This allows mental health professionals to receive the assistance they require while maintaining their ability to assist clients in the field of work. Furthermore, open communication with clients and colleagues makes a safe and healthy work environment that fosters positive client responses and results possible.

Ethical considerations are central to mental health counseling, guiding counselors in providing compassionate, effective care while maintaining professionalism. This study emphasizes how crucial it is to maintain professional boundaries, foster mental resilience, and take a client-centered approach. Counselors must balance their emotional reactions with the requirement to maintain objectivity to provide emotional support that is sympathetic and objective (Prikhidko et al., (2018). Clients benefited greatly from small acts of consolation, highlighting the need for emotional support. Counselors must carefully control their emotions to avoid burnout and guarantee good treatment. Thus, they must remain professional while providing emotional engagement.

A significant theme that emerged was how important advocacy is in counseling. The participants stressed the importance of prioritizing the welfare of clients, especially children, over one's achievement or prominence. Counselors have an ethical duty to handle difficult situations, such as helping parents confused about their child's needs. Such circumstances call for patience and understanding (Lloyd-Hazlett, 2017). The study also discovered that the appreciation of their clients frequently contributes to counselors' feelings of contentment

and strengthens their commitment to their profession. In order to continue helping their clients' mental health journeys, counselors must have this sense of purpose.

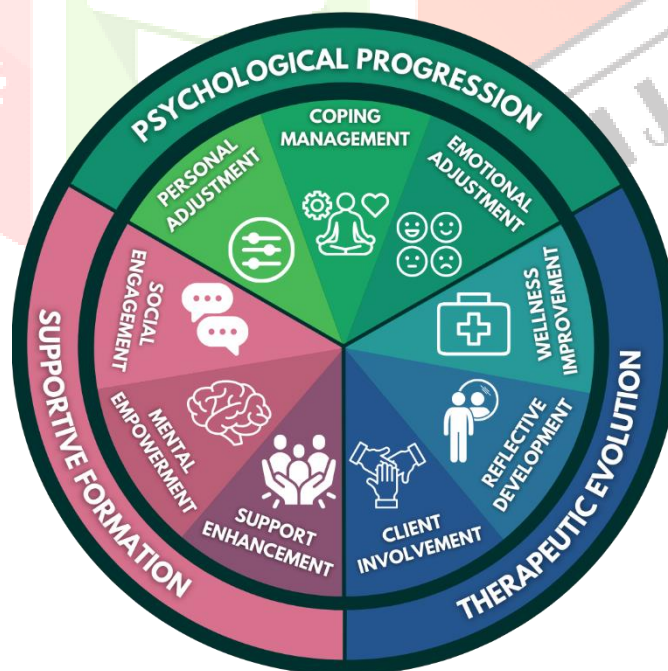
Setting boundaries and caring for oneself has become essential to preserving emotional stability in counseling. In order to give their clients, the best treatment possible, counselors must put their own health first. Counselors stay motivated and productive by avoiding burnout through self-care techniques and clear professional limits (Bardhoshi et al., 2021). According to the study, the profound joy from helping others, which goes beyond monetary compensation, is the most fulfilling part of counseling for many participants. This highlights how crucial internal motivation is to the counseling field.

One important component of developing successful counselor-client interactions was social engagement. To ensure that clients feel heard and supported, counselors must be adaptive, flexible, and able to establish rapport. Participants emphasized the importance of acknowledging minor turning points in clients' development because doing so can boost their self-esteem and inspire further development. Confidentiality procedures were also emphasized as crucial to establishing a secure environment where clients can freely and honestly express themselves. This strengthens the trust that forms the basis of the therapeutic relationship.

The study also highlighted the challenges of counseling in an evolving societal context. The effectiveness of counseling was shown to be significantly impacted by generational differences, with participants emphasizing the value of keeping up with cultural shifts to interact more effectively with younger clients. Another important factor was knowing when to refer clients, particularly minors, to qualified specialists. The results indicate that effective therapy necessitates balancing empathy, moral commitment, and flexibility. The most effective counselors who help their client's mental health and well-being can handle these difficulties while remaining professional and sensitive to their feelings.

Figures and Tables

Figure 1. Strategies that the Mental Health Professionals developed in response to the lived experiences they encounter with their Patients



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