

TRAINING FOR SCHOOL COUNSELING: JEWISH AND ARAB STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INTERPERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH MEMBERS OF THE OTHER NATIONALITY AS PART OF THE TRAINING PROCESS

Ayelet Yariv

Dr. Ina Ben-Uri

Dr. Sameer Kadan

Beit Berl college, Israel

ABSTRACT

The school counseling profession focuses on promoting mental well-being. Therefore, the training process requires students to engage deeply with their inner-world and interpersonal communication with their peers. The master's degree program in educational counseling at Beit Berl College integrates Arab and Jewish students and often provides an opportunity for Jewish and Arab students to engage in an intimate dialogue with one another. The current study aims to understand the interpersonal interactions between Jewish and Arab students as part of the training process. The study used semi-structured in-depth interviews with 20 Arab and Jewish second-year students to better understand their perceptions and experiences. The findings highlight the complex dynamics between Arab and Jewish students. Both groups expressed fear and uncertainty regarding their interaction with the other peers. However, during the year, relationships gradually began to build at varying levels of closeness, supported by interventions from program mentors. The study underscores the role of the training program in fostering resilience, encouraging open discussions about the 'elephant in the room,' and addressing collective and individual pain.

Keywords: School Counseling Training, Intercultural Dialogue, Jewish-Arab Relations, Experiential Learning, Higher Education Integration

INTRODUCTION

Introduction The professional training of school counselors in Israel has evolved over the past decades in response to shifting social and educational needs. Counselor education programs emphasize emotional and psychological well-being, both for individuals and for the school community as a whole [16, 6]. The Israeli Ministry of Education's Counseling and Psychological Services (Shefi, 2025) defines the central mission of school counselors as promoting student welfare by facilitating supportive environments and developing students' socio-emotional capacities. As such, training programs stress the cultivation of interpersonal sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and group leadership skills [4, 21]. Within this professional framework, experiential and workshop-based learning has gained prominence. These methods encourage students to engage in self-reflection, interpersonal dialogue, and collaborative exploration of group dynamics—essential competencies for future counselors. This type of training is considered transformational, as it supports both theoretical learning and personal growth [10].