UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

A COMPARATIVE CLINICAL CASE STUDY OF A TRADITIONAL AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL PSYCHOMETRIC FEEDBACK

by

Safia Mohamed

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS
(Educational Psychology)

in the

Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

SUPERVISOR:
Prof. Liesel Ebersöhn

PRETORIA
August 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"And if I stand tall amongst you today... it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants..."

The journey to the completion of this project has been a long and winding one. I would like to take the time to thank the many special people in my life that through love, patience, support and care saw me through this fanatical time...

I would firstly like to thank my Almighty Creator for all the abundance in my life. My family, friends, mentors, my ample gifts and Your blessings in the form of the amazing opportunities and life experiences that I have been blessed with; these have far surpassed my greatest expectations in life. Your blessings are never taken for granted and for your infinite mercy and wisdom that I see materialise in my life every day I am eternally grateful. *La-illaha-illallah…*

To mummy and daddy: thank you for your consistent support, care and prayers throughout my life. May Allah reward you abundantly for all your patience, sacrifices and the love that you unselfishly shower on us. Always know that these never go unnoticed!!

To Liesel… thank you for being my north star through this process. Your encouragement, motivation and your constant "amplifying" of my strengths was often the fuel that kept me going. Thank you for being an amazing mentor and role-model and for teaching me how to *live* positive psychology! May God bless you for all that you have shared with me…

To 'Sia and the rest of the participants, thank you for being so willing to participating in the data collection process and for sharing your experiences so eagerly. Thank you for your efforts, patience and enthusiasm along the way☺

And last but never least, to Wendy… For being an amazing friend, an equally amazing shrink and a caring, patient, and gracious human being! Thank you for your time and effort during the data collection process and for your constant (and unequalled) support.

DECLARATION

I, Safia Mohamed (21070637), hereby declare that all the resources that were consulted during the completion of this dissertation are included in the reference list and that this study is my original work.

_____

Ms. S. Mohamed

2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY 1

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE 3
1.2 INTENT AND AIMS 5
1.3 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES 6
1.4 CONCEPTUALISATION 7
1.4.1 Positive psychology 7
1.4.2 Positive psychological feedback interview 8
1.4.3 Traditional feedback interview 9
1.4.4 Clients' or participants' experiences 11
1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 12
1.5.1 Research design 12
1.5.2.1 Selection of participants 13
1.5.2.2 Data collection 13
1.6 ETHICAL STRATEGIES 17
1.7 QUALITY CRITERIA 17
1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS 18
1.9 SUMMARY 19

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION 21
2.2 WHAT DOES THE PROCESS OF PROVIDING PSYCHOMETRIC FEEDBACK ENTAIL? 21
2.3 HOW CAN (TRADITIONAL) PSYCHOLOGY BE CONCEPTUALISED? 28
2.4 THE CONSTRUCT OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY 31
2.4.1 The history and rationale behind positive psychology 31
2.4.2 The founding pillars of positive psychology 33
2.4.3 The process of flow 34
2.4.4 Positive prevention and positive therapy 35
2.5 THE NATURE OF A POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL PSYCHOMETRIC FEEDBACK INTERVIEW 37
2.5.1 Defining the construct of a positive psychological feedback interview 37
2.5.2 Strength building in a positive psychological feedback interview 39
2.5.3 Addressing and overcoming the challenges posed in the process of administering a positive psychological feedback interview 42
2.6 INTEGRATING READINGS ON FEEDBACK INTERVIEWS 44
2.6.1 Defining the procedure of a positive psychological feedback interview 49

2.7 CONCLUSION 52

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION AND AIMS 53
3.1.1 Comparative purpose of the study 53
3.2 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE 54
3.2.1 An interpretivist epistemology 54
3.2.2 A mixed-method approach 56
3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN 61
3.3.1 A clinical case study design 61
3.3.2 Advantages and disadvantages of implementing a clinical case study design 64
3.4 RESEARCH PROCESS 65
3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 67
3.5.1 Selection of participants 67
a) The young girls 67
b) The Educational Psychologist 69
3.5.1.1 Developing a framework for the two modes of feedback interviews 69
3.5.2 Piloting of the interview frameworks 70
3.5.3 Data collection and documentation 71
3.5.3.1 Quantitative data sources 74
3.5.3.2 Qualitative data sources 74
a) Adapted unstructured face-to-face feedback interview with participants 74
b) Unstructured face-to-face interview with the Educational Psychologist 75
c) Observation-as-context of interaction 76
d) Learners' narrative regarding feedback 78
e) The Educational Psychologists' narrative regarding feedback 80
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION 81
a) Data analysis and interpretation of quantitative data 81
b) Data analysis and interpretation of qualitative data 81
3.7 QUALITY CRITERIA 83
3.7.1 Credibility 83
3.7.2 Transferability 83
3.7.3 Dependability 84
3.7.4 Confirmability 84
3.7.5 Authenticity 84
3.7.6 Reflexivity 85
3.7.7 Validation 85
3.8 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER 85
3.9 ETHICAL STRATEGIES 87
3.9.1 Informed consent 87
3.9.2 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity 88
3.9.3 Protection from harm 88
3.10 CONCLUSION 89

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION 90

4.2 OUTCOMES OF THE PILOT PHASE OF THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS 90

4.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE "CASE" 93

4.3.1 Common characteristics 93

4.3.2 Traditional feedback interview case 94

4.3.3 Positive psychological feedback interview case 95

4.4 THEMES: POST ANALYSIS 96

4.4.1 Theme 1: Clients' experiences of the two modes of feedback interviews 96

4.4.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Similarities between the clients' experiences of the two modes of feedback interviews 96

4.4.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Experiences of the participants unique to the positive psychological feedback interview 99

4.4.2 Theme 2: The educational psychologist's experiences of the two modes of feedback interviews 102

4.5 CONCLUSION 104

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION 105

5.2 FINDINGS THROUGH THE LENS OF THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE 105

5.3 CONCLUSIONS IN TERMS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS 110

5.3.1 What is the nature of a traditional and positive psychological feedback interview? 110

5.3.2 What are the differences and similarities between experiences of a traditional and a positive psychological feedback interview? 110

5.3.2.1 Similarities between the two modes of feedback interviews 111

5.3.2.2 Differences between the two modes of feedback interviews 112

5.3.3 How can a comparison between experiences of a traditional and a positive psychological psychometric feedback interview inform educational psychological theory and practice? 114

5.4 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 115

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS 116

5.6 CLOSING REMARKS 117

REFERENCES 118

APPENDICES

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Outline of the various data collection and documentation strategies 14
Table 2.1 Do's and don'ts during feedback interviews 26
Table 2.2 Positive styles of giving and receiving feedback 27
Table 2.3 Areas of emphasis under the various domains that psychologists practice under 30
Table 2.4 Framework for developing a positive psychological feedback interview 46
Table 2.5 Framework for developing a traditional feedback interviews 48
Table 3.1 Summary of identifying details of participants 68
Table 3.2 Qualitative and quantitative data strategies 72
Table 5.1 Summary of tasks assigned to the two modes of feedback interviews 106
Table 5.2 Similarities and differences identified between the two modes of feedback interview 111

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Visual representation of the procedure of a positive psychological feedback interview……..51
Figure 3.1 Embedded mixed-method design – flow diagram presentation……57
Figure 3.2 Use of quantitative and qualitative data sources in various phases of the mixed-method study……58
Figure 3.3 Research process: flow chart representation……65

SUMMARY /ABSTRACT

A COMPARATIVE CLINICAL CASE STUDY OF A TRADITIONAL AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL PSYCHOMETRIC FEEDBACK

by

Safia Mohamed

Supervisor : Prof. L. Ebersöhn
Institution : Department of Educational Psychology
Degree : MEd (Educational Psychology)

The purpose of this clinical case study was to compare clients' and an Educational Psychologist's experiences of a psychometric feedback from a traditional perspective with feedback from the perspective of positive psychology. The study consulted relevant literature and integrated readings to design frameworks to guide the two modes of feedback. A mixed-method research approach was applied, with a dominant focus on the qualitative aspects of this study (Qualquan), guided by an interpretivist epistemology.

Four adolescent girls and an Educational Psychologist were conveniently selected to participate, with two girls participating in the pilot phase and two in the data collection phase. After the pilot the interview frameworks were adapted. Psychometric profiles were used to generate quantitative data, while audio-visual recordings of the feedback interviews, interview transcripts, field notes , the researcher's and Educational Psychologist's reflections, and participants' pre- and post-feedback narratives contributed to the qualitative data for the study.

Following thematic analysis it emerged that the ***clients' experienced four similarities between the two modes of feedback interviews***. Both feedback interviews were experienced as satisfactory and positive experiences; both modes provided self- and career knowledge to the participants; both were experienced as comprehensive

feedbacks and the Educational Psychologist highlighted both strengths and weaknesses of the client in each mode. However, the participant who experienced the positive psychological feedback interview received an ***additional strength-building opportunity.***

The lack of significant differentiation between the two modes of feedback interviews may be indicative of the value of the therapeutic alliance between therapists and client. This study's main contribution to Educational Psychology theory and practice is a framework for a positive psychological feedback interview, which may create opportunities for strength-building discussions.

LIST OF KEY WORDS:

Traditional psychology
Positive psychology
Feedback of psychometric results
Traditional psychology feedback
Positive psychology feedback
Clients' experiences
Educational Psychologist's experiences
Researcher's observations
Client-Therapist relationship
Therapeutic alliance