INTRODUCTION

Many solutions to ethical dilemmas are disagreed upon (Pope, Tabachnik, & Keith-Spiegel, 1987). Students training to become mental health professionals need to have experience with ethical and legal matters encountered in the practice (Callan & Bucky, 2005). Ethics education needs to teach correct behaviors in different ethical dilemmas (Haas, Malouf, & Mayerson, 1986). Main ethical issues encountered in counseling psychology (Lawrence & Robinson Kupius, 2000).

Competence: Having the knowledge and skills to work with specific clientele

Informed consent: Permission given by the client to begin treatment

Confidentiality: Which information to share with and which to withhold from guardians

Hypotheses:

There will be an effect between the age of the stimulus child and the appropriateness of the situation

In comparison to males, there will be more of an effect between females and the rating of the ethical dilemma

Variables:

True independent variable (TIV): Age of stimulus child (fourteen years old versus five years old)

Quasi-independent variable (QIV): Gender (male versus female)

Dependent variables:

Rating of situation to be ethical/unethical

Rating of psychologist’s decision to be ethical/unethical

Rating of feeling comfortable making the same decision as the psychologist

Rating of probability of making the same decision

METHOD

Online Qualtrics Experiment

Demographics

Females (71%)

Males (29%)

Randomization Question

Randomization Question

Jan, Feb, Mar, July, Aug, Sep

Apr, May, June, Oct, Nov, Dec

Jan, Feb, Mar, July, Aug, Sep

Apr, May, June, Oct, Nov, Dec

3 scenarios about a 14 year old

3 scenarios about a 5 year old

3 scenarios about a 14 year old

3 scenarios about a 5 year old

4 questions evaluating knowledge and awareness

Thoughts about online surveys

RESULTS

2 x 2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

No significant effect between TIV, QIV, and dependent variables

Scenario 1:

Q1: F(1, 143) = .08, p < .78, η² = .00 (no effect)

Q2: F(1, 143) = .00, p < 1.00, η² = .00 (no effect)

Q3: F(1, 143) = 2.13, p < .15, η² = .00 (no effect)

Q4: F(1, 143) = 2.62, p < .11, η² = .02 (no effect)

Scenario 2:

Q1: F(1, 143) = .76, p < .12, η² = .00 (no effect)

Q2: F(1, 143) = .97, p < .80, η² = .00 (no effect)

Q3: F(1, 143) = .29, p < .59, η² = .00 (no effect)

Q4: F(1, 143) = .05, p < .82, η² = .00 (no effect)

Scenario 3:

Q1: F(1, 143) = 2.13, p < .15, η² = .02 (no effect)

Q2: F(1, 143) = 2.62, p < .12, η² = .02 (no effect)

Q3: F(1, 143) = 1.01, p < .51, η² = .01 (little effect)

Q4: F(1, 143) = 5.37, p < .02, η² = .04 (no effect)

DISCUSSION

Both hypotheses were refuted

Age of the stimulus child and the gender of the participant did not affect the rating of the situation and the decision

Both males and females had some knowledge and awareness of ethics in child psychology

The majority of the participants either completely identified the situation and the decision as “ethical” or rated the situation and the decision to be “somewhat unethical.” When the situation and the decision were ethical, the participants correctly identified the situation and decision to be “ethical.”

Both females and males indicated they would not very feel comfortable making a decision in an ethical dilemma

Bernard and Jara (1986) found that although students had knowledge of what to do in an ethical situation, some participants were unwilling to correctly and ethically solve the problem

There needs to be stronger and more informative ethics training for students

Internal validity: medium

Randomization, no effect of variables

External validity: medium

Slightly biased population, can be somewhat generalized to society

Future research could include:

Unbiased population

Comparison of stimulus child and stimulus adult

Survey about prior knowledge/experience of ethics

Tests to assess participants’ morals

Implications:

Ethics training is necessary for students

A lack of knowledge and skills can affect their ethical decision-making skills (Milliken & Neukrug, 2009)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire’s Differential Tuition for funding my research and for creating this poster.

I would like to thank Dr. Blaine F. Peden for his encouragement and his advice. I would also like to thank him for assisting me and revising my research.

Scenario 1: Competence

A counseling psychologist has the opportunity to work with fourteen-year/five-year-old Joey/Jenny who is believed to have Attention Deficit Disorder. The psychologist has had training on mental disorders of adults, but has not had specialized training on mental disorders and developmental stages of children. The psychologist believes that it is safe to assume that mental disorders are the same for all ages and feels competent enough to treat Joey/Jenny. Because of this belief, the psychologist decides to continue treatment and schedules an appointment with him/her for the following week.

Scenario 2: Informed Consent

Andrew/Allison, a fourteen-year/five-year-old who is depressed, approaches a counseling psychologist with his/her grandmother/grandfather. They explain to the psychologist that it is necessary for the psychologist to treat him/her, but Andrew/Allison’s parents are against the idea. His/her grandmother/grandfather says she/he will give consent for Andrew/Allison’s treatment. The psychologist decides that since the grandmother/grandfather is not Andrew/Allison’s guardian, her consent is unacceptable and cannot continue with treatment.

Scenario 3: Confidentiality

Kevin/Katie, who is a fourteen-year/five-year-old, has been having behavioral and academic problems in school. His/her school guidance counselor contacts Kevin/Katie’s psychologist and requests access to his/her mental health records and evaluations. The psychologist is hesitant to provide the records, but Kevin/Katie’s guidance counselor promises not to share them with anyone else. The guidance counselor convinces Kevin/Katie’s psychologist to provide the records, and they are sent the next day.

Means Summary Table 1

| Question 1: “To What Extent Would You Rate the Situation to Ethical or Unethical?” |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Age of Stimulus Child (yrs) | 14 | 5 |
| Answers Correct | Male | Male | Female | Female | Correct | Male | Male | Female | Female |
| Scenario 1 | 1 | 2.44 | .89 | 2.30 | .76 | 1 | 2.35 | .69 | 2.30 | 1.00 |
| Scenario 2 | 4 | 3.00 | .97 | 3.51 | .78 | 4 | 2.96 | 1.04 | 3.50 | .82 |
| Scenario 3 | 1 | 1.56 | .63 | 1.79 | .98 | 1 | 1.88 | .86 | 1.64 | .78 |

Means Summary Table 2

| Question 2: “To What Extent Would You Rate the Psychologist’s Decision to be Ethical or Unethical?” |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Age of Stimulus Child (yrs) | 14 | 5 |
| Answers Correct | Male | Male | Female | Female | Correct | Male | Male | Female | Female |
| Scenario 1 | 1 | 2.25 | .93 | 1.98 | .72 | 1 | 2.15 | .83 | 1.89 | .84 |
| Scenario 2 | 4 | 3.19 | .91 | 3.46 | .85 | 4 | 3.31 | .84 | 3.36 | .78 |
| Scenario 3 | 1 | 1.50 | .73 | 1.75 | .95 | 1 | 1.77 | .86 | 1.52 | .63 |