ABSTRACT

Past studies emphasized that internationalization of psychology is an important aspect of the field of psychology. These studies also indicated that international movement is a slow process, and faces several challenges. The current study investigated the following goals related to internationalization of psychology: (1) Exploration of the general challenges facing international movement; (2) Identification of non-Western psychologists’ viewpoints about internationalization of psychology; (3) Examination of counseling psychology faculty’s contributions to the internationalization of counseling psychology; (4) Investigation of the history, current status, and future trends of counseling in Iran. The outcomes demonstrated several important barriers facing international movements, and provided recommendations for both psychologists and psychology organizations about how to resolve these challenges in the future and facilitate the internationalization of psychology.

INDEX WORDS: Internationalization of Psychology, Psychology Organizations, Counseling Psychology Faculty, Challenges.
INTERNATIONALIZATION OF PSYCHOLOGY

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2015
INTERNATIONALIZATION OF PSYCHOLOGY

by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to my research advisor Dr. Alan Stewart for his continuous, indefinite, and invaluable support and encouragement during the course of doctoral program. His knowledge and excitement about the material investigated in this dissertation were a source of inspiration throughout. Moreover, Dr. Stewart’s support extended beyond the academic bounds; where on many occasions he was instrumental in helping me overcome research difficulties and hurdles. I will be indefinitely indebted to him. I would like to extend my gratitude to my committee members Dr. Linda Campbell and Dr. Brian Glaser. Thanks are also due to my current and former colleagues in the Department of Counseling and Human Development for their assistance and various constructive discussions which have directly or indirectly helped me in my work, and for the environment they provided which made my life as a graduate student pleasant, enjoyable and exciting. I also would like to extend many thanks to my husband and parents for all their supports and encouragements over the past years. Thank you so much for always believing and reminding me of what I am capable of.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

"The hardest problems of pure and applied science can only be solved by the open collaboration of the world-wide scientific community."

Kenneth G. Wilson

I have chosen the Internationalization of Psychology as the theme of my dissertation and I have tried to cover different aspects of this topic. Before discussing internationalization of psychology it is important to define this concept since psychologists have used this it differently (Gerstein, Heppner, Ægisdóttir, Leung & Norsworthy, 2009). In this study we adopt the Leung and et al. (2009) definition of internationalization, used specifically to describe the internationalization of counseling psychology. Internationalization refers to “an ongoing process of integrating knowledge from research and practice derived from different cultures and employing this knowledge to solve problems in the local and global communities”.

The initial inspiration to investigate the internationalization of psychology came from my own personal life experiences. Since early childhood I have traveled and lived in different countries and experienced difference cultures. I have observed how culture affects people’s everyday life and the way they think, feel and behave. Going to school and studying psychology in different countries provided me with an opportunity to learn about the psychological research and practices in different countries. I have also seen
how cultural and social factors affect the psychological issues in that emerge in different societies. The different nature of social and psychological problems has caused psychologists in different countries to focus on different research topics in order to provide solutions for psychological questions in their societies. Additionally, through studying psychology in different countries, I have learned about different challenges psychologists face in different places.

Observing how the nature of psychological issues and psychological research varies from one culture or county to the other made me question the extent to which we can apply or generalize the result of psychological research, theories, practices and techniques to people living in different places. Through attending psychology classes in different countries and comparing the issues discussed in these classes, I have noticed that some of the psychological topics discussed in psychology or counseling classes in one country do not even exists in other counties or cultures. My practicum and research experiences have shown me that the outcomes of psychological research are very culture-bound and we sometimes cannot apply these outcomes to populations in other countries or cultures. This issue has showed me the importance and benefit of communication and collaboration among psychologists living in different countries. Through communication and collaboration psychologists can learn about similarities and difference in the field of psychology in different countries.

In addition, my personal experiences have shown me the importance of professional and scientific collaboration among psychologists from different national and cultural backgrounds. Professional and scientific collaboration among psychologists can help us better understand what aspects of psychology, including theory, research and
practice are culture-bound and what parts are independent from cultural factors. Through international collaboration psychologists can learn from each other about different teaching methods and research practices. International psychology tries to facilitate and enhance this communication and collaboration among psychologists through different means. In this regard, Pawlik and dYdewalle (1996) noted that the primary goal of international psychology is enhancing the communication and collaboration among psychologists worldwide, which could increase the international understanding as well as goodwill among psychologists. Communication and collaboration among psychologists can be increased through promoting the internationalization of psychology.

Internationalization of psychology can help the field of psychology to include more diverse populations in psychological research and practice. Some areas in psychology have been criticized for being ethnocentric and encapsulated (Leung, 2003). Internationalization of psychology can reduce the ethnocentric approach and encapsulation in psychology. Internationalization of psychology also can enhance the integration of research outcomes from different cultures and countries in psychological research. Further, through internationalization of psychological research, psychologists can include populations from different countries in psychological research and database. This approach reduces the prevalence of western undergraduate samples in psychological database (Medin & Atran, 2004; Rozin, 2009; Sears, 1986; Sue, 1999).

Stevens (2002) noted that psychology does not emphasize or sometimes ignore the processes that shape the complexity of human experiences such as culture, economic and religious. Stevens called this orientation in psychology “the reductionist orientation”. This orientation is a historical barrier in international collaboration and
communication among psychologists. In addition, this orientation does not capture the reality and life experiences of people from different cultural backgrounds.

Internationalization a movement in psychology that attempts to consider all processes that shape the experiences of people living in different counties and cultures in psychological studies and practices. Thus, through internationalization of psychology, psychologists find the opportunity to expand the scope of psychology to include all people living worldwide and this only can happen through promoting collaboration and communication among psychologists.

**Psychology as a Scientific Discipline**

Other than facilitating the collaboration among psychologists and reducing the reductionist orientation, internationalization of psychology is important since it can promote the status of psychology as a scientific discipline. Psychology claims to be a scientific discipline that uses variety of scientific methodologies to analyze human thoughts and behaviors (Frensch, 2013). Early psychologists such as Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) described psychology as the science of conscious experience in which human mental states could be scientifically examined through the process of introspection (Blumenthal, 2001). More recently, American psychological Association (APA) (2013) defined psychology as an academic discipline that scientifically study human behaviors, thoughts and mental functions. Similar to other scientific discipline, it is expected from psychology to follow scientific principles. It is also expected that people living in different locations in world can benefit from the outcomes of psychological research and practice.
One of the principles of scientific methodology asks researchers to consider and include all members of the targeted population when sampling from that population. Scientific methodology particularly emphasizes on the use of random sampling among all the members of the population to generate a representative sample (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001). This will increase the likelihood that the results can be generalized to all the members of targeted population in the future.

Since psychology claims to use scientific principles and methods to study human behavior, it is expected that psychologists sample from all human populations to increase the external validity of psychological research in general. This issue is particularly important when psychologists generate general statements about psychological research outcomes and plan to apply these outcomes to people living in different locations. Not sampling from different human populations will cause the results of psychological research to become culture-bound and not applicable to all people.

However, psychology as a science has significantly focused on using different strategies that increase the likelihood of having stronger causal inferences and to some degree has ignored to include all members of population (human population) in sampling for different research studies. As a result, psychology has pay less attention to external validity, which is the extend that one can generalize the outcomes of psychological research to different populations (Arnett, 2008; Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010; Sue, 1999).

Through a comprehensive analysis of six major APA journals Arnett (2008) concluded that psychological research particularly in the United States has significantly
focused on people living in the United States and neglected other populations. He emphasized that Americans are less than 5% of the world population and there are significant cultural and social differences between American culture and other cultures. This brings up questions about the extent to which the outcomes of psychological research particularly in the States can be generalized to other populations and the extent to which psychology follows scientific principles. Furthermore, this indicates that psychologists have paid more attention to internal validity than external validity and disregarded the representativeness of their samples in psychological research. However, it is equally important to pay attention to both internal and external validity in psychological research (Sue, 1999) in order to follow scientific principles.

To make the samples in psychological research more representative and equally increase both external and internal validity of psychological research, it is important to expand the international research collaborations among psychologists, sample from all populations and publish research from different cultures and countries in widely used journals (Arnett, 2008; Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010). Psychologists from different cultures and countries have recognized the importance of this issue. As a result of this recognition the international research collaboration among psychologists worldwide has gradually increased over the last two decades (Kliegl & Bates, 2011). However, as Adair and Huynh (2012) reported that United States still dominates the overall publications in psychology. Internationalization of psychology can increase the research collaboration, co-authorship and diverse samples in psychological research. Also, it can improve the scientific practices in the field of psychology. It is important to consider that due to cost, linguistic and cultural differences international research
Collaboration is a difficult task that requires significant efforts (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010).

Internationalization of psychology and enhancing scientific collaboration and communication among psychologists can improve the external validity in psychological studies and enhance the practices of scientific principles. Therefore, internationalization of psychology is an important step in establishing a scientific psychology.

**The Structure of This Dissertation**

My life experiences have shown me the similarities and differences in definition and scope of psychological practices in different countries. I have realized that it is very important and scientific to conceptualize and investigate psychology in a broad way that is not limited to one country or culture. I have experienced and observed how international collaboration can benefit psychologists and the field of psychology.

Although over the past decades psychology has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to internationalization (Gerstein, & Ægisdóttir, 2007) this process faces many challenges some of which have not addressed, studied or even identified before. Further, mostly psychologists in western countries have reported their perceived or experienced challenges (Leung, 2003) related to internationalization of psychology. Our awareness about the challenges that psychologists in other countries experience is very limited.

In this dissertation I plan to explore different challenges facing the internationalization movement in psychology from the perspective of psychologists worldwide. Knowing these challenges are the first step in resolving them in the future.
have investigated these challenges as well as different trends in internationalization in separate studies through reviewing literature, asking psychologists in different countries about their challenging experiences and investigating counseling psychology faculty’s contribution to internationalization of their field. Through all these studies I plan to comprehensively explore different challenges related to internationalization of psychology and counseling psychology.

In this dissertation I aim to answer the three following questions: 1. How important is the internationalization of psychology and its challenges from the perspective of psychologists worldwide? 2. What are the challenges that psychologists in different countries experience with respect to internationalization of psychology and what type of assistance they need for resolving these challenges? and 3. how have counseling psychology faculty members contributed to internationalization of counseling psychology? Each of these questions is the basis for one of the three studies in this dissertation.

Additionally, one of the important issues in facilitating internationalization of psychology is learning about psychological issues and practices in other cultures and countries. However, Gerstein and Ægisdóttir (2007) noted that the number of articles in the published literature about international issues in psychology (counseling psychology) is very limited which contributes to the lack of awareness about the status of psychology and psychological issues in other countries. To increase the awareness about the status of psychology and mental health in other countries different journals have initiated publishing articles about psychological issues and populations outside the United States. For instance, the Journal of Counseling and Development (JCD) has published several
articles about practices of psychology, mental health and counseling in different countries. In line with this effort, I will conclude my dissertation with a review of the status of counseling psychology in Iran.

Questions Addressed in This Dissertation

Question one: How important is the internationalization of psychology and its challenges?

In this study psychologists from variety of cultural and national backgrounds rate the importance of a number of identified challenges including but not limited to dissimilarities of interests, second language barriers and dissimilarities of psychological approaches in different countries. These challenges were extracted from the previous studies and literatures. This study was open for psychologists to participate for ten months and targeted as many psychologists as possible worldwide to get more information and a better understanding of the similarities and differences of the challenges psychologists face in different places.

Question two: What challenges psychologists in non-Western countries are facing with respect to internationalization of psychology and what type of assistance they need for resolving these challenges?

The goal of this study is to understand the specific challenges experienced by psychologists in different countries and cultures. The other purpose of this study is to identify the type of assistance psychologists need in the process of internationalizing psychology in their countries. This study is qualitative and exploratory in nature. In this study psychologists answer several questions and have the opportunity to express their
specific challenges and identify how psychology organizations can help them in resolving these challenges. This study aims to identify the common and specific challenges psychologists experience and provide recommendations for psychology organizations with respect to the assistance they can provide to psychologists in different places.

*Question three: How have counseling psychology faculty members contributed to internationalization of counseling psychology?*

In this study, through analyzing counseling psychology faculty’s vitas, I plan to investigate how much counseling psychology faculty initiated, contributed and expanded the internationalization in their profession. To investigate this issue I identified and recorded different faculty’s professional activities over time that were related to international issue and populations that include faculty’s publications, presentations, courses they have taught and membership in psychology organizations. I also evaluate the relationship between study or training abroad experiences with faculty’s internationally related professional activities. Overall, I aim to identify different trends in internationalization of counseling psychology in the United States that were related to counseling psychology faculty’s professional work. Finally, I will compare the status of internationalization in the field of counseling psychology with other fields such as cognitive psychology and neuropsychology.

Overall, through investigating different aspects of internationalization of psychology, I plan to identify the challenges facing this movement as well as past and present trends in internationalization of psychology. The outcomes of these studies will provide guidelines that might facilitate the internationalization of psychology.


American Psychological Association. (2013). Retrieved from

http://www.apa.org/support/about/apa/psychology.aspx#answer


CHAPTER 2

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS CHALLENGES ¹

Abstract

In this study we investigated challenges of internationalization of psychology through sending a web-based survey to psychologists in different countries. A total of 405 psychologists from 73 countries participated in this study. Using cluster analysis we divided participants’ responses into four clusters. Most participants indicated that internationalization of psychology is a very important aspect of the field; however, their perspective about internationalization challenges varied significantly across four clusters. Based on the results we offered recommendations for the field of psychology as well as psychology organizations to facilitate the internationalization of psychology in the future.

Keywords: Internationalization, psychology, challenges, organizations, congresses
Introduction

The process of internationalization has changed the nature and face of communication, business, politics, and economy worldwide. Psychology as a field has not been an exception in this process and, similar to other areas, it has been involved in internationalization for at least a century. The first International Congress of Physiological Psychology was held in 1889 and psychologists from 20 different countries participated in the exchange of knowledge and skills (Nuttin, 1992) with their international colleagues. Following this conference, the International Committee was created to plan future conferences. Later, the International Union of Scientific Psychology (currently known as The International Union of Psychological Sciences) was established in 1951 to provide a venue for psychology at the international level. Today, the Union represents 82 national members (International Union of Psychological Sciences, 2013). Although the first international conference in psychology was held in 1889, the development of international psychology has not been an even process, and was hindered with several worldwide events including World War II (Pickren & Rutherford, 2010). During the last decade, the internationalization of psychology has been accelerated through the advances in the technology. These advances have connected psychologists worldwide (Leung et al., 2009) and reduced the effect of geographical distances.

Even though the concept of internationalization of psychology appears to be clear at the first glance, authors have used this concept differently (Gerstein, Heppner, Ægisdóttir, Leung, & Norsworthy, 2009) in different contexts. For the purpose of this study, we adopted the Leung et al. (2009) definition of internationalization due to its emphasis on equal partnership, respect, and cultural sensitivity, which are essential
factors for internationalization of psychology. Here, the internationalization refers to “a continuous process of synthesizing knowledge generated through research, scholarship, and practice from different cultures and using this knowledge to solve problems in local and global communities. Internationalization involves collaborations and equal partnerships in which cultural sensitivity and respect are required for success” (p. 115).

Factors Contributing to Internationalization of Psychology

Internationalization has had a significant impact on psychology. It has influenced the development and expansion of the field so far and can have the same impact in the future. Wilhelm Wundt considered psychology to involve the study of internal and external events with both national and international roots (Schultz & Schultz, 2004). International collaborations among psychologists have positively impacted psychology curricula and psychological interventions. An example of the European influence and subsequent adoption in U. S. approaches to psychology was noted by Pawlik and d'Ydewalle (1996), that during the 1970s and 1980s, personality psychology was not emphasized to a great extent in all academic quarters; however, during 1990s psychologists started emphasizing more on personality psychology in curriculum and this was strongly guided by international collaboration and communication among psychologists. Moreover, Heppner, Leong, and Chiao (2008) emphasized that through international collaboration psychologists might be able to conceptualize intervention strategies and programs that are culturally relevant and sensitive to solve old problems with new and effective solutions.

There is evidence indicating that psychology is internationalizing. The number of articles co-authored by psychologists from different countries is increasing. Kliegl and
Bates (2011) analyzed 26,722 articles and reviews from 12 major psychology journals published during 1975 and 2007. The outcomes suggested that the research in psychology is internationalizing and this trend had started in the mid 1970s. The results of this analysis also showed an average increase rate of 7% per year in international publication of articles co-authored by psychologists from different countries.

Congresses of psychology have also played significant roles in the internationalization of psychology. International Congress of Applied Psychology (ICAP) and International Congress of Psychology (ICP) are two examples of these international congresses. Congresses in psychology are a venue for the exchange of knowledge and information among psychologists who are scientists and practitioners (Adair, Unik, & Huynh, 2010). Exposure to psychologists from other countries and cultures, and their work can also challenge psychologists’ narrow view of the discipline. Adair, et al. (2010) investigated the presentations and databases of the seven ICAP and ICP conferences from 1996 to 2004. This investigation revealed that psychologists from 117 countries participated in ICAP and ICP. In each congress, the number of participants from the host country was significantly larger. The results also demonstrated significant participation of psychologists from developing countries, which had up to one third of presentations at ICAP. This indicates that psychology in these countries is growing and might have an impact on the field of psychology in the future.

Different psychological associations and organizations have served psychology and its internationalization. The International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS) has been considered as the largest psychological organization that serves psychological sciences at the international level (Pawlik & d'Ydewalle, 1996). Other organizations such
as International Council of Psychologists, International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP), European Federation of Psychologists’ Associations (EFPA), Sociedad Interamericana de Psycologia (SIP), and the American Psychological Association (APA) - Division of International Psychology (Division 52), have also accelerated the internationalization of psychology (Stevens & Wedding, 2004). These organizations provide opportunities such as venues for publication and presentation, financial support, and international research cooperation for international psychologists. For instance, the Association for Psychological Science (APS) has initiated an online postdoctoral exchange program in order to assist psychology students from different countries to find postdoctoral opportunities in Europe and North America (Adair & Huynh, 2012). Furthermore, IUPsyS has publication programs such as the International Journal of Psychology (IJP) that facilitate international distribution of research and the APA’s Division of International Psychology publishes international research through the journal of International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation.

**Challenges Facing Internationalization of Psychology**

Internationalization of psychology started years ago; however, this process faces several challenges. Adair and Huynh (2012) investigated the publication trends in 16 primary and 3 secondary U.S. journals as well as 4 international journals published during the past three decades. Although the results indicated that publications of U.S authors have slightly decreased since the year 2000, U.S. authors continue to dominate the overall publications particularly in the areas of clinical, social, health, and personality psychology. Similarly, O'Gorman, Shum, Halford, and Ogilvie (2012) evaluated the
psychology publications in the Web of Science from 1996 to 2010. The outcomes demonstrated that Western Europe and U.S. authors contributed the most to psychology publications. Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan (2010) noted that publications in behavioral science represent samples from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) societies that do not exemplify all human societies.

Although the results of these studies demonstrated that Western authors contributed significantly to psychological research, it is important not to attribute the low number of non-Western psychologists’ publications to the absence of psychology in non-Western countries. Considering that some psychologists in non-Western countries focus on indigenous psychology and issues that are regionally and locally important, they might disseminate the outcomes of their studies locally, which is less likely to be abstracted internationally. In this regard, Kim, Yang, and Hwang (2006) pointed out to the local contributions of indigenous psychology in different countries and the lack of awareness about psychological research and practice outside the Western context.

The publication trends show that the number of articles co-authored by psychologists from different countries has increased (Kliegl & Bates, 2011); however, there is evidence indicating that the emphasis on international topics and populations is still very limited. For instance, Gerstein and Ægisdóttir (2007) reviewed the publication trends of the following counseling psychology journals between 2000 and 2004: Journal of Counseling Psychology, Journal of Counseling and Development, Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, and The Counseling Psychologist. They found that in these four journals, only 6% of the published articles were related to international issues and populations. In another study, Arnett (2008) analyzed published
articles in six major APA journals (Developmental Psychology, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Journal of Abnormal Psychology, Journal of Family Psychology, Health Psychology, and Journal of Educational Psychology) from the year 2003 to 2007. This analysis showed the percentage of the sample in psychological research from different regions: 68% United States, 14% other English-speaking countries, 13% Europe, 3% Asia, 1% Latin America, and Less than 1% Africa and the Middle East. Arnett concluded that the current psychological knowledge, particularly in the United States, is only based on 5% of the world population, which is significantly different from the rest of the world. This lack of publication about international populations can be a significant factor contributing to psychologists’ limited knowledge and awareness about international issues and populations (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010) and may pose different barriers for internationalization of psychology.

Psychologists may assume that the outcomes of psychological studies are applicable to all people while the sample mostly represents the U.S population (Arnett, 2008), and quite restricted subgroups of this population at that. This might also impose problems if psychologists generalize the outcome of psychological studies to people living in other countries. Furthermore, lack of publication about international issues limits psychologists’ understanding of economic, racial, and social justice issues as well as cultural and gender differences in other countries and in global community. This lack of awareness can contribute or cause bias in understanding psychological issues.

Another challenge is related to the struggles that international psychologists and scholars face when trying to present their work at conferences or publish in English journals. International psychologists need to convince the journal editors and conference
chairs that their work is relevant to the journal or the conference context (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010) and that it is worth presenting and publishing. To convince the editors and chairs, scholars may sometimes make the requested changes in their work that affect the cultural, contextual, or quality of scholars’ works. Rather than making these changes, some international psychologists may decide to publish or present locally to preserve the content of their work. In this regard, Leung (2003) reported a personal experience in which his symposium proposal for the Annual Convention of APA was rejected since the program chairs evaluated his work as irrelevant to the psychological work in the United States. APA conferences and particularly journals have heavily focused on U.S population, which resulted in a psychology that is not representing global issues and populations (Arnett, 2008). These challenges can negatively affect the participation of psychologists from different countries at the international level.

It is important for editors and conference chairs around the world to set general and local standards for selecting manuscripts and presentations; however, such standards should not be solely based on local cultural values and norms. Setting the selection criteria based on such standards prevents the global distribution of research from variety of cultures and populations, and leads to a psychology that is incomplete (Arnett, 2008). Thus, it is important for all journals and conferences around the world to consider publishing qualified studies that are not specifically carried out with the local population in order to promote a comprehensive understanding of psychological issues and reduce biases in the field of psychology.

The important role of participating in international psychology congresses for the internationalization of psychology has been described earlier. Adair, et al. (2010)
identified the wealth of a nation and the cost of attendance as factors affecting the participation of psychologists in international psychology congresses. Similarly, O’Gorman et al. (2012) noted that countries’ Gross National Income (GNI) per capita is a predictor of psychological research output and productivity in different countries. Most psychology congresses are held in wealthy countries or regions that have more resources to host congresses. Psychologists from less wealthy counties need to spend their limited resources to attend congresses that are usually located far from their countries. The location of international conferences as well as the cost of attendance may discourage some psychologists from participating in international conferences.

Another challenge facing the internationalization of psychology is related to research collaboration among psychologists from different countries. Arnett (2008) emphasized that research on whole humanity is needed in building the science and practice of psychology. Research collaboration among psychologists in different countries facilitates the inclusion of different populations, cultures, and attitudes. However, international collaboration is a time-consuming and costly task (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010) that needs acceptance by psychologists in other countries as well as their institutions. International researchers also face methodological challenges such as construct and linguistic equivalencies (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010). Because the number of international research collaborations among psychologists has been limited so far, some of these challenges have not been completely addressed or resolved yet. All these issues hinder the international research collaborations among psychologists.

Stevens and Wedding (2004) emphasized that one of the goals of international psychology is to promote collaboration and communication among psychologists.
worldwide. This collaboration can facilitate and eventually promote the internationalization of psychology. Stevens and Wedding identified different mechanisms that promote collaboration among psychologists that include regional and international conferences, Internet resources, international journals, international exchange and training programs, and psychology organizations (particularly those representing the interests of international psychologists). Lack of access to any of these resources can be a barrier for internationalization. Moreover, in most international psychology meetings and forums English is the dominant language (Draguns, 2001). Using English as the primary language in conferences and journal publications is convenient for participants whose first language is English. However, this might be a reason for lack of equal participation by psychologists from regions such as Africa and Latin America in which English is not the primary language. The internationalization of psychology is obstructed by the heavy emphasis on English as the primary language in international conferences and journals. Other barriers for international movement are the dissimilarity of interests among psychologists, different nature of psychology in different countries, indigenous practices in psychology, and differences in cultural, political, religious, and social norms.

Past studies have identified some of the challenges facing the international movement in psychology through looking at the number and trends of conference presentations and journal publications. However, it is not clear how psychologists from different nations perceive these challenges. To accelerate the internationalization process it is necessary to better understand the challenges that this movement is facing from the perspectives of psychologists with different backgrounds. It is also very important to know these challenges; because this knowledge is the first primary and required step in
resolving them in the future. In addition, resolving these problems can help psychologists in different places disseminate their research findings, which may increase the depth and richness of psychology as a discipline. Our goal in this study was to understand how psychologists perceive internationalization’s barriers. Specifically, we wanted to understand issues that psychologists view as being both important and challenging in internationalization of psychology. Knowing these challenges may inform major psychological organizations, conference chairs, and journal editors in their efforts to implement changes in their policies to facilitate the internationalization of psychology.

Method

Participants

Data was collected from 534 psychologists in 73 different countries; however, 129 participants were excluded from the study because they failed to complete the survey yielding 405 total participants. The number of participants from each country is presented in Table 2.1. Participants included 219 males and 185 females (one person declined to provide gender). Participants self-identified as Clinical Psychologists (22%), Social Psychologists (17%), Counseling Psychologists (11%), Cognitive Psychologists (9%), Developmental Psychologists (8%) and others (33%). Others included Educational Psychologists, School Psychologists, Behavioral Psychologists, Neuropsychologists, Aviation Psychologists, Experimental Psychologists, Organizational Psychologists, Forensic Psychologists, Rehabilitation Psychologists, Health Psychologists, and Research Psychologists. Participants reported that they have been working in the field of psychology between 1 to more than 29 years. Among the participants, 52% reported having more than 15 years of experience working as a psychologist. Since different
countries have different types of educational degrees in psychology, we asked participants about the number of years they have studied after high school. On average, participants noted an average of 9.6 years of education after their high school. With regard to work setting, 85.2% of participants reported working in academia. Others identified their work settings as private practice (2.5%), hospital (4.2%), outpatient (1.2), and others (6.9%) including federal government, NGO, consulting, research institute, and correctional facilities.

**Table 2.1. Frequency of Participants Based on Country**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada, Germany</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Taiwan</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia, Brazil</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia, Argentina, Turkey</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia, Netherlands</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand, Austria, Ireland, Israel, Lebanon, Macau, Philippines, Poland, Singapore, Switzerland, Yemen</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia, Finland, Czech Republic, Denmark, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, France</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bermuda, Cameroon, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Egypt, Guadeloupe, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Oman, Peru, UAE, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Zambia, Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Survey Instrument**

We used a web-based survey specifically designed for this study. The survey took participants approximately 15 minutes to complete. The survey’s items were chosen
through a systematic review of the literature. These items were revised based on the feedback provided by five subject matters living in three different countries. Finally, the survey was administered to a small group of participants, and their feedbacks and recommendations were incorporated in the follow up revisions. The survey had a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.82. The survey was designed and disseminated in English. This survey consisted of the following sections: Demographic questions, rating questions, a multiple-choice question, and three open-ended questions. Participants used a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from very important (6) to completely unimportant (1), to answer the rating questions. In the multiple-choice question participants had the opportunity to choose as many items as they wanted. In the open-ended questions, participants reported specific challenges they experience in their county and discussed the type of assistance they need to resolve these challenges. Due to the extent of responses to the open-ended questions, we did not report the results here. The survey questions are listed in Appendix A.

**Procedures**

The data were collected with an Internet-based survey and participants were recruited through a variety of snowballing and networking methods. We identified and sent e-mails, containing the description of the study and the link to the survey, to several psychology organizations in different countries using the list of psychology organizations provided in the APA website (APA, 2013). We requested these organizations to distribute the survey. Furthermore, the UAE Psychologist published the summary of this study (Fatemi & Stewart, 2012) as well as the link to the survey in their December 2012 newsletter. We also sent individualized e-mails to the authors who published in several
psychology journals with international focus. Additionally, we sent the survey to several psychologists who presented at the last ICP. Participants used the link provided in the email to participate in the study. Upon going to the survey website, participants viewed the consent form that described the purpose of the study, its benefits as well as limits of confidentiality in Internet research. The survey was designed in one page and at the end of the page participants submitted their responses and provided with debriefing. The survey was open from June 2012 to March 2013, and participants did not receive any compensation for their participation.

Confidentiality is a common challenge in Internet-based research (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002). In order to protect participants’ confidentiality, we did not record personally identifiable information (name, address, institution, and email address), rather automatically generated IDs for participants and used this ID to identify them throughout the study. We also saved the data in a password protected website, and collected data through secure server line (SSL) technology. This technology encodes data from participants’ computer and makes it meaningless to protect the information in case it is intercepted during the transfer process (Nosek et al., 2002).

Statistical Analysis

We first calculated the mean and standard deviation of the responses provided by participants to the twelve survey questions (Table 2.2). We characterized the responses to the twelve questions based upon the mean and standard deviation. The responses provided by participants to questions one, two, and six were very similar, and the standard deviations were lower compared to other questions. Therefore, we eliminated
these three questions from statistical analysis and cluster analyzed the responses of participants to the nine questions (3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12) in the survey.

Cluster analysis is an exploratory method and does not assume normal distribution of data (Romesburg, 2004). Since participants’ responses were not normally distributed, we decided to use cluster analysis to group participant and explore their responses further. Cluster analysis maximizes the between-cluster differences while minimizing the within-cluster differences. In this method of analysis, the ultimate number of clusters should not be determined in advance and several values of k need to be tested with the k-mean algorithm (Everitt & Hothorn, 2010). Therefore, we ran the algorithm twelve times testing two through twelve cluster solutions. To decide about the ultimate number of clusters, we used the elbow method in which the number of clusters is chosen considering the amount of variance explained by each cluster (Madhulatha, 2012). We graphed the amount of variance explained by each cluster. We observed that four clusters explained the highest amount of variance and after that adding more clusters did not considerably contribute to the variance. Thus, we conducted a non-hierarchical k-means cluster analysis using four-cluster solution with Euclidean distance as the similarity measure. According to the results of cluster analysis, all subjects were classified into four groups and the differences between clusters were assessed. We characterized the nature of the four clusters by examining the means of each cluster on the variables used to generate them.

Results

The descriptive statistics of responses to the twelve questions (Table 2.2) demonstrated that participants had very similar opinions in three questions (question 1, 2,
and 6). The responses indicated that on question one, most participants reported that the internationalization of psychology is very important aspect of the field ($M=5.46$, $SD=0.77$). On questions two and six, responses showed that financial issues and becoming part of international research teams or projects are important challenges for the internationalization of psychology ($M=4.89$, $SD=1.14$ and $M=4.99$, $SD=1.14$ respectively). Thus, most participants think that internationalization of psychology is a very significant aspect of the field; however, they face financial difficulties and challenges related to research collaboration with international colleagues. Compared to other questions, the standard deviations in question one, two, and six were lower indicating homogeneity of responses among participants in these questions.

The responses to the other nine questions (Table 2.2) showed larger standard deviations compared to questions one, two, and six. Additionally, participants rated the following three items as the least important barriers for the internationalization of psychology: dissimilarities of interests with international colleagues and scientific communities ($M=3.95$, $SD=1.41$), dissimilarities of psychological approaches to therapy, diagnosis assessment and etc ($M=3.91$, $SD=1.41$), and indigenous practices of psychology ($M=3.65$, $SD=1.60$). These results indicate that to psychologists, different psychological approaches as well as the practices of indigenous psychology are not considered as problematic for internationalization of psychology. However, it is important to note that the standard deviation in the question asking about indigenous practices of psychology ($M=3.65$, $SD=1.60$) is the highest among other questions demonstrating that participants’ responses are widely spread, and there is a lot of variability among ratings.
Table 2.2. Mean and Standard Deviation of All Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Topic Description</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Importance of internationalization of psychology</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Financial issues</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dissimilarities of interests with international colleagues and scientific communities</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Second language barriers</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Accessing international resources</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Becoming part of international research teams</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lack of acceptance by the international scientific communities</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Differences in cultural, political, religious, and social norms and values</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Different nature of psychology in your country</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Dissimilarities of psychological approaches</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Indigenous practices of psychology</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lack of training with international focus</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Participants used a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from very important (6) to completely unimportant (1), to answer questions.

We used nine survey items (3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 10, 11, and 12) to place respondents into one of the four clusters. The purpose of clustering was to identify relatively homogenous groups of participants based upon their responses, and describe the characteristics of each group and how challenging and important they perceive different barriers to internationalization. There were 135 participants in cluster one, 87 in cluster two, 117 in cluster three, 66 in cluster four. The means and standard deviations for each cluster are provided in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3. Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation in Response to the Nine Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>C1</th>
<th>C2</th>
<th>C3</th>
<th>C4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Dissimilarities of interests with international colleagues and scientific communities</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Second language barriers</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cluster One. Participants in this cluster seemed somewhat similar because they perceived most of the survey questions as important challenges for internationalization of psychology. In addition, participants in this cluster differed from other participants since their responses were very similar and the standard deviations of responses were the lowest among other clusters. To participants in cluster one accessing international resources was the most important challenge ($M=5.4$, $SD=0.8$). Other major challenges were lack of training with international focus ($M=5.1$, $SD=0.8$) and second language barriers ($M=5.3$, $SD=0.8$). Notably, 63% of participants in this cluster were from economically developing countries in which English is the second language. Furthermore, the average distance between each participant to the cluster centroid was 0.8 indicating that compared to participants in other clusters, participants in cluster one had more similarities in their responses.

Cluster Two. Participants in this cluster viewed half of the survey items as unimportant and the other half as important challenges. Similar to cluster one,
participants’ responses in cluster two indicated that they perceived access to international recourses such as articles and conferences \((M=5.2, SD=0.7)\), second language barriers \((M=4.8, SD=1.2)\), and lack of respect by international scientific communities \((M=4.8, SD=0.9)\) as major challenges. However, participants in this cluster reported that indigenous perspectives and practices in psychology \((M=2.4, SD=1.1)\), different nature of psychology in their country \((M=3.0, SD=1.3)\), and dissimilarities of psychological approaches to therapy, diagnosis assessment and etc \((M=3.2, SD=1.1)\) are not challenging factors. One of the reported challenges in this cluster was second language barriers. Among participants in this cluster 81\% are from countries in which the official language is not English. Participants in this cluster were from different countries, and the average distance between each participant to the cluster centroid was 1.1.

Cluster Three. This cluster is characterized by participants’ average ratings on all questions. To participants in this cluster lack of training with international focus \((M=4.7, SD=1.0)\) was very challenging. They also reported that lack of acceptance by international scientific communities \((M=3.6, SD=1.2)\) is not a significant barrier for internationalization of psychology. Similar to cluster two, participants in this cluster were from different countries. Furthermore, the average distance between each participant to the cluster centroid was 1.0 in this cluster.

Cluster Four. Participants in this cluster were homogeneous because they rated all the factors as unimportant indicating that to most participants in this cluster none of the items in the survey were considered challenging. More specifically, participants reported that indigenous perspective and practices in psychology \((M=1.9, SD=1.0)\), dissimilarities of psychological approaches to therapy, diagnosis assessment and etc
different nature of psychology in their country ($M=2.2$, $SD=0.9$), and dissimilarities of interests with international colleagues and scientific communities ($M=2.3$, $SD=1.1$) were not significant barriers. In this group, 95% of participants were from economically developed countries. The average distance between each participant to the cluster centroid was 1.2 indicating that compared to other clusters participants’ responses in cluster four were less similar. Overall, to participants in this cluster the factors identified in the survey were not viewed as barriers for internationalization of psychology.

The distances between cluster centers demonstrated that cluster one and four have the greatest dissimilarities, and cluster one and three are more similar. Overall, the results of the cluster analysis demonstrated that there were four dimensions with respect to internationalization of psychology. These dimensions fell within a spectrum ranging from viewing all the items as very challenging to perceiving all items as unimportant barriers for internationalization of psychology. In addition, some clusters were differentiated from others since participants in those clusters significantly emphasized one or two of the challenges such as accessing resources or second language barriers.

In the multiple-choice question, participants identified the challenges they have experienced in the process of publishing in international or English journals. In this question out of six options, 188 participants selected “writing in a second or third language”, 80 participants selected “differences in research method and design from editors or peer reviewers”, 93 participants chose “cultural differences”, 177 participants selected “acceptance of work by editors of journals for publication”, 96 participants reported “match of interests with editors of journal”, and 87 participants selected
“differences in perceived definitions of constructs and concepts” as challenges in the process of publication in psychology journals. Overall, writing in a second or third language and acceptance of psychologists’ work by editors of journals for publication are the main cited challenges.

**Conclusion and Discussion**

Although internationalization of psychology initiated years ago, it has faced several challenges. In this study, we tried to understand and identify factors psychologists view as both challenging and important in internationalization of psychology. Clustering revealed that several participants from economically developed countries rated most of the survey items as less challenging compared to most participants from economically developing countries who reported considerably more challenges. In this regard, O’Gorman et al. (2012) emphasized the role of countries’ wealth and financial resources in development of psychology. Specifically, Stevens (2010) noted that countries’ level of economic freedom is an important factor in determining research productivity in the area of psychology. Furthermore, countries’ wealth can influence the breadth and depth of internationalization challenges. For instance, several items in the survey (e.g. access to Internet and articles) that are correlated with countries’ financial resources were identified as major challenges among most participants from economically developing countries. Adair, Kashima, Maluf, and Pandey (2006) also explained that historically these countries faced difficulties accessing scientific resources due to financial barriers. It is important to consider that considerable improvement in internationalization of psychology is unlikely unless the wealth and financial resources of economically developing countries increase (O’Gorman et al., 2012). Access to financial resources
might explain why psychologists from economically developed countries reported less
challenges in several areas assessed in this study. Overall, there is little awareness about
the challenges many psychologists experience in different countries.

The challenges facing internationalization are not limited to countries’ wealth. Due to the lack of enough publications and presentations about several cultures and
populations in the world, the knowledge and awareness (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010)
about different populations worldwide (Arnett, 2008) and indigenous psychology (Kim,
et al., 2006) are very limited. As past studies demonstrated (Adair & Huynh, 2012;
Arnett, 2008; O’Gorman et al., 2012) majority of publications in major psychology
journals are from authors affiliated to U.S. and Western Europe institutions, and mostly
cover issues related to Western psychology and populations (Arnett, 2008). These
journals are the major sources of learning for psychologists in Western and economically
developed countries. Lack of access to enough learning resources about different
populations worldwide and indigenous psychology might be a reason explaining why
psychologists from economically developed countries reported that practices of
indigenous psychology are not challenging for internationalization of psychology. Lack
of access to learning resources might prevent these psychologists from fully
understanding differences between indigenous and Western psychology, and how
practices of indigenous psychology can be challenging for internationalization. Future
studies can further investigate the importance of indigenous psychology in
internationalization, and the awareness of Western psychologists about indigenous
psychology.
Psychologists from economically developing countries considered practices of indigenous psychology as important challenges for internationalization. In this regard, Kim, et al. (2006) explained that many psychologists who completed their training in Western countries experience difficulties when trying to establish psychology in their home country. These psychologists pointed to the importance of contextual, cultural, and indigenous factors in establishing psychology, and noted that Western theories and practices of psychology might not be applicable or valid in other cultures and countries.

Another important challenge facing internationalization is using English as the primary language in scientific communications in psychology (Draguns, 2001). Although this facilitates the communications among psychologists who are able to communicate in English, it creates difficulties for those who are not fluent in English. As demonstrated in this study, the majority of participants who were from countries in which English is not the primary language, perceived English language as an important barrier for internationalization. Language barriers limit contribution to psychology databases and access to scientific information (Adair et al., 2006). The effects of English as the primary language in internationalization need to be explored and studied further in future studies. The outcomes of such studies can help psychologists whose primary language is English to better understand the positive and negative consequences of English being the primary language in scientific communications. This understanding might lead to changes in the procedures and policies within the profession in the future that eventually helps those psychologists who are not fluent in English. In addition, valuing and encouraging bilingualism (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010) can enhance learning opportunities for all psychologists and eventually facilitate the internationalization of psychology.
Psychologists from economically developed countries reported more similarities in their interests with scientific communities. This might indicate that these communities accommodate the needs of these psychologists or their institutions, and reflect their interests or values. Moreover, acceptance of manuscripts by editors seems to be a major challenge facing publishing psychological research and a barrier for internationalization of psychology. This finding is in line with what was discussed earlier about struggles that international psychologists face in publishing and presenting their work internationally.

Overall, achieving true internationalization rests on equal participation of all psychologists in the profession, attention to the challenges facing the internationalization movement, and changes in policies and procedures in the future. Without these changes the field of psychology cannot fully benefit from internationalization movement. This study is a preliminary step to better understand the challenges of internationalization of psychology and more researches of this kind is needed to better understand different aspects of this topic.

This research possesses several limitations. First, we only designed the survey in English, which automatically excluded participants who were not able to read and understand the questions in English. Additionally, most of the questions in the survey focused on the scientific aspects of the field, and the majority of participants were from academia. The challenges that psychologists experience in academia might be very different from other psychologists involving in practice, training, or organization. It is important to investigate how psychologists outside academia and those who are not fluent in English experience and view challenges related to internationalization of psychology. The opinion and experience of these psychologists who were excluded are important and
might be different considering the topic of this study. Therefore, the results of this study do not reflect the challenges that all psychologists experience worldwide due to the limitation in the sample. The results should be considered as preliminary steps informing future studies in internationalization of psychology. It is also worth taking into consideration that question one in the survey might have created order effect for participants since it asked about participants’ overall perception about the importance of internationalization.

Second, although the survey was open for ten months, only 534 psychologists participated in this study. To better understand the challenges that internationalization of psychology is facing, more participants from each country and region is needed. By recruiting more participants, researchers can analyze the results based on region and country, which will increase the understanding of regional challenges. In our study, there were instances that we only had one participant from a country, which does not reflect the challenges of psychologists in that country. Furthermore, we found countries from which we did not have any participants. Having knowledge about countries’ specific challenges is very important in resolving these challenges in the future and accelerating the internationalization process.

Third, this study only used an Internet data collection tool. This method might have prohibited us from reaching psychologists in countries where Internet is not accessible or international connections are not convenient. To recruit more participants from different regions in the future, it is important to use tools other than Internet to learn about specific regional challenges.
Fourth, Monitoring participants’ misbehavior is a challenge in Internet-based research especially if researchers are not recording identifiable information to protect confidentiality of participants. In this study we did not incorporate specific measure to carefully monitor possible misbehaviors. Future studies using Internet to reach psychologists can provide each participant with a username and password that will be used to log in and complete the study.

Considering the results and limitations of this study, we emphasize the importance and necessity of psychology organizations to provide economically developing countries with more funding opportunities and low cost access to information, resources, and services. In this regard, O'Gorman et al. (2012) pointed out to the importance of collaboration among psychologists form developed and developing countries, and encouraged psychologist from developed countries to offer open-access resources, and make their equipment and data available to psychologists in developing countries for the purpose of psychological research. Furthermore, psychology organizations are recommended to further investigate and consider the needs of those countries that reported more challenges.

In order to learn more about factors practitioners perceive to be challenging, future studies are recommended to recruit psychologist-practitioners through different national and international psychology organizations that represent applied psychology subfields. It is also important to design and distribute studies in languages other than English. Such studies can increase our understanding of the challenges experienced by those psychologists who are not fluent in English as well as the impact and consequences of English being the primary language in professional communications. This would
require the collaboration among psychologists from different countries, which is a good practice in internationalization itself.

The follow up studies and surveys should investigate the training needs and strategies that could enhance psychologists’ sensitivity, knowledge, and awareness about international issues within the profession. Internationalization of psychology happens simultaneously with internationalization of curriculum and training in psychology (Bikos, DePaul Chism, Forman, & King, 2013). Therefore, psychologists need to focus on internationalizing psychology curriculum and training. Moreover, to increase the diversity of samples in psychological studies, researchers need to established links with international colleagues to access diverse subject pools (Henrich et al., 2010).

Editors of journals are strongly encouraged to equally consider and value all manuscripts from psychologists with different backgrounds. Editors of journal have especial power to promote multicultural, multilingual, and international coverage in journals (Draguns, 2001). Increasing publications about different populations can improve psychologists’ knowledge about non-Western populations and indigenous practices of psychology in different countries. Furthermore, psychologists whose second or third language is English are making a significant effort to write or present their work in English. Thus, it is equally important to implement different strategies that facilitate the publication and presentation of these psychologists’ works. It is important to consider that Western psychologists through simultaneous translation in conferences, editorial mentoring programs, and several other activities have made efforts to include colleagues from other countries; however, more of these efforts are needed to accelerate the internationalization movement.
Appendix A

We are investigating the challenges and possibilities that psychologists around the world experience in the process of the internationalization of psychology. By internationalization, we mean the process of incorporating the results of research and practice that are derived from different cultures to solve problems in local and global community. The following questionnaire will take few minutes of your time. Your answers will help us understand what you think the problems are concerning the process of internationalization of psychology.

i. What country are you from?

ii. What is your field?

iii. How many years have you been working in this field?

v. How many years have you studied after high school?

iv. Please choose in which of the following settings do you work?
   Private Practice □  Hospital □  Outpatient □  Academia □
   Other □  If other, please specify .........................

iv. What is your gender?

1) Do you see the internationalization of psychology as an important and prominent aspect of the field?
   Very Important □  Important □  Little Important □
   Somewhat Unimportant □  Unimportant □  Completely Unimportant □

* Relevant to the internationalization, which of the following items do you find as challenges for you or your colleagues?
2) Financial issues

Very Important □  Important □  Little Important □
Somewhat Unimportant □  Unimportant □  Completely Unimportant □

3) Dissimilarities of interests with international colleagues and scientific communities

Very Important □  Important □  Little Important □
Somewhat Unimportant □  Unimportant □  Completely Unimportant □

4) Second language barriers

Very Important □  Important □  Little Important □
Somewhat Unimportant □  Unimportant □  Completely Unimportant □

5) Accessing international resources such as articles or conferences

Very Important □  Important □  Little Important □
Somewhat Unimportant □  Unimportant □  Completely Unimportant □

6) Becoming part of international research teams/projects

Very Important □  Important □  Little Important □
Somewhat Unimportant □  Unimportant □  Completely Unimportant □

7) Lack of acceptance by the international scientific communities

Very Important □  Important □  Little Important □
Somewhat Unimportant □  Unimportant □  Completely Unimportant □

8) Differences in cultural, political, religious, and social norms and values

Very Important □  Important □  Little Important □
Somewhat Unimportant □  Unimportant □  Completely Unimportant □

9) Different nature of psychology in your country

Very Important □  Important □  Little Important □
10) Dissimilarities of psychological approaches to therapy, diagnosis, assessment and etc.

Somewhat Unimportant          Unimportant                      Completely Unimportant
Very Important □           Important□           Little Important □
Somewhat Unimportant□       Unimportant □           Completely Unimportant □

11) Psychology as practiced in my home country is perceived through the lens of indigenous psychology

Somewhat Unimportant          Unimportant                      Completely Unimportant
Very Important □           Important□           Little Important □
Somewhat Unimportant□       Unimportant □           Completely Unimportant □

12) Lack of training with international focus

Somewhat Unimportant          Unimportant                      Completely Unimportant
Very Important □           Important□           Little Important □
Somewhat Unimportant□       Unimportant □           Completely Unimportant □

13) Which of the following items do you see as challenges facing you or your colleagues in the process of publishing in international or English journals?

☐ Differences in research method/design from editor or peer reviewers

☐ Cultural differences

☐ Acceptance of work by editors of journals for publication

☐ Match of interests with editor of journal

☐ Differences in perceived definitions of constructs and concepts
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CHAPTER 3
NON-WESTERN PSYCHOLOGIST’S VIEWPOINTS ABOUT
INTERNATIONALIZATION OF PSYCHOLOGY 

Abstract

In this study we investigated the experiences of non-Western psychologists with respect to internationalization of psychology through a questionnaire with open-ended questions. Using the grounded theory approach and open, axial, and selective coding, we analyzed the data. The finding of this study demonstrated the following four selective codes: Ethnocentrism, access problems, challenges, and future needs. Overall, participants indicated that the ethnocentric view in psychology is one of the main challenges for the internationalization process, and they emphasized the important role of psychology organizations in resolving the challenges they experience. We provided recommendations for resolving the challenges that non-Western psychologists experience at the conclusion of the paper.

Keywords: Internationalization, Psychologists, Non-Western Countries, and Challenges
Introduction

As a scientific discipline that emphasizes both research and practice, psychology has recognized the benefit of cultural and scientific exchanges among psychologists from different countries and cultures. Pawlik and d'Ydewalle (1996) noted that the early history of psychology emphasized the needs for scientific exchange among psychologists so that the field would grow and develop. More recently, this exchange has been particularly facilitated through advances in technology (Leung & et al., 2009). Through international exchange and collaboration, psychologists have opportunities to learn new strategies and interventions from their international colleagues and solve old problems with new solutions (Heppner, Leong, & Chiao, 2008; Norsworthy, Heppner, Ægisdóttir, Gerstein, & Pedersen, 2009). Furthermore, internationalization enhances cross-national and cross-cultural understandings builds goodwill among psychologists from different cultural and national backgrounds (Stevens & Wedding, 2004), and reduces the ethnocentric view in psychology. This understanding might enhance psychologists’ multicultural competencies (Sue et al., 1982) that include knowledge, awareness, and skills related to international issues and populations (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010). Internationalization also facilitates respect and equal partnership (Leung & et al., 2009) among psychologists that are critical for future scientific dialogs.

A modest level of internationalization is happening in different disciplines (Adair & Huynh, 2012). Similar to other disciplines, psychologists have realized the importance of internationalization of psychology while emphasizing the indigenous development of psychology within each country (Kim, Yang, & Hwang, 2006; Norsworthy, et al., 2009). Several psychologists described the importance and benefit of internationalization of
psychology (Heppner et al., 2008; Pawlik & d’Ydewalle, 1996; Stevens & Wedding, 2004) and how increasing knowledge and awareness about international issues through research and publication (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010; Adair & Huynh, 2012; Hohenshil & Amundson, 2011) can benefit the discipline. In addition, several psychologists described principles governing international research in psychology and have discussed the necessity of being culturally responsive in international and cross-cultural research (Ægisdóttir, Gerstein, Leung, Kwan, & Lonner, 2009) as well as incorporating none U.S populations in psychological research (Arnett, 2008; Gerstein, Ægisdóttir, 2007; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). These psychologists aimed to show the importance of international focus in psychology and how the lack of this focus might harm the discipline.

Although several psychologists have emphasized the importance of internationalization of psychology, the field of psychology in general and American psychology in particular have been slow in embracing internationalization and incorporating international perspectives and populations into the research and practice of psychology (Arnett, 2008). Leung (2003) identified psychology as an encapsulated discipline and criticized its ignorance of international issues and populations. Similarly, Arnett (2008), through analyzing the publications in six major American Psychological Association (APA) journals published in 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003 and 2007, demonstrated that the samples, authors and editors in these journals were mostly American. He argued that APA journals have mainly focused on Americans who are only 5% of the world population and culturally very different from other populations in the world.

Furthermore, Henrich et al. (2010) reviewed a wide range of publications from
different branches of psychology and concluded that most of the studies published in the
top psychology journals include samples from “Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich,
and Democratic (WEIRD) societies”. Henrich and his colleagues emphasized that
psychologists have ignored the variations and diversity in human populations and assume
that Western samples are representative of human species. Similarly, Adair and Huynh
(2012) reported that although the United States is no longer the only producer of
psychological research and publications, the international imbalance in publications is
still in place, the same as decades ago. In addition, through analyzing the psychological
publications in the Web of Science during 1996 and 2010, O’Gorman, Shum, Halford,
and Ogilvie (2012) investigated the international trends in psychological research. The
results indicated that during these years authors affiliated with institutions in Western
countries had the majority of citations. Overall, the review of top psychology journals
form different disciplines within psychology and during different periods of time
indicated the lack of representation of international authors and topics.

Why Internationalization of Psychology Has Been a Slow Process?

As demonstrated above, the process of internationalization of psychology is slow.
Based on previous studies, several factors contribute to the slow process of
internationalization in the field of psychology. Lack of publications about international
topics and populations limits both American psychologists and psychologists in other
countries in their ability to learn about international issues (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010).
Moreover, Ægisdóttir and Gerstein (2010) reported that international psychologists
sometimes experience difficulties in publishing or presenting their work. International
psychologists need to show the journal editors that their work is relevant and worth
publishing or presenting. These difficulties are barriers for international psychologists and for the internationalization of psychology.

Another venue that promotes international communication and collaboration among psychologists and enhances internationalization of psychology is the psychology conferences, particularly the international psychology conferences. Professional conferences play significant roles in promoting a discipline by providing opportunities to present and receive feedback from other professionals in the discipline. International conferences in psychology are also important in that psychologists can exchange knowledge and information with psychologists from other cultures and countries (Adair et al., 2010). For the exchange of knowledge and information among psychologists from different nations to happen, it is necessary for psychologists from different countries to attend international psychology conferences. However, as noted by by Pawlik and d'Ydewalle (1996), international conferences in psychology are usually held in developed counties that have more resources for conferences and expositions. The high cost of conference and travel might prevent psychologists who are from developing counties from attending international conferences, which could thus affect the international themes or characteristics of conferences.

When thinking about reasons behind the slow process of internationalization in the field of psychology, it is important to consider that not all psychologists have the same understanding, perspective, and approach toward internationalization. For instance, Leung (2003) reported that his work for APA convention was rejected since the conference chair evaluated his work as irrelevant to mainstream psychology in the United States. Ægisdóttir and Gerstein (2010) also noted that they have received comments from
editors or reviewers questioning the relevance of their manuscript to the U.S populations or issues. These reported experiences demonstrate that not all psychologists believe internationalization is an important characteristic of psychology.

Each country’s resources, support networks, cultural, social, historical, and political backgrounds affect the type of challenges that psychologists experience. Adair and Kagitcibasi (1995) pointed to the lack of resources as an important challenge related to the growth of psychology in developing countries. Furthermore, Draguns (2001) reported that the use of English as the primary language in psychology professional meetings or journals is an important barrier for some psychologists. Draguns emphasized that it might be convenient for those psychologists who are fluent in English to attend meetings or read in English, but “what about the rest of the world?” Draguns also noted that psychologists mostly have ignored contributions to psychology that are in languages other than English, which is another barrier for internationalization of psychology.

The Goals of This Study

As it has been noted earlier, based on previous studies, internationalization of psychology faces several challenges that include but not limited to publishing in international journals, and presenting and attending international psychology conferences. However, most of these challenges have been identified or reported by psychologists living and working in the United States or other Western countries. Thus, these challenges reflect mostly the perspectives and experiences of psychologists who live in Western countries. The challenges that psychologists in non-Western countries experience with respect to internationalization of psychology are mostly unknown. Although some authors addressed issues and challenges related to internationalization of
psychology (Gerstein, Heppner, Ægisdóttir, Leung, & Norsworthy, 2009; Kim et al., 2006; Stevens & Wedding, 2004), still our knowledge and awareness about psychology in different countries, and challenges related to internationalization in non-Western countries are very limited. We are unaware of the similarities and differences of the experienced challenges among psychologists in Western and Non-Western countries. Since we do not have a clear understanding about these challenges, it is difficult to have efficient plans or strategies for resolving them in the future.

For the purpose of this study, we adopted the Leung et al. (2009) definition of internationalization, used specifically for internationalization of counseling psychology due to its emphasis on cultural sensitivity, which is a significant factor that needs to be considered when thinking about internationalization of psychology. Internationalization refers to “a continuous process of synthesizing knowledge generated through research, scholarship, and practice from different cultures and using this knowledge to solve problems in local and global communities. Internationalization involves collaborations and equal partnerships in which cultural sensitivity and respect are required for success” (p. 115).

In this study we were interested to learn about non-Western psychologists’ viewpoints about the challenges facing internationalization of psychology and identify different needs that psychologists have in resolving their challenges in the future. We tried to recruit, as many psychologists from different non-Western countries as possible to better understand the nature of these challenges. In their study Adair, et al. (2010) categorized the world into the following parts, considering countries’ financial resources: “United States, economically advantaged (E-A) countries (Australia, Canada, Israel,
Japan, New Zealand, and Western Europe), and majority-world (M-W) countries, previously referred to as developing (but also including former Eastern Bloc) countries.”

In this study we considered Adair, et al.’s categories, and investigated the challenges psychologists in M-W countries face. We used the term non-Western countries instead of M-W countries. We also used the qualitative approach to better understand the nature and depth of challenges that non-Western psychologists experience. The outcomes of this study might shed light on the global challenges facing internationalization of psychology, and help to better understand the type of assistance that non-Western psychologists need in resolving their challenges. The results also could help psychology organizations in further refining policies and procedures that might impact internationalization of psychology.

**Method**

The data for the current study was collected as part of a larger study that investigated the importance of challenges facing internationalization of psychology. The results from qualitative part of our investigations are presented in this paper.

**Survey Instrument and Participants**

The survey for this study was design and disseminated in English. In the survey we asked participants the three following open-ended questions: Please explain problems that you see or have experienced in the process of internationalization of psychology in your country., Please tell us what established psychology associations could do to assist you in developing and enhancing psychology in your country., and please describe any other thoughts that you have regarding the internationalization of psychology. In this
study, 92, 71, and 66 participants responded to the first, second, and third question respectively.

Participants also had the opportunity to write as much as they wanted for each question, and were not limited in any way. We decided to use open-ended questions in the survey since this type of question helps researchers to get factual information, establish knowledge about the topic, explore new areas (Ballou, 2008), and encourage participants to provide deeper and more comprehensive responses. Considering that our knowledge about the challenges non-Western psychologists experience is limited, open-ended questions provided us with opportunity to learn more about non-Western psychologists’ experiences and to give voice to them. The participants were from the following countries: Algeria, Argentina, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bermuda, Cameroon, Colombia, Costa Rica, China, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Japan, Iran, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Nigeria, Taiwan, Malaysia, Turkey, Macau, Philippines, Singapore, Yemen, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Oman, Peru, UAE, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Among the participants, 85.3% reported working in an academic setting. Other participants reported working at hospital, private practice, and outpatient settings. Participants also reported an average of 10 years of work experience as psychologists.

Procedures

We used an online method of data collection. In order to recruit participants from different countries and cultures, we sent emails to psychology organizations in different countries asking them to forward the information related to this study to their members
via email. The email included the explanation of the study and the link to the survey as well as the contact information of the researchers. We also sent emails to psychologists who published in psychology journals or presented at psychology conferences, asking them to participate in the study and to forward the email to psychologists who might be interested in participating in this study. We used internet-based and snowball sampling methods (Coleman, 1958) to recruit participants. Coleman (1958), Goodman (1961), Gabler (1992), and Spreen (1992) noted that snowball sampling is a commonly used method to access hard-to-reach populations in research. Since we considered psychologists from different national backgrounds as potential participants in this study, using internet-based and snowball sampling provided us the opportunity to access our hard-to-reach population.

**Analysis**

Our goal in this study was to create a theory that is grounded in the lived experiences of psychologists from different national and cultural backgrounds so that we could explain their challenges. Therefore, we used a version of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1988) to analyze the open-ended questions. Fassinger (2005) explained that grounded theory provides a context for exploring and understanding salient social justice concerns. Grounded theory gives voice to marginalized groups and explains their realities and experiences (Ellis & Chen, 2013) from their point of view. Considering that in this study the goal was to better understand non-Western psychologists’ challenges from their perspective, we used the grounded theory. Furthermore, learning about and resolving the challenges that non-Western psychologists experience might promote social justice and diversity in the field of psychology in the future. In this regard, Fassinger (2005) stated
that for counseling psychologists who want to address diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice issues, grounded theory provides a context to incorporate different qualitative approaches into research and better explain important societal problems.

Since the qualitative data for this study was gathered through a web-based survey and there were not any face-to-face interactions among participants and researchers, this study falls closer to the postpositivist approach. Ponterotto (2005) noted that in postpositivist paradigm the researcher has an objective and detached role and tries to understand the relationships among different factors. However, to understand and interpret the data we adopted a critical lens. The critical paradigm is an emancipatory one in that the researcher challenges and argues against the status quo (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000) to understand and change the power dynamics, and emancipate people from oppression. Critical theory attends to experiences that are affected by oppression and power relations in the past and present (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). Using critical lens, we aimed to understand and challenge how global power differentials affected the internationalization of psychology and the experiences of non-Western psychologists. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) pointed to the commonalities among critical theories and recommended researchers to use critical theory broadly, and not limit themselves to one approach. Thus, in this study we used the critical paradigm broadly as a lens to explain and interpret participants’ responses. This perspective also provided us with opportunities to explore general patterns that create challenges for non-Western psychologists and that also tend to obstruct the internationalization process.

To analyze the participants’ responses, we followed open, axial, and selective coding processes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) that occurred recursively. Fassinger (2005)
noted that although these coding processes are considered sequentially, they mostly occur recursively due to the researcher’s constant comparison of the new data to the already existing data in order to create coherent categories of information.

To develop initial familiarity with the data, three researchers first read the participants’ responses. Then, we used open coding in that we broke down the data into concepts and used participants’ own words to identify and describe the concepts. To code the responses, we considered single words, short phrases or paragraphs as the units of meaning (Morrow & Smith, 2000). As different codes were created, we constantly compared new units of meaning with the existing units, which led to creation of new categories or to the revision of the existing categories. Therefore, to incorporate new data, the categories were constantly revised (Fassinger, 2005). Following the open coding we initiated the axial coding in which we determined the connection and relationship among categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990 & 1998). We then grouped categories into fewer and more encompassing categories (Fassinger, 2005) by putting the data back together. At this stage of coding we identified and described the characteristics of the categories in order to understand each category and the relationships among categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990 & 1998).

Following the axial coding we conducted the selective coding process to create a theory that explains the challenges experienced by non-Western psychologists with respect to internationalization of psychology. For selective coding we chose the main categories that explained smaller categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In generating the theory, we created a narrative to explain the main aspects of the data while considering all of the categories and their interrelationships. As we generated the theory we
constantly compared the theory to the participants’ responses (Fassinger, 2005) to make sure that it is grounded in non-Western psychologists’ experiences and describes their challenges. To calculate the agreement among raters we used the Krippendorff’s alpha with 95% confidence interval. The Krippendorff’s kappa was 0.919, which indicated a good agreement among raters.

**Results**

Analyzing the data yielded 32, 9, and 4 open, axial, and selective codes respectively. Codes explaining the theory of non-Western psychologists’ experiences related to internationalization of psychology are presented in Table 3.1. Overall, the theory that resulted from this study suggested that non-Western psychologists perceived many challenges related to internationalization, and they have several needs to further internationalize psychology in the future. They see ethnocentrism and access to resources as main barriers toward internationalization of psychology, and believed that psychology organizations can play a significant role in resolving challenges and promoting internationalization of psychology in the future.

**Table 3.1. Selective, Axial, and Open Categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selective</th>
<th>Axial</th>
<th>Open</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnocentrism</td>
<td>• Ignorance of indigenous psychology</td>
<td>• American psychologists dominate the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• American psychologists’ biases</td>
<td>• In-group favoritism by American psychologists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• American psychology suffers from the self-citation bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• One-sided Euro-American information, concepts, theories, practices, and perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of respect, understanding, open-mindedness, and cultural awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• American journal editors and reviewers’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access problems</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Future needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Lack of cultural sensitivity</td>
<td>● Financial problems</td>
<td>● Role of psychological associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Failures to consider other countries’ culture, religion, and philosophies of life</td>
<td>● Lack of opportunities for networking</td>
<td>● Award grants for non-Western young scholars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Lack of localization and indigenization of psychological theories and practices</td>
<td>● High cost of attending conferences</td>
<td>● Psychological organizations provide mentorship programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● English as the first language</td>
<td>● Lack of access to culturally-appropriate resources</td>
<td>● Increase conferences in low-income countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Western-based psychological training and supervision</td>
<td>● Lack of access to continuing education opportunities, databases, journals, and software</td>
<td>● Create relations among psychological associations in different countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Financial problems</td>
<td>● Lack of funding opportunities</td>
<td>● Provide real-time translation in psychological conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Lack of resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Create more resources to disseminate indigenous psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Negative impact of politics and policies</td>
<td>● Different ethic codes, licensure requirements, and educational systems</td>
<td>● Develop more cultural sensitivity about international work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Systematic differences</td>
<td>● Difficulty disseminating non-Western research</td>
<td>● Create international faculty and student exchange programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Absence of common understandings of internationalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coding participants’ responses yielded the following selective codes:
Ethnocentrism, access problem, challenges, and future needs. We provided detailed
description of each category below.

**Ethnocentrism**

The results showed that the majority of participants perceived American
psychologists’ biases and assumptions as an important barrier for internationalization of
psychology. Non-Western psychologists reported that American psychologists dominated
the field of psychology, ignore psychological practices and approaches of indigenous
psychology in other countries, and suffer from self-citation bias. It appeared that to non-
Western psychologists most of psychological approaches and practices are Euro-
American, and there is a lack of cultural awareness, knowledge, understanding, and
respect for non-Western psychologists. One of the participants stated, “All the major
theorists are European or North American. Alternative theoretical frameworks are either
not acknowledged at all or are belittled to various degrees.” Another participant noted,
“The flow of information, concepts, theories and perspectives is predominantly one-
sided. They move from Euro-American settings and marketed and consumed in the
various non-Western cultural settings. In contrast, the works from non-Western settings
often do not reach to other parts of the world. True internationalization requires
acknowledging diverse forms and processes of psychological knowledge.”
The responses also indicated that American journal editors and reviewers’ approaches to non-Western psychologists’ manuscripts and research is ethnocentric. One of the participants explained that “Journal editors or reviewers often require us to specify the relevance of our research in the American context or populations, this is a very ethnocentric perspective.” Another participant noted, “The use of non-U.S samples is constantly criticized. Editors and reviewers request justifications for this choice. I see no reason to assume that U.S samples are the standard, and others samples should be measured against them.”

Another challenge that non-Western psychologists experience is that English is the primary language in professional communications. This seems to be related to in-group favoritism and ethnocentrism in that psychologists whose first language is English have language privilege over those psychologists whose second or third language is English. One of the participants noted “I basically see language as the primary source of problem as it relates to the inability of individuals to get their ideas across.” True internationalization requires all psychologists from all over the world to be open and willing to learn from each other; however, being ethnocentric prevents some psychologists from learning about other cultures. Indeed, one participant reported “Quite frankly, being part of the International Affairs Committee of one of the best known research societies in the field of psychology which is working towards the internationalization of the field, I feel I am well informed enough to say the majority of North American psychologists THINK they have NOTHING to learn from their international colleagues (especially "Third World" colleagues).” Overall, the results indicated that biases, assumptions, and ethnocentric perspectives are important challenges.
for internationalization. It appeared that these challenges prevented psychologists from learning about non-Western perspectives, specifically indigenous psychologies of different regions of the world.

**Access Problem**

Several participants reported experiencing financial problems. They noted that the funding opportunities are very limited, and the cost of attending conferences is very high. They reported that financial problems prevented them from accessing continuing education opportunities, databases, journals, and software, all of which are important for promoting psychology in their countries. In additions, participants expressed difficulties of networking with international colleagues, collaborating in research projects, and accessing culturally adapted and appropriate materials. With regard to financial challenges, one psychologist explained, “I have been facing a lot of financial problems for doing research in the area of my interest and expertise. I received my PhD from a foreign country in 2010 and learned how to use sophisticated technology in psychophysical research. Since then, more than 2 years have passed, but I have not yet been able to purchase the equipments I need to develop and run my experiments. Yes, we have some annual budgets for purchasing equipments, but unfortunately those moneys are being spent according to the willingness of some powerful faculty members. This has limited my capacity to publish my works in international journals.” The outcomes showed that the process of internationalization is obstructed for non-Western psychologists due to problems related to accessing scientific and financial resources, and connecting with international colleagues.
Challenges

Participants reported experiencing multiple challenges in different domains. They noted that sanctions, political conflicts, and local policies negatively impacted internationalization. One participant shared that “Political conflicts between governments influence the academic relationships and exchanges. This is the most important problem in my view. At present it is several months that my university is sanctioned by Science Direct, Elsevier and many other scientific databases! Just because of political problems”. The results also revealed that significant systematic differences are creating challenges for internationalizations of psychology. Some of these differences are as follows: different ethic codes, licensure requirements, and educational systems. One of the psychologists explained that “Having global standards of training in psychology may assist in enhancing research and clinical practice at an international level.”

The absence of common definitions and understandings of internationalization, and limited understanding about non-Western populations and cultures are other challenges. One participant noted, “There is little indigenous study of the local populations. There are few examples we can draw on to encourage a localized view of psychological theories. More research has to be done locally to adapt the theories to a more international focus.” Moreover, to better understand and address this challenge one of the participants suggested, “Counseling psychology journals need to understand that their audience is around the world…” and they should not “Limit their scope to U.S. readers and professionals.” Thus, it is important that psychology journals publish studies about variety of topics, cultures, and populations. This will help psychologists around the world to also learn about indigenous practices of psychology.
Several participants pointed to the level of development of psychology in their country. One psychologist shared that in his country “Psychology is in its infancy”, and the needs of psychology as a profession in his country is different from some other countries in the world. To facilitate the process of internationalization it is important to find solutions to problems that psychologists in different countries are experiencing.

**Future Needs**

The outcomes demonstrated that psychology organizations could play a significant role in facilitating the process of internationalization and in resolving some of the current challenges that the international movement is facing. Participants recommended that these organizations provide more grants and mentorship programs for non-Western scholars, increase conferences in low-income countries, establish relationships among psychological associations in different countries, make conferences more accessible, and create international faculty and student exchange and training programs.

Furthermore, it is important for psychology organizations to stay neutral. In this regard, one participant recommended the establishment of a neutral international entity. This participant stated that “Instead of all the world being regulated by the American Psychological Association, it would be of great benefit in the long term, if there was a "neutral" international entity that would set the norms for an international psychology and counseling (sort of having a UN for Psychology).”

Several participants also discussed the importance of mutual and respectful connections and communications among psychologists all around the world, and how this
type of communication can facilitate international movement. Such communications also can help in developing psychology in places that it is usually neglected. One of participants noted, “It is important to move towards the internationalization of counseling and psychology in order to connect the psychologists all over the world and develop the science and profession to promote psychological well-being and alleviate the human suffering. As most of the developments in psychology are happening in North America, we need to make a shift to other cultures and countries in order to develop this field where it is often neglected.” Additionally, it is important to increase interdisciplinary communications among professionals. One psychologist reported, “As psychology is very much inter-disciplinary subject, it would be beneficial to collaborate with experts and professionals from other fields as well (within and outside psychology). I myself have collaborated with educational psychologists, anthropologists and psychiatrists.”

Several participants also reported challenges related to how people in different places perceive and view psychology. In several places in the world people do not have an accurate expectations and understandings of psychology as a discipline. Furthermore, in some places psychology and the process of receiving mental health services is associated with stigma. One of participants explained that “It is also important to break the myths that people have, like psychologists are mind readers or they themselves are psychos,” thus it is important to educate people and increase their support for the field of psychology globally. Few participants requested “All journals report data about their attained level of internationalization”. Finally, it is important to increase cross-cultural awareness and respect to facilitate internationalization of psychology in the future. Without mutual respect any other effort will not be effective. One participant
emphasized, “No two individuals are the same and no two nations are the same. Internalization therefore requires mutual understanding and respect for individual differences and cultural and religious diversities.”

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Several scholars (Pawlik & d’Ydewalle, 1996; Leung et al., 2009; Heppner et al., 2008; Norsworthy et al., 2009; Stevens & Wedding, 2004) emphasized the benefit and importance of internationalization for the field of psychology. However, as the results of this study indicated there are several barriers facing the international movement. One of the main barriers that most non-Western psychologists noted was ethnocentrism. Previously, Leong and Ponterotto (2003), and Leung (2003) discussed that psychology and counseling are ethnocentric and encapsulated disciplines. The ethnocentric perspective prevents psychologists to be open-minded and willing to learn from each other. For the true internationalization to happen psychologists all around the world need to change their attitude and perspective, examine their biases, be open and respectful to other psychologists and their cultures, and try to increase their multicultural and cross-cultural knowledge and awareness.

It is also important for all psychologists to learn about indigenous psychology of different countries and recruit research participants from cultures other than their own. Being ethnocentric might be one of the main reasons that most of psychological research is carried out on Western populations, specifically U.S population (Arnett, 2008). Moreover, lack of available resources and reading materials about indigenous psychology, psychology in other countries, and mental health issues of different
populations around the world is a barrier preventing psychologists to increase their cross-cultural awareness. In this regard, Ægisdóttir and Gerstein (2010) noted that the low number of publications about international issues in the U.S journals contributes to the U.S counseling psychologists’ lack of awareness about international topics.

Changing the policies and procedures related to publishing studies in different journals might encourage psychologists from different backgrounds to submit manuscripts for publication. Based on the results of this study, we recommend that editors dedicate a section in journals to international issues, populations, or manuscripts. It is helpful if journals report their yearly statistics related to the degree they cover or address international issues.

Furthermore, department chairs and promotion committees can significantly impact the internationalization of psychology. Through changing faculty promotion policies and criteria they can encourage internationally related research in psychology and counseling departments. These changes in policies and procedures might encourage psychologists to carry out studies with international focus in the future. In this regard, Turner-Essel, Yakunina, Glover, and Chessar (2007) reported that faculty members mostly carry out international research through their personal connections with international colleges rather than through their departments. It is important that faculty be able to have international connections with international colleges through their department in the future.

Psychology organizations can play a significant role in addressing some of the challenges that non-Western psychologists experience. Adair, et al. (2010) stated that the
cost of attending conferences might prevent some psychologists from participating in psychology congresses, specifically if psychologists are from low-income countries. Holding psychology congresses in low-income areas in the world might increase the participation of psychologists from low-income countries. In addition, dedicating funding for travel and research for scholars from low-income countries can positively impact internationalization of psychology. Offering free or lower cost access to resources for psychologists from low-income countries is another method with which psychology organizations can positively impact the internationalization process. It is also important for psychology organizations to stay neutral in their policies and procedures, and not advocate for specific culture or country. Moreover, to facilitate the internationalization of psychology, psychology organizations could build connections with local psychology organizations. This connection might create several opportunities for research, consultation, publication, and professional collaborations. Both psychology departments and organizations can initiate cross-national and cross-cultural programs in which psychologists from different national and cultural backgrounds collaborate and learn from each other. This type of collaboration can increase cross-cultural awareness and reduce the ethnocentric view in the field.

This study possesses several limitations. First, due to geographical distance, and the cost of travel and interview, we gathered the data online through a questionnaire that had several open-ended questions. Not having face-to-face interviews might prevent participants to share their deep concerns and challenges related to internationalization. We recommend that in the future researchers focus on specific regions or countries and conduct face-to-face interviews with fewer participants to deeply learn about non-Western
psychologists’ challenges. This method will also help to identify country or region specific challenges.

Second, in this study for privacy and confidentiality purposes we did not record participants’ identifiable information such as their email, name, or contact information. This prevented us from contacting participants and asking them follow up questions. Similarly, this precluded the process of member-checking our results with the research participants. Thus, our understanding of participants’ challenges was limited to what they initially report in the questionnaire. We suggest that in the future researchers record participants’ contact information. This allows researcher to ask follow up questions if needed.

We also used the grounded theory to generate a theory that we hope begins to explain the experiences of non-Western psychologists about internationalization. For the current study this approach seemed appropriate because not such a theory existed prior to this study that attempts to convey the challenges non-Western psychologists experience. We recommend that researchers in the future use other qualitative approaches to build upon this theory and better understand the experiences of non-Western psychologists.
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CHAPTER 4

COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY FACULTY’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF PSYCHOLOGY

Abstract

In this study, we identified counseling psychology faculty members’ international publications, presentations, activities, and education abroad experiences through investigating 183 curricula vitae of faculty members in the United States. The results demonstrated that compared to four decades ago, the emphasis on international issues has increased. However, there is still a large group of counseling psychology faculty members, who have not incorporated international issues into their professional activities. Path analysis results indicated that international presentations and activities moderately predicted publications. Based on these results, we proposed several ways to facilitate the internationalization of counseling psychology in the future.

Keywords: Internationalization, Counseling Psychology, Faculty, Research
Introduction

For decades counseling psychologists significantly focused on counseling issues and populations in the United States. As a result, counseling psychology became an ethnocentric (Leong & Ponterotto, 2003) and encapsulated discipline (Leung, 2003), confined to the U.S populations and contexts. Additionally, for years most counseling psychologists did not engage in international professional activities and even questioned the importance of such engagement (McWhirter, 2000). However, since the 2000, counseling psychologists have place greater emphasis on international issues (Gerstein, Heppner, Ægisdóttir, Leung, & Norsworthy, 2009) particularly after several calls about the narrow focus of psychologists on people of “Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD)” societies (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010) and the comparative ignorance of different populations in the world (Arnett, 2008).

Several counseling psychologists pointed to the benefits and importance of internationalization of the discipline. Gerstein (2005) identified the international movement as “the next stage in the multicultural movement”. Heppner, Leong, and Chiao (2008) also noted that internationalization can promote a context in which counseling psychologists use the knowledge from other cultures and counties to effectively solve the existing problems with new solutions. They recommended educators and faculty to expand their professional activities to include international issues, populations, and settings, and equip students with skills that prepare them to function globally. For the purpose of this study, we adopted the Leung et al. (2009) definition of internationalization due to its emphasis on respect, equal collaboration, and cultural sensitivity, which are essential factors for internationalization of psychology. Here, the
internationalization refers to “a continuous process of synthesizing knowledge generated through research, scholarship, and practice from different cultures and using this knowledge to solve problems in local and global communities. Internationalization involves collaborations and equal partnerships in which cultural sensitivity and respect are required for success” (p. 115). Thus, as a result of internationalization psychologists might engage in collaborations with international colleagues, create international and cross-cultural research projects and publications, and expand the scope of multiculturalism and social justice in counseling psychology.

Gerstein, et al., (2009) also reported that the field of counseling psychology is currently involved in the internationalization process. This involvement is evident from the rise of U.S counseling psychologists’ presentations and publications about international topics (Heppner & Gerstein, 2008; Kwan & Gerstein, 2008; Leong & Blustein, 2000; Leong & Ponterotto, 2003), participation in cross-cultural and cross-national researches and professional activities (McWhirter, 2000; Norsworthy, Leung, Heppner, & Wang, 2009), and initiation of and attendance at international counseling psychology conference (Forrest, 2008; Kwan & Gerstein 2008). Counseling psychology professionals have also focused on enhancing cross-cultural competencies (Heppner et al., 2009) in training the next generation of counseling psychologists. Although the international movement initiated several years ago through crossing national boundaries, it still faces several challenges. For instance, the number of publications about international topics and populations in the U.S counseling journals is very limited, which contributes to the U.S counseling psychologists’ lack of awareness about international issues (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010). True internationalization of profession is not
possible until counseling psychologists resolve some of the challenges facing the international movement. This means that U.S counseling psychologists need to engage more in international collaborations and projects, and incorporate more international perspectives and populations into their work.

As a result of internationalization, counseling psychologists have paid more attention to providing culturally sensitive mental health services to people with international background in the U.S (Fouad, 1991). Counseling psychologists have also provided applied and training services in other countries (Heppner et al., 2008), and developed international training programs that benefited both faculty and students (Wang & Heppner, 2009). U.S counseling psychologists’ international experiences have increased their cross-cultural competencies that include second language proficiencies, interests in international collaborations, and emphasis on cross-cultural counseling and research.

**Counseling Psychology Faculty**

Counseling psychology faculty members have had a major role in the accomplished international activities within the counseling psychology profession. They promoted internationalization of counseling psychology through their publications, international collaborations, emphasis on international issues in counseling psychology curriculum, and training the next generation of counseling psychologists including international students. Additionally, through engaging in professional psychology organizations with international focus (e.g. American Psychological Association, Division 52, and International Section in Division 17), and inviting international guest
speakers and faculty to U.S counseling programs (Turner-Essel & Waehler, 2009), U.S counseling psychologists have enhanced internationalization of counseling psychology.

International activities of counseling psychology faculty members can enrich and diversify counseling psychology programs. Counseling psychology faculty members’ decisions can also have significant impact on the internationalization of the field. Faculty’s decision about initiating international connection or collaboration, studying international topics and populations, funding projects with international focus, and incorporating international issues in the curriculum can significantly impact the internationalization process. Additionally, the admission criteria that faculty set for counseling psychology programs influence how international counseling psychology programs might be in the future. In this regard, Leong and Ponterotto (2003) noted that considering applicants’ study and travel abroad experiences in admission could promote cross-cultural understanding and awareness in counseling psychology programs. In addition, faculty can increase and foster international and cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness through (1) encouraging students to attend conferences held outside the U.S, (2) including foreign language proficiency as part of program requirements, (3) creating international student and faculty exchange programs, and (4) offering or supporting internships and practicum with international focus (Leong & Ponterotto, 2003).

Turner-Essel, Yakunina, Glover, and Chessar (2007) noted that counseling psychology faculty, through their own connections, have mostly created international collaborations, projects, and activities that promoted internationalization in their programs. Counseling psychology faculty can also infuse international perspectives in their teaching and create international learning experiences for students (Turner-Essel
&Waehler, 2009). These experiences can significantly impact students’ knowledge and awareness about international issues. Moreover, through influencing different policies, such as giving credit, tuition remission, or graduate assistantship to students who are interested in international issues, faculty can initiate, and enhance internationalization in their programs. Previous studies indicated that counseling psychology students are very interested in participating in activities and projects with international focus (Turner-Essel &Waehler, 2009; Gerstein, & Ægisdóttir, 2007). Creating international opportunities and projects for students is a response to an existing need. Overall, counseling psychology faculty members’ professional activities, decisions, and interests have an important role in enhancing internationalization of counseling psychology.

Overview of Present Study

Considering the importance of faculty’s professional interests and activities in internationalization of the field, the present study investigated the professional contributions of counseling psychology faculty members to the internationalization of counseling psychology. Through analyzing faculty members’ curricula vitae, we identified counseling psychology faculty members’ publications, and presentations related to international topics and populations as well as their education abroad experiences and involvement in international collaborations, activities, and projects. We demonstrated how the patterns related to emphasizing on international issues have changed in faculty’s publications, presentations, and international activities over the past few decades. The primary research question we wanted to address was to identify factors that contribute to faculty’s international work specifically international publications.
Several scholars (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010; Arnett, 2008; Henrich et al., 2010) emphasized the importance of publications about international topics and populations, and demonstrated how lack of such publications might negatively impact the field. To investigate the impact of factors influencing faculty’s international publications, we first hypothesized that faculty members’ international activities directly predict their international publications. Indirectly, faculty’s international activities link to their publications through their presentations. Second, we hypothesized that faculty’s education abroad experiences positively predict their publications. Indirectly faculty’s education abroad experiences relate to their publications through their presentations. Third, we expected that faculty members’ education abroad experiences positively related to their publication through their international activity.

**Methods**

**Participants and Procedures**

We first identified all counseling psychology APA accredited programs in the US through the APA website (American Psychological Association, 2013). We then visited each program’s website and downloaded the curricula vitae of those faculty members who had posted their curricula vitae online. If faculty members’ information was not provided in a separate file, we copied and pasted the information that was provided in programs website in a word document. We created a separate file for each faculty member. In cases we could not find faculty members’ curricula vitae online, the posted curricula vitae were incomplete, or have not been updated over the past two years, we sent an email requesting faculty’s vitae. Overall, we obtained 294 curricula vitae through downloading from websites and receiving individual emails from faculty members. We
kept 183 curricula vitae for further analysis, and did not consider 111 vitae since they did not have any emphasis on international topics or populations. We did not consider curricula vitae of faculty who identified themselves as a clinical, instructor, visitor, lecturer, or part-time faculty. Furthermore, the data collection for this study was carried out during 2012-2013, and we considered curricula vitae that were updated during or before 2011. Therefore, the information presented for the years 2010-2013 in table 4.1 might not include all the faculty’s professional activities related to international issues.

We recorded the year and number of faculty’s international activities, publications, and presentations related to the international issues and populations as well as education abroad experiences. Providing applied, research, or educational services outside the U.S and collaborating with international colleagues in projects were considered as international activities in this study. Furthermore, obtaining a Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral degree, or a postgraduate training outside the U.S was considered as education abroad experiences. To analyze the curricula vitae, two raters independently coded each curriculum vitae. Any activity such as education abroad experience, publication, or presentation in faculty’s vitae was counted as one if it was related to international issues, and zero otherwise. In several cases that it was not clear from the titles of the published work whether publications were related to international issues or internationalization of counseling and psychology, the raters read the published works to decide about their relevance to international issues. The initial inter-rater agreement indicated that the raters agreed on 91% of the ratings. The raters then compared the ratings for which there were disagreements. The raters ultimately reached a complete agreement in all the ratings.
Analysis

The descriptive statistics were used to demonstrate how the focus on international issues in faculty’s professional and scholarly activities has changed over the past four decades. We used path analysis to investigate the relationship among faculty’s education abroad, international activities, presentations, and publications. Specifically we were interested to learn more about to extent to which education abroad experiences, presentations, and international activities predicted faculty’s publications. To conduct path analysis, we used the SmartPLS software (http://www.smartpls.de/), which is based on the partial least squares (PLS) path modeling, and focuses on the analysis of variance and predicting the relationships among variables. The goal of this study was to predict the relationship among faculty’s scholarly activities; therefore, SmartPLS was appropriate compared to other path modeling covariance-based software such as AMOS or LISREL that are commonly used for confirming a given theory (Wong, 2013). Furthermore, Rindskopf (1984) recommended using PLS when assumptions of minimum sample size, normality of distributions (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011), and maximum model complexity are violated. Additionally, when the accurate model specifications are not ensured and there are very few available theories to explain the data, using PLS modeling is suggested (Hwang et al. 2010). Because the sample size in this study was not large, the data was not normally distributed, and there was not any specific theory or previous research to support and explain the data, we used the SmartPLS software.

Chin (2010) noted that model fit indices are not provided in variance-based SEM such as PLS. In this case, to demonstrate the adequacy of PLS model, high R-squares and significant structural paths should be demonstrated. To test the significance of structural
paths, we used the bootstrap resampling method (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993). Bootstrap procedure provides t value of the path coefficient in the model, and indicates whether the path is statistically significant. Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011) noted that the critical value in two-tailed test with a p value of 0.05 is 1.96. Thus, any t value resulted from bootstrap procedure that is above 1.96 is considered statistically significant. In this study, to test the statistical significance of paths, we adopted 1000 resamples with 95% confidence interval.

**Results**

The number and year for faculty’s publications, presentations, and international activities are presented in Table 4.1. The results indicated that during 1970’s, international issues were largely not a part of counseling psychology faculty’s professional interests and focus; however, over the course of several decades, the attention to international issues in the counseling profession has considerably increased. Notably, the results showed that the faculty had more international activities than publications and presentations. Moreover, since the year or type of education abroad experiences of some faculty members were not clearly stated in their curricula vitae, we did not include the number and year of faculty’s education abroad experiences in the Table 4.1. The correlation among variables and descriptive statistics are reported in table 4.2.

**Table 4.1.** Year and Number of Faculty’s Publications, Presentations, and International Activities

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The path analysis diagram is presented in Figure 4.1. The calculation of power indicates that the sample size is large enough to detect the medium effect 99% of the time. As it was hypothesized, faculty’s international activities were directly related to publications ($\beta = 0.32$, $R^2 = 0.05$, $t = 2.8$, $p = 0.05$). Indirectly, they were linked to publications through presentations ($\beta = 0.62$, $R^2 = 0.05$, $t = 5.2$, $p = 0.05$; $\beta = 0.53$, $R^2 = 0.50$, $t = 4.9$, $p = 0.05$ respectively). However, faculty education abroad was not directly ($\beta = 0.04$, $R^2 = 0.001$, $t = 1.1$, $p = 0.05$) or indirectly ($\beta = 0.22$, $R^2 = 0.001$, $t = 1.9$, $p = 0.05$) related to publications. We also observed that Presentations were positively linked to publications ($\beta = 0.53$, $R^2 = 0.50$, $t = 4.9$, $p = 0.05$). Education abroad was also positively linked to international activities ($\beta = 0.23$, $t = 2.9$, $R^2 = 0.05$, $p = 0.05$).

Table 4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations for Variables of Interest

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<tr>
<td>Education Abroad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>International Activities</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.67</td>
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Overall, the variables included in the model predicted 61% of the variability in the publications.

**Figure 4.1.** Model of Relation Among Education Abroad, International Activities, Presentations, and Publications. Numbers in regular font show standardized coefficients and numbers in italics are the bootstrapping results. Italics numbers above 1.96 are considered statistically significant

**Summary and Discussion**

Counseling psychology faculty professional interests and publications are an important source for increasing international knowledge, awareness, and competencies in the counseling profession. This awareness provides variety of worldviews and clinical lenses, and prepares counselors to better understand and serve individuals from different cultural and international backgrounds (Gerstein, 2005; Leong & Ponterotto, 2003). This study demonstrated the impact of faculty’s education abroad experiences, international activities, and presentations on their publications related to international issues. The results indicated that faculty’s education abroad experiences do not predict their
international publications. However, faculty’s publications are predicted by their presentations and their international activities. Thus, the outcomes of this study support our first and second hypotheses, but not the third hypothesis.

Counseling psychology faculty members have an important role in promoting internationalization through their own international connections, collaborations, and activities (Turner-Essel et al., 2007). This study also demonstrated that such activities might lead to increase in faculty’s publications about international issues. International activities also provide opportunities for counseling psychologists to immerse themselves in the culture of the country, which they carry out their studies, and build connections with the local communities. Such connections help counseling psychologists increase their knowledge about cultural values, norms, behaviors, and languages skills (Gerstein & Ægisdóttir, 2007). It seems to be important that future scholars investigate factors that are responsible for getting counseling psychology faculty interested in international academic activities. Specifically, it appears to be important to study the motivation of those faculty members who engage in international work.

Furthermore, although counseling psychology faculty members are currently paying more attention to international populations and topics compared to four decades ago, a large group of faculty has not considered or incorporated international perspectives and activities into their professional work yet. Leong and Leach (2007) argued that U.S counseling psychologists have not demonstrated considerable interests in internationalization and psychological research in other countries. Several factors might explain this lack of attention to international issues. In this context, Gerstein and Ægisdóttir (2007) discussed some methodological challenges that counseling
psychologists might face when engaging in international research. These challenges include difficulties in accessing international populations, similarities and differences in concepts and constructs, high cost, and difficulties related to cross cultural validity. Furthermore, conducting international research is a very time consuming task, which could be discouraging for counseling psychology researchers. Wang and Heppner (2009) noted that similarity in areas of expertise, mutual respect, developing problem solving strategies, and cross-cultural and national competencies are important factors that facilitate international collaborations.

In their investigation of four major counseling psychology journals’ publications from 2000 to 2004, Gerstein and Ægisdóttir (2007) concluded that only 6% of the published articles in these journals were related to international topics or populations. This lack of emphasis on international issues is not limited to counseling profession. Indeed, it is a trend in the field of psychology that needs to be changed. Arnett (2008) noted that the psychological research published in major American psychology journals is based on 5% of the world population. He emphasized on the differences between American culture and other cultures in the world, and different problems associated with generalizing the research outcomes of Western population to all human populations. Although international publications of American psychologists including counseling psychologists are limited, the overall number of their publications dominates national and international psychology journals (Adair & Huynh, 2012; O'Gorman, Shum, Halford, & Ogilvie, 2012).

To decrease counseling profession’s encapsulation (Leung, 2003) and further internationalize the field, it is important that counseling psychologists understand why
paying attention to international issues is important, and how lack of this attention can harm the profession. This understanding facilitates setting criteria that enhance international research and activities of counseling psychologists. We encourage counseling psychology faculty members, departments heads, and university officials to consider that international research is a time consuming task. This consideration is especially important for those faculty members who are in the tenure track position, and want to engage in international research. It is also important for both the departments and psychology organizations to provide funding opportunities for activities or projects with international focus. Counseling organizations or divisions can also play an important role in creating and facilitating collaborative opportunities in which counseling psychologists collaborate with their international counterparts. Overall, it is critical for psychology organizations, training programs, faculty, and students to consider benefits of internationalization. Norsworthy et al. (2009) noted that counseling psychologists’ international collaborations provide variety of opportunities for growth and learning. The past experiences of counseling psychologists involving in international research (Wang & Heppner, 2009) indicated that international collaborations could increase cross-cultural competencies, international teaching and learning opportunities, as well as presentations and publications.

Despite our findings, this study possesses a few limitations. First, we did not include the curricula vitae of retired faculty or those who did not post their information online. These faculty members might have some international activities that were not included in this study. Therefore, the results need to be viewed as an estimation of faculty engagement in international academic activities. Second, since we used faculty’s vitae,
we only identified and investigated the role of presentations, education, and international activities. Other factors might influence faculty’s publications about international issues and internationalization of counseling profession that were not included in this study. Third, as it was explained earlier, the information presented for more recent years (2010-2013) might not accurately reflect faculty’s international publications, presentations, or activities. Fourth, when counting faculty’s publications, we combined different types of publications such as journal articles, book chapters, reports, or newsletters. Each type of published work might have different readerships and impacts. We recommend future studies use other research methods such as interviews or questionnaires to gather a better and deeper understanding of other factors influencing internationalization of counseling psychology, and faculty’s publications. It is also important for future studies to investigate why some faculty members incorporate international perspectives or topics in their professional work while others do not. It is also important to further explore some of the barriers counseling psychology faculty face when engaging in international research, teaching, or practice.

Although the process of incorporating international perspective in the field and collaborating with international colleagues started several years ago (Gerstein, et al., 2009), considerable efforts are still needed to truly internationalize the profession. In addition, despite its considerable emphasis on diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice (Marsella & Pedersen, 2004), the field of counseling psychology has mostly ignored international issues and populations. The counseling psychology’s emphasis on multiculturalism appears to be limited to the US population (Moodley 2007). Internationalization requires emphasizing that diversity and multiculturalism are not
limited to the U.S borders. Moreover, to internationalize the field, more receptivity and respect for international scholarship is needed (Pieterse, Fang, & Evans, 2011). Internationalizing counseling psychology could bring more diversity, cultural awareness, and understanding into the field. Internationalization is also in line with the counseling profession’s social justice agenda. It is unlikely that counseling psychology will fully achieve its social justice and multiculturalism agenda unless it focuses more on international issues. In this way, counseling psychology faculty could play a significant role in incorporating international issues into their professional works. This will expand and facilitate counseling psychology’s multicultural and social justice movement.
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CHAPTER 4

COUNSELING IN IRAN: HISTORY, CURRENT STATUS, AND FUTURE TRENDS

Abstract

As a growing profession, counseling in Iran was first established within the Iranian educational system. Counselors in Iran have provided mental health services during natural disasters and war. The counseling profession in Iran currently faces challenges in addressing the needs of women, ethnic minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals. In this article, the authors focused on the historical backgrounds, current trends, and future challenges of the counseling profession in Iran.

Keywords: Iran, Counseling Services, Training, Credentialing
Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (2006), Iranian society recognized the value of positive mental health and the important role of counselors in providing mental health services. The demand for counselors in Iran increased due to challenging conditions, including natural disasters (Yasamy, & et al., 2001), war, and social and political instability (Priester, 2008). Counselors in Iran actively provide services under challenging and often turbulent economy, social, and political contexts (Priester, 2008). The role of counselors in Iran serve as an example of how counselors can help people and provide services under challenging social and political circumstances.

In this article, the authors present an overview of Iran’s demographics and cultural context to give a background about Iran and its population, and discuss the historical roots of counseling in Iran, its current status, and future directions. The authors conclude with a focus on challenges facing the profession of counseling in Iran.

Cultural Context of Iran

The establishment of Iranians’ civilization and empire dates approximately as far as the 6th century BC (Ladjevardian, 2005). Iran is a Middle Eastern country, which shares borders with Iraq, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Kazakhstan and Russia are also Iran’s neighbors across the Caspian Sea, which is located in the north of Iran. The southern edge of Iran was formed by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman (World Population Review, 2013). With a size of 1,628,771 square kilometers, Iran has a population of 75,149,669 people (Statistical Center of Iran, 2011).

Demography of Iran
Iran’s population significantly increased during the second half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century (Tehran Times, 2012) due to improvements in the health system; however, the population growth rate decreased in recent years by 1.29\% (Statistical Center of Iran, 2011). Iran has a young adult population. With the mean age of 29.86 years, 23.4\%, 70.9\%, and 5.7\% of the population belong to the 0-14, 15-64, 65+ age groups, respectively (Statistical Center of Iran, 2011). The rate of divorce in Iran is 1.7 per 1,000 people (Reihani, 2009).

Iran’s population consists of different ethnic groups: Persian (61\%), Azeri (16\%), Kurd (10\%), Lur (6\%), Baloch (2\%), Arab (2\%), Turkish tribes and Turkmen (2\%), and others 1\% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). Currently, Iran is considered a Muslim state with a 98\% Muslim population. Approximately 2\% of Iranians are Jewish, Zoroastrian, Christian, and Baha’I (Hassan, 2008). There is no record available for the number of LGBTQ individuals and their specific mental health challenges in Iran due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBTQ was classified as a crime in Iran (Human Rights Watch, 2010) and this classification prevents individuals to identify themselves as LGBTQ. Further, sexual relationships outside heterosexual marriage are illegal in Iran (Sanei, 2010). These issues contribute to the lack of awareness about the mental health challenges of LGBTQ individuals in Iran.

The official language of Iran is Farsi, spoken by 65\% of the population. Other spoken languages are Gilaki, Mazandarani, Azeri, Kurdish, Balochi, and Arabic (Library of Congress, 2008). Iran became an Islamic country and theocratic republic in 1979 when the Pahlavi monarchy was overthrown (Ladjevardian, 2005). The Pahlavi monarchy (1925-1979) tried to promote modernism in Iran (Harvey, 1989) through industrial
transformation. The Pahlavi monarchy’s goal was to transform Iran into its previous imperial glory (Keshavarzian, 2007). However, the Pahlavi’s monarchy gradually became oppressive, which led to the overthrow in 1979 (Abrahamian, 1982). The overthrow of the Pahlavi monarchy and replacement with an Islamic Republic brought significant cultural and social changes that affected people and mental health care providers (Priester, 2008).

Life expectancy is approximately 74.6 years for females and 72.1 years for males (Statistical Center of Iran, 2011). The literacy rate improved since the Iranian revolution in 1979 with an overall literacy rate in Iran of 85%, 89.3% for males and 80.7% for females (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). Female students comprise 60% of the university students in Iran (Sham, 2011). However, their employment and participation in the economy (Poya, 1999) is negatively affected by the gender discrimination (Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, 2013) and the patriarchal system (Rezai-Rashti, 2012) in Iran. This system requires married women to consult with their husband prior to initiating work (Wlodek-Biernat, 2010). Among Iranian women (age 15 and above) only 32 % are involved in the job market compared to 73% for men (UNICEF, 2011).

Urbanization continues in Iran (Priester, 2008) with 71.4% of the population living in urban areas, 28.5% in rural areas, and 1% are unsettled (Statistical Center of Iran, 2011). The urbanization process is mostly under the influence of an improving employment market in the cities and a lack of resources in the rural areas. The current unemployment rate is 15.3%, and 18.7% of the population is living below the poverty line (Statistical Center of Iran, 2011). Iran’s job market and economy are affected by the political and economic situations with the United States (U.S.) and the ensuing economic
sanctions (Wright, 2007). Further, the United Nations and the European Union also imposed sanctions against Iran (U.S. Department of State, 2013) that negatively affected people’s everyday quality of life.

**Historical Background of Counseling in Iran**

The roots of counseling in Iran can be traced back to the collectivistic Iranian culture that values advice-seeking (Tavakoli, 2013) and consultation. The Iranian physician and philosopher Avicenna (980 – 1037) used psychological methods (Haque, 2004), such as talk therapy, in treating different psychological problems as fear, anger, and depression (Sharafkandi, 1988). In addition, the Iranian physician, chemist, and philosopher Rhazes, also known as Rasis (865 – 925), argued that changing negative inner thoughts can lead to changes in behaviors (Ostham Nejati, 2007). Professional counseling in the current era in Iran started in 1954 when the Ministry of Work and Industrial Organization used guidance and consultation to improve the selection and evaluation of its employees. In 1956, within the Ministry of Education, the division of Psychological Research developed and evaluated psychological measures (Shafiabadi, 1995). These measures later were used in different organizations such as the air force for officer recruitment, evaluation, and placement.

In 1960, the government sent a group of experts from the Ministry of Education abroad to study within counseling and its related fields. This group of experts graduated from universities in Western countries and returned to Iran during 1960s and 1970s. These graduates established (Ahmadi, 2000) and later developed fields of guidance and counseling, counseling psychology, family counseling, rehabilitation counseling,
educational counseling, and career counseling as independent fields in Iran’s universities. With the help of these educated experts, the Teacher Training University (Shafiabadi, 1995), for the first time, offered Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in guidance and counseling. In 1970, for the first time, 49 students graduated with a Master’s degree in guidance and counseling from the Teacher Training University (Shafiabadi, 1995). The work of counselors during 1970s and 1980s mostly focused on educational and career planning in high school (Ahmadi, 2000). Activities related to prevention, intervention, and treatment of mental and psychological issues were not the primary responsibilities of counselors.

Ahmadi (2000) reported that early counselors, who provided educational and career planning, faced many different challenges. First, principals, teachers, parents, and students were not fully aware of the professional roles of counselors, which prevented counselors from fully functioning within the educational system. Second, there were not enough valid measures for counselors to use when working with students. Third, the numbers of counselors were very limited. In 1972, for each 1250 Iranian students there were only one counselor. With all these challenges that counselors faced, training and support were necessary. However, no training was available for counselors at the time (Shafiabadi, 1995), and counselors were not supported by the educational system or any other organizations. As a result of all these challenges, the activities of counselors were not evaluated positively, and they were eventually removed from the educational system (Ahmadi, 2001).

Ahmadi (2001) argued the consideration of social needs and cultural values for Iranian society in designing and implementing a counseling agenda in Iran. However,
most counselors were trained based on western models of counseling and practiced different western schools of psychology in Iran (Ghobari & Bolhari, 2001). Lack of attention to the cultural adaptation of the counseling methods, theories, and techniques may have contributed to the educational experts’ evaluation of counselors’ activities as unnecessary within the Iranian educational system (Shafiabadi, 1995). Following social changes in Iran, in 1991 the Ministry of Education reformed the structure of high schools. In this reform, the roles and professional responsibilities of counselors, as well as methods of counseling, were redefined and culturally adapted based on Iranian and Islamic culture. As a result of this cultural adaptation, counselors again became an active part of educational system. Furthermore, the activities of counselors were expanded from educational counseling to providing individual and group counseling for students with behavioral and psychological problems (Ahmadi, 2001). Preventive activities became part of counselors’ responsibilities within the school setting. Moreover, counselors were provided with different types of support and continuing education opportunities. All these activities helped counselors find their place within the Iranian educational system (Shafiabadi, 1995).

In 1982 as Iran engaged in a war with its western neighbor, Iraq, the demand for counselors increased (Priester, 2008) and counselors became more engaged in providing mental health services in non-school settings. The Iran-Iraq war continued for eight years and imposed many economic, social, and psychological damages to Iranian society (Mehrabi & et al., 2000). Cordesman (1990) reported that during Iran-Iraq war approximately 730,000 Iranians were killed, 1,200,000 wounded and 45,000 captured. During the Iran-Iraq war, the numbers of psychiatric disorders including PTSD, panic
disorder, and depressive disorders increased (Abhari, 2003). During the war and years after, counselors helped veterans and their families cope with their physical and mental problems. At that time, mental health services offered to veterans were provided not only by counselors but also by religious experts and Islamic clergies. Thus, counselors closely worked with religious Islamic clergies when providing mental health services. This affected the type of interventions counselors offered. For instance, counselors used concepts such as trusting God and forgiveness while working with veterans who experienced PTSD or loss. In this regard, Aflakseira and Colemanb (2009) identified religious and Islamic beliefs as the most important factor helping Iranian veterans cope with their problems.

Counseling and psychology clinics were established and expanded during 1990s through the Ministries of Education, and Health and Medical Education. These clinics provided more opportunities for counselors to expand their role as mental health professionals. In 1997, the Psychology and Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran was established. In 2004, after years of effort, the Guardian Council of the Constitution approved the Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran (Psychology and Counseling Organization of Iran, 2006). This approval significantly affected the development of counseling as a mental health discipline.

**Current Status of Counseling in Iran**

Counseling exists as an independent discipline in Iran. Counselors have their own established professional identity, organization, and set of activities (Psychology and Counseling Organization of Iran, 2006). In recent years, counseling services in Iran
received increased recognition because of several national challenges and crises (Priester, 2008). First, Iran’s eastern neighbor, Afghanistan, is the main producer of opium in the world (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008). Consequently, addiction is a growing problem in Iran (Ahmadi & Motamed, 2003). Based on the Library of Congress, Federal Research Division (2008), the number of people living with addictions ranged from 2 to 4 million. Iranian government, families (Bingham, 2005) and adolescents are affected by addiction. Mohammadpoorasl, Vahidi, Fakhari, Rostami, and Dastghiri (2007) noted that addiction among Iranian adolescents considerably increased within the past few decades. Substance abuse counselors provide individual, group, and family counseling to the persons affected by addiction and their families. Further, substance abuse intervention programs for school-aged adolescents were implemented in Iran (Allaherdipour, Bazargan, Farhadinasab, Hidarnia, & Bashirian, 2009). Although addiction is a problem in both urban and rural areas, addiction counseling services are mostly available in the urban areas.

Due to its geographical location, numerous natural disasters impacted Iran. Iran is one of the most disaster-prone countries worldwide (Zolala, 2010) with high average deaths per earthquake (1105.32), flood (69.06), landslides (26.50), and windstorms (39). The annual average count of natural disasters in Iran is 4.304 per year. In 1990, Iran suffered the most earthquake deaths among other countries (Kahn, 2005). Moreover, Jafari (2010) demonstrated that approximately every ten years a large and damaging earthquake might occur around the capital city, Tehran. Considering Iran’s critical geographical location and the short-term and long-term mental health consequences of natural disasters, crisis intervention and counseling are growing areas in Iran (World
Health Organization, 2006). Counselors receive special training in order to work with survivors of natural disasters who experience loss or trauma. Counselors also attend and provide mental health services on disaster areas (Bolhari & Chime, 2007). In addition, Iranian researchers focused on studying emotional and behavioral problems following natural disasters (Kalantari & Vostanis, 2010) and effective treatment methods for those who survive natural disasters in Iran (Shooshtary, Panaghi, & Moghadam, 2008).

Iran’s religious culture emphasizes the importance of family values and heterosexual marriage. In order to increase heterosexual marriage success rates, the Iranian government mandated that couples who are getting married receive sixteen hours of counseling prior to their heterosexual marriage. In pre-marriage counseling, couples participate in genetic, health and marriage counseling (Salarvand, Bahri, Heidary, & Khadive, 2011). Couples are provided with different opportunities such as face-to-face counseling and watching psychoeducational videos with other couples. Counselors are responsible for providing pre-marriage counseling services to couples. The model of pre-marriage counseling in Iran is still developing through research. For instance, Farnam, Pakgohar, and Mir-Mohammadali (2011) investigated the effect of pre-marriage counseling on the marital satisfaction of Iranian newlywed couples and found increased overall marital satisfaction of couples in the intervention group over a control group.

Iranian society is in transition from a traditional society to a modern one (Priester, 2008; Shahhosseini, Simbar, Ramezankhani, & Alavi Majd, 2012) due to rapid changes in technology and societal values. The Internet and Satellite technologies presented western values, which affected Iranian societal values. Western values, transitioning from traditional to modern society (Fazeli, 2006), and generation gap (Shahhosseini & et al.,
2012) may influence the relationship between Iranian parents and their children, and in some instances create tension between the two generations (Ehteshami & Zewiri, 2007). Because of these changes, Iranian parents have problems relating to their children while expecting them to live based on traditional cultural values. Furthermore, children are reevaluating and questioning traditional values, which creates tension in the parent-child relationship and has led Iranian parents to seek counseling services more frequently. Counselors address the tension between parents and children and help them communicate more effectively. For instance, through providing parenting education and family counseling, counselors help parents to understand their children, communicate more effectively, and set boundaries with regards to children’s freedom, and limitations. Shahhosseini and colleagues (2012) noted that Iranian adolescents viewed a strict parenting style as a factor that creates problem in the parent-child relationship. During family counseling, counselors also provide opportunities for children to express their needs and concerns. Furthermore, counselors encourage parents to provide their children with emotional support, which increases adolescents’ ability to cope with stressful events (Shahhosseini & et al., 2012).

**Counseling Services in Iran**

The Iranian health care system promotes equal access to health care service (World Health Organization, 2006) for all people. Health care and psychiatry services are provided through the Ministry of Health and Medical Education. This ministry and other organizations involved in providing health and mental health services emphasize more on the treatment of diseases rather than mental health problems (Ghobari & Bolhari, 2001). Thus, the insurance reimbursement policies in Iran currently only include psychiatry
services and medicine (World Health Organization, 2006). Psychiatrists have prescription authority. Counselors and psychologists do not have such a privilege and cannot bill insurance companies for psychological services (Ghobari & Bolhari, 2001). Insurance companies’ reimbursement policies affect the types of activities and populations counselors serve. For instance, these policies negatively affect access to psychological services for individuals from low socioeconomic status. Furthermore, as a result of these policies, counselors focus on providing short-term interventions. Counseling and psychological services are expanding in the urban areas; however, these services are still very limited in rural areas and in some instances do not exist. The profession of counseling in Iran needs to provide affordable mental health services for all individuals in both rural and urban areas. Although counselors have addressed the various mental health needs of Iranians, there is an overall shortage of mental health providers in Iran. It is estimated that Iranians need 17,000 mental health providers. Currently, there are only 6,500 counselors and psychologists working in Iran (Afrooz, 2013).

Counseling services are offered mostly through community mental health services, hospitals, private counseling centers (World Health Organization, 2006), and university counseling centers. In addition, educational and career planning are the primary responsibility of counselors in the school setting. In high schools, counselors usually offer classes on educational and career planning in which they help students identify their interests, future career, and the plan to achieve their goals. Regional health organizations provide family planning services, premarital counseling, and mental health programs (Plan and Budget Organization, 1999), as well as telephone counseling. Overall, counselors and psychologists’ professional activities include diagnostic services,
educational and career counseling, intervention, psychotherapy, and psychological testing (Ghobari & Bolhari, 2001). Counselors use the translated version of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR). Some of psychology and counseling resources and approaches were translated from other languages to Farsi. However, the cultural relevance and validity of these approaches for Iranian population are currently unknown. Most of these approaches are not culturally validated for different minority groups in Iran.

The counseling profession in Iran can benefit from studying the mental health issues of LGBTQ individuals. Iran has approximately 20000 transsexuals, and 1366 Iranians had sex change operation during 2006 to 2010 (Littauer, 2012). Javaheri (2010) reported that transsexuals are not under any legal or religious restriction in Iran. Individuals who intend to go under sex-change operation need to obtain the court permit prior to their operation (Littauer, 2012). Social and family supports have a significant role in helping transsexuals adjust to their new identity (Hejazi, et al., 2009). However, transsexuals might experience pressure or rejection from their families or society (Javaheri, 2010), which may negatively influence their mental health. Due to this issue, they are at high risk of developing mental health problems (Shayestehkhou, Moshtagh Bidokhti, Eftekhari, & Mehrabi, 2008). However, studies addressing mental health needs of LGBTQ individuals are scarce in Iran. Supporting studies that investigate the mental health issues of minorities in Iran can enhance the emphasis on social justice and multiculturalism within the counseling profession in Iran.

Several Iranian cultural values influence the work of counselors in Iran. In Iranian culture, older individuals are very well respected. People refer to elders as sources of
consultation. This cultural value is one of the factors contributing to the low number of elders seeking counseling services in Iran. Younger individuals are more likely to take advantage of mental health services in Iran. However, Iranian elders face several mental health challenges. Nazemi and colleagues (2013) reported that depression is a common mental health problem among elderly in Iran. Bagheri-Nesami, Rafii, and Oskouie (2010) identified strategies that Iranian elderly women use to deal with their age-related challenges. The result of this study indicated that seeking mental health services or counseling are not among strategies that older women actively use in Iran. Considering elders as sources of consultation may prevent Iranian counselors from attending to mental health needs of older individuals.

Over the past few decades, the Iranian educational system emphasized providing education for all individuals. This emphasis created opportunities for Iranian women to pursue higher education. Rezai-Rashti (2011) reported that since 1990 Iranian women attended higher education; however, women’s participation in the job market is limited. The unstable economy and gender discrimination (Rezai-Rashti & Moghadam, 2011) prevents educated women from fully participating in the job market. Thus, advocacy for women and addressing the gender discrimination in the job market is important for the counseling profession. Further, counselors can provide culturally sensitive career counseling for women to assist them with their experience of gender discrimination in the job market. While focusing on gender discrimination against women in the job market, counselors need to consider the intersection of women’s traditional roles (e.g. wife and mother) with their professional roles and how this intersection might prevent women from fully participating in the job market. The culture of marriage and family in Iran
emphasizes on the roles of women as mother and wife, which is an important consideration for counselors. Considering these roles, as well as women’s professional roles, assists counselors in providing culturally sensitive counseling services for Iranian women.

**Required Training and Credentials for Working as a Counselor in Iran**

In order to work as mental health professionals, counselors need to obtain their license and work permit from the Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran (Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2013). To become a licensed counselor, one needs to become a member of Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran, have a Master’s or Ph.D. degree in counseling or psychology, and complete the Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran’s screening process. The Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran regularly monitors counselors’ performances through sending evaluators to counseling centers or mental health clinics (Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2013). This is in line with the overall Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran’s policies that aim to protect clients and counselors’ rights as well as try to enhance the quality of mental health services. Furthermore, Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran has established its own ethical guidelines, training activities, conference, publication, licensing board, and newsletter (in Farsi: http://www.pcoiran.ir/). This organization monitors the performance of new counselors with Master’s and Ph.D. degrees two and three years after they obtain their license, respectively. To keep their license, counselors also need to follow the Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran’s guidelines and participate in continuing education activities that are mostly offered by the
Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran (Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2013).

Counselors are also encouraged to participate in different educational opportunities offered by other organizations. The government provides incentives for counselors, particularly those affiliated with university systems, to attend seminars, workshops and conferences. More recently, the number of Iranian counselors and psychologists who participate in international conferences increased. In an analysis of the past international congresses in psychology, Adair and Huynh (2012) noted that Iran was among the countries with the highest number of presentations at the last International Congress of Applied Psychology and International Congress of Psychology. Iranian Psychological Association (IPA) is a psychology organization that also provides training for psychologists and counselors. This organization has nine divisions, one of which is counseling psychology (Iranian Psychological Association, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, in the 1970’s the Iranian government sent Iranian students to different countries such as U.S., Canada, and England to continue their education in different fields including counseling and psychology (Shafiabadi, 1995). The Iranian government supported these students with a variety of fellowships and the students’ commitment of returning to and working for the country. After graduation, some of these graduates returned to Iran and started working as counselors, psychologists, professors, and researchers. Since Iranian counselors and psychologists received their degrees from different countries, a wide variety of schools in psychology are reflected in the professional practice within Iran (Ghobari & Bolhari, 2001).
Counseling training in Iran starts at the undergraduate level. Undergraduate training in counseling is independent from psychology and prepares students to work at school setting. Students who want to obtain a bachelor’s degree in counseling need to complete approximately 136 semester hour credits. Most of these credits are specifically geared towards counseling. Master’s programs in counseling in Iran follow a model very similar to Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) model (Priester, 2008). At the doctoral level, counseling and clinical psychology programs in Iran are based on the scientist-practitioner model. In Iran, ten universities offer master’s and doctoral degrees in family counseling, rehabilitation counseling, school counseling, and career counseling. Counseling psychology was added recently to the list of master’s programs, and universities will accept students starting Fall 2013. Graduate programs in counseling prepare students for obtaining licensure and strongly emphasize research. Students are expected to participate in faculty’s research, have their own research project, and publish their research project prior to graduation.

**Future Trends and Challenges for Counseling Profession in Iran**

The profession of counseling in Iran had several successes over the last few decades, including responding to Iranian’s mental health needs during war and natural disasters. The other success is establishing the Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran and monitoring the work of counselors through mandating work permit and license prior to practice as well, as offering continuing education activities for counselors. Twelve years ago, Ghobari and Bolhari (2001) reported that Iranian psychologists are not required to obtain any license or certificate to practice in Iran. However, over the past decade this trend changed and now counselors and psychologists
are mandated to obtain licensure prior to their practice, which is a considerable change for the profession of counseling in Iran.

Due to rapid societal changes, counseling is expected to expand in Iran. Counseling in Iran currently faces several challenges, however, that need to be addressed by the Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran and other organizations responsible for providing mental health. The first challenge is related to providing counseling services in rural areas. Although different organizations such as the Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran supported counselors and their activities, counselors still struggle with the stigma associated with receiving mental health services in rural and urban areas (Mohammadpoorasl, Vahidi, Fakhari, Rostami & Dastghiri, 2007). Counselors who chose to work in the rural areas need to find their place and navigate their way within more traditional helping groups such as clergies and community elders. These traditional helping groups sometimes do not value the work of counselors, which is a significant professional barrier for counselors working in rural areas. Counselors need to focus on introducing counseling services to people in these areas, providing appropriate education to reduce stigma, and offering culturally sensitive services in rural areas in the future.

Insurance companies do not pay for counseling and mental health services in Iran (Ghobari & Bolhari, 2001). This issue creates a problem for people, who are unable to pay out-of-pocket for these services, and limits the number of people who could benefit from counseling and mental health services. Thus, the second challenge for counseling profession in Iran is extending the coverage of insurance policies to include mental health and to provide affordable services for all individuals. Affordable mental health services
particularly need to be expanded in the rural areas in the future. Furthermore, Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran with the collaboration of other organizations such as the Ministry of Health and Medical Education need to work towards changing policies and obtaining more funding to provide affordable mental health care for all individuals.

Culturally relevant theories or techniques are limited. For instance, Hosseini (1984) developed a counseling model, which integrates religious and Islamic values with the counseling process. Similar to Hosseini, Khalili (2004) developed a psychological theory that places Islamic values at the core of psychological processes. Although Iranian counselors and psychologists initiated developing and testing culturally relevant approaches, most of counseling and psychology theories, methods, and techniques currently practiced in Iran were developed and tested in Western countries. Adair and Kagitcibasi (1995) explained that importing western models and solutions to developing countries is not effective in solving local problems. Thus, the third challenge for counseling profession in Iran is to further develop and examine psychological interventions, approaches, and tools that are rooted in the Iranian and Islamic cultural values. Additionally, testing the cultural relevance and validity of any imported approach prior to using it with the Iranian population is important.

Counselors in Iran are mostly mental health providers. Expanding the role of counselors to social change agents and social justice advocates is the fourth challenge for the profession of counseling in Iran. Iranian counselors need to focus and serve underrepresented populations including aging groups, racial and ethnic minorities, women, and LGBTQ individuals. Studies about these populations in Iran are currently
limited, which contribute to the lack of Iranian counselors’ awareness of the mental health needs of these populations. Specifically, mental health issues of LGBTQ individuals rarely were studied or addressed among Iranian counselors and psychologists. Dezhamkhooy and Papoli Yazdi (2013) explained that sexual identity is a marginalized concept among Iranians, which make the study of sexuality in Iran very difficult. However, it is very important for counselors to study the mental health challenges of LGBTQ individuals considering that LGBTQ are accompanied with social stigma in Iran (Khoshnood, Hashemian, Moshtagh, Eftekahri, & Setayesh, 2008) and the Iranian government has banned any sexual relations outside heterosexual marriage (Sanei, 2010).

Conclusions

Although counseling in Iran faces numerous challenges, this profession may have a promising future in Iran. Counseling in Iran has borrowed a lot from counseling in other countries over the past fifty years. Iranian counselors should incorporate more cultural values in counseling services. As the main organization, the Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran can play a significant role in providing culturally sensitive and affordable mental health care to Iranian people in the future. However, the range of Counseling Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran’s activities is strongly affected by available financial resources to this organization. Through countrywide education, the government and public awareness about the importance of counseling services may increase over time. Such countrywide education can lead to dedication of more resources for mental health in Iran. The counseling profession in Iran can significantly benefit from focusing on social justice, advocacy, and multiculturalism in the future.
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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Implications of Studies

Several scholars (Ægisdóttir & Gerstein, 2010; Arnett, 2008; Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010; Pawlik & d'Ydewalle, 1996; Stevens & Wedding, 2004) previously noted that internationalization is an important aspect of the field of psychology and can be very beneficial for the future of the discipline. As I demonstrated in this dissertation, internationalization of psychology faces several significant challenges such as financial problems, ethnocentrism and bias, and access to different resources. True internationalization requires psychologists from different cultures and countries to collaboratively identify and resolve these challenges.

The goal of this dissertation was to explore different aspects of internationalization and its challenges, and provide suggestions for resolving these challenges in the future. As a result, each chapter in this dissertation focused on one aspect of internationalization. Each chapter tried to deeply explore a specific area, and offer solutions or recommendations based on the results. Identifying the challenges facing international movement, investigating specific challenges that psychologists in non-Western countries experience, evaluating the role of counseling psychology faculty in internationalization of counseling psychology, and reviewing the development of counseling in Iran were areas that I discussed in this dissertation.
One important and primary finding demonstrated that there is no consensus about what internationalization means among psychologists worldwide. Defining internationalization, and identifying its goals and scopes is one initial step in addressing international movement’s challenges. Without identifying goals, evaluation of international movement’s achievements and outcomes over time would be difficult. In identifying the goals and scopes of this movement considering the opinions, values, and needs of all psychologists is necessary. In this process psychologists need to be aware of the ethnocentric tendencies that already exist in the field, and how these tendencies might interfere with further internationalizing the discipline.

As the outcomes of this dissertation demonstrated ethnocentric tendencies have obstructed the communications and collaborations among psychologists in the past. Examining these tendencies by all psychologists seems to be necessary. Furthermore, expanding the scope of multicultural movement in psychology and counseling psychology to cover international issues might resolve or address some of the ethnocentric tendencies in the filed. It appears that in the past multicultural movement has mostly focused on populations and issues within the U.S, and ignored international topics and populations. It is important and beneficial for multicultural movement to expand its boundaries and cover international issues in the future.

The outcomes of different studies in this dissertation also indicated the importance of indigenous psychology. Internationalization and indigenization are both important processes that need to happen simultaneously within the profession. However, the challenges related to publishing international manuscripts in journals or presenting in international conferences seem to prevent the indigenous psychology to expand its
boundaries and distribute its findings globally. Overall, the lack of resources that lead to increase in awareness about indigenous psychology and international issues, and limited international collaborations are significant barriers for international movement.

To better understand international movement’s challenges, it is important to investigate these challenges within each subfield in psychology. The investigation of the contributions of counseling psychology faculty members to internationalization demonstrated that the development of internationalization in counseling psychology is very slow, and many counseling psychologists have not done any activity that contributes to internationalization. Creating international collaborations and projects appears to be the key to facilitate this slow process. Future studies are recommended to investigate the factors that might facilitate or encourage international collaboration in counseling psychology departments. Moreover, future studies can explore challenges related to internationalizations in other subfields of psychology.

**Reflections**

The motivation to investigate internationalization of psychology initiated from personal experiences living, traveling, and studying internationally. These experiences helped me understand the importance of internationalization and what this process can offer to the field. I also experienced how lack of awareness about international issues can limit psychologists’ conceptualization and understanding about human behaviors and psychological processes.

Throughout the process of completing this dissertation I communicated with several psychologists around the world as well as some psychology organizations. I realized that some psychologists were very excited about this topic while others very
skeptical and fearful. Since this study was conducted by researchers in the U.S some participants at first were hesitant to participate and asked questions about the nature of this study and the intentions behind it. I reached to the conclusion that it is very important to be aware of how past experiences and historical trends in international activities might affect the desire to participate in international collaborations and studies. Researchers who decide to design and carry out international research projects should be aware of these dynamics and how these dynamics might affect different aspects of international projects.

Through the process of distributing this study I also face difficulties related to recruiting participants in different countries. I experienced difficulties related to recruiting a representative sample. Specifically, I designed this study in English and distributed through Internet, which affect recruiting a representative sample. I learned that collaborating with local psychological associations that have a better access to local psychologists could be very beneficial. These organizations can also offer recommendations that are culture or country specific and might facilitate the process of international research.

There is limited knowledge about the development of psychology or subfield of psychology in different counties. This does not mean that psychology in these countries does not exist or it is in its infancy. Lack of available resource about psychology in some countries might in fact indicate significant barriers that these counties face in presenting their studies or indigenous psychology internationally. This was clear for me as I investigated the status of counseling in Iran, and its history and development. In this process, I learned that similar to counseling in several other countries, counseling in Iran
has a long history and several achievements. I also learned about specific challenges that counselors face in Iran, and how international community can help to address some of these challenges. The study of counseling in Iran was only one example of attending to international issues in psychology, and expanding our awareness about counseling and psychology in other countries. It is important that future researchers explore other countries or areas in the world, and learn about their populations and psychology. Doing so might reduce some of the biases and assumptions that psychologists hold.
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