Ethical Conflicts in Military Counseling For Suicidal Clients
– A Military Counselor’s Experience

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Abstract

Given the character and expectations of military organizations, counselors in the military have to face many ethical and professional conflicts and dilemmas, often involving suicidal clients. New counselors face numerous and unique ethical and professional issues and dilemmas, particularly when suicidal clients are involved.

This study investigated the ethical conflicts experiences by military counselors treating suicidal clients. Two questions were addressed by this study. 1. What kind events of the ethical conflicts a military counselor has to face when treating suicidal clients under the military circumstances? 2. What kind issues of the ethical conflicts a military counselor has to face when dealing with suicidal clients under the military circumstances?

The study population was one military counselor in this study. Based on the study design, a military counselor was interviewed four times total with one to two hours each. The interview data was analyzed by “narrative analysis”, and was presented in one of two forms of “narration-conflict events” and "construct story meaning/conflict issues”.

The narrative analysis results indicate that, given the unique ethical and legal context of the military, the counselor treating suicidal clients face the following events of ethical conflicts: 1. Should the counselor giving out privileged phone number?/Providing personal information to suicidal clients or not? 2. A suicidal client should have the treatment or have a punishment in the martial court?/A conflict thought on the counselor, 3. The counselor have the limit of confidentiality and the challenge of trustful relationship. The way for the counselor to interpret the narrative story meaning and the issues of the ethical conflicts experienced by the counselor include: 1. Balancing professional ethics with the practical need to establish a trusting relationship with the client, 2. The dilemma of a role when the military counselor has to play the client’s counselor and a employee of the organization, 3. The conflict between the professional responsibility to treat the client and the responsibility to the military organization.

Key words: Suicidal client, ethical conflict, narrative analysis