

Abstract

The purpose of the present research was to examine existing HIV counseling practices, counselors' experiences of providing counseling, and the process of behavior change among clients in the context of Targeted Interventions (TI) in Gujarat. The study employed the constructivist grounded theory methodology. With a theoretical sampling, 14 counselors were interviewed and counseling records were reviewed and analyzed. After primary analysis of interviews, five counselors were selected for participant observations of counseling sessions. Total 24 counseling sessions (including up to four follow-up sessions of the same client) were observed. Data were analyzed using grounded theory techniques. The study revealed that HIV counseling represents a combination of client-centered and solution focused orientations that encompass culturally grounded practices that inform the counseling process and yield behavior change in clients. Counselors' experiences are constructed through various influences such as training, peers, nature of TI program, and the organization's environment in the cultural context. Overall the counseling process reveals the values and practices reflective of the Indian culture, at the same time raising the issue of 'good' versus 'best' practice. It is thus necessary to create a framework that is not only sensitive to cultural sensibilities, but also ensures that the process does not violate ethical principles. The constructivist grounded theory of HIV counseling practice that has emerged from the study represents culturally grounded counseling practices, HIV counseling process, and behavior change in clients.

Key words: HIV counseling practices, culturally grounded counseling, HIV counseling process, targeted interventions