

Abstract Title:-

Understanding and Managing Parental Reactions in Counseling Sessions: A Clinical and Relational Framework

Keynote Speaker – Dr. Jihene Mrabet – Associate Professor



Abstract:

Parental involvement plays a crucial role in counseling processes involving children and adolescents; however, counseling sessions with parents are frequently characterized by strong emotional reactions that can challenge therapeutic work. When these reactions are not adequately understood or managed, they may interfere with the therapeutic alliance and limit the effectiveness of interventions.

This workshop aims to provide mental health practitioners with a structured framework for understanding and responding to parental reactions during counseling sessions. Using brief case vignettes, the session will illustrate how parental reactions often reflect underlying emotional needs rather than resistance to intervention. Practical counseling strategies will be discussed, focusing on relationship-based responses, de-escalation skills, and collaborative communication approaches.

By integrating theory with clinical practice, this workshop seeks to enhance practitioners' confidence in navigating challenging parental dynamics and to promote more effective, collaborative counseling relationships that support positive outcomes for both parents and children.

Workshop Description:

This 90-minute workshop supports practitioners in building a deeper understanding of parental emotional responses during counseling sessions. Participants will explore the psychological and relational drivers behind parental reactions, and learn how to respond therapeutically without escalating conflict or weakening the alliance. Realistic case vignettes will be used to apply strategies, strengthen clinical judgment, and support parent-inclusive counseling processes.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- Recognize common parental emotional reactions encountered during counseling sessions and identify psychological, relational, and contextual factors contributing to these responses.

- Implement strategies to de-escalate high-intensity emotional responses without reinforcing maladaptive patterns or compromising therapeutic goals.
- Strengthen the therapeutic alliance through a structured, parent-inclusive approach that supports collaborative decision-making and improves outcomes for children and families..

Keywords:

Parental guidance; Therapeutic alliance; Counseling interventions

Short Professional Biography:

Dr. Jihene Mrabet is a Clinical Psychologist with a PhD in Clinical Psychology from France and two master's degrees in Professional Clinical Psychology and Psychopathology. Since beginning her academic and clinical career in 2008, she has maintained a strong commitment to research, teaching, and applied practice. Her research interests include child and adolescent psychology, addiction, psychopathology, and the intersection of clinical psychology and artificial intelligence. She currently serves as Program Leader for the Master of Psychology at Amity University Dubai and Head of the Center of Excellence for Research in Health and Wellbeing.