

Ethical sanctions in the field of forensic psychology

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BACKGROUND

The constant increase, year after year, of complaints received by the Ethics Committee in Catalonia (Spain) is an alarming fact. Compared with North American data (APA, 2015), we appreciate that the volume of complaints is much higher in our context, so it is necessary to intensify the research and dissemination tasks in order to provide concrete guidelines that contribute to redirect this situation.

The complaints and consultations received by the Ethics Committee in Catalonia are mainly concentrated in the area of Forensic Psychology – especially in the realm of family-. Specifically, it means more than three quarters of the total number of complaints received (Arch et al., 2013) and similar volume of consultations attended.

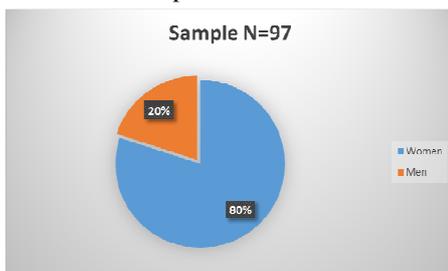
The aim of the study is knowledge what facts have been more imputed to COPC psychologists.

METHODS

- We reviewed 87 disciplinary procedures in the realm of forensic psychology from 2010 through 2015.
- The disciplinary procedures were selected from Ethics Committee (COPC) data base.
- The total sample was N=97 psychologists.

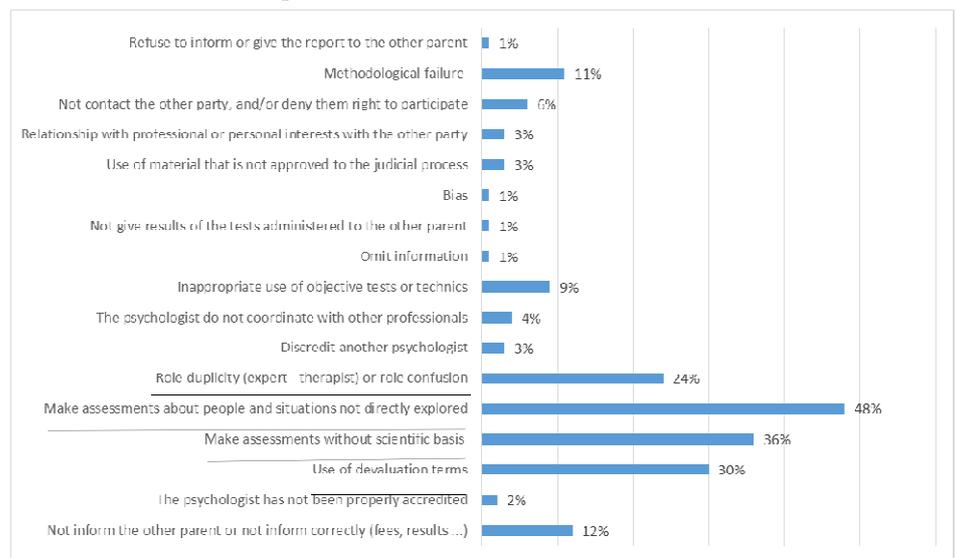
RESULTS

FIGURE 1. Sample



- The total sample was N=97 psychologists, 80% woman and 20% man, because some disciplinary procedures involved more than one psychologist.
- The professional experience was an average of 15 years.
- 20% of the subjects had obtained at some time the title of Expert in Forensic Psychology accredited by the COPC.

FIGURE 2. The facts complained



Findings indicate that the most imputed facts were: a) Make assessments regarding people and situations not explored (49%); b) Make assessments without scientific basis (37%); c) Use of devaluation terms (31%); d) Role duplicity or role confusion (expert in forensic psychology / clinic psychologist) (25%). Other relevant facts complained were: the psychologist doesn't inform the other parent or doesn't inform correctly (fees, results...), methodological failure and inappropriate use of objective tests or technics.

The kind of most applied sanctions were: written reprimand (35%), professional suspension for 15 days (27%) and professional suspension for one week (9%)

CONCLUSIONS

The data derived from this study allow us to evaluate behaviours considered inadequate and their relationship with correct interpretation of the Ethics Code. This can be as a guiding criterion for professionals who practice forensic psychology. Furthermore, the results permit us specify the ethical aspects that psychologists must incorporate as personal behaviour and professional practice.

ACTIONS

There is a need to inform and train psychologist about ethics issues and disseminate knowledge about the Ethics Code, by means of courses, conferences, and seminars, in order to prevent sanctions.

REFERENCES

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