

# **Reliability Analysis on Ethics Practice Survey in Malaysia Context: A Preliminary Study**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to disseminate findings related to the reliability of the instruments to measure the ethics practice of counsellor in Malaysia. The instrument was developed by Kenneth S Pope (1987) and it consisted of 88 items. Based on the pilot study, Cronbach's Alpha yield at .88 for ethical behaviour and .992 for ethics belief. The instrument was involved 108 registered and non-registered counsellors in Malaysia. The finding demonstrates that the instrument is suitable to measure ethics practice among counsellor.

**Keywords:** Ethics, Code of Ethics, Counsellor, Ethics Behaviour, Ethics Belief.

## **Introduction**

Counselor is a person who provides counseling services for a fixed fee or any other consideration (Counsellor Act, 1998). In Malaysia, counsellor practice counseling services in government and private sectors. Counselor is a professional career like other practitioners such as lawyer, engineer, medical doctor and accountant. Professional counselor is a counselor who practices in an ethical manner. There are many studies that discuss the issue and practice of counselors in helping profession such as ethical practices involving confidentiality (Rae, Sullivan, Razo & Alba, 2009; Barnett, Behnke, Rosenthal and Kocher, 2007), unethical practices such as non-sexual relationship to clients and supervisee (Dallessasse 2010), informed consent, confidentiality and diagnosis (Kress, Hoffman, Adamson & Karen, 2013), ethical issues involving children under age (Lawrence & Kurpius, 2000) and other ethical issues involving counselor (Herlily & Dufrene, 2011).

Counsellors often exposed to a variety of ethical issues when conducting counseling practices such as confidentiality issues, skill and expertise of counselors, professional relationships, abuse, multiple relationship and multicultural issues. Clients who come for

counselling session have various backgrounds of race, religion, socio-economic and cultural. This diversity of client's background and various issues they brought to the counselling session caused issues faced by counsellors more complicated. The complexity and uniqueness of each issue brought by the client in a counseling session can cause unethical practice such as confidentiality issues. For example, counselor disclose information from counseling session to a third party without the client's consent. Unethical practices may cause harm to the client whether emotionally, physically and spiritually.

Counselor as a professionals practitioners should avoid behaviors that can lead to unethical practices and detrimental to the client (ACA Codes of Ethics, 2014; Counsellor Code of Ethics, 2011). Unethical practices such automatically the counsellor breach the code of ethics in their profession (Moleski & Kiselica 2005; Heaton & Black, 2009), non-sexual relationship with clients can cause harm and detrimental to the client and resulting in exploitation and should be avoided (Lazarus & Zur, 2002; Moleski & Kiselica, 2005, Heaton & Black, 2009).

As mention above, counselling is a professional practice by counsellor. In counselling profession, a counsellor has to obey and implement Code of Ethics in their profession. Code of ethics is standards guidance for counselor to act ethically. According to the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, the American Counseling Association (ACA), counseling is a professional relationship that empowers a variety of individual, family or group to achieve its goals in terms of mental health, welfare, education and career. In the United States, a licensed professional counselor must upholds the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, ACA (2014) when practicing counselling in their practice. In Malaysia, The Code of Ethics, Board of Counselor (2011) was published as a guide to the counselor when practicing counselling services. The code of ethics describes the guidance of what is expected to be carried out by counselor and not break what has been enshrined in a code of conduct that has been established (Welfel, 2013). Counsellors are expected to adhere to a code of ethics that have been provided in order to avoid making unethical practices when conducting counseling sessions.

## **Method**

This research drawn on the quantitative design as measuring ethical behaviour and ethical belief of counsellor as well as examining the reliability on the instrument which is Ethics Practice Survey. This questionnaire has two parts, part A (Ethical behavior) and Part B (Ethical Belief). The instrument has been developed by Pope et. al (1987) and has been modified by Gibson and Pope (1993). The questionnaire contains 87 item related to counseling practice. According to Gibson and Pope (1993), all items includes seven basic principles which were originally developed based on the five principles of the Hippocratic Oath which are avoid harm, demonstrated efficacy, prevent exploitation, show respect and maintain confidentiality. Two more principles added later on informed consent and ethical principles of social equality and justice (Gibson and Pope, 1993). Literature shows that reliability of this questionnaire was Cronbach's alpha,  $\alpha = .88$  for ethical behaviour and  $\alpha = .97$  for the scale of confidence. There are two types of scale used in the questionnaire. First, participants were asked to determine whether the statement in the items of behavior is ethical or not. Respondents have to answer either "yes" or "no". Second, participants were asked to describe their degree of confidence in

their answer in part B. Participants were asked to circle the answer either "0" (not confident at all) to "10" for the highest confidence (Gibson and Pope, 1993). The item divided into positive item and negative item in both part. Details of the item as below:

Table 1: Positive and Negative Item

Part / Section	Positive Item	Negative Item
Part A Ethical Behavior	2,4,6,8,10,17,18,20,21,27,30, 31,33,35,42,45,51,64,65,75, 76,80,82, 86,87	1,3,5,7,9,11,12,13,14,15,16,19 ,22,23,24,25,26,28,29,32,34,36, 37,38,39,40,41,43,44,46,47,48, 49,50,52,53,54,55,56,57,58,59, 60,61,62,63,66,67,68,69,70,71, 72,73,74,77,78,79,81,83,84,85
Part B Ethical Belief	2,4,6,8,10,17,18,20,21,27,30, 31,33,35,42,45,51,64,65,75, 76,80,82, 86,87	1,3,5,7,9,11,12,13,14,15,16,19 ,22,23,24,25,26,28,29,32,34,36, 37,38,39,40,41,43,44,46,47,48, 49,50,52,53,54,55,56,57,58,59, 60,61,62,63,66,67,68,69,70,71, 72,73,74,77,78,79,81,83,84,85

This preliminary study involved 108 counsellors nationwide in various setting. They were asked to complete the questionnaire in part A and B. They were 20.4% male and 79.6% female. The aged of them were around 24 to 65 years old. Respondent is 86.1 Malay, 9.3% Chinese and 4.6% Indian. 76.9% respondent have undergraduate degree in counselling and 23.1 have postgraduate degree (master and Doctorate degree) From all respondent, 37 % is registered counsellor and 63% is non-registered counsellor. The instrument was distributed to the counsellor in peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak). The researcher were used the SPSS version 22 in analyzing the data.

Table 2: Demographic Information

Demographic	Category	No.	Percentage(%)
Age	21 to 30 years	73	67.6
	31 to 40 years	22	20.4
	41 to 50 years	8	7.4
	51 years and above	5	4.6
Gender	Male	22	24.0
	Female	86	79.6
Race	Malay	93	86.1
	Chinese	10	9.3
	Indian	5	4.6
Qualification	Undergraduate	83	76.9
	Postgraduate	25	23.1
Registration Status	Registered Counselor	40	37
	Non-Registered Counselor	68	63

## Findings

Previous studies showed that the internal consistency analysis of the Ethics Practice Survey is high for both parts of the questionnaire. The results of the pilot study also showed the internal consistency is high for both part. This study shows that reliability of Ethics Practice Survey yield at  $\alpha = .88$  for ethical behaviour and  $\alpha .992$  for ethical belief.

Table 1: Reliability for Ethics Practice Survey

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach Alpha Based on Standardized Item	No. of Item
Ethical Behavior	.88	.905	87
Ethical Belief	.992	.992	87

## Conclusion and Implication

The main purpose of this preliminary study was to evaluate ethical behaviour and ethical belief among counsellor in Malaysia. Reliability is the degree to measure of a construct is consistent which is if we use the instrument to measure the same construct multiple time, we can get same result (Bhattacharjee,2012). Accordin to Creswell (2009) a researcher has to do reliability analysis when they combine an instrument in their study. The finding from this analysis found there was high reliability on the instrument which are  $\alpha = .88$  for ethical behaviour and  $\alpha .992$  for ethical belief. The result shows that this instrument is reliable to use for measuring ethical behaviour and ethical belief or counsellor in Malaysia.Beins and McCarthy (2012) emphasis that researcher have to use instrument with established reliability and validity. For further research, the future researcher can enhance the result to prove another analysis such as content validity, exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis in this instrument.

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