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Tengku A Razak, Faridah Che Husain, Maziah Mahmud, Abu
Bakar Jaafar, Wan Azmi Wan Ahmad

^{1,2,5,6,7}Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Kampus
Pahang, Malaysia, ³Centre of Foundation Studies (CFS), Universiti Teknologi MARA, ⁴Centre
for Internship Training and Academic enrichment (Citra), University of Malaya, Malaysia
Correspondence Author Email: shahiraibrahim@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

It is often heard that mental health issues have a detrimental effect on one's life. If ignored, this issue will become more acute and severe in society. They are following this situation, whether the counseling services offered at the National level can efficiently address this mental health issue. Therefore, this study evaluated the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among counseling clients in LPPKN Pahang, Malaysia. The purposive sampling technique was used to collect 143 counseling clients to answer the questionnaire. SmartPLS software was used to psychometrically evaluate the questionnaire form's data content and test the research hypotheses. The analysis results yielded several significant findings: first, there was a positive and significant relationship between self-awareness and psychological well-being. Second, there is a positive and significant relationship between emotional regulation and psychological well-being. Third, there is a positive and significant relationship between self-motivation and psychological well-being. Fourth, there is a positive and significant relationship between social awareness and psychological well-being. Fifth, there is a positive and significant relationship between social skills and psychological well-being. The findings of this study confirm that emotional intelligence is an essential determinant of psychological well-being. These findings are expected to assist practitioners in understanding the diversity of scopes and perspectives related to emotional intelligence and how it continues with the psychological well-being of a counseling client. Next, the best management plan and action can be planned in detail to help clients maintain their emotions and well-being in the face of life crises.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Well-Being, Counseling Services, SmartPLS, Covid-19

Introduction

The location of social support and control is generally critically studied in studies of positive psychology, clinical psychology, health, and culture (Strong and Gore, 2020). This element is essential because one of the primary things to know is an emotional crisis that is taking place. Many studies have examined the influence of emotions on dedication, learning, memory, and problem-solving in the education sector related to long-term sustainability (Vuilleumier, 2005; Shen et al., 2009; Berenson et al., 2012). However, few studies have examined the effects of counseling services on emotional intelligence (EI) and psychological intent in studying stress, fatigue, and performance (Brenson et al., 2008; Han and Johnson, 2012).

If observed, the relationship between the search for emotional help and hope has been noted in the literature. Previous literature has shown that emotional support for the online environment (Drentea et al., 2011) is particularly important during global epidemics. A significant relationship between emotional and positive support has been demonstrated in policymakers efforts to promote emotional support in times of crisis. Essential findings by Adikari et al (2021) showed a high intensity of feelings of anxiety and sadness during the onset phase of the covid-19 pandemic. This emotional shift is changing rapidly because with the frightening news coverage, the epidemic's effects are widely shared on social media so that users who read it will have negative emotions towards the news.

During the covid-19 pandemic, mental illness was generally detected when individuals underwent isolation such as quarantine. This persistent situation has created a chaotic psycho-emotional state in countries experiencing an increase in mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, stress, sleep disorders, and restlessness among their citizens (Gritsenko et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2020;), as well as increased drug use (Gritsenko et al., 2020) and suicidal behavior (Mamun & Griffiths, 2020; Russia Today, 2020). Those with low emotional levels will tend to experience severe emotional symptoms (Athira, 2020). This effect does not only occur in adults but other groups are also affected. Surveys of college students in China show increased student anxiety (Cao et al., 2020: 83). In a survey of 111 children with mental health problems in the UK, 83% of respondents said that the covid-19 outbreak had worsened their mental health (Young Minds, 2020: 84). Another study found that more than two-thirds of university students in Bangladesh suffer from mild to severe depression (82.4%), and anxiety has reached 87.7% (Islam et al., 2020).

Emotional care during this covid-19 pandemic is necessary for self-resilience, especially for those who already have a psychological illness. If they cannot control their emotions well, it can harm them to a critical level. This will complicate the physician's supervision of the patient because of the limitations in undergoing the treatment process during a pandemic (e.g., follow-up treatment has to be postponed). The seriousness of helping those with low emotions cannot be ignored. This coincides with the study of Alam et al (2021) found that emotional intelligence and self-efficacy became important determinants for them to be more knowledgeable about self-psychology (Alam et al., 2021). Furthermore, living daily life by working, educating, and socializing depends on an excellent emotional state (Johnson, 2021). According to a recent study on personality differences and individual differences, people with high EI and low stress can survive a pandemic better than those with low EI or a high stress (Johnson, 2021).

The American Center for Development issued recommendations on social and emotional assistance for students of African American heritage, Aboriginal people, and other blacks in July 2020 (Islam et al., 2020). Many of them are stuck in long-term deadlock and are forced to live in difficult conditions. This stress can be reduced when an organization called Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) provides social and emotional support services to students and educators to reduce daily work stress, increase employee participation, and improve the ability to model positive emotions for students and educators (Megan, 2021). The role of teachers in practicing these implemented social and emotional learning skills can improve the well-being, social, emotional, and academic of themselves and their students. In addition, the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence also found that teachers need to have specialized professionals on social and emotional learning skills so that students will benefit together and be able to break out of the cocoon of negative emotions (Megan, 2021).

However, the increasing demand for counseling services among counseling clients in Malaysia is expected to increase due to factors such as direct involvement in covid-19, long working hours, young, single, suffering from illness, having children, inadequate childcare, inadequate psychological support in the workplace, and irregular spiritual routines (Roslan et al. 2021). Following this increase, psychosocial support help is desperately needed to determine how these negative emotions can affect counseling clients, how they deal with emotional disorders, and how awareness arises to undergo counseling sessions when this pandemic crisis occurs. With the lack of studies on the psycho-emotional well-being of counseling clients, this study aims to determine the prevalence of emotional and mental disorders among counseling clients in Malaysia and the impact of counseling therapy on the emotional intelligence and psychological well-being of clients during pandemic crisis covid-19 to understand the problem better and find a new way to deal with it.

Literature Review

The Relationship of Emotional Intelligence with Psychological Well-Being

Emotional intelligence is a valuable tool for overcoming difficulties because it affects a person's resilience to cope with stressful situations. According to Romanelli, Cain, and Smith (2006), high levels of emotional intelligence can help individuals make better decisions, develop and maintain collaborative relationships, cope with stress, and deal with increasing change levels. Consistent with Salovey and Mayer's (1990) definition, EI is a person's ability to control their own and others' feelings and emotions, as well as their ability to direct all their actions and thoughts rationally (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Salovey and Mayer divide intelligent emotions into four aspects: identifying emotions, using emotions, understanding emotions, and managing emotions, while Goleman (1998) categorizes EQ into five dimensions, namely self-awareness, self-organization, motivation, empathy, and social skills. However, a recent study found that emotional intelligence has been developed using two main aspects (i.e., personal competence and social competence) and focused on six main elements (Sandhya & Namrata, 2013). The six elements of personal and social skills are self-awareness, self-motivation, emotional regulation, social awareness, social skills, and emotional receptivity—self-awareness, which refers to the ability to see oneself objectively. Self-awareness involves interactions between thoughts and feelings aware of a person's positive and negative emotions in a particular situation or circumstances. Self-motivation is the ability to do what needs to be done without influencing other people or situations. Self-

motivated people can find reason and strength to complete tasks, even in challenging situations and circumstances, without giving up or needing others to push them. Emotional regulation is the ability to observe and control one's emotions. This is the ability to respond to a variety of emotions in a socially acceptable way. It emphasizes being flexible to justify spontaneous reactions as well as the ability to delay spontaneous reactions.

On the other hand, social awareness refers to the ability to see, understand, and respond to the emotions of others and feel socially comfortable. It involves knowing about others regarding feelings, thought patterns, points of view, achievements, facial expressions, and non-verbal messages. Social skills are the ability to communicate, persuade, and interact with other members of society, without undue conflict or disharmony. It is the ability to express positive and negative feelings in an interpersonal context. Social skills consider the art of persuasion and the ability to create a friendly atmosphere in the workplace. It also emphasizes dealing with difficult people and annoying situations wisely. Emotional acceptance refers to accepting and encouraging the point of view of others by being open to their emotions. Good emotional acceptance makes a person emotionally and socially competent. Furthermore, it makes the individual empathetic to the needs of others. In general, emotional intelligence is a person's ability to manage and control his or her feelings and those of others while providing positive impetus toward establishing human relationships that can lead to achieving a goal (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; McGarvey, 1997).

Several studies show that the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being is significant. For example, a study by Sayeeda and Hameeda (2016) involving 100 students of Senior Secondary Schools, AMU, Aligarh found that girls show more emotions than boys and found that the role of emotional intelligence can balance students' mental, personal, and social relationships, academic performance and overall psychological well-being. The findings were further strengthened when Najib et al (2018) study using 167 polytechnic hard of hearing students in Malaysia found that special workshops or self-emotional training were conducted on these students, and their psychological well-being was better. Meanwhile, Ali et al (2014) studied 270 employees at 70 branches of Mehr Eqtesad Bank in Tehran, Iran, found that emotional intelligence contributes to positive attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes indirectly the psychological well-being of employees in better conditions. Therefore, this leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Self-awareness has a positive and significant relationship with psychological well-being.

Hypothesis 2: Emotional regulation has a positive and significant relationship with psychological well-being.

Hypothesis 3: Self-motivation has a positive and significant relationship with psychological well-being.

Hypothesis 4: Social awareness has a positive and significant relationship with psychological well-being.

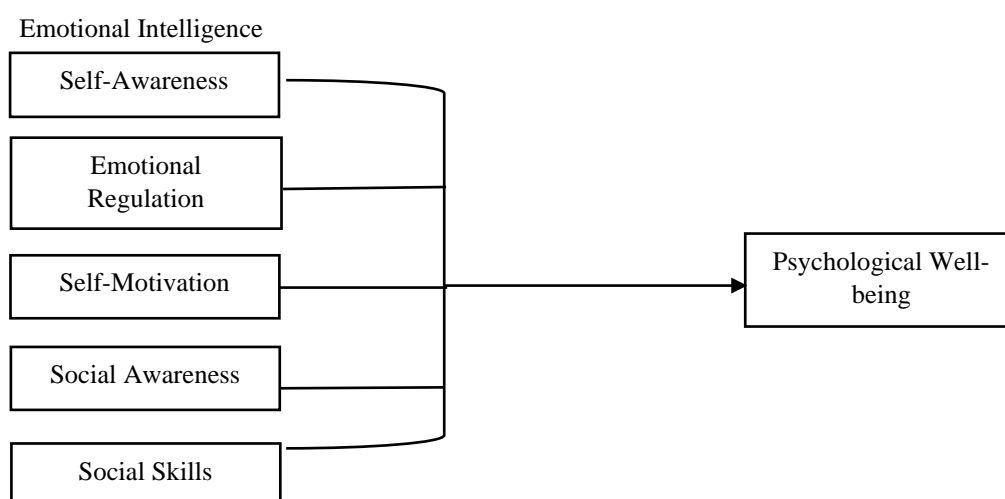
Hypothesis 5: Social skills have a positive and significant relationship with psychological well-being.

Although many previous studies have examined the influence of emotional intelligence in improving psychological well-being, most of these studies have focused on

direct effects between variables without analyzing specific features in emotional intelligence. In conclusion, previous studies have limitations in studying specific elements of emotional intelligence; Previous studies used simple correlations to measure the strength of the relationship between dependent and independent variables; previous studies used simple interview methods in explaining different respondents' perceptions regarding emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. So it is evident here that the lack of past studies suggests a significant weakness of evidence of a relationship between emotional intelligence to psychological well-being. This prompts researchers to fill in the gaps and at the same time want to prove that this relationship is significant and should be given due attention in society, let alone can be used to identify the effectiveness of counseling sessions conducted during the covid -19 outbreak. Thus, this study was conducted to guide counselors, educators, and organizational leaders on the importance of their role in improving psychological well-being.

The research literature has guided the researchers to formulate a conceptual framework for this research, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Method and Study Area

Research Design

The National Population and Family Development Board, which provides counseling services in the Malaysian state of Pahang, conducted this study. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), this study employs survey methods and a cross-sectional research design to help researchers obtain accurate data, decrease bias, and improve the quality of the data collected. Questionnaires based on the research on emotional intelligence and psychological well-being were created in the early stages of data collecting. Back-to-back translation techniques were utilized to translate the survey questionnaires into English and Malay (Lomand, 2016).

Research Sample

The search sampling approach is used in this study to distribute 200 questionnaires to counseling clients at the National Population and Family Development Board, which provides counseling services in the Malaysian state of Pahang. This sampling strategy was adopted because the researchers did not receive thorough information on counseling users on the

secrecy factor. Counselors administered questionnaires to all respondents who came to seek counseling services individually for this study. Because the evaluator knows and develops the respondent, the assistance of this counselor is critical in assisting with accurate and timely data research. Furthermore, based on their consent, these counseling clients completed the survey form anonymously and voluntarily. The researchers received 143 (71.5 percent) valid questionnaires out of the total.

Research Instruments and Procedures

This study's questionnaire has three major sections: First, emotional intelligence is assessed using 19 items modified from Sandhya and Namrata's research (2013). This construct is evaluated based on five factors: self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, social awareness, and social skills. Second, Ryff's (1989) study was used to assess psychological well-being with four items. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree." As this study investigated the feelings of counseling clients, demographic factors such as gender, age, place of residence, religion, citizenship, higher education, occupation, marital status, and monthly income were used.

Data Analysis

To evaluate the data, the SmartPLS was used. Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2017) highly suggest assessing multiple latent and manifest variables in a conceptual schema because of its ability to generate latent variable scores, manage a small sample size, and handleless standard data. To evaluate the hypothesized model, the PLS Algorithm, Bootstrapping, and Blindfolding techniques were utilized in the data analysis.

Results and Discussion

Characteristics of respondents

According to Table 1, the majority of respondents are female (62.9 percent), between the ages of 25 and 40 (44.8 percent), live in the city (58 percent), are Muslim (93 percent), Malay (93 percent), have a bachelor's degree (47.6 percent), work in the government sector (39.9 percent), are married (55.2 percent), and earn less than RM1999 (51.7 percent).

Table 1: Demographics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	53	37.1
	Female	90	62.9
Age	Below 25	62	43.4
	25- 40	64	44.8
	41- 56	17	11.9
Residence	The city	83	58.0
	Rural	60	42.0
Religion	Muslim	133	93.0
	Non-muslim	10	7.0
Nation	Malay	133	93.0
	Chinese	1	0.7
	India	1	0.7
	Others	8	5.6
Education	Lower secondary Assessment	2	1.4
	Malaysian Certificate of Education	18	12.6
	STPM/STAM	4	2.8
	Certificate/Diploma	41	28.7
	Degree	68	47.6
	Others	10	7.0
Jobs	Government	57	39.9
	Private	23	16.1
	Self-employed	63	44.1
Marital status	Married	79	55.2
	Single	57	39.9
	Others	7	4.9
Pendapatan	< 1999	74	51.7
	2k – 2999	25	17.5
	3k – 3999	13	9.1
	4k – 4999	13	9.1
	5k – 5999	9	6.3
	>6k	9	6.3

Note:

STPM/STAM (Higher Certificate of Education Malaysia/ Higher Certificate of Religion Malaysia)

Reflective Measurement Model

According to table 2, all outer loading values recorded values as indicated by Hair et al. (2017), which are more significant than 0.708, and the AVE value of the majority was more significant than 0.5. This is demonstrated by the fact that the value of outer loading and AVE achieved the level established by Hair et al. (2017) while looking at indicators connected with other indicators in the same construct. The faulty CR value for internal consistency reliability is more than 0.708.

Table 2: The value of the reflective measurement model

Indicator	Convergent Validity		Internal Consistency
	Outer Loadings	AVE (>0.50)	Reliability Composite Reliability
B01	0.810	0.636	0.897
B04	0.802		
B06	0.808		
B09	0.817		
B11	0.747		
B14	0.738	0.679	0.913
B18	0.828		
B19	0.875		
B20	0.882		
B25	0.788		
B31	0.945	0.891	0.942
B32	0.943		
B36	0.783		
B39	0.875		
B40	0.900		
B41	0.866	0.729	0.890
B46	0.812		
B53	0.887		
B54	0.862		
E30	0.813	0.747	0.922
E33	0.880		
E36	0.851		
E37	0.910		

Source: Questionnaire

Table 3 displays the concept validity and reliability outcomes. The Heterotrait-monotrait correlation ratio (HTMT) was less than 0.90 for each construct (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2009), showing that the concept met the discriminatory validity criterion (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2017; 2009). The secret interval value for each construct displayed in parenthesis is less than one (Hair et al., 2017), indicating that the construct met the discriminating analysis conditions.

Table 3: Discriminatory analysis results

Construct	Self Awareness	Emotional Regulation	Self-Motivation	Social Awareness	Social Skills
Emotional Regulation	0.874				
Self-Motivation	0.744	0.811			
Social Awareness	0.653	0.677	0.712		
Social Skills	0.666	0.739	0.661	0.747	
Psychological well-being	0.760 (0.094; 0.334)	0.784 (0.058; 0.362)	0.730 (0.032; 0.284)	0.675 (0.016; 0.252)	0.724 (0.074; 0.312)

Note. The values in the parenthesis are the values of confidential interval at 5% and 95%.

Construct Analysis

Table 4 shows that the variance inflation factor for the relationship between the independent variable (Self-Awareness, Emotional Regulation, Self-Motivation, Social Awareness, and Social Skills) and the dependent variable (Psychological Well-Being) is less than 5.0, indicating that such data do not have serious collinearity issues (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 4: Analysis of variance inflation factor and descriptive statistics

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance Inflation Factor
			Psychological well-being
Self Awareness	4.0783	0.6162	2.572
Emotional Regulation	3.8727	0.7202	3.220
Self-Motivation	4.0979	0.7298	2.413
Social Awareness	3.9685	0.6620	2.120
Social Skill	4.0443	0.6774	2.041
Psychological well-being	3.9913	0.7419	

Structural Model Measurement

For the direct impact model, Self_A, ER, SM, Social_A, and SS explain 59.5 percent of the changes in PWB. This suggests that other factors that are not the subject of this study can explain up to 40.5 percent of the PWB variance. This model has a big influence if the R^2 value is greater than 0.33. Following that, the results of the study hypothesis test revealed five significant findings: First, Self_A substantially linked with PWB ($B = 0.214$; $t = 2.755$), hence supporting H1. Second, ER was linked with PWB ($B = 0.229$; $t = 2.250$), lending support to H2. Third, SM was shown to be substantially linked with PWB ($B = 0.161$; $t = 2.052$), lending credence to H3. Fourth, Social_A was strongly linked with PWB ($B = 0.584$; $t = 11.611$), supporting H4. Fifth, SS substantially linked with PWB ($B = 0.183$; $t = 2.395$), supporting H5.

Following that, the effect size (f^2), model fit (SRMR value), and forecast relevance (Q^2) were all evaluated. The f^2 values for the relationships between Self_A and PWB (0.044), ER and PWB (0.040), SM and PWB (0.027), Social_A and PWB (0.020), and SS and PWB (0.041) were all less than 0.15 (Hair et al., 2017), indicating a moderate influence. The standard root means residual value (SRMR) is 0.062, less than 0.1, indicating that this model is suitable. PWB's Q^2 value is 0.428, which is more than zero, suggesting that the model has a valid forecast.

Hypothesis	Relationships	β	P	t	Result	R^2	F^2	Q^2	SRMR
H1	Self_A → PWB	0.214	0.003	2.755	Accepted		0.044		
H2	ER → PWB	0.229	0.012	2.250	Accepted		0.040		
H3	SM → PWB	0.161	0.020	2.052	Accepted	0.595	0.027	0.428	0.062
H4	Social_A → PWB	0.126	0.034	1.829	Accepted		0.020		
H5	SS → PWB	0.183	0.008	2.395	Accepted		0.041		

Table 5: Results of structural model measurement analysis

Note. Significant at * $t > 1.67$ (one tail testing); Self_A: Self-Awareness; Social_A: Social Awareness; ER: Emotional Regulation; SM: Self-Motivation; SS: Social Skills; PWB: Psychological well-being

Conclusion

Many previous studies have used direct impact models to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being Sayeeda and Hameeda (2016); Najib et al (2017); Ali et al (2014) to ascertain the strength of the relationship between these variables. However, most researchers do not associate components of emotional intelligence (i.e. self-intelligence, emotional regulation, self-motivation, social awareness, and social skills) with psychological well-being. This situation prompted researchers to add knowledge by studying the effects of each component of emotional intelligence (i.e., Self-Awareness, Emotional Regulation, Self-Motivation, Social Awareness, and Social Skills) on psychological well-being from the counseling client's perspective. Both of these variables are essentially very important in the process of a counseling session being conducted. This is because most clients present face difficult moments in their lives physically, mentally, and emotionally. For example, some clients are trying to get out of the stress caused by the death of a family member, friend, or colleague, struggling with marital problems or divorce, losing a job, facing a disaster, and so on. All of the above lead to significant stress on the individual. These events, either natural or artificial, resulting in disruption of normal life. A long healing process is required to restore normal life and thinking exposed to negative life events. Therefore, the counselor is where clients should meet to examine past patterns to help clients assess more healthily about current / past relationships and decision-making in various angles and matters. With the help of a counselor, clients will better understand their strengths and abilities to manage life's challenges that are critical to achieving their therapeutic goals. At

the same time, these coaching sessions can contribute to clients' psychological well-being by indirectly influencing their emotional control in daily life.

This study has two significant implications: theoretical contributions and practical contributions. In terms of theoretical contribution, the findings of this study confirm that emotional intelligence can influence counseling clients' psychological well-being. These findings are consistent with previous research (Bar-On, 2006; Emmons, 2000). According to Bar-On's (2006) emotional intelligent model, emotional intelligence involves interconnected emotional and social competence relationships. These theories are thought to influence how we understand and express ourselves, how we understand others, how we relate to those around us, and how we deal with day-to-day emotional challenges. As a result, the client's emotional intelligence can improve his or her psychological well-being. According to Sayeeda and Hameeda (2016); Najib et al (2017); Ali et al (2014), the ability of counselors to practice emotional intelligence based on the diverse personalities, needs, and expectations of clients in formal and informal counseling activities has improved clients' psychological well-being.

Additionally, practitioners can use the findings of this study to enhance the effectiveness of guidance and counseling management in counseling service agencies. Management should focus on the following factors to accomplish this goal. Firstly, creative training programs should be meticulously designed to assist clients in applying standard content and methods to everyday life situations with varying needs and expectations. This practice enables counselors to more accurately assess their clients' abilities to achieve guidance and counseling goals. Following that, registered counselors must work extensively in all sectors, particularly schools, universities, the public sector, the private sector, and the community, to ensure that counseling services become ingrained in the community and serve as a channel for expressing feelings and emotions. Also, the government can develop a customized plan requiring that the entire family attend counseling at least twice a year. This session is critical in guiding the client to use his intellect to discern between truth and error, consider the existence of nature and the power of Allah SWT, and balance his evil desires with his good desires. This practice has improved clients' personalities, morale, and confidence, allowing them to live everyday lives. The suggestions above are critical in motivating and assisting the client in adapting to the various problems.

Other suggestions are related to improving the study's methodological and conceptual limitations. Firstly, future research should look into some essential client characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, occupation, income, and level of education. This can help us better understand how different client characteristics influence counseling sessions in various agencies. Second, longitudinal studies should be considered because they can reveal variable patterns over time, provide valuable data on individual changes, and assess the strength and nature of relationships between variables. Third, to better understand the effects of emotional intelligence in counseling sessions, future research should be conducted across multiple agency scopes. Fourth, other specific theoretical terms related to emotional intelligence must be investigated and published so that they can be widely recognized as an essential link between psychological well-being. Finally, probability sampling planning, particularly stratified random sampling, should be considered because it will collect data at random, reducing the bias from the traditional method. The significance of the recommendations mentioned above should be addressed further in future studies.

Several methodological and conceptual limitations have been identified in this study. For starters, this study employed a cross-sectional research design, which precludes causal inference between variables. Second, the relationship between the dimensions of the mediating variables was not tested in this study. Third, client perceptions were only used as a measure in this study to assess the relationships between variables in the hypothesized model. Fourth, this study was limited to a counseling service agency in Pahang. Finally, the sampling strategy aims to prevent the response bias from being bypassed. The limitations listed above may limit the ability of this study's findings to be generalized to other agencies.

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