The Level of Happiness and Self Esteem among Counsellors

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Abstract

This objective of this study is to explore the level of self-esteem and happiness among counsellors in Gombak, Selangor the year of 2024. As part of the processes for these self attributes and positive psychology element, a thorough quantitative approach was conducted. Employing a framework for wellbeing and happiness, the SPSS analysis was undertaken using the Correlation Pearson. Participants in this study were all enrolled as a counsellor under the Board of Counsellor Malaysia. There were 127 participants involved in this study. Finding from the research question comes out with the level two of happiness for self-esteem and happiness which is moderate happiness and self-esteem among counsellors. The findings also shown that there is a significant relationship between self-esteem and happiness level among the counsellors. Self-esteem seems correlated with happiness as if they have high self-esteem, they would be their ultimate happiness, this could be to enhance their motivation to achieve as good counsellor and become happier. These results indicated the necessity for intervention to raise counsellor's self-esteem and happiness levels for their future career and professional growth. We also can raise overall client's achievement by supporting their happiness level and cultivating self-esteem. This study should help all counsellors to improve the standard of their clients' future lives especially their student life achievement.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Happiness, Counsellors, Well-Being, Motivation, Joy, Positive Emotions

Introduction

Background of Study

In the emotionally taxing field of counseling, practitioners must be able to negotiate difficult emotional situations, offer compassionate support, and mentor clients through trying times. The health and self-worth of counselors themselves, however, are also very important factors to consider because their personal experiences can have a big impact on how well they can help their clients.

Positive psychological research such as happiness and boosting self-esteem and self-satisfaction have given many benefits to human life and has proven that exploring this topic will help people thrive and be more positive in many ways. According to Haase et al. (2012), Positive psychology has greater motivation toward education and career because they believe they have more control over attaining their goals. This topic is developing rapidly among researchers nowadays, especially in our country. The awareness of its importance arose when psychologists thought that positive psychological topics such as personality, self-efficacy, self-esteem, or social support are the aspects or resources to bring happiness to human lives (Khairuddin, 2017). Even though the empirical research about positive psychology is still developing, the awareness of exploring them is increasing in this country. For instance, research about happiness in Malaysia has increased recently (Khairudin, 2017; Al Mahdi; 2012, Dahlan, Nicol & Maciver, 2010; Haslina, 2006; Jaafar et al., 2009; Khairudin, 2009; Ma'rof and Asnarulkhadi, 2006; Nor Ba'yah and Kamsiah, 2002). The increment occurs when the awareness among researchers has risen about happiness, especially in our socio-cultural. (Khairuddin, 2017). Consequently, it would be better to investigate these issues of good self-rated attitudes rather than negative psychological themes like stress, worry, and sadness.

Problem Statement

When it comes to the happiness and self-esteem of counselors, there is a spotlight on this issue because the literature is not exactly throwing much empirical research when it comes to counselors' well-being. We need more studies that specifically focus on the happiness and self-esteem of these unsung heroes, the ones who listen, guide, and hold space for others. Perhaps the gap lies in understanding how their personal well-being impacts their professional effectiveness.

Counselors operate in a unique universe. Their job description includes empathy, compassion, and patience often without expecting the same care in return from their clients. But nobody is checking in on their emotional balance. Who is refilling their empathy tank? They swoop in to save the day, but sometimes forget to save themselves. Imagine a counselor sits across from a client, listening intently, offering wisdom, and holding space for healing. But what about the counselor's own healing journey? Here is where the problem statement pirouettes onto the stage. Counselors often prioritize their clients' well-being over their own, leading to potential stress, burnout, and emotional fatigue. A study found that 78.9% of therapists experienced high burnout, and 58.1% reported high disengagement. This burnout can negatively impact treatment outcomes for clients. (Sutton, 2023).

Research also indicates that social workers experiencing emotional distress are less empathetic towards clients, increasing their risk of burnout. Managing stress and maintaining empathy are crucial for their well-being (Mack, 2022). This imbalance affects not only their personal lives but also their professional effectiveness. Therefore, how can we ensure counselors maintain healthy self-esteem while navigating the emotional rollercoaster of their work? What strategies can be embedded into counselor training to promote their happiness and well-being?

Counselors are assets of the country as they are going to be the future of the nation. They need to navigate complex emotional landscapes, provide empathetic support, and guide individuals through challenging life experiences for clients, especially students in schools. One of the factors of happiness is accomplishment (Martin Seligman, 2012). It is defined as the scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing on multiple levels that include the biological, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global dimensions of life (Seligman, M. E. P. Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive Psychology brought the pursuit of happiness, well-being, and positivity, which created meaning in human life.

One study by Cook et.al 2021 entitled 'Self-reported symptoms of burnout in novice professional counselors: A content analyses found that new counsellors are particularly vulnerable to burnout, which can affect both their personal and professional lives. Addressing burnout symptoms is vital for providing quality care and maintaining personal fulfilment. Therefore, and investigation of the level of these unsung heroes should be prioritized. We must avoid them from being low self esteem and unhappy because even counselors also need a safe harbor for their souls.

Research Objectives
In this study, researcher intends to achieve the following objectives:
RO1 : To identify the level of self-esteem among counsellors
RO2 : To identify the level of happiness among counsellors
RO3 : To investigate the significant relationship between self esteem and happiness among counsellors

Research Questions
The research questions are as follows:
RQ1 : What is the level of self-esteem among counsellors?
RQ2 : What is the level of happiness among counsellors?
RQ3 : Is there any significant relationship between self-esteem and happiness among counsellors?

Significance of the Study
The findings of this study will give many benefits in counseling and psychology fields, because this study mainly focuses on the variables which correlate to their wellbeing and self-esteem. Furthermore, this study can be used by counselors in schools, universities, therapists, and clinical psychologists in the hospitals as it can guide them in developing new techniques and conducting new programs which can help them to perform well in their career achievement as well as helping them to cope with their self-esteem and the happiness level. Thus, it can lead to producing them with positive well-being and excellence in academic performance.

By examining the happiness level among counsellors, future researchers also can assess the efficacy of various initiatives designed to advance mental health and wellbeing. This research will be a guide for future researchers as they will need to make a reference regarding this topic in the upcoming years. They can use the outcomes of this study to further their research relating to this topic. In addition, it can be used for any new topics that require

future researchers to refer to the outcomes of this study. Thus, they can use the outcomes of this study as a gap to conduct further research relating to this topic. Besides, this research is significant to contribute to more research in Malaysia, especially on various topics relating to our current issues, culture, and the environment in Malaysia, to broaden people's knowledge about this topic. On the other hand, this research is also significant in opening our local researchers' s eyes to positive psychology instead of only negative ones.

Theory and Literature Review
Theory
The father of positive psychology, Martin Seligman, is credited with developing the theory that is applied to happiness. His unique perspectives on happiness and well-being, as the creator of positive psychology, have contributed to the field's development (Compton & Hoffman, 2013). According to his most recent theory of well-being, PERMA stands for positive emotion, engagement, connections, meaning, and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). According to his new theory of well-being, humans also require positive relationships and positive accomplishments in order to be happy, implying that positive feeling, engagement, and meaning alone are insufficient to produce well-being (Seligman, 2011). These five components, in Seligman's opinion, can aid a person in obtaining a fulfilling, happy, and meaningful existence. According to the PERMA theory, it is appropriate to investigate the self-esteem and happiness dimension among counsellors in this study in light of their potential for future success and helping others
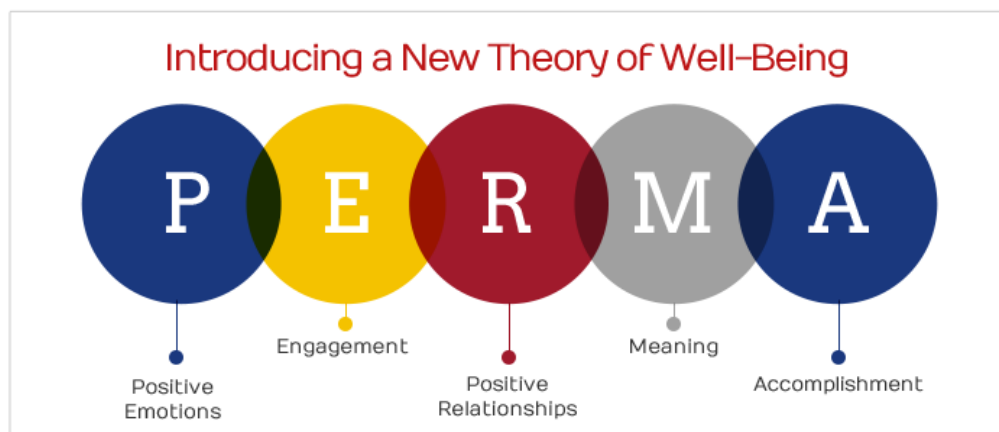

Figure 2.1: PERMA Model from the Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being by Seligman.

The PERMA model, developed by Martin Seligman, is highly relevant to understanding the levels of self-esteem and happiness among counselors. each element relates to counselors such as
1. **Positive Emotion**: Experiencing positive emotions can enhance counselors' overall happiness and reduce stress, which is crucial for maintaining high self-esteem and avoiding burnout.
2. **Engagement**: Being deeply involved and engaged in their work can help counselors find fulfillment and satisfaction, boosting their self-esteem and overall happiness.

3. **Relationships**: Maintaining positive relationships with clients, colleagues, and supervisors can provide emotional support and reduce feelings of isolation, which is essential for counselors' well-being.
4. **Meaning**: Understanding the purpose of their work and feeling that they are making a difference can significantly enhance counselors' sense of meaning and purpose, contributing to higher self-esteem and happiness.
5. **Accomplishment**: Achieving professional goals and milestones can boost counselors' self-esteem and provide a sense of accomplishment, further enhancing their overall happiness.

Literature Review

A previous study was done which highlights the significant stress, burnout, and emotional fatigue that counselors often face due to prioritizing their clients' well-being over their own. In the study about High Burnout Rates among counsellors, it found that 78.9% of therapists experienced high burnout, and 58.1% reported high disengagement (Sutton, 2023). This burnout can negatively impact treatment outcomes for clients. These high levels of burnout and disengagement can have several detrimental effects such as emotional exhaustion, physical symptoms and reduced their empathy level. Therapists experiencing burnout often feel emotionally drained and unable to cope with their workload. Besides, low self-esteem and unhappy with their job can lead to a decrease in empathy, making it difficult for therapists to connect with their clients. Chronic stress from low self-esteem and burn out can manifest as physical symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, and sleep disturbances. Consequently, high levels of unhappiness and low self-esteem as well as burnout can lead to mistakes in judgment or treatment planning, which can negatively affect clients. Therapists also may struggle to provide high-quality care, potentially leading to less effective treatment outcomes and the relationship alliance between the therapist and client can suffer, impacting the client's progress and satisfaction with therapy.

Research indicates that social workers experiencing emotional distress are less empathetic towards clients, increasing their risk of low self-esteem and burn out. Managing stress and maintaining empathy are crucial for their well-being. (Mack, 2022). Research has shown that social workers who experience emotional distress often struggle to maintain empathy towards their clients. This reduction in empathy can significantly increase their risk of burnout. Counsellors frequently encounter challenging and emotionally taxing situations. When they experience high levels of emotional distress, it can become difficult for them to remain empathetic and compassionate towards their clients. When they are unhappy, they tend to be burned out. Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. When social workers are less empathetic, they may feel disconnected from their clients, leading to higher levels of burnout. Finally, it can lead to physical symptoms such as fatigue and headaches, as well as mental health issues like anxiety and depression.

Methodology
Research Design
This study design is quantitative. Inductive in nature, qualitative research typically focuses on meanings and insights in each circumstance (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Levitt et al., 2017). In March of the academic year 2024, 127 counsellors from Gombak participated in this quantitative study. Data for this study were analyzed by using the SPSS.

Participants
A total of 127 counsellors were chosen to take part in the survey. These participants were chosen purposively among the counsellors in Gombak Selangor These 127 participants all come from different backgrounds and are pursuing career in the secondary school. The researcher targeted counsellors who are in the schools because government supposed to provide two counsellors in each school. It was conducted for counsellor from Gombak district where the counsellors were participating during the counselling program. Purposive sampling was used as all of them are chosen counsellor from the secondary schools.

Instrumentation
In this research, the questionnaires were divided into three parts. It included the demographic factors, Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaires (OHQ). The question guide was separated into three sections, each of which served a different purpose from the study. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was developed by Michael Argle and Peter Hills in 2022. Peter Hills and Michael Argyle created OHQ who were very popular among positive psychologists in this world. Michael Argyle and Hills P. from Oxford University founded OHQ consists of 29 items with six Likert scales to measure the people level of happiness in 2012. (Hills & Argyle, 2002). According to Internal reliability usage, Cronbach's alpha in the sample of students (n=127) was 0.92 which is excellent reliability.

Self-esteem instrument is the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. Morris Rosenberg is the founder of the RSES. It was developed in the year 1965. The RSES exhibits strong dependability. For the scale, Cronbach's alpha is usually given in the range of 0.81 to 0.88, showing strong internal consistency. It presented high ratings in reliability areas; internal consistency was 0.77 which acceptable to run this instrument.

Procedures
Before starting the survey, the researcher starts by explaining the study that will be conducted so that the participants understand their role in the survey. Besides, the researcher also builds rapport with the participants. Confidentiality is very important, and the researcher will not use the real name of the participants in the survey without their consent. Each of the participants will be asked 39 items which is 29 items for the happiness level and 10 items for the self-esteem level items. The target duration for the interview will be between 20 to 30 minutes. The data will be recorded and kept for references. This study used the method of triangulation to collect data.

Analysis
The researcher utilized a Likert scale for all but the first section, which asks for background information. The descriptive analysis to condense the information gathered while conducting

this study. Descriptive analysis helps researchers get the best level of accuracy by concentrating on the present investigation. For the level analysis, once the researcher has collected responses from participants, then the researcher will compute the mean (average) score for each person. The scores for all items will be added up and divided by the total number of items.

To ascertain the strength of the variables and whether they are connected, correlation analysis in SPSS Version 26 is utilized. A high correlation suggests a strong relationship between the variables. Another method for assessing validity and reliability is correlation analysis. The relationship between self-esteem and happiness was examined in this study.The degree of linear correlation between two continuous variables is ascertained via a Pearson correlation. By drawing a straight line between the two variables in question, a scatterplot can show a linear link. The correlation's value indicates the type and degree of the relationship.

Results
Descriptive Analysis
This study was conducted among 127 counsellors in Gombak area. The respondents, who ranged in age from 25 to 54, were consists of 21 males and 105 females. Malay is the majority in race description which consists of 83.6% followed by Chinese (6.3%) and Indian (9.4%).

Demographic Description of Each Respondent as follows:

Gender
Tables 4.1
Demographic description for gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	105	82.8	82.8	82.8
	Gender	1	.8	.8	83.6
	Male	21	16.4	16.4	100.0
	Total	127	100.0	100.0	

Race
Tables 4.2
Demographic description for race

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Chinese	8	6.3	6.3	6.3
	Indian	12	9.4	9.4	15.6
	Malay/Bumi	106	83.6	83.6	99.2
	Race	1	.8	.8	100.0

	Total	127	100.0	100.0

Descriptive Statistics

Tables 4.3 Taotal Score Self-esteem and Happiness

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
scorehappy	127	71.00	124.00	93.0236	7.95869
totalSE	127	20.00	39.00	28.1496	2.56063
Valid N (listwise)	127				

RQ1: What is the level of self-esteem among counsellors?

Schedule 4.1   Scale of Self Esteem

Category	Scale
Level 3 (39 and above)	High Self Esteem
Level 2 (21 -38)	Moderate Self Esteem
Level 1 (20 and below)	Low Self Esteem

Score for self-esteem is 28. Based on the provided scale, self-esteem score of 28 falls into Level 2, which corresponds to Moderate Self-Esteem. This indicates that the counsellors have a reasonable level of self-esteem. They likely feel good about themselves in many situations but may experience occasional self-doubt or insecurity. This is a balanced state where counsellors can recognize their strengths but are also aware of areas for improvement. Therefore, it answered the first research objective.

RQ2: What is the level of happiness among counsellors?
Schedule 4.2   Scale of Happiness Level

Category		Scale
Level 3	(124 and above)	High happiness
Level 2	(72 -123)	Moderate happiness
Level 1	(71 and below)	Low happiness

Based on the provided scale, the happiness score of 93 among counsellors falls into Level 2, which corresponds to moderate happiness. If it falls in level three, it means counsellors in this category experience a high level of happiness. They likely feel very positive about their work and personal lives, and they generally have a strong sense of well-being.Unfortunately, the result shown is a moderate happiness. This indicates that, on average, counsellors have a moderate level of happiness. They likely experience a balance of positive and negative emotions, feeling content and satisfied in many aspects of their lives but also facing some challenges that may affect their overall happiness. Counsellors with moderate happiness generally have a balanced sense of well-being. They experience both positive and negative emotions but manage to maintain a reasonable level of contentment. There may be specific areas in their professional or personal lives

that could be improved to enhance their overall happiness. Therefore, the result from this second research objective has been answered.

RQ3: Is there any significant relationship between self-esteem and happiness among counsellors?

Table 4 .4
Correlation between Self-Esteem and happiness level

Variable	Happiness Level	Self Esteem
Happiness Level	1	.436*
		(N = 127)
Self Esteem	.436*	1
	(N = 127)	

*Note: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
Table 4.4 : Correlation between students' self-esteem and happiness level

According to Gay et al. (2012), if the correlation is less than 0.35 is a low correlation. If the correlation is between 0.36 and 0.65 is a moderate correlation. Above 0.66 is a high correlation. Table 4.2 explains the size of correlation and the interpretation.

Table 4.5
Interpreting the size of the correlation

Size of Correlation	Interpretation
0.35 and below	Low correlation
Between 0.36 - 0.65	Moderate correlation
Above 0.66	High correlation

		Self Esteem	Happiness level
Self Esteem	Pearson Correlation	1	.436*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	127	436
Happiness Level	Pearson Correlation	.436*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	127	127

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The current study tested the correlation between self-esteem and happiness level of counsellors in Gombak, Selangor.The results of the correlation test indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between happiness level with student's self-esteem (r=0.436, p=0.000). The correlation between happiness with student's self-esteem is moderate. The p-value indicates that the correlation is statistically significant. This means that the likelihood of this correlation occurring by chance is extremely low, providing strong evidence that self-esteem and happiness are related. These results rejected the Ho1 and answered Research Question 3. These results also indicate that students with high self-esteem also have higher happiness level.

Discussion of Study

As the aim of the study is to explore the level of self-esteem and happiness counsellors in secondary school, the results indicate that there is a moderate level among counsellors in secondary schools in Gombak area. Both fall into Level 2, which corresponds to moderate happiness and self-esteem. It supported by Galili et.al inn his research in 2020 about systematic review highlights the importance of self-compassion among mental health professionals, including its impact on self-esteem. The review consolidates findings from 24 empirical studies, showing that self-compassion can prevent burnout and improve overall well-being. (Galili-Weinstock, Chen, Atzil-Slonim, Rafaeli, & Peri, 2020). In 2019, shown it supported the results where other researcher explores the role of self-care in promoting well-being among mental health practitioners. It emphasizes the importance of self-care practices in reducing stress and burnout, thereby enhancing happiness and professional effectiveness.

The result suggests a moderate positive relationship between self-esteem and happiness levels. The positive correlation implies that individuals with higher self-esteem are likely to experience higher levels of happiness. This highlights the importance of fostering self-esteem to enhance overall well-being.For counsellors, understanding this relationship can be crucial in designing interventions. Programs aimed at boosting self-esteem could potentially lead to increased happiness among clients. Techniques such as positive affirmations, goal-setting, and cognitive-behavioural strategies can be effective. Activities that promote self-awareness, self-acceptance, and personal achievements can help individuals build self-esteem. Examples

include journaling, mindfulness practices, and celebrating small successes. It supported where another review highlights the importance of self-compassion among mental health professionals, including its impact on self-esteem. This literature review explores the role of self-care in promoting well-being among mental health practitioners. It emphasizes the importance of self-care practices in reducing stress and burnout, thereby enhancing happiness and professional effectiveness (Posluns, 2019).

Conclusion

The strong positive links and moderate levels of happiness and self-esteem highlight how closely related these two dimensions of wellbeing are to one another. Higher levels of happiness can also be promoted by individuals and professionals by concentrating on techniques that build self-esteem. This study connects positive psychology with self-esteem literary perspectives. It draws attention to how pleasure and self-worth are correlated and emphasizes how they support one another. According to this research, professionals can indirectly encourage higher levels of happiness by focusing on techniques to improve self-esteem. The study makes an empirical contribution that not only unites theories but also has applications for mental health professionals, educators, and employers. Based on these findings, educators and school counselors can customize interventions for students, considering the influence on their well-being. Recognizing that self-worth, understanding that self-esteem contributes to happiness can inform curriculum design, peer support programs, and mental health services. Moving forward, understanding this dynamic relationship can lead to more effective well-being interventions.

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