

Multicultural Counselling Competency towards Clients with Sexual Orientation Disorder

Shahida Nalini Binti Mat Sabri, Dr. Norsayyidatina Binti Che Rozubi

Department Of Guidance & Counselling, Faculty of Human Development, Sultan Idris Education University

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine and identify the level of multicultural counselling competency towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder. This study was conducted on 89 respondents consisting of trainee counsellors from IPG Kampus Tengku Ampuan Afzan who are undergoing practicum and counselling internship in schools. The selection of study respondents was carried out through purposive sampling technique. The research method used was through the distribution of the Sexual Orientation Counseling Competency Scale (SOCCS) questionnaire. The data obtained were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software version 26.0. The results of the analysis found that the level of multicultural counselling competency towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder is at a moderate level. Therefore, it is highly hoped that trainee counsellors will continuously seek knowledge in this field. In conclusion, trainee counsellors are individuals who will be needed in schools to assist students who require guidance and counselling services. In this era of rapid technological advancement, counsellors need to be more advanced both in terms of technology and skills. Furthermore, competency in multicultural counselling is highly required considering the various issues of sexual orientation disorder and identity that exist among students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: Multicultural Counselling Competency towards Clients with Sexual Orientation Disorder, Trainee Counsellors

Introduction

The need for guidance and counselling services in Malaysia is increasingly gaining importance and encompasses all levels of society, especially in terms of social changes that affect cultural transformation and lifestyle. Beginning with guidance and counselling in schools, the social changes that have occurred have shown the importance of counselling as a primary aspect in society. The Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM), through Circular KP5209/35(4), has enforced the appointment of guidance and counselling teachers in schools to play an

important role as agents of change in the development of human capital to drive the national development agenda. Thus, the question arises whether counsellors in Malaysia, especially those in schools, are capable of conducting sessions in multicultural counselling considering that Malaysia consists of a multi-ethnic, multicultural and diverse lifestyle society. Therefore, this writing will explain the level of multicultural counselling competency among trainee counsellors at IPG Kampus Tengku Ampuan Afzan. Multicultural counselling has been defined as any counselling relationship between two or more individuals who differ in terms of cultural background, values and lifestyle (Nugent, 1994). According to Lee and Richardson (1991) in Faizah Farizan (2019), when culture refers to race or ethnicity, various appropriate approaches may need to be considered in handling counselling with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Based on the findings conducted during the writing of this article, it was found that not many studies on multicultural counselling have been conducted in Malaysia, and this field may not have received comprehensive attention compared to other aspects of counselling studies. In fact, within the last five years, there is only one study available. Nevertheless, recognising the current needs in the endemic era due to the spread of the Coronavirus or Covid-19, studies on multicultural counselling need to be conducted because our differences are not only cultural but gender issues can also be cross-cultural in counselling.

Through this article, the researcher aims to gain a deeper understanding of the level of multicultural counselling competency among trainee counsellors at IPG Kampus Tengku Ampuan Afzan. Therefore, the researcher conducted a survey study to examine the level of cultural counselling competency of trainee counsellors towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder.

The following are the objectives, research questions and research hypotheses

Objectives of the study:

1. To identify the level of cultural counselling competency of trainee counsellors towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder
2. To identify the differences between gender and cultural counselling competency of trainee counsellors towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder.

Research questions :

1. What is the level of cultural counselling competency of trainee counsellors towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder?
2. Is there a difference between gender and the cultural counselling competency of trainee counsellors towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder?

Research hypothesis :

H_{a1} : There is a significant difference between gender and KMCPB towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder

Literature Review

Previous related studies include the study by Azharizah Saimi and Salleh Amat (2011) on 6 counsellors in a school implementing a Special Education Integration Program. The findings showed that lack of exposure to the needs and skills of cross-cultural counselling for clients with disabilities becomes a challenge for counsellors in conducting cross-cultural counselling

sessions. In addition, negative perceptions become a barrier to counsellors' acceptance of cross-cultural clients. This differs when counsellors have extensive experience with cross-cultural clients, as they are more prepared to conduct counselling sessions with such clients.

Ping and Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin (2013) conducted a study involving 104 respondents consisting of 52 clients and 52 counsellors (26 registered counsellors and 26 trainee counsellors). The findings showed that overall, there is no difference in the level of cross-cultural competency between registered counsellors and trainee counsellors, indicating similar competency levels. The mean value obtained showed that knowledge is the main factor in determining cross-cultural counselling competency.

Yasmin Ahmad (2014) conducted a study involving 514 teachers in Kedah, Penang and Perak. The findings showed that multicultural competency based on awareness, knowledge, attitude and skills differs according to ethnicity and gender. In addition, multicultural competency was found to be at a moderate level. The discussion highlighted that challenges in multicultural competency stem from lack of experience.

Md Shah and Saleh Amat (2014) conducted a study involving 275 counselling teachers in Selangor. The findings showed that secondary school counselling teachers have a high level of cross-cultural competency. In addition, competency levels differ according to educational level.

Abdul Malek Abdul Rahman, Siti Zubaidah, Samsiah Jais, and Nor Junainah Mohd Isa (2014) conducted a study on 39 counsellors in Perak. The findings showed that the level of cross-cultural counselling competency is moderate.

Ruhani Mat Min (2017) conducted a study on 186 registered counsellors. The findings showed that counselling skills are at a high level.

Noor Faizah Fharizan (2019) conducted a study involving 659 counsellors, including postgraduate and undergraduate trainee counsellors and registered counsellors. The findings showed that overall multicultural counselling competency is at a moderate level.

Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin (2017) conducted a study on 508 counsellors in Malaysia. The findings identified five factors in cross-cultural counselling and significant differences based on ethnicity, education level and training involvement.

Kamarul Md Shah (2014) conducted a study on 102 counsellors in Selangor. The findings showed that the overall mean score of multicultural counselling competency is high.

Puteri Hayati Megat Ahmad et al. (2010) conducted a study on 150 counsellors in Sabah. The findings showed no difference in multicultural competency based on gender and workplace location, but differences were found based on work experience.

Methodology

Research Design

his study uses a combination of descriptive and inferential research design. Descriptive research is a study that provides a systematic explanation of facts, levels and characteristics of the population studied by the researcher (Sidek Mohd Noah, 2002). Descriptive research is used to answer the first research objective. Meanwhile, for the second research objective, an inferential research design is used. This inferential study is able to answer objectives that involve relationships between variables. Overall, this study focuses on identifying the level of competency in implementing multicultural counselling towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder among trainee counsellors at IPG Kampus Tengku Ampuan Afzan.

Sample of Study

$$S = \frac{x^2 N p (1 - p)}{e^2 (N - 1) + x^2 p (1 - P)}$$

Based on the sample calculation formula above, the total sample selected for this study is 74 respondents, while the total population of trainee counsellors at IPG Kampus Tengku Ampuan Afzan is 89 individuals. However, according to Tuckman (1978), the sample size should be maximised to minimise sampling error. This is because the study sample not only represents the population but also ensures reliability in representing the studied population. Where,

S = sample size

x^2 = desired confidence level (0.05)

based on chi-squared table = 3.841

N = population size (89)

P = population proportion (0.5)

e = margin error (0.05)

Research Instrument

This study uses a questionnaire as a tool for data collection, measurement and analysis. The questionnaire examines the Sexual Orientation Counseling Competence Scales (SOCCS) translated by Noor Faizah Fharizan (2019). The reliability of the questionnaire based on the pilot study conducted shows that the Sexual Orientation Counseling Competence Scales (SOCCS) is .89. The questionnaire used has high reliability.

Statistical Analysis

For the Sexual Orientation Counseling Competence Scales (SOCCS), there are 29 items. The level of multicultural counselling competency towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder can be determined based on scores, where scores from 0 to 87 indicate a low level. Scores from 88 to 145 indicate a moderate level. Scores from 146 to 203 indicate a high level of multicultural counselling competency towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder.

Research Findings

Testing Objective 1: Level of competency in implementing multicultural counselling towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder (KMCPB).

Table 1

Level of competency in implementing multicultural counselling towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
KMCPB	52.00	180.00	127.0263

Based on the table above, the level of competency in implementing multicultural counselling towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder is at a moderate level, where the mean score is 127.0263.

Testing Hypothesis 1: Difference in competency in implementing multicultural counselling towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder based on gender.

Table 2

Level of competency in implementing multicultural counselling towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder according to gender

Gender	Bil.	Mean	Standard Deviation	-t Value	Sig.
Male	21	125.8478	22.98209	-.368	.713
Female	53	127.5377	27.18094		

Based on the table above, the t-value for the comparison of competency level in implementing multicultural counselling towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder between males and females is $t=5.047$ with a significance level of $p=.713$. This significance level is greater than .05 ($p<.05$). Therefore, there is no significant difference between males and females. The hypothesis stating that there is a significant difference in competency based on gender is rejected.

The mean score for male counsellors (mean=125.8478) differs only slightly from female counsellors (mean=127.5377). This indicates that the level of competency in implementing multicultural counselling towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder between genders is almost the same.

Discussion

Analysis of the level of competency in implementing multicultural counselling towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder.

The study conducted found that the level of competency in implementing multicultural counselling towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder is at a moderate level, and this finding is consistent with Noor Faizah Fharizan (2019), who also found that cross-cultural counselling competency is at a moderate level among registered counsellors, trainee counsellors, and overall. This finding is also supported by six other studies, namely Bidell

(2001, 2003, & 2005), Rutter et al. (2008), Abdul Malek Abdul Rahman et al. (2014), and Adams (2015). This may be due to trainee counsellors receiving less exposure to cross-cultural counselling compared to those who have higher competency levels.

Difference in competency level in implementing multicultural counselling towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder based on gender of trainee counsellors.

Based on the study conducted, there is no significant difference in competency level based on gender. This finding is supported by Noor Faizah Fharizan (2019), who also found no significant gender difference in competency level.

Implications of the Study for Trainee Counsellors

This study provides evidence to trainee counsellors regarding their ability and awareness in handling clients from diverse cultural backgrounds, especially those different from their own. Therefore, trainee counsellors require greater exposure to cross-cultural counselling to better understand their clients.

Implications of the study for the Ministry of Education Malaysia, Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia and the Malaysian Board of Counsellors.

With extensive research on cross-cultural counselling competency, useful input can be provided to these entities in managing cross-cultural counselling. Such studies can also assist in planning programmes, seminars and training to develop counsellors who are open and accepting of clients from diverse backgrounds, in line with ethical principles of unconditional acceptance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, trainee counsellors are individuals who will be needed in schools to assist students who require guidance and counselling services. In this endemic era, counsellors need to be more advanced in terms of both technology and skills. Competency in multicultural counselling is highly necessary due to the various issues of sexual orientation and identity among students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This study found that the level of competency in implementing multicultural counselling towards clients who possess sexual orientation disorder is at a moderate level. Therefore, it is hoped that trainee counsellors will continuously seek knowledge in this field. Finally, the researcher hopes that this study will be continued as issues of sexual orientation are becoming increasingly prevalent among adolescents, especially students today. This will help provide useful information to relevant parties. Additionally, relevant organisations can organise courses, seminars and conferences to enhance the skills of trainee counsellors so they can provide effective services in real settings.

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