

# **Role Difficulties among Trainee Counsellors: A Conceptual Paper**

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## **Abstract**

Role difficulties are included role conflict and role ambiguity. Clarification on role difficulties is important in ensuring the effectiveness of supervision process. The definition of role conflict is defined as the expectations of behaviour that are competing or opposing (Biddle, 1979) and role ambiguity happened when the expectations within it is incomplete and unclear to facilitate behaviour causing uncertainty (Biddle, 1979). Hence, the Role Theory mainly focus on the study of behaviour that are characteristics of a person within context and with varies processes that presumably produce, explain or are affected by those behaviour. Understanding and exploring on role difficulties it might contributed toward clear social position between trainee counsellors and supervisor, crystallised the expectations between them, identify the consequences and functions of trainee counsellors and supervisor as well as taught role to trainee counsellors. As conclusion, the clarification of role difficulties between trainee counsellors can develop the effectiveness of supervision process.

*Keywords: Role difficulties, role conflict, role ambiguity, Role Theory, trainee counsellor, supervisor*

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## **1. Introduction**

According to Ng and See (2010), over the years, counselling in Malaysia had developed and become more prominent. This was proven by the significant groundworks and achievement in the counselling field. Counselling in Malaysia marked its professional milestone with the establishment of Counselling Board (Malaysia). The road to professionalization continued with legitimacy gained from parliament enacted the Counsellors Act 1998 (ACT 580) (Ng & See, 2010). From this significant recognition, counselling in Malaysia owned its professional identity. In order to maintain and improve the professionalism of counselling, supervision plays the main role to ensure the ability, quality and competency of counselors.

Before becoming a professional and registered counsellor in Malaysia, all the counsellor trainees have to go through formal practicum counselling or internship in different settings. During this practicum counselling period, counsellor trainees are guided by supervisors. Moreover, counsellor trainees have to play many roles simultaneously at this period. For example, as a trainee counsellor, student, supervisee, colleague and also client. As an intern or student, they have to involve themselves fully in counselling programme to acquire knowledge and skills in order to gain more clinical experience and increase their competency; as a supervisee, they have to expose themselves either on their strength or weaknesses to receive feedback and evaluation from their supervisors. Although all roles and expected behaviour are well-defined, but counsellor trainees find it hard to acquire and learn all these roles since all the expectations from the roles come at the same time (Kulp, 2011). Therefore, role conflict and role ambiguity occurred during the supervision process. As mentioned by Olk and Friedlander (1992), the presence of role difficulties (role conflict and role ambiguity) highly associated with to work-