

## **The Impact of Supervision Process toward Counselling Competencies among Malaysian Trainee Counsellors**

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### Abstract

The main objective of this study is to investigate the level of counselling competencies among trainee counsellors in supervision. It also aims to analyze the relationship between frequency of supervisions with counselling competencies. This study was conducted among trainee counsellors (counselling students) from nine public universities all across Malaysia that offer bachelor programmes in counselling. The respondents consisted of n=204 trainee counsellors and n=62 lecturer supervisors who were selected in pairs using stratified random sampling. The Counselling Competencies Scale was used to assess the counselling competencies of trainee counsellors. The results of the study revealed that most of the respondents were at the “meets expectations” level of the counselling competency. The results also showed that there was a significant relationship between the frequency of supervisions with two sub-scales of counselling competency, namely professional behaviour ( $d=.180$ ,  $p<.009$ ) and counselling skills ( $d=.169$ ,  $p<.019$ ). This research finding has implications for the training field of counselling education in Malaysia. Additional research on other areas, such as the other contribution factors toward the trainee counsellor’s competency is needed for future studies.

*Keywords:* Malaysia, supervision, counselling competencies, trainee counsellors

Our lives today have become more challenging as urbanization and globalization have come into the fore. The idea of urbanization and globalization may be intimidating to many, as it is all about the resistance to change. With globalization, there will be transitions in terms of jobs, cultures as well as the environments and lifestyles, and in effect, people have to deal with these changes. In response to this form of modern lifestyle, nowadays counselling is acknowledged as a professional service equipped with various approaches and techniques that can assist humans when dealing with psychological distress and mental health problems (Arifin et al., 2022).

As a result, there is a demand for counsellors in providing research-based and structured counselling services competently (Farozin, 2019; DepPue & Lambie, 2014; Falender & Shafranske, 2014; Swank et al., 2012; Zakaria, 2013). Therefore, it is worth pointing out that counsellors shoulder various responsibilities for clients with psychological and mental health struggles. Ideally, to become a competent counsellor, all aspects of competence need to be developed from the beginning of counsellor training and education (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; McLeod, 2013; Setiyowati et al., 2019; Zakaria & Warren, 2016). Unfortunately, a trainee counsellor does not develop in a vacuum and requires the readiness to bear responsibility for personal learning in many areas. As stated by McLeod (2013), educating a counsellor involves many aspects such as the system of education, training, and also support to produce and maintain the quality of counselling services offered (Zakaria et al., 2017).

Therefore, counsellor education programmes are designed to ensure that their trainees are efficient, that they can persevere through difficult periods of counselling, exert themselves to work effectively with a complex range of clients, and demonstrate a high level of competence in dealing with their clients (Zawawi & Al-Ali, 2014). In view of this, counselling internship (Mohd Ali et al., 2020) and supervision process (Alis et al., 2017) are both among the main elements in counselling degree courses in Malaysia that need to be undertaken concurrently as stated in the Counsellor Training Standard and Qualification (Malaysian Board Counsellors, 2015) guidelines.

Counselling internship is a form of post-practicum experience training supervised with the purpose of enabling students to scrutinize, increase and strengthen the counselling knowledge and skills application at the professional training hubs (Malaysian Board Counsellors, 2015). The internship training needs to be executed in any organizations, institutions or clinics that prepare counselling services and it is part of the supervision process.

Although Malaysian Board of Counsellors has presented a clear guideline, counsellor educators and supervisors find it really challenging to develop and empower their trainees' competency, due to the complex nature of the supervision process (Arifin et al., 2022). That is why the extent of the actual competency level achieved by trainee counsellors is still open for debate (Falender, 2014). Additionally, the researchers also found that the studies or writings related to the topic of trainee counsellors' competency are also very limited especially in the context of supervision in Malaysia.