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Development of a Continuous Professional Development Training Module Based on Multicultural Counseling Competency (CPD-MCC) for Professional Counselors in Malaysia

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Development of a Continuous Professional Development Training Module Based on Multicultural Counseling Competency (CPD-MCC) for Professional Counselors in Malaysia

Abstract

The aim of this study is to develop a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training module based on Multicultural Counseling Competency (MCC) for professional counselors in Malaysia. The present research is segregated into three phases. The first phase uses a survey technique aimed to examine the need for CPD in which two sets of questionnaires (Multicultural Counseling Competency Survey-Malaysian Counselor Edition and Professional Identity Scale in Counseling) were used to collect data from 116 professional counselors from various work settings. The results clearly indicate the need to obtain continuous development training to enhance multicultural competence. The second phase involves the development of the training module using Sidek's (2001) model of module development. The CPD module content's is based on the multicultural counseling model by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992). The third phase is aimed at evaluating the level of validity of the module's content via the modified instrument by Russell (1974) introduced by Jamaludin (2002). The validity assessment analysis reveals that the training module has high content validity value (between 72.5% to 82.5%). The overall findings of the present research revealed that the CPD training module developed is in line with the needs of Malaysian professional counselors.

Keywords

Multicultural counseling competency, continuous professional development, multicultural counseling training, Malaysian professional counselors.

Introduction

Malaysia is located in Southeast Asia with a population of over 30 million that includes 69.1% *Bumiputra* (i.e. Malays and indigenous groups), 23% Chinese, and 6.9% Indians, and the rest of the population are made up of other ethnic indigenous group (Malaysian Department of Statistics, 2018). This element highlights the uniqueness and diversity of the country. At the same time, it is also a challenge for counselors, especially because most Malaysian counselors are Malay Muslims (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2013). Here, Malaysian counselors are exposed to clients with various cultural backgrounds that indirectly becomes a barrier to the counselors themselves. One of the main reasons is because of Malaysia's diverse religions and cultures (e.g., Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Sikhism and other religions) that expresses different beliefs and ways of life (Ibrahim, Jamil, & Yusof, 2013). Hence, counselors of a different culture may become judgmental towards certain beliefs or practices that are different from their own. Therefore, Malaysian counselors facing these challenging circumstances must have high levels of multicultural counseling competence to prevent

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3 personal biases towards certain individuals (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis 1992; Aga Mohd
4 Jaladin, 2013).
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7 In Malaysia, counseling is still viewed as a new field in the mental health profession. It
8 originally started in 1960s as a type of career guidance for high school students (Othman &
9 Abdullah, 2015). Since then, it underwent rapid and drastic transformations through massive
10 counseling movements within the nation. The counseling field has been diversified and are
11 now being sought out by human resource managers, athletes, hospitals, police force (forensic)
12 and educational sectors. As a result, the demand for counselor education programs have
13 substantially increased. Additionally, the Malaysian government have also showed support by
14 providing formal training and education programs for trainee counselors and novice
15 counselors. Nonetheless, there are concerns that the present educational and training programs
16 lack multicultural focus. For instance, multicultural components are being separated and taught
17 as one subject instead of being infused in all teaching and learning process (Aga Mohd Jaladin,
18 2013). As a result, many professional counselors are lacking this important feature
19 (multicultural competence).
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27 **The need for development of multicultural counseling competence module**

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29 International literature posits that all mental health workers must be capable to provide
30 effective services and be culturally sensitive to every member of society who come from
31 different cultural backgrounds (Dillon et al., 2016; Pelling, 2007; Pelling, Brear, & Lau, 2006;
32 Sue & Sue, 2008). This statement implies that counselors should not only pursue their studies
33 in the field of counseling but must have awareness, knowledge, and skills on cultural diversity
34 which are the fundamental components of a multicultural counseling competency construct.
35 Hence, training programs designed specifically to increase multicultural counseling
36 competence among professional counselors is essential (Conner & Walker, 2017; Constantine,
37 2001; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). In a nutshell, as a counselor, to be multiculturally competent
38 is to be effective, it is not avoidable nor can we view it as an add on or optional.
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43 There are several reasons to explain the lack and decreasing level of counselors'
44 multicultural competency. First, there is a significant increase in the number practicing
45 counselors and counselor education courses (See & Ng, 2010). Hence, there is difficulty
46 monitoring the quality of the programs. Additionally, it is crucial to comprehend that
47 counselors can never master multiculturalism upon graduating from an undergraduate or
48 graduate counseling course. It is a continual state of learning. For instance, attending various
49 counseling training programs and taking on a greater number of diverse clients can increase
50 counselors' multicultural knowledge and competence. Here, by attending multicultural
51 counseling trainings, they gain more insights, increase knowledge base and stay updated on the
52 latest trends.
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57 Second, today's clientele is very much different compared to the past decade. An
58 increasing number of clients (including those from the minority population) are seeking mental
59 health services which indicates that stigmatization surrounding mental health is decreasing and
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3 globalization is increasing (Rickwood, Mazzer, & Telford, 2015). While, the client population
4 in Malaysia is increasingly diversified by its existence of foreign workers, travelers,
5 expatriates, etc. Therefore, professional counselors must be well prepared to take on this
6 challenge and provide effective service to their culturally diverse clients.
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10 Besides that, advances in technology has also provided opportunities to clients to seek
11 counseling service from an assortment of channels such as via phone, email, text and video
12 conferencing (Rickwood, Mazzer, & Telford, 2015). Online interventions are a significant
13 advantage as access to mental health services becomes easily available and more affordable.
14 Thus, this changing landscape denotes the need to train and prepare professional counselors to
15 work with culturally diverse clients.
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19 Moreover, issues brought by diverse clients may be more complex and may be
20 influenced by cultural factors. Cultures does not only include ethnicity or cultures, it also
21 includes sexual orientation, economic status, age group, disability, etc. In Malaysia,
22 demographic shifts are increasingly significant and are brought about by minority populations
23 such as single mothers, pregnant teens and economically disadvantaged (Suan, Ismail, &
24 Ghazali, 2015). As such, it is also important to understand that culture influences clients'
25 identity and life circumstances. This indicates that professional counselors need to keep
26 updated on the various types of minority groups available and be aware of their needs in order
27 to effectively work with them.
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31 Furthermore, as counselors gain multicultural competence, they are able to effectively
32 help more culturally diverse clients. At the same time, more clients from different backgrounds
33 will be more open to seeking help from counselors of different ethnicity. To sum up, continuous
34 professional development (CPD) courses are necessary as part of the ongoing evolution of
35 professional counselors to comprehend and utilize suitable intervention strategies when dealing
36 with culturally diverse clients.
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42 **Continuing Professional Development- Multicultural Counseling Competency (CPD- 43 MCC) Training Module** 44

45 The CPD-MCC training module is a training module that is developed to assist in increasing
46 the level of multicultural counseling competence (MCC) among Malaysian professional
47 counselors. It includes 12 units and 19 activities that needs a total of three consecutive days to
48 execute. The total duration of time for the module is 24 hours. This module can accommodate
49 up to 30 participants and needs to be executed in a classroom or small lecture hall. When
50 developing the CPD-MCC training module, the researchers used the module development
51 process by Sidek (2001). This model was selected because it proposes a systematic technique
52 in the development procedure and is appropriate for the use of the present module. For the
53 development of the module content, the researchers used an MCC matrix model by Sue and
54 colleagues (1992). The primary objectives of the CPD-MCC training module are to (a) Increase
55 the awareness of self and the various cultures of clients within the society; (b) Increase the
56 understanding of multicultural counseling; (c) Develop a multicultural counseling strategy that
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3 is sensitive to the client's culture and needs; (d) Increase the understanding of beliefs and
4 attitudes towards cultural diversity; (e) Increase knowledge in multicultural counseling; and (f)
5 Increase macro and micro skills in multicultural counseling practice.
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10 **Objectives of the present study**

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12 This paper discusses the three phases of the development of the CPD-MCC training module.
13 As a result, there are three research objectives in this paper, which are:
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- 15 1. Review the development needs of CPD-MCC training module.
 - 16 2. Develop a CPD-MCC training module.
 - 17 3. Assess the reliability and validity of the CPD-MCC module.
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22 **Methodology**

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24 The following portion describes a detailed methodology of the present study.
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28 **Research design**

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30 Overall, this research project uses exploratory mixed methods as a combination of qualitative
31 and quantitative data collection methods (Creswell & Plano, 2007). When developing the CPD-
32 MCC training module, the researchers used the module creation model proposed by Sidek
33 (2001). While the development of the module's content is built around the multicultural
34 counseling competence model proposed by Sue and colleagues (1992). These measures have
35 been formulated into three main research phases:
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- 39 1. Study the need for the development of CPD-MCC training modules.
 - 40 2. Development of CPD-MCC training modules.
 - 41 3. Assess the reliability and validity of the CPD-MCC module.
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46 **Phase 1: CPD-MCC Training Module Needs**

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48 Phase 1 aims to investigate the need for the development of CPD-MCC training modules. There
49 are four research questions in this phase, which are:
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- 51 (a) What is the level of multicultural counseling competency and development of
52 professional identity of Malaysian professional counselors?
 - 53 (b) What are the components of multicultural counseling competency that are needed by
54 counselors for continuous professional development training?
 - 55 (c) Is there a significant relationship between multicultural counseling competency and the
56 development of professional identity counselors in Malaysia?
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3 (d) Is there a significant difference in the scores of multicultural counseling competency
4 and the development of professional identity of counselors in Malaysia due to the
5 following factors (i) gender, and (ii) registration of professional counselors?
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9 ***Research method***

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11 In order to answer the questionnaire in phase 1, researchers used a survey method to obtain an
12 overview of the level of multicultural counseling competency and professional identity of
13 counselors, as well as to define their specific needs for training in the aspect of MCC using a
14 questionnaire.
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20 ***Sample***

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22 The sample of the present study consists of 116 professional counselors in Malaysia. Majority
23 of the participants were female counselors (n = 89: 76.7%), while 27 were male participants
24 (23.3%). In terms of ethnicity, majority were Malays (n = 98: 84.5%) which is the dominant
25 ethnic group of Malaysia, followed by Indians (n = 10: 8.6%), Chinese (n = 6: 5.2%), and
26 others (n = 2: 1.7%). Most of the counselors participating in this study were in between the
27 ages of 20 to 40 years old (n = 90: 77.6%).
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33 ***Method of collecting research data***

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35 In order to conduct this survey, researchers use two questionnaires: (a) Multicultural counseling
36 competency Survey-Malaysian Counselor Edition (MCCS-MCE: Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2011,
37 2017) and (b) Professional Identity Scale in Counseling (PISC) (Woo & Henfield, 2015).
38 MCCS-MCE has 27 items ($\alpha = .7$) divided into 5 sub-scales; (a) Multicultural Understanding
39 ($\alpha = .85$), (b) Multicultural Knowledge ($\alpha = .75$), (c) Micro-Culture Skills ($\alpha = .86$), (d)
40 Multicultural Awareness ($\alpha = .60$), and (e) Macro-Cultural Skills ($\alpha = .83$). Meanwhile, PISC
41 consist of 52 items ($\alpha = .7$), divided into 6 subscales; (a) Involvement ($\alpha = .88$), (b) Knowledge
42 of Profession ($\alpha = .88$), (c) Attitude ($\alpha = .81$), (d) Professional Role and Expertise ($\alpha = .80$), e)
43 Profession Philosophy ($\alpha = .72$), and (f) Professional Value ($\alpha = .44$).
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50 ***Findings***

51 ***Research Question 1***

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54 As a whole, the participants level of MCC is moderate (M = 3.23, SP = .87). Participants had
55 the highest mean score in the Multicultural Understanding component (M = 3.92, SP = .71)
56 and Macro Culture Skills (M = 3.56, SP = .98). While the lowest mean score was obtained in
57 Multicultural Awareness component (M = 2.69, SP = 1.41) and Micro Culture Skill component
58 (M = 2.93, SP = .93). Overall, the development of professional identities of counselors also
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3 shows a moderate level ($M = 3.88$, $SP = 1.72$). However, the Engagement component ($M =$
4 3.42 , $SP = 1.70$) and Knowledge about Profession component ($M = 3.65$, $SP = 1.77$) showed
5 the lowest mean score.
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8 *Research Question 2*

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10 A total of 107 participants responded to this research question, in which most of them
11 responded "Yes" ($n = 91$; 85.0%), indicating that they needed continuous professional
12 development training based on components of multicultural counseling competency. They had
13 also provided detailed information on the components of multicultural counseling competency
14 they need to improve based on a five-point Likert scale, 1 = Extremely unnecessary, 5 =
15 Extremely needed.
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18 *Research Question 3*

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20 To detect the significant relationship between MCC and PISC scores, the correlation analysis
21 using the Pearson r value had been implemented. The results of the analysis revealed that there
22 is a significant relationship between MCCS-MCE and PISC scores ($r = .454$, $p < .01$). This
23 indicates that there is a weak positive relationship between the perceived multicultural
24 counseling competency and professional identity among Malaysian professional counselors.
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28 *Research Question 4*

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30 An independent t test was conducted to compare MCC and PISC means of female participants
31 and MCC and PISC means of male participants. The results showed no significant difference
32 in MCC scores among men ($M = 3.47$, $SP = .95$) and women, $M = 3.15$, $SP = .84$; $t(107) =$
33 1.66 , $p = .10$ (2-tails). However, PISC data analysis showed significant differences in PISC
34 scores among men ($M = 4.55$, $SP = .86$) and women, $M = 3.68$, $SP = 1.86$; $t(113) = 2.34$, $p =$
35 $.021$ (2-tailed). This shows that female counselors are more involved in activities that refine
36 their professional identity compared to male counselors.
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41 However, the results of the independent t test showed significant differences in MCC
42 scores among registered counselors ($M = 3.47$, $SP = .84$) and non-registered counselors, $M =$
43 2.92 , $SP = .88$; $t(100) = 3.24$, $p = .002$ (2-tailed). The level of perceived multicultural
44 counseling competency of registered counselors is higher than that of counselors who are not
45 registered with the Malaysian Board of Counselors. Similar findings were obtained for the
46 mean PISC score in which there was a significant difference between perceived PISC scores
47 for registered counselors ($M = 4.56$, $SP = 1.36$) and non-registered counselors, $M = 3.09$, $SP =$
48 1.79 ; $t(105) = 4.79$, $p = .000$ (2-tails). Both these findings provide strong empirical evidence
49 to support the need for practicing counselors to register themselves with the Malaysian Board
50 of Counselors. Some advantages registering with the Malaysian board of counselors include
51 clients being able to recognize the credibility of the counselor and to recommend counseling
52 practices to others. Most importantly, the Malaysian board of counselors provides and
53 recommends continuous development programs for their members to join in order to further
54 improve counselors' skills, knowledge and intervention strategies. Additionally, it is a form of
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3 networking in which professional counselors can meet and share their knowledge and
4 experience with each other.
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9 **Phase 2: CPD-MCC Training Module Development**

10 *Systematic procedures*

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13 In order to develop a good and systematic module, the researchers used the module creation
14 model proposed by Sidek (2001). This model contains two different stages of purpose. The
15 first is the stage of preparing the CPD-MCC training module draft which has nine steps,
16 beginning with goal development and ending with the consolidation of the module draft. It is
17 referred to as a draft as it has not been proven to be valid and reliable. Next the CPD-MCC
18 training module draft goes through the second stage of development which is to evaluate the
19 module. This is the stage in which the module undergoes validity and reliability assessment.
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23 *Content development*

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25 A comprehensive and effective development of module must be founded on the theory, for
26 each content of the module built. For the present research, the researchers used the renowned
27 MCC matrix model by Sue et al. (1992) as their foundation, especially in terms of the structure,
28 content and order of activities. The MCC matrix model is significant as it is the cornerstone of
29 the strength of the CPD-MCC training module. The MCC model stands on the formula of 3
30 (characters) x 3 (dimensions). The three characters consist of i) Awareness about one's
31 assumptions, values and biases; ii) Understanding the cultural worldview of various clients; iii)
32 Develop appropriate techniques and intervention strategies. While, the three dimensions
33 consist of i) Beliefs and attitudes; ii) Knowledge; iii) Skills. Via this matrix formula, nine
34 primary competencies had been recognized (Lee, 2008; Minami, 2008; Sue et al., 1992; Wendt
35 & Gone, 2011). From the nine main competencies, 31 competencies were developed (9
36 competencies for beliefs and attitudes, 11 competencies for knowledge, and 11 competencies
37 for skills (Lee, 2008; Minami, 2008). Hence, to form sub-modules for CPD-MCC training
38 modules, the researchers used an arrangement of these dimensions of multicultural competence
39 and characters of multicultural counselors. When developing each activity, the researchers used
40 the 31 competencies as their foundation. Table 1 illustrates the framework of the newly
41 developed CPD-MCC training module.
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Table 1. CPD-MCC Training Module Framework

MCC Matrix Model by Sue et al. (1992)	CPD-MCC Training Module	Activities	Contents
3 Characters X 3 Components = 9 Competencies - 9 Beliefs & Attitude - 11 Knowledge - 11 Skills = 31 Multicultural Counseling Competencies	1. Introduction 2. Multicultural Beliefs & Attitude 3. Multicultural Knowledge 4. Multicultural Counseling Generic Skills 5. Specific Cultural Skills 6. Multicultural Counselor Self-Awareness 7. Awareness of Multicultural Clients and Communities 8. Multicultural Understanding 9. Multicultural Strategies Development 10. Practical of Multicultural Counseling (1) 11. Practical of Multicultural Counseling (2) 12. End	1. Recognize your culture 2. Lecture 3. Me, you & her 4. Cultural differences 5. Lecture Question and answer Quiz 6. Lecture 7. Tell me 8. Do not get me out 9. Cultural people 10. You know me? 11. My client 12. My country 13. I'm better 14. Cultural BINGO 15. Note Book 16. Suicide 17. Challenge 18. My experience 19. Reflection	An introductory activity to participants by knowing and being aware of your own culture as well as recognizing the background and the culture of other participants. A brief lecture in preparation for participants to carry out activities in unit 2 (Multicultural Beliefs & Attitude). An activity to enhance the level of beliefs and attitudes of different cultures of the participants based on existing prejudices and stereotypes, and the effects of these two elements in cultural diversity. A simulation activity to enhance the multicultural beliefs and attitudes among participants through experience and awareness of socio-cultural development, the difference between cultural groups and cultural influences on human behavior. A lecture on multicultural counseling with question and answer session. Next, participants were given a short quiz on multicultural counseling. A brief lecture activity in preparation for participants to carry out activities in unit 4 (Multicultural Counseling Generic Skills). A role play activity of a counseling session focusing on the difference between counselors and clients in terms of ethnicity and race. A role play activity of counseling sessions focusing on the differences between counselors and clients in terms of cultural components such as gender, religion, language, level of education and so on. An activity based on the 'RESPECTFUL' feature that aims to raise participants awareness of their own culture. The implementation of this activity is based on participants' experience. This activity is a continuation of the previous activity of 'Cultural people'. It is an activity to know about yourself through the views of others. The use of interview methods can train participants to communicate with different cultures. A labeled card game aimed at building awareness of participants towards the diversity of clients' cultures. A collage activity carried out via group work. Through this activity, the participants will share experiences to revisit the diversity of cultures within the current society and to create awareness of the diversity of these cultures. This collage activity was chosen because it is among the best methods in promoting creativity to think critically in the larger scope to create awareness of the differences that exist in multicultural society. A debate activity in which the proposer & opposition party will defend a cultural issue. This activity will give participants an understanding of the differences between bias, racism, discrimination, stereotyping and so on that may affect them individually and through their work. This urges them to recognize their own prejudices, beliefs and emotions. A game activity that urges participants to exhibit understanding and their knowledge of various cultures as well as reinforce positive feelings regarding distinct cultural norms, traditions and customs. A group work activity in which groups are required to produce notebooks that contain issues and methods appropriate in developing multicultural strategies based on several features of multicultural counseling competencies. A role play counseling session based on a unique counseling case (Meena) aimed at increasing participants' skills in the practice of multicultural counseling. A group discussion activity in analyzing multi-cultural counseling cases. A group work activity to develop an actual multi-cultural counseling case based on participants' experience. Role play activities were also conducted to train participants to conduct counseling sessions from the counseling case discussed. A group activity for participants to share experiences and opinions on topics and activities that have been conducted.

Phase 3: Content validity and reliability of the CPD-MCC training modules

For the third phase, the research method used was based on a quantitative approach performed through a survey and the instrument used to evaluate content validity of the present module is based upon Jamaludin's (2002) research which is an adaption of Russell (1974) guide to module development. Four experts were invited to evaluate the contents of the CPD-MCC training modules. The four experts were selected because due to their extensive experience and expertise in the field of counseling, psychology, module development, multicultural counseling and education. Each expert was provided with a version of the completed MCC module that consist of an introduction to the research, the manual to the module and relevant appendices. After which, suggestions and critical feedbacks from the experts in regards to improving the module's materials were gathered, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). In order to establish the validity value of the contents of the module, the raw data were computed by dividing the total scores of the individual experts' ratings by the overall score of the rating. The calculated value based on this process will stress the level of validity of a research module and the content validity is considered high if the value is higher than 70% (Sidek & Jamaludin, 2005). Table 2 summarizes the percentage value of the entire validity of the content based on seven statements regarding the module's integrity:

Table 2. Content Validity of the CPD-MCC Training Module

No.	Statements	Content Validity (%)	Experts' Judgment
1.	The contents of this module meet the required multicultural counseling competence	75.0	Accepted
2.	The content of this module meets the target population	82.5	Accepted
3.	The contents of this module are suitable to be implemented	77.5	Accepted
4.	The contents of this module are suitable with the proposed duration	80.0	Accepted
5.	The contents of this module are capable of increasing the level and attitude of multicultural counseling	72.5	Accepted
6.	The contents of this module are able to increase the level of multicultural counseling knowledge	77.5	Accepted
7.	The contents of this module are able to increase the level of multicultural counseling skills	72.5	Accepted
Overall content		76.8	Accepted

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Table 2 also presents the overall MCC training module content validity value which is 76.8 percent and is regarded as high. It comfortably exceeds the endorsed threshold value of 70 percent. In terms of the experts' individual reports, all of them reported high validity values which ranges from 72.5 percent to 82.5 percent. Accordingly, the conditions recommended by Jamaludin (2002) which is an adaption from Russell (1974) guide that had been used by the researchers for the module development, were strongly validated. Therefore, the findings of the present study reveal that the overall content validity of the module was high and can be applied to the targeted population.

To test the value of reliability of the CPD-MCC training modules, a set of reliability questionnaires has been developed. This set of questionnaires was developed based on the module activity (Jamaludin & Sidek, 2001). Subsequently, this questionnaire was answered by the participants of the pilot module. These questionnaires were then analyzed using SPSS computer software. As a whole, Alpha Cronbach's coefficient value is 0.65. This shows that the CPD-MCC training module showed an acceptable reliability value (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 1998; Mohamed, 2000; Valette, 1977).

Discussion

When developing the CPD-MCC training module which is based on the MCC matrix model, the researchers first extensively reviewed relevant literature on multicultural counseling competency especially in terms of theoretical concepts, principles and methods that were established by Sue and colleagues (1992). Through the information obtained by the literature review conducted, the researchers developed the module that comprises 12 units and 19 activities. From a theoretical and practical viewpoint, these findings will have a profound impact on the current body of knowledge involving multicultural counseling and psychology.

Moreover, for an impact to be more significant, the module's content validity will need to be verified before prior to its adoption lest the effects would be spurious. This notion is best echoed by Sidek and Jamaludin (2005). According to them there are three essential features that represents the merit of a newly developed module which are content validity and reliability of the module. Among these two, content validity is the most significant aspect in establishing the strength of the construct built into the module. In general, attaining a high content validity is tough as a module that is to be developed would involve a comprehensive review on related literature (Shah, Bakar, Ahmad, & Jais, 2013). Through this method, a module can be formed successfully to suit the intended needs of a specific segment of a society (i.e. student groups). In light of this specific condition, the researches embraced seven relevant conditions as outlined by Jamaludin (2002). Thereafter, the content validity of the group guidance module was appraised by four expert panels along with the seven determinants of relevancy. Consequently, the results of this appraisal showed that group guidance module has high content validity based on the unanimous, unequivocal agreement of all experts involved. Thus, this module possesses high content validity and innovative craftsmanship which can assist practitioners when dealing with counselors' multicultural counseling competencies.

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3 The advantages of the CPD-MCC training module are further improved by its
4 efficiency in accomplishing short term goals and by its innate nature of obtaining instantaneous
5 feedback from counseling practitioners. Nonetheless, when implementing a training program
6 using the CPD-MCC module, the organizers of the program must ensure that it is being
7 delivered by an experienced and competent professional counselor in order to maximize
8 effectiveness. This is because adult learners prefer trainers with knowledge, respect, applied
9 experienced within the same field, possess clear communication skills, are fair and
10 understanding (Phillips, Baltzer, Filoon, & Whitley, 2017). It is also envisioned that this
11 module (when used pertinently and sensibly) will assist the target participants to attain
12 heightened levels of multicultural counseling competence.
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20 **Limitations of the Research**

21 There are concerns in regards to the limitations of self-report instruments used during phase
22 one of the present study. This is because self-report measures make it difficult to discern
23 whether the participants' actual attitudes and behaviors are being reported or if the participants
24 may have been prompted regarding the researcher's intent. Self-report measures also raises
25 concerns of social desirability bias. Moreover, the sample size of the present study was
26 moderate which limits its generalizability. Additionally, the research's sample consisted
27 primarily of Malay (76.7%) professional counselors which again limits the generalizability to
28 other ethnic groups within Malaysia. The final limitation is that all the experts invited to
29 develop and review the module were located in West Malaysia (only one geographical area).
30 This was because these experts were renowned practicing counselors especially in the field of
31 multicultural counseling.
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37 **Recommendations and Implications for Future Research**

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39 Based on the findings above, the validity of the content of the present module is high. It is
40 proposed to conduct an experimental research to study the effectiveness of this module on
41 professional counselors in Malaysia. Besides that, this training module can also be used to test
42 its effectiveness in different job settings (e.g. hospital, organizations, non-governmental
43 organizations, hospitals, welfare centers, schools, etc.). Additionally, this module can also be
44 used to improve the existing educational courses at universities. For example, their counseling
45 education curriculum can be revised to include this module. This ensures that student
46 counselors will be multiculturally competent even before graduating.
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50 This module can also be promoted to counseling practitioners in developing continuous
51 training programs, in order for more research can be carried out on a greater scale within the
52 Malaysian context. Training professional counselors (continuously) to improve their
53 multicultural competence will only benefit the nation as a whole while ensuring that clients
54 receive high quality counseling services. This will further strengthen the mental health of
55 Malaysian citizens and help the nation achieve a universal cultural sensitivity equivalent to
56 international standards. The main benefit of this module is driven by its effectiveness of
57 achieving short-term goals and the immediate impact to be seen right after attending the
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3 training program. It is hoped that this module will be accepted by stakeholders (i.e. policy
4 makers, educators, counselor practitioners, researchers, course coordinators and Malaysian
5 board of counselors) to foster a high level of multicultural competency in counseling practices
6 within the nation.
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10 11 **Conclusion**

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13 The present study has revealed that the CPD-MCC training module (that is based on the MCC
14 matrix model) is definitely feasible to be applied on the target population. Furthermore, this
15 module has been validated and is considered to have high content validity through a panel of
16 experts. Hence, this module can act as a catalyst for future researches to conduct more studies
17 on multicultural counseling and multicultural counseling competency. Lastly, the present study
18 encourages practitioners to take on a similar approach when developing a diverse range of
19 training modules that involves the enhancement of multicultural counseling competency
20 among professional counselors, benefitting the counseling profession and the Malaysian
21 society as a whole.
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Development of a Continuous Professional Development Training Module Based on Multicultural Counseling Competency (CPD-MCC) for Professional Counselors in Malaysia

Abstract

The aim of this study was to develop a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training module based on Multicultural Counseling Competency (MCC) for professional counselors in Malaysia. The research methodology comprised three phases, which were: (a) training need assessment using survey method, (b) module design and development, and (3) module evaluation using an experimental design. First, the Multicultural Counseling Competency Survey-Malaysian Counselor Edition questionnaire was used to collect data from 116 professional counselors from various work settings. The results clearly indicated the need for CPD training to enhance counselors' MCC. The development of the training module adopted Sidek's model, a Malaysian-based framework for module development. The developed training module was then evaluated for its effectiveness through analyzing its content validity and reliability. Results revealed that the training module scored high content validity value of 77.2% (0.77) and satisfactory reliability level (alpha Cronbach's coefficient value of 0.75). The overall findings of the present research imply that the CPD training module is necessary for enhancing MCC of Malaysian professional counselors.

Keywords

Multicultural counseling competency, continuous professional development, multicultural counseling training, Malaysian professional counselors, module development

Introduction

Malaysia is located in Southeast Asia with a population of over 30 million that includes 69.1% *Bumiputra* (i.e. Malays and indigenous groups), 23% Chinese, 6.9% Indians, and the rest of the population are made up of other ethnic indigenous group (Malaysian Department of Statistics, 2018). This element highlights the uniqueness and diversity of the country. At the same time, it is also a challenge for counselors, especially because most Malaysian counselors are Malay Muslims (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2013). Here, Malaysian counselors are exposed to clients with various cultural backgrounds that indirectly becomes a barrier to the counselors themselves. One of the main reasons is because of Malaysia's diverse religions and cultures (e.g., Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Sikhism and other religions) that expresses different beliefs and ways of life (Ibrahim, Jamil, & Yusof, 2013). Hence, without proper multicultural training, counselors of a different culture may become judgmental towards certain beliefs or practices that are different from their own. For example, issues such as homosexuality, premarital and extramarital sex are generally perceived as culturally sensitive issues or taboo subjects in Malaysia. Therefore, clients are reluctant to talk about these issues

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3 during counseling sessions. Consequently, Malaysian counselors facing these challenging
4 circumstances must have high levels of multicultural counseling competence to prevent
5 personal biases towards certain individuals (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2013; Sue, Arredondo, &
6 McDavis, 1992).
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10 Besides that, language barriers may also pose as a challenge to Malay Muslim
11 counselors (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2013). For example, some Chinese Malaysian clients prefer to
12 speak in their mother tongue (Mandarin language) during counseling sessions. As most Malay-
13 Muslim counselors are only bilingual (speaks English and Malay), this language restriction is
14 an obstacle for conducting effective counseling sessions. Here, they can learn a few commonly
15 used Mandarin words or phrases to communicate better in counseling sessions. Moreover,
16 some cultural issues such as caste system faced by Indian Malaysians splits the Indian
17 community and causes equality issues. Malay-Muslim counselors needs to be aware about
18 these issues to actively engage with their clients.
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23 In Malaysia, counseling is still viewed as a new field in the mental health profession. It
24 originally started in 1960s as a type of career guidance for high school students (Othman &
25 Abdullah, 2015). Since then, it underwent rapid and drastic transformations through massive
26 counseling movements within the nation. The counseling field has been diversified and are
27 now being sought out by human resource managers, athletes, hospitals, police force (forensic)
28 and educational sectors. As a result, the demand for counselor education programs have
29 substantially increased. Additionally, the Malaysian government have also showed support by
30 providing formal training and education programs for trainee counselors and novice
31 counselors. Nonetheless, there are concerns that the present educational and training programs
32 lack multicultural focus. For instance, multicultural components are being separated and taught
33 as one subject instead of being infused in all teaching and learning process (Aga Mohd Jaladin,
34 2017). As a result, many professional counselors are lacking this important feature
35 (multicultural competence).
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42 **The need for development of multicultural counseling competence module**

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44 International literature posits that all mental health workers must be capable to provide
45 effective services and be culturally sensitive to every member of society who come from
46 different cultural backgrounds (Dillon et al., 2016; Pelling, 2007; Sue & Sue, 2008). This
47 statement implies that there is a need for multicultural counseling competency (MCC) in the
48 education of counselors and practice of counseling in multicultural contexts. The term MCC
49 has been defined as a counsellor's: i) beliefs and attitudes regarding racial and ethnic
50 minorities, the need to check biases and stereotypes, and the development of a positive
51 orientation toward multiculturalism; ii) knowledge of one's own worldview, knowledge of
52 cultural groups with whom one works, and knowledge of socio-political influences on members
53 of these groups; and iii) skills, strategies and interventions needed to work with minority groups
54 within a cross-cultural counselling context (Sue et al., 1982).
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3 Therefore, training programs designed specifically to increase multicultural counseling
4 competence among professional counselors are essential (Conner & Walker, 2017;
5 Constantine, 2001; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). In a nutshell, as a counselor, to be multiculturally
6 competent is to be effective, it is not avoidable nor can we view it as an add on or optional.
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10 There are several reasons to explain the lack and decreasing level of counselors'
11 multicultural competency. First, there is a significant increase in the number practicing
12 counselors and counselor education programs (See & Ng, 2010). For instance, there are more
13 than 20 counseling programs in higher education institutions in Malaysia (Aga Mohd Jaladin,
14 2017). Hence, there is a difficulty in monitoring the quality of the programs. Although, the
15 Malaysian board of counselors regularly reviews and updates its curriculum, the multicultural
16 focus lacks depth and attention. The multicultural counseling subject as its own has yet to be
17 assessed objectively by lecturers and practicing counselors. Besides that, the board should also
18 engage with trainee counselors and educators in order to receive constructive feedback on the
19 curriculum. Even though, this is not directly related to multicultural counseling, this method
20 will ensure that future graduates are of the highest standard and provide quality care to their
21 wide range of clients.
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26 Additionally, it is crucial to comprehend that counselors can never master
27 multiculturalism upon graduating from an undergraduate or graduate counseling course. It is a
28 continual state of learning. For instance, attending various counseling training programs and
29 taking on a greater number of diverse clients was empirically proven to increase counselors'
30 multicultural knowledge and competence (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2017). This means that by
31 attending multicultural counseling trainings, they gain multicultural insights, increase
32 knowledge base and stay updated on the latest trends. Nevertheless, sadly, there is a lack of
33 multicultural training for practicing counselors in Malaysia.
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37 Moreover, there are more than 8,000 registered counselors in Malaysia (Zhafran, 2017).
38 However, the opportunities in the counseling field is scarce, thus, not all of them are able to
39 practice counseling. As a result, there are many counseling graduates that are unemployed or
40 forced to venture in a different field (Zhafran, 2017). Here, higher education institutions need
41 to implement stringent entry requirements to ensure that only the highest quality students are
42 enrolled in this program especially since the current supply has outnumbered the demand.
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46 Today's clientele is very much different compared to the past decade. An increasing
47 number of clients (including those from the minority population) are seeking mental health
48 services which indicates that the stigmatization surrounding mental health is decreasing and
49 globalization is increasing (Rickwood, Mazzer, & Telford, 2015). While, the client population
50 in Malaysia is increasingly diversified by its existence of foreign workers, travelers,
51 expatriates, etc. Hence, professional counselors must be well prepared to take on this challenge
52 and provide effective services to their culturally diverse clients. Additionally, the curriculum
53 of counseling programs in Malaysia have yet to represent this portion of the client population.
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3 Besides that, advances in technology has also provided opportunities to clients to seek
4 counseling service from an assortment of channels such as via phone, email, text and video
5 conferencing (Rickwood et al., 2015). Online interventions are a significant advantage as
6 access to mental health services becomes easily available and more affordable. Thus, this
7 changing landscape denotes the need to train and prepare professional counselors to work with
8 culturally diverse clients.
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12 In addition, issues brought by diverse clients may be more complex and may be
13 influenced by cultural factors. Cultures does not only include ethnicity or cultures, it also
14 includes sexual orientation, economic status, age group, disability, etc. In Malaysia,
15 demographic shifts are increasingly significant and are brought about by minority populations
16 such as single mothers, pregnant teens and the economically disadvantaged (Suan, Ismail, &
17 Ghazali, 2015). As such, it is also important to understand that culture influences clients'
18 identity and life circumstances. This indicates that professional counselors need to keep
19 updated on the various types of minority groups available and be aware of their needs in order
20 to effectively work with them.
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25 Furthermore, as counselors gain multicultural competence, they are able to effectively
26 help more culturally diverse clients. At the same time, more clients from different backgrounds
27 will be more open to seeking help from counselors of different ethnicity. To sum up, continuous
28 professional development (CPD) courses are necessary as part of the ongoing evolution of
29 professional counselors to comprehend and utilize suitable intervention strategies when dealing
30 with culturally diverse clients. Therefore, this research aimed to probe into Malaysian
31 counsellors' practice of multicultural counselling, develop a CPD multicultural counseling
32 competency training module and then, assess the reliability and validity of the module.
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38 **Methodology**

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40 The following portion describes a detailed methodology of the present study.
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45 ***Objectives of the present study***

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47 This paper discusses the three phases of the development of the CPD-MCC training module.
48 As a result, there are three research objectives in this paper, which are:
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- 50 1. Review the development needs of CPD-MCC training module.
 - 51 2. Develop a CPD-MCC training module.
 - 52 3. Assess the reliability and validity of the CPD-MCC module.
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Research design

Overall, this research used an exploratory mixed-methods approach (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The specific research design used to develop the CPD-MCC training module was based on Sidek's model, a Malaysian-based framework for module development (Sidek, 2001). While the development of the module's content is built around the multicultural counseling competence model proposed by Sue and colleagues (1992).

Phase 1: Assessing training and development needs of counselors

Phase 1 aims to investigate the need for the development of CPD-MCC training modules. There are three research questions in this phase, which are:

- (a) What is the level of multicultural counseling competency of Malaysian counselors?
- (b) What are the components of multicultural counseling competency that are required by Malaysian counselors for continuous professional development training?
- (c) Is there a significant difference in the scores of multicultural counseling competency of counselors in Malaysia among (i) gender, and (ii) registration of professional counselors?

Research method

In order to answer the research questions in phase 1, researchers used a survey method to obtain an overview of the level of multicultural counseling competency of counselors, as well as to define their specific needs for training in the aspect of MCC using a questionnaire.

Sample

The sample of the present study consists of 116 professional counselors in Malaysia. Majority of the participants were female counselors (n = 89: 76.7%), while 27 were male participants (23.3%). In terms of ethnicity, majority were Malays (n = 98: 84.5%) which is the dominant ethnic group of Malaysia, followed by Indians (n = 10: 8.6%), Chinese (n = 6: 5.2%), and others (n = 2: 1.7%). Most of the counselors participating in this study were in between the ages of 20 to 40 years old (n = 90: 77.6%).

Instrument

In order to conduct this survey, the researchers used the Multicultural Counseling Competency Survey-Malaysian Counselor Edition (MCCS-MCE: Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2011, 2017). The MCCS-MCE has 27 items ($\alpha = .70$) divided into 5 sub-scales; (i) Multicultural Understanding ($\alpha = .85$), (ii) Multicultural Knowledge ($\alpha = .75$), (iii) Micro-Culture Skills ($\alpha = .86$), (iv)

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3 Multicultural Awareness ($\alpha = .60$), and (v) Macro-Culture Skills ($\alpha = .83$). The MCCS-MCE
4 measures participants' self-perceived MCCs when counseling clients in the Malaysian context.
5 Some example of questions includes "At present, how would you rate your understanding
6 regarding Malaysian culture?", "Differences exist between my clients and myself regarding
7 ethnicity and beliefs", etc. This questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale with higher score
8 depicting a higher level of multicultural counselling competency (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2017).
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14 *Findings*

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16 As a whole, the participants level of MCC is moderate ($M = 3.23$, $SD = .87$). Participants had
17 the highest mean score in the Multicultural Understanding component ($M = 3.92$, $SD = .71$)
18 and Macro Culture Skills ($M = 3.56$, $SD = .98$). While the lowest mean score was obtained in
19 Multicultural Awareness component ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.41$) and Micro Culture Skill component
20 ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .93$). Here, Malaysian counselors understand and are well aware of the macro
21 cultural difference. However, they lack multicultural awareness and micro culture skills. For
22 instance, they are aware of the general differences between different races but not the unique
23 differences within one race (e.g. Kelantanese Malays and Johorean Malays varies in terms of
24 food, dialect and certain cultural practice). Another issue is that Malaysian professional
25 counselors may not be aware of their personal biases, thus, there is a need for more training
26 programs to help them become aware of this and keep their personal biases in check.
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32 A total of 107 participants responded to the second research question, in which most of
33 them responded "Yes" ($n = 91$; 85.0%), indicating that they need continuous professional
34 development training based on components of multicultural counseling competency. They had
35 also provided detailed information on the components of multicultural counseling competency
36 they need to improve based on a five-point Likert scale, 1 = extremely unnecessary, 5 =
37 extremely necessary. The results indicated that participants were most concerned with
38 increasing their multicultural knowledge and multicultural skills.
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42 In terms of the third research question, an independent t test was conducted to compare
43 MCC means of female and male participants. The results showed no significant difference in
44 MCC scores among men ($M = 3.47$, $SD = .95$) and women, $M = 3.15$, $SD = .84$; $t(116) = 1.66$,
45 $p = .10$ (2-tails). Hence, this indicates that there is no reported differences of multicultural
46 competencies among genders.
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49 In addition, the results of the independent t test showed significant differences in MCC
50 scores among registered counselors ($M = 3.47$, $SD = .84$) and non-registered counselors, $M =$
51 2.92 , $SD = .88$; $t(116) = 3.24$, $p = .002$ (2-tailed). The level of perceived multicultural
52 counseling competency of registered counselors is higher than that of counselors who are not
53 registered with the Malaysian Board of Counselors. This is probably because the Malaysian
54 board of counselors ensures that all registered professional counselors abide by the ethical
55 guidelines and regulations set. This finding provide support for the need for practicing
56 counselors to register themselves with the Malaysian Board of Counselors. This is because
57 registering with the Malaysian board of counselors allows potential clients to recognize the
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credibility of the counselor and to recommend counseling practices to others. Most importantly, the Malaysian Board of Counselors provides and recommends continuous development programs for their members in order to further improve counselors' skills, knowledge and intervention strategies. Additionally, it is a form of networking in which professional counselors can meet and share their knowledge and experience with each other.

Phase 2: Designing and developing the CPD-MCC training module

The module creation model proposed by Sidek (2001), a Malaysian-based framework for module development was used in order to develop an effective and systematic module. The steps that were taken in the development process of the CPD-MCC module are summarized in Figure 1. This comprehensive model was selected because it proposes a systematic technique in the development procedure and for the testing of its reliability and validity (Mahfar, Noah, & Senin, 2019).

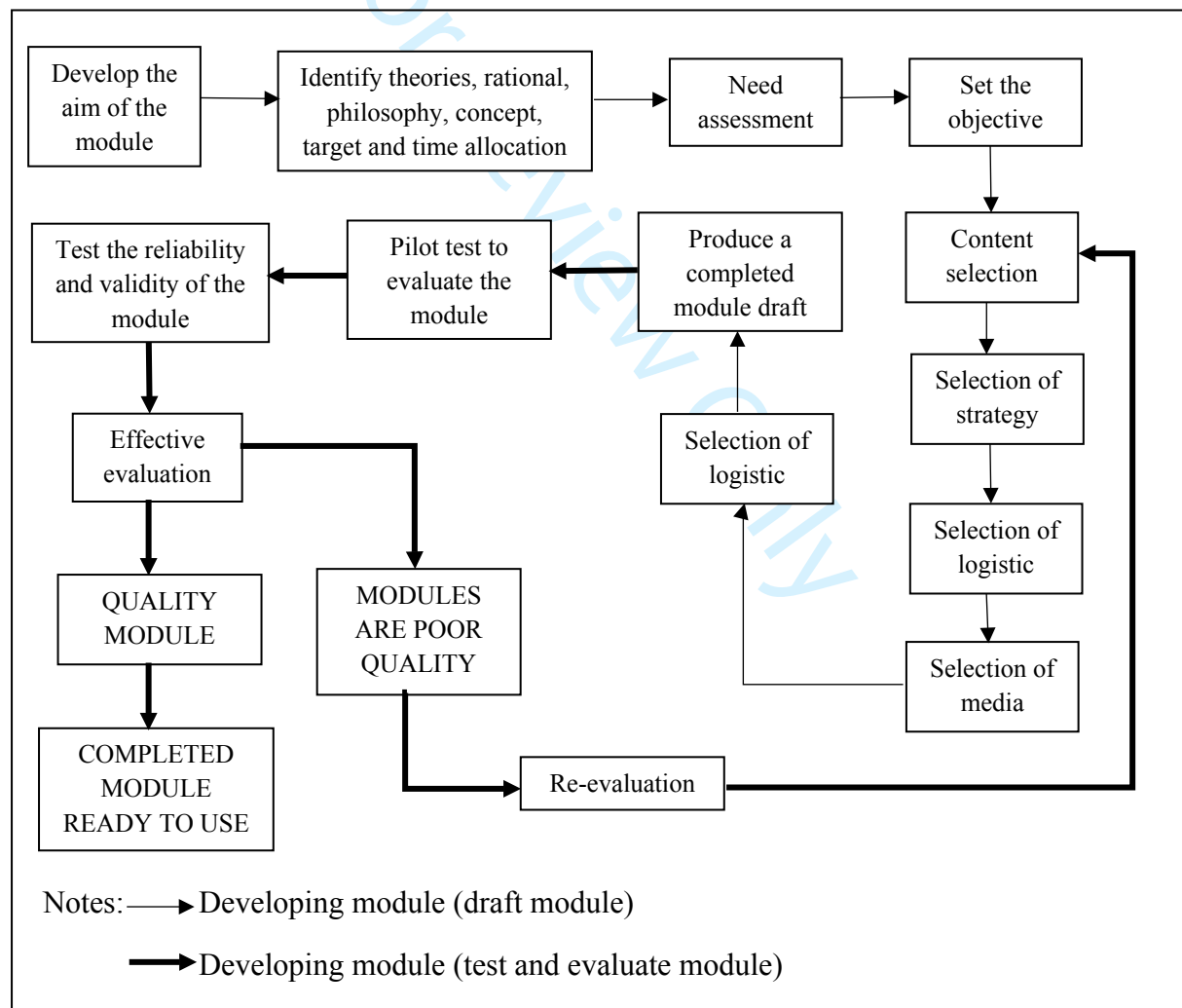


Figure 1. Sidek's module development model.

Source. Mahfar, Noah, & Senin (2019); Noah & Ahmad (2005).

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3 The CPD-MCC training module was developed to assist in increasing the level of
4 multicultural counseling competence (MCC) among Malaysian professional counselors and
5 counselor trainees. It includes 12 units and 19 activities that needs a total of three consecutive
6 days to execute. The total duration of time for the module is 24 hours. It can be taught in a
7 classroom setting and it is catered for participants aged 18 years old and above. The learning
8 process includes individual participations and group interactions that involves problem solving
9 exercises and focus groups.
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15 *Content development*

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17 A comprehensive and effective development of module must be founded on a theory. For the
18 present research, the researchers used the renowned MCC matrix model by Sue et al. (1992) as
19 their foundation, especially in terms of the structure, content and order of activities. The
20 primary objectives of the CPD-MCC training module are to (a) Increase the awareness of self
21 and the various cultures of clients within the society; (b) Increase the understanding of
22 multicultural counseling; (c) Develop a multicultural counseling strategy that is sensitive to the
23 client's culture and needs; (d) Increase the understanding of beliefs and attitudes towards
24 cultural diversity; (e) Increase knowledge in multicultural counseling; and (f) Increase macro
25 and micro skills in multicultural counseling practice.
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30 The MCC matrix model is significant as it is the cornerstone of the strength of the CPD-
31 MCC training module. The MCC model stands on the formula of 3 (characters) x 3
32 (dimensions). The three characters consist of i) Awareness about one's assumptions, values
33 and biases; ii) Understanding the cultural worldview of various clients; iii) Develop appropriate
34 techniques and intervention strategies. While, the three dimensions consist of i) Beliefs and
35 attitudes; ii) Knowledge; iii) Skills. Through this matrix formula, nine primary competencies
36 had been recognized (Lee, 2008; Minami, 2008; Sue et al., 1992; Wendt & Gone, 2011). From
37 the nine main competencies, 31 sub-competencies were developed (9 competencies for beliefs
38 and attitudes, 11 competencies for knowledge, and 11 competencies for skills (Lee, 2008;
39 Minami, 2008). Hence, to form sub-modules for CPD-MCC training module, the researchers
40 used an arrangement of these dimensions of multicultural competence and characters of
41 multicultural counselors. When developing each activity, the researchers used the 31 sub-
42 competencies as their foundation. Table 1 illustrates the framework of the newly developed
43 CPD-MCC training module.
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Table 1. CPD-MCC Training Module Framework

MCC Matrix Model by Sue et al. (1992)	CPD-MCC Training Module	Activities	Contents
3 Characters	1. Introduction	1. Recognize your culture	An introductory activity to participants to know and be aware of your own culture as well as recognizing the background and the culture of other participants.
X	2. Multicultural Beliefs & Attitude	2. Lecture	A brief lecture to prepare the participants to carry out the activities in unit 2 (Multicultural Beliefs & Attitude).
3 Components		3. Me, you & her	An activity to enhance the level of beliefs and attitudes of different cultures of the participants based on existing prejudices and stereotypes, and the effects of these two elements in cultural diversity.
=		4. Cultural differences	A simulation activity to enhance the multicultural beliefs and attitudes among participants through experience and awareness of socio-cultural development, the difference between cultural groups and cultural influences on human behavior.
9 Competencies		5. Lecture	A lecture on multicultural counseling with question and answer session. Next, participants were given a short quiz on multicultural counseling.
- 9 Beliefs & Attitude	3. Multicultural Knowledge	6. Lecture	A brief lecture to prepare the participants to carry out the activities in unit 4 (Multicultural Counseling Generic Skills).
- 11 Knowledge		7. Tell me	A role play activity of a counseling session which focuses on the difference between counselors and clients in terms of ethnicity and race.
- 11 Skills	4. Multicultural Counseling Generic Skills	8. Do not get me out	A role play activity of counseling sessions focusing on the differences between counselors and clients in terms of cultural components such as gender, religion, language, level of education and so on.
=		9. Cultural people	An activity based on the 'RESPECTFUL' feature that aims to raise participants awareness of their own culture. The implementation of this activity is based on participants' experience.
31 Multicultural Counseling Competencies	5. Specific Cultural Skills	10. You know me?	This activity is a continuation of the previous activity of 'Cultural people'. It is an activity to know about yourself through the views of others. The use of interview methods can train participants to communicate with different cultures.
	6. Multicultural Counselor Self-Awareness	11. My client	A labeled card game aimed at building awareness of participants towards the diversity of clients' cultures.
		12. My country	A collage activity carried out via group work. Through this activity, the participants will share experiences to revisit the diversity of cultures within the current society and to create awareness of the diversity of these cultures. This collage activity was chosen because it is among the best methods in promoting creativity to think critically in a larger scope and to create awareness of the differences that exist in a multicultural society.
	7. Awareness of Multicultural Clients and Communities	13. I'm better	A debate activity in which the proposer & opposition party will defend a cultural issue. This activity will give participants an understanding of the differences between bias, racism, discrimination, stereotyping etc. that may affect them individually and through their work. This urges them to recognize their own prejudices, beliefs and emotions.
	8. Multicultural Understanding	14. Cultural BINGO	A game activity that urges participants to exhibit their understanding and knowledge of various cultures as well as reinforce positive feelings regarding distinct cultural norms, traditions and customs.
	9. Multicultural Strategies Development	15. Note Book	A group work activity in which groups are required to produce notebooks that contain issues and methods that are appropriate in developing multicultural strategies based on several features of multicultural counseling competencies.
	10. Practical of Multicultural Counseling (1)	16. Preventing Suicide	A role play counseling session based on a unique counseling case (Meena) aimed at increasing participants' skills in the practice of multicultural counseling.
		17. Challenge	A group discussion activity in analyzing multicultural counseling cases.
	11. Practical of Multicultural Counseling (2)	18. My experience	A group work activity to develop an actual multicultural counseling case based on participants' experience. Role play activities are also performed to train participants to conduct effective counseling sessions from the counseling case(s) discussed.
	12. The End	19. Reflection	A group activity for participants to share experiences and opinions on topics and activities that have been conducted.

Phase 3: Evaluating content validity and reliability of the CPD-MCC training module

For the third phase, the researchers used a quantitative approach via the distribution of questionnaire to participants. This questionnaire is the instrument used to evaluate content validity of the present module that is based upon Jamaludin's (2002) research which is an adaption of Russell (1974) guide to module development. Four PhD qualified and experienced lecturers were invited to evaluate the contents of the CPD-MCC training module. The four experts were selected due to their extensive experience (more than 10 years) and expertise in the field of counseling, psychology, module development, multicultural counseling and education. They were in between the ages of 40 to 55 years of old.

Each expert was provided with a version of the completed MCC module that consist of an introduction to the research, the manual to the module, relevant appendices and a questionnaire of the content validity based on the recommendations of Russell (1974) on the required conditions of content validity of a module summarized in Table 2. The questionnaire includes a Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). A blank space was also provided in the questionnaire for the evaluators to provide suggestions or feedback regarding the module. Consequently, the researchers only needed to amend a few minor grammatical errors that were pointed out by the evaluators.

In order to establish the validity of the contents of the module, the raw data were computed by dividing the total scores of the individual experts' ratings by the overall score of the rating. The calculated value based on this process will stress the level of validity of a research module and the content validity is considered high if the value is higher than 70% (Sidek & Jamaludin, 2005).

Table 2 summarizes the percentage value of the entire validity of the content based on the eight statements regarding the module. The table also presents the overall MCC training module's content validity value which is 77.2% and is regarded as high. It comfortably exceeds the endorsed threshold value of 70%. The content validity value based on each component of validity is in between 72.5% to 82.5%. Accordingly, the conditions recommended by Jamaludin (2002) which was an adaption from Russell (1974) guide that had been used by the researchers for the module development, were strongly validated. Therefore, the findings of the present study reveal that the overall content validity of this module is high and can be applied to the targeted population.

Table 2. Content Validity of the CPD-MCC Training Module

No.	Statements	Content Validity (%)	Experts' Assessment
1.	The contents of this module meet the required multicultural counseling competence for professional counselors	75.0	Accepted
2.	The content of this module is suitable for the target population	82.5	Accepted
3.	The environment of the module implementation is satisfactory	80.0	Accepted
4.	The contents of this module are suitable to be implemented	77.5	Accepted
5.	The contents of this module are suitable with its proposed duration of time	80.0	Accepted
6.	The contents of this module are capable of increasing multicultural counseling attitude and beliefs	72.5	Accepted
7.	The contents of this module are capable of increasing multicultural counseling knowledge	77.5	Accepted
8.	The contents of this module are capable of increasing multicultural counseling skills	72.5	Accepted
Overall content		77.2	Accepted

Moreover, Pallant (2013) asserts that the minimum number of respondents for a pilot test is 20. Therefore, the process of testing the reliability of the CPD-MCC training module included 25 counselor trainees (aged 19 to 24) in a public university in Malaysia. The counselor trainees underwent the pilot test for the complete twelve sessions. To test the value of reliability of the CPD-MCC training module, a set of reliability questionnaire had been developed. This set of questionnaires is developed based on the module's activities (Jamaludin & Sidek, 2001). The items consist of 100 questions which were developed based on three subscales of MCC Matrix model which were multicultural beliefs and attitudes, multicultural knowledge and multicultural skills. The questionnaire consists of a 10-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). Examples of the items include "I am more aware of my culture after the recognize your culture activity", "I am now aware of my body language exhibited after the tell me activity", and "I can recognize by personal biases based on the me, you and her activity".

Subsequently, this questionnaire was answered by the participants after completing each session. A blank space was also provided in the questionnaire for the participants to provide suggestions or feedback regarding the module. Here, the participants only stated positive comments about the module, thus, the researchers did not need to make any changes to it. The responses to the questionnaires were then analyzed using SPSS software. As a whole, the alpha Cronbach's coefficient value is 0.75. This shows that the CPD-MCC training module

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3 has an acceptable reliability value (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005; Mohamed, 2000; Valette, 1977).
4 The researchers also further enhanced the reliability of the module by ensuring that i) the
5 facilitators received sufficient training and have mastered the module before the
6 implementation of the pilot test, ii) the facilitators fully adhere to the instructions of the module,
7 and iii) a summary of each activity of the module is presented to the participant (student) of
8 the pilot test before progressing to the next topic (Mahfar, Noah, & Senin, 2019).
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14 **Discussion**

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16 When developing the CPD-MCC training module which is based on the MCC matrix model,
17 the researchers first extensively reviewed relevant literature on multicultural counseling
18 competency especially in terms of theoretical concepts and methods that were established by
19 Sue and colleagues (1992). Through the information obtained by the literature review
20 conducted, the researchers developed the module that comprises 12 units and 19 activities.
21 From a theoretical and practical viewpoint, these findings will have a profound impact on the
22 current body of knowledge involving multicultural counseling and psychology.
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27 Moreover, for an impact to be more significant, the module's content validity will need
28 to be verified prior to its adoption. This notion is best echoed by Sidek and Jamaludin (2005).
29 According to them, there are two essential features that represents the merit of a newly
30 developed module which are content validity and reliability. Among these two, content validity
31 is the most significant aspect in establishing the strength of the construct built into the module.
32 In general, attaining a high content validity is tough as a newly developed module requires a
33 comprehensive review on related literature (Shah, Bakar, Ahmad, & Jais, 2013). By using this
34 method, a module can be effectively developed to suit the needs of a specific segment of a
35 society (e.g. professional counselors or student groups). In light of this specific condition, the
36 researches embraced eight relevant conditions as outlined by Jamaludin (2002). Thereafter, the
37 content validity of the module was appraised by four expert panels along with the eight
38 determinants of relevancy. Consequently, the results of this appraisal showed that group
39 guidance module has high content validity, built upon the unanimous, unequivocal agreement
40 of all experts involved. Hence, this module can successfully assist practitioners when dealing
41 with counselors' multicultural counseling competencies.
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48 The advantages of the CPD-MCC training module are further improved by its
49 efficiency in accomplishing short term goals and by its innate nature of obtaining instantaneous
50 feedback from practicing counselors. Nonetheless, when implementing a training program
51 using the CPD-MCC module, the organizers of the program must ensure that it is being
52 delivered by an experienced and competent professional counselor in order to maximize
53 effectiveness. This is because adult learners prefer trainers with knowledge, respect, applied
54 experienced within the same field, possess clear communication skills, are fair and
55 understanding (Phillips, Baltzer, Filoon, & Whitley, 2017). It is also envisioned that this
56 module (when used pertinently and sensibly) will assist the target participants to attain
57 heightened levels of multicultural counseling competence.
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Limitations of the Research

There are concerns in regards to the limitations of self-report instruments used during phase one of the present study. This is because self-report measures make it difficult to discern whether the participants' actual attitudes and behaviors are being reported or if the participants may have been prompted regarding the researcher's intent. Self-report measures also raises concerns of social desirability bias. Moreover, the sample size of the present study was moderate which limits its generalizability. Additionally, the research's sample consisted mostly Malay (76.7%) professional counselors which again limits the generalizability to other ethnic groups within Malaysia. The final limitation is that all the experts invited to develop and review the module were located in West Malaysia (only one geographical area). This was because these experts were renowned practicing counselors especially in the field of multicultural counseling.

Recommendations and Implications for Future Research

Based on the findings above, the content validity and reliability of the present module is satisfactory. It is proposed for future researchers to conduct an experimental research to study the effectiveness of this module on professional counselors in Malaysia. Besides that, this training module can also be used to test its effectiveness in different job settings (e.g. hospitals, organizations, non-governmental organizations, welfare centers, schools, etc.). Additionally, this module can also be used to improve the existing educational courses at universities. For example, the Malaysian counseling education curriculum can be revised to include this module. This ensures that student counselors will be multiculturally competent before graduating.

This module can also be promoted to counseling practitioners in developing continuous training programs. Here, more studies to be carried out on a greater scale within the Malaysian context. Training professional counselors (continuously) to improve their multicultural competence will only benefit the nation as a whole while ensuring that clients receive high quality counseling services. This will further strengthen the mental health of Malaysian citizens and help the nation achieve a universal cultural sensitivity equivalent to international standards. The main benefit of this module is driven by its effectiveness of achieving short-term goals of increasing the multicultural competency (skills, knowledge and awareness) among the participants. It is hoped that this module will be accepted by stakeholders (i.e. policy makers, educators, counselor practitioners, researchers, course coordinators and Malaysian Board of Counselors) to foster a high level of multicultural competency in counseling practices within the nation.

Conclusion

The present study has revealed that the CPD-MCC training module (that is based on the MCC matrix model) can be applied on the target population (professional Malaysian counselors). Furthermore, this module has been validated and is considered to have sufficient content

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3 validity and reliability. Hence, this module can act as a catalyst for future researches to conduct
4 more studies on multicultural counseling and multicultural counseling competency. Lastly, the
5 present study encourages practitioners to take on a similar approach when developing a diverse
6 range of training modules that involves the enhancement of multicultural counseling
7 competency among professional counselors, benefitting the counseling profession and the
8 Malaysian society as a whole.
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