



**Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development**

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANXIETY INDEX AND  
SELF-EFFICACY AMONG COUNSELLOR TRAINEES**

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Masters ☐

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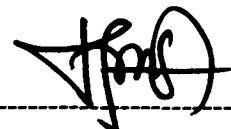
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COUNSELLOR TRAINEES**

**AGNES KONG YI JING**

**This project is submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a  
Bachelor of Counselling with Honours**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Relationship between anxiety index and self-efficacy among counsellor trainees**

**Agnes Kong Yi Jing**

This research is aimed to investigate the anxiety index of the counsellor trainees and the relationship between anxiety index and self-efficacy among counsellor trainees. This proposed research utilized correlational research design. 150 counselor trainees recruited for data collection by using stratified random sampling. 2 instruments implemented in this study, which are State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and generalized self-efficacy scale (GSE). STAI used to measure the anxiety index among counsellor trainees while GSE used to measure the scale of self-efficacy of counsellor trainees. The collected data analyzed by using Pearson Coefficient Correlation and independent samples t-test. Results revealed that there was significant relationship between anxiety index and self-efficacy. Besides that, there was no significant differences in anxiety index between gender of counsellor trainees. The results also showed that there are no significant differences in self-efficacy between male and female.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The demand of the service from mental health professional is increased in this century. In US, there are about 552,000 mental health professionals, including those who work full-time or part-time. Virtually all the mental health professional fields have a positive job outlook in the upcoming decade (Grohol, 2016). According to Kollinger (2017), the CEO Forum labour market analysis shows that there are 48% more demand for mental health counsellors in 2016 than 2013. The ratio of psychiatrists to the Malaysian population is 1:200,000. To-date, there are about 2,090 registered counsellors in Malaysia (Uni Assignment Centre, 2017). Counsellor is the one that offer the helping service to the clients that face the issues. They are demanded to help people deal with their mental health issues. Therefore, counsellors' self-care should be the priority before helping others because wellness is one of the critical factors in being a healthy counsellor (Burns as cited in Shallcross, 2011).

In this century, the mental health problem arise and more people are experiencing the mental health issues. According to statistics from community studies in European Union (EU), Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, 27% of the adult population had the experience suffering in at least one of a series of mental health disorder. Women are significantly higher than men in having the mental health disorder, except for substance use disorder and psychotic disorder (World Health Organization, 2017). In Asia, there are over 450 million of people are reported to suffer from mental or neurological disorders (World Psychiatry, 2002). As reported in Uni Assignment Centre (2017), in Malaysia, the ratio of suicides from 2007 to 2010 was 1.3 in 100,000 people and every 6 out of 10 people facing depression issue. There are 400,227 mental patients sought treatment at government hospitals. Mental health illness is expected to become second highest form of health problem after the heart disease in Malaysia.

On the whole, the demand of the service from counsellors increased overall in the worldwide as the mental health issues increased around the world.

## **1.2 Background of Study**

The demand of counselling services is increased due to the growing number of individuals seeking mental health services. Therefore, the need for counsellor also increased. The counselling field is a rewarding profession that involve highly distressing and sometimes traumatic circumstances. Many counsellors find their personal lives impaired as human beings is the one can be deeply impacted by the experiences of others (Copley, L.A., 2013). As a counsellor, they might face a lot of job stress and challenges such as dealing with difficult clients, new environment of working place, lack of supervision system from supervisor, heavy paper work and caseload, lack of support from management and colleagues, financial ability to survive and so on. Therefore, the counsellors need to monitor themselves through personal insight, reflection and supervision.

Counsellor trainee is an individual who seeking the licensure as a professional counsellor. By entering into the helping profession, the trainee counsellors may feel excited but some of them also worried and anxious because of the challenge they have to face in the work environment. Counsellors in training will face the challenges in balancing academic, professional and personal obligations. The several main challenges such as counselling training, environment and supervision with supervisor will also be faced by them.

Counsellor trainees need to face the challenges from clinical practicum and internship training. They needed to select an internship placement to gain the experiences and practices. In clinical practicum, many of them are the first time experience in conducting the sessions. They also need to face the stresses when they are conducting the sessions. These stresses come from the process of sessions with clients. In the counselling session, they might meet the clients that come from different culture, the counsellor wish to have the effective communication with their clients. The anxiety can come from the uncertainty to manage to achieve the effective communication. When conducting the sessions, counsellors have to maintain their healthy mind set and proper facial expression. Trainee counsellors may feel encouraged by their clients as they may think that it is a reward if their clients can make progress or move forward after they express their feelings and issues to the counsellors. However, they may also feel discouraged and anxious if the effective result from counselling

session and the improvement of clients cannot be seen. Their self-efficacy might be impacted if the client give the negative feedback. Therefore, the anxiety can come from the clinical practicum and internship training because the counsellor trainees need to deal with different clients.

Despite that, counsellors need to be trained by different skills before they can conduct the counselling sessions with the clients. Besides facing the stress from internship training, the counsellor trainees also face the stress from supervision. During the practicum and internship, the counsellor trainees receive the supervision from their supervisor. According to Liddle (1986), counsellor trainees in supervision feel anxiety and they perceive it as a threat. Certain supervisor behaviours such as evaluation and personal issues with supervisee can bring the anxiety and affect the self-efficacy of counsellors. Generally talking, the stress from supervision can bring the anxiety to trainee counsellors.

Anxiety is an important variable in personality research generally and occupies a prominent place in various personality perspectives including psychoanalytic, behavioural, trait theory and social cognitive theory. Generally, anxiety has been characterised as a 'complex state that includes cognitive, emotional, behavioural and bodily reactions' (Sarason 1984, p.931)

A manageable of anxiety level is good for the counsellor trainees so that they have the motivation in doing better. However, a high level of anxiety can become an obstacle for trainee counsellors to move on. The anxiety can affect the self-efficacy of trainee counsellors. Self-efficacy is someone's belief about their own ability to perform in the task. Counsellor trainees' self-efficacy is about their belief and preparedness to handle particular clinical situations effectively and their ability to perform counselling-related behaviours.

To conclude, counsellor trainees might need to face a lot of challenges in their training period. The anxiety that come from training can affect the self-efficacy of the trainee counsellors.

### **1.3 Statement of Problem**

The research done shows the study about the counsellor trainees' anxiety and how it affects the self-efficacy of trainee counsellor's performance. According to the Eurasian Journal of Educational Research (Kurtyilmaz, 2015), it was found that the counsellor trainees do feel anxious when they are in practicum training. The trainee feel hard in using the theoretical knowledge, professional methods and techniques need to use in counselling and they are uncertain on which of the methods and techniques they should use in appropriate time. Therefore, the trainees will find the single truth in practicum training. In the process, the trainee may start to self-assess themselves whether they have the ability in conducting the effective counselling session when they having the difficulties in dealing with clients. Besides that, their self-efficacy affected as they question themselves when they cannot help the clients. When undergoing the self-evaluation, the trainee also need to face the stresses as they need evaluated by their supervisors. (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003).

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The objectives for this study are:

1. To assess the significant relationship between anxiety index and counsellor trainees' self-efficacy
2. To assess the significant differences in anxiety index between gender of counsellor trainees
3. To assess the significant differences in self-efficacy between gender of counsellor trainees

### **1.5 Research Hypotheses**

The research hypotheses for this study are:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between anxiety index and counsellor trainees' self-efficacy

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant differences in anxiety index between gender of counsellor trainees

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant differences in self-efficacy between gender of counsellor trainees

1.6 Conceptual Framework

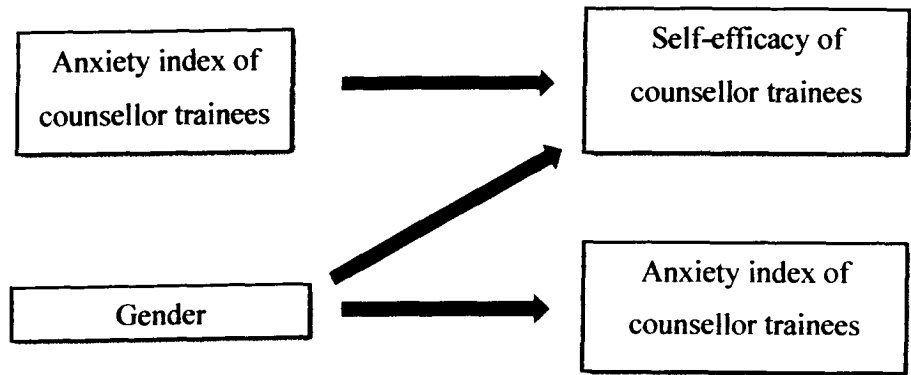


Figure 1.6.1

The framework of this study on figure 1.1 shown the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable. This study has three objectives which are:

- i) To assess the significant relationship between anxiety index and counsellor trainees' self-efficacy
- ii) To assess the significant differences in anxiety index between gender of counsellor trainees
- iii) To assess the significant differences in self-efficacy between gender of counsellor trainees

For the first one objective, the anxiety index is the independent variable and the self-efficacy is the dependent variable. The second one is, the gender of the counsellor trainees is the independent variable and anxiety index is the dependent variable. For the third one, gender of the counsellor trainees is the independent variable and self-efficacy is the dependent variable. Therefore, this study can find out the relationship between anxiety index and the self-efficacy of the counsellor trainees and the differences between gender with anxiety index and self-efficacy of counsellor trainees.



### **1.7 Significance of Study**

Through this study, the counsellor trainees can disclose more of their feelings when they are in the period of training. The study allow them to know that their feeling is making sense during the professional development process. In addition, through this study, the supervisors can more understanding to the feelings of trainees and they will take into consideration during their supervision. Counsellor trainees can get the support and understanding and this can make them more motivated when undergo the training. Their negative emotion will be reduced and their emotions can be more stable during their training period. From this study, it may also provide knowledge on the gender differences in anxiety index and self-efficacy among counsellor trainees.

### **1.8 Definition of Terms**

Definition of terms can be denoted as conceptual and operational. There are three terms that will be defined; anxiety, gender, trainee and self-efficacy.

#### **1.8.1 Trainee**

##### *Conceptual definitions*

Trainee is a person undergoing training for a particular job or profession (Oxford university press, 2017).

##### *Operational definitions*

Counsellor trainee is someone that need to perceive training such as practicum, supervision before they become a professional counsellor. In this study, the counsellor trainees are chosen as the participants to study the relationship between anxiety and the self-efficacy among them.

#### **1.8.2 Gender**

##### *Conceptual definitions*

Gender is either of the two sexes, male and female, especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones (Oxford university press, 2017).

### *Operational definitions*

Gender of counsellor trainees is investigated to know whether the gender differences is consisted or not in the anxiety index and self-efficacy.

### **1.8.3 Anxiety**

#### *Conceptual definitions*

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome (Oxford university press, 2017).

#### *Operational definitions*

Anxiety is one of the factors that can impact self-efficacy of trainee counsellors. A counsellor trainee that have high anxiety may perform less effectively in counselling tasks.

### **1.8.4 Self-efficacy**

#### *Conceptual definitions*

Self- efficacy is the ability to produce a desired or intended result (Oxford university press, 2017).

#### *Operational definitions*

Self-efficacy of counsellors is counselling self-efficacy. It is defined as one's belief about his or her ability to counsel a client effectively.

## **1.9 Limitations of Study**

Although this study show the important findings about the anxiety index among counsellor trainees, it has some limitations. In this study, the data was collected from one location only, which is UNIMAS. Therefore, there are lack of knowledge about others university's students. The study was conducted as quantitative study, thus the feelings of trainee cannot be explored deeper because the interview are not used. For knowing the deeper understanding of their feelings and thoughts, the interview can conducted during the pre-professional and professional life. In addition, the study also only conducted with the students that have not undergo the internship. The data only collected before their internship. The data also can be collected during the sessions and

the end of the sessions to observe the tendency of inadequacy feelings over a developmental process.

### **1.10 Chapter Summary**

Through this study, the feelings and thoughts of the counsellor trainee will be explored. To maintain the healthy mind set, the counsellors need to know how to handle well their anxiety so that they can conduct the counselling sessions well. Thus, the relationship of anxiety index and self-efficacy of counsellor trainees is crucial to be studied.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature related to anxiety and self-efficacy, theory and model related to the study and lastly the discussion of conceptual framework of the study.

##### *Anxiety*

Anxiety is defined as the feeling of being uneasy, tense, worried, or apprehensive about what might happen. Anxiety can bring in positive or negative effects to people. Although anxiety is a negative, unpleasant emotion, it also can become a motivator and an essential part of the human condition when associated with wide range of new events or stimuli. Therefore, positive function of anxiety can alert us to evaluate potential threats and respond them in an appropriate way.

However, overload stress and uncontrollable worrying thoughts can bring anxiety to counsellor trainees. Counsellor trainees with anxiety may have the experience cognitive manifestations which are negative self-talk or overly negative appraisals of their work, behavioural manifestations such as defensiveness to feedback and avoidance of fear about counselling, somatic manifestations such as heart rate increased and uncomfortable stomach. They also feeling a sense of failure as they begin to feel overwhelming.

In addition, counsellor trainees feel the anxiety when they need to deal with a stranger. When the anxiety is decreased, the ability to predict accurately the client's behaviour is increased. Counsellor trainees who are the beginner in conducting the session will frequently experience anxiety when they are initially encounter with their client. These anxiety affects with counsellor-trainee learning and performance. High anxiety is associated with less clear counsellor interventions. Anxiety affects the counsellors' empathy because the counsellors will tend to rate their sessions less favourably than their more comfortable peers (Kelly, Hall, and Miller, 1989). Therefore, anxiety do impact the self-efficacy of counsellor trainees.

Overall, it may be said anxiety will alter our mental state and also physical symptoms such as raised heart rate and adrenaline. In order to let the source of anxiety passed, the counsellor trainees need to learn to cope with their stress to reduce its hold over them.

### *Self-efficacy*

As what Bandura (1994) defined, the self-efficacy is the people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events about their lives. Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's confidence on whether he or she can perform the task given successfully or not. Specifically, Bandura (1997) suggested that individual's ability is not only included their skill and ability to accomplish a task or goal but also their belief that provide them confidence and motivation to complete a task.

Self-efficacy makes a differences to as how people feel, think, and act. Besides that, self-efficacy of a counsellor is affected by their readiness and preparedness on conducting the sessions. The more prepared, the greater their self-efficacy. The counsellor self-efficacy is related to the performance, which is the greater the counsellor's self-efficacy, the greater his or her performance will be. Thus, self-efficacy can affect the performance of the counsellor trainees.

According to Bandura (1997), the person who has the high levels of self-efficacy can more approach to the high level of difficulty tasks and challenges because they can exercise control over the situation. High self-efficacy allows individuals to choose challenging settings and explore their environment or create new ones. However, according to Bandura (1997), low self-efficacy is related to low self-esteem. Besides that, self-efficacy is related to the experience of stress and work burnout (Heslin and Klehe, 2006). Thus, lower self-efficacy make the trainees become less persistence when facing the challenges.

Besides that, according to the study (Hall, 2009), the hypothesis of this study which is there would be a statistically significant negative relationship between anxiety and counselling self-efficacy is supported by the result. The result of this study shows that the higher levels of anxiety the participants have, the lower levels of counselling self-efficacy.

To sum up, to become a good competency of counsellor, they need to have enough knowledge, skills and self-efficacy so that they can perform in the required behaviour under difficult circumstances.

## **2.2 Review of Theory and Model Related**

### **2.2.1 Uncertainty Reduction Theory**

The theory that used is based on Charles Berger's uncertainty reduction theory. The counsellor trainees have the anxiety in their practice because they are afraid the things that they are unsure and unclear. They can doubt themselves about their ability to conduct the sessions. According to Gudykunst as cited in Griffin (n.d.), his research also show that the anxiety and uncertainty are related, whereas the uncertainty is cognitive and the anxiety is affective. Gudykunst insisted that a minimal level of anxiety and uncertainty can become the motivation to people in communication. This is because when people feel no tension in an intergroup encounter, they are careless with what they are talking about.

In communication between people, if people become paralyzed with fear, they cannot concentrate on the message in the conversation or the messenger. They will fall back on negative stereotypes or simply withdraw from the conversation. When the uncertainty occurs, people will lose the confidence and make them cannot predict others' behaviour, so the conversation are no longer seems worthwhile. Thus, uncertainty includes the doubts we have about our ability to predict the outcome of our encounters with strangers. This is why the counsellor trainees may feel anxiety when conducting the sessions with the clients that come from different backgrounds (Gudykunst, n.d.).

In the Journal of Psychology (1995), according to Izard, Lazarus and Mandler, the uncertainty will bring the account of anxiety. Therefore, there is relation between the uncertainty and the anxiety. In the uncertainty reduction theory, uncertainty is the core of the anxiety. Uncertainty is a concept that relate closely within the cognitive domain. The negative emotion including anxiety will occur if the counsellor trainees fail to meet their goal. According to Lazarus (1991), he stated that the anxiety come together with fright. Fright occurs when the imminent physical harm occurs. Lazarus believes that anxiety is characterised by uncertain, ambiguous and existential threat.

However anxiety can be distinguished from fear or fright if the object is external and real. As a result, anxiety is triggered by uncertainty from an individual.

### 2.2.2 The Social Cognitive Model of Counsellor Training (SCMCT) Model

Bandura (1986) incorporated the concepts of self-efficacy and proposed social cognitive theory (SCT). Larson (1998) proposed the Social Cognitive Model of Counselor Training (SCMCT) by expanding self-efficacy concept in counsellor training and supervision. According to Bandura (1997), the self-efficacy can be influenced by the interdependent relationships among behaviours, internal person factors and external environment. The four sources that will impact the expectations of self-efficacy in Social Cognitive Model are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences through modelling, verbal persuasion and emotional and physiological states. The most influential factors that impact self-efficacy is the mastery experiences.

Similarly, SCMCT has three major components which are trainees' personal agency, the proximal environment where trainees' learning occurs including therapy and supervisory sessions and trainees' actions in counselling and supervision. SCMCT hypothesizes that self-efficacy of counsellors in training is the major determinant of therapist effectiveness. The trainees with strong self-efficacy will learn more successfully and perform more effective interventions with clients than trainees with low self-efficacy. Therefore, a good competence of counsellor trainee has high self-efficacy according to this model.

### Chapter Summary

In summary, to study the relationship between anxiety index and self-efficacy among counsellor trainees, the Charles Berger's uncertainty reduction theory and Larson's Social Cognitive Model of Counsellor Training (SCMCT) plays a major part to explain it. In the next chapter, research methodology for this study is discussed.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The methodological procedures that was used in the study are introduced in this chapter. The topics are the research design, research instrument, pilot study, data analysis and ethics of study. The method that was used to conduct the study, number of respondents and procedure of the study are discussed in the first section. The instrument used in the study is explained in the second section. In the third section, the data collection procedures will be explained. The forth section introduces the statistical techniques for the analysis of the data followed by pilot study and lastly the fifth section discusses about the ethics that need to be considered while conducting the research.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The purpose of the research is to analyse the relationship between anxiety index and self-efficacy among counsellor trainees. The research design that used in this research is correlational design. A correlational research design is a specific type of non-experimental design used to describe the relationship between or among variables. It provides empirical evidence suggesting two or more variables are – or are not – related.

The research design of this study is quantitative research. Method of this research is distributing the questionnaire to the sample. Participants will be asked to complete and answer the survey questionnaire which consists of demographic form and also a few measures of instruments.

#### **3.3 Location, Population and Sample**

This study will carried out by using the counsellor trainees' population in Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development (FCSHD) of University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). The population is UNIMAS undergraduate counselling students including male and female. The sample considered of 150 undergraduate counselling students that come from vary background such as their age, race and year of study. The sampling process was done by using stratified sampling technique. By