

Multicultural Academic Experience and Multicultural Counselling Competency in Addressing Polygamous Family Structures Among Registered Counsellors in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

To effectively conduct counselling sessions, professional counsellors in Malaysia need to possess multicultural competence, especially considering the discrepancies between the ideal and the actual understanding of polygamous marriages. This study examines the relationship between multicultural academic experience, multicultural counselling competency, and the competency of counsellors in addressing polygamous family structures among 370 registered counsellors in Malaysia. The collected data was analysed using Pearson Correlations, One-Way ANOVA and Multiple Regressions. The findings indicate that the respondents demonstrated high multicultural academic experience and multicultural counselling competency. There was a significant positive correlation between multicultural academic experience and multicultural counselling competency, as well as the competency of counsellors in handling polygamous families. Moreover, there were noteworthy variations in competency levels based on ethnicity. This study highlights the crucial role of multicultural academic experience and multicultural counselling competency in predicting the competency of counsellors when dealing with

polygamous families. Further validation of the Counselors' Multicultural Competency on the Polygamous Family Structure Scale is recommended in future studies encompassing larger and more diverse populations.

Keywords: Counselling, competency, multicultural, polygamous family structure, registered counsellor

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INTRODUCTION

Malaysia has a population of about 33.2 million (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). Malaysia is a multi-racial, multicultural, and multilingual society comprised of different ethnic groups. The ethnicities in Malaysia mainly consist of the Malays, Chinese, Indians, indigenous communities, and natives of Sarawak and Sabah. Multicultural counselling competence is essential for counsellors who work with clients from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It plays a crucial role in their professional practice in developing competent counsellors (Sue, 1992). Consequently, universities in Malaysia must incorporate at least one multicultural counselling course within their counselling programs (Harun et al., 2021; Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2016)—these courses and training in multicultural counselling aim to reduce racism when counselling clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. According to Hill et al. (2013), a counsellor's competence in establishing a therapeutic relationship with clients from different cultures is influenced by their training, academic background, and experience. The social cognitive theory postulates that learning happens within a social context, where individual behaviours and environments interact reciprocally and dynamically (Bandura, 1986). The competence can be enhanced by counselling culturally diverse clients and gaining multicultural academic experiences. Multicultural counselling competencies consist of three components:

awareness, knowledge, and skills. These competencies are essential for counsellors to effectively work with diverse cultural groups (Sue et al., 1992).

Polygamous Family Structure and Cultural Diversities

Polygamy, a widely debated and controversial topic, has garnered significant scholarly attention around the globe (Kent, 2023; Naqvi, 2023). It is a family structure practised not only by Muslims but also by others, such as Mormons, a sect of Christians (Watson, 2022). In Malaysia, a Muslim man can legally marry up to four wives, provided he can demonstrate financial capability, fairness to the wives, and a justifiable reason according to Islamic provisions as stated in the Qurán (4:3). Positive roles of polygamy have been highlighted by Yasin and Jani (2013). However, research indicates that the stigma of polygamous families can contribute to mental health issues among wives and negatively impact children (Kee & Hassan, 2020). Nevertheless, more neutral findings on the impact of polygamy have been illuminated by some in-depth studies (Zeitzen, 2018; Razif & Huda, 2017).

Multicultural Counselling Competency in Addressing Polygamous Family Structures

For counsellors to effectively address the needs of clients from polygamous families, it is essential to have competency in multicultural counselling. However, limited attention has been given by the counselling profession to the specific challenges posed

by polygamy. The cultural values and social norms associated with polygamy in Malaysia make it a sensitive and delicate issue within the counselling context (Jaladin et al., 2020). Moreover, there is a scarcity of research on polygamy-related issues, particularly within the counselling field in Malaysia. Previous studies have predominantly focused on measuring multicultural counselling competency in specific areas, such as counselling for the LGBTQ+ community (Bidell, 2014; Jamal et al., 2018; Pereira et al., 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to expand counselling competency studies to encompass other domains, specifically the competency to effectively counsel clients from polygamous families.

Problem Statement

In light of these considerations, this study aims to investigate the relationship between multicultural counselling academic experiences and multicultural counselling competency regarding the polygamous family structure among registered counsellors in Malaysia. By exploring this under-researched area, we can gain insights into how counsellors can enhance their competence in assisting clients from polygamous families. This research seeks to bridge the knowledge gap and contribute to the professional development of counsellors in handling the unique challenges associated with polygamy.

Study Objective

This study examined the relationship between multicultural academic experience,

multicultural counselling competency, and the counsellor's competency in the polygamous family structure among registered counsellors (RCs) in Malaysia. There were five hypotheses in this research.

H1: There is a significant relationship between multicultural academic experience and multicultural counselling competency among RCs.

H2: There is a significant relationship between multicultural academic experience and counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure among RCs.

H3: There is a significant relationship between multicultural counselling competency and counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure among RCs.

H4: Counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure is significantly predicted by multicultural academic experience and multicultural counselling competence among RCs.

H5: There is a significant difference between the ethnicities among RCs in multicultural counselling competency and counsellors' competency on polygamous family structure

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design utilised in this study was correlational, either to elucidate significant human behaviours or to forecast probable outcomes (Gay et al., 2012; Lee & Khawaja, 2012). The data for this study was obtained through a set of questionnaires. The researcher deliberately adopted a

correlational approach to examine the relationships between the studied variables. Three distinct instruments were employed to measure the variables studied: multicultural academic experience, multicultural competency, and counsellors' competency within polygamous family structures.

Population and Sampling Procedures

The sample for a correlational study should be selected carefully and, if possible, randomly. Formulas and published sample size tables were used to determine the reasonable sample size according to the total population. The total number of registered counsellors in Malaysia is 9243. According to the sample size table published by Barlett et al. (2001), with a prior significant level = .01, the effect size of $r = .30$, and a statistical power of .99, the required sample size is 209. However, the researcher increased the sample size to 370 to make sure that there was enough data for analysis of the differences between ethnicities (Salkind, 2017). Besides that, the Cochran formula for continuous data was also applied to calculate the ideal sample size. We set the significant level at .01, used the 7-point Likert scale, and set the acceptable margin of error level at 3%, considering all three different statistical analysis requirements.

Stratified random sampling was used in the current study. The first step in stratified random sampling was to define the strata in the population and list all individuals. The strata are the ethnicities: Malay, Chinese, Indian and others. According to Cohen (1988), a minimum sample size

of 30 respondents per stratum is required for comparison. In the random number technique, every registered counsellor in Malaysia was listed according to their registration number in Microsoft Excel format. A subset of the population was generated using the online random number generator (culcatorsoup.com), which is 550 registered counsellors. Then, the 550 samples were chosen from the population list based on the 550 numbers generated. After that, the questionnaire was mailed to these 550 registered counsellors. The researcher generated 550 random numbers because a response rate of 50% was expected (Salkind, 2017).

Instrumentation

Three instruments were adopted and adapted in this study. The first two instruments were adopted, whereas the third was adapted. The third instrument is the Counsellor Competency on Polygamous Family Structure Scale (CCPFS), which was adapted from two instruments because there is no suitable instrument to measure the third variable. This instrument was used to measure the competency of the counsellor's work with clients from a polygamous family structure. A demographic questionnaire was also distributed to the participants. Participants were required to designate their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, and working experience in counselling.

Multicultural Course Racial Experiences Inventory (MCREI). This instrument is meant to measure the experiences of

participants in multicultural courses. There are 19 items in MCREI. It consists of four subconstructs, comprising five items for Racial Group Identification, five for Racial Diversity-Tension, four for Racial Group Salience, and five for Racial Diversity – Negative Effects. The 7-point Likert scale was applied in rating each item (1= Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly agree), giving a range score of 19 to 133. The higher the score, the higher the respondents' level of multicultural academic experience. Cronbach's $\alpha = .842$ for the MCREI (Harun et al., 2021)

Multicultural Counselling Competence Survey and Training-Revised (MCCTS-R). Holcomb-McCoy and Day-Vines (2004) developed the original version of MCCTS, revised in 2004 to measure the multicultural counselling competency of school counsellors. There are 32 items in MCCTS-R. There are three subconstructs in MCCTS-R: Multicultural Knowledge (20 items), Multicultural Awareness (8 items), and Multicultural Terminology (4 items). All items are positively directed. The 7-point Likert scale was applied in rating each item (1= Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly agree). The score range of MCCTS-R is 32 to 224. The higher the score of MCCTS-R, the higher the multicultural counselling competence level of respondents. Harun et al. (2021) evaluated the Malay version of MCCTS-R; they found Cronbach's $\alpha=.952$

for the 32 items, and each factor ranged from .874 to .935

Counsellors' Competency on Polygamous Family Structure Scale (CCPFS).

CCPFS was modified and adapted from the Attitudes Toward Polygamous Marriage (ATPM) scale (Negy et al., 2013) and the Sexual Orientation Counsellor Competency Scale (Bidell, 2005). CCPFS consists of three sub-constructs: awareness, skills, and knowledge. Every sub-construct consists of 7 items and a total of 21 items. The 7-point Likert scale was applied in rating each item (1= Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Neutral, 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly agree). The score range of CCPFS is 21 to 147. The total score of CCPFS gained from the respondents explained their level of self-perceived multicultural counselling competence. In this study, we found Cronbach's $\alpha= .862$ for CCPFS.

Pilot Study

The reliability of the instruments and appropriateness of the items were checked by the pilot study, especially when the instrument was adapted and translated. Multicultural Course Racial Experiences Inventory (MCREI), Multicultural Counselling Competence Survey and Training-Revised (MCCTS-R) and Counsellor Competency on Polygamous Family Structure Scale (CCPFS) were sent to 30 registered counsellors in Google Form. They were given three weeks to complete the questionnaire. The data collected from

the pilot study of the initial database was analysed using alpha Cronbach for reliability analysis.

The reliability analysis showed that the overall reliability of all the instruments included in the questionnaire ranged from .862 to .961. The overall of each instrument is presented in Table 2. Based on the overall reliability, it can be concluded that all the items in the MCREI ($\alpha = .903$), MCCTS-R ($\alpha = .961$) and CCPFS ($\alpha = .862$) are reliable and stable, as Pallant (2011) mentioned that Alpha Cronbach of $\alpha = .70$ and above are more than adequate.

Data Collection and Analysis

A web-based survey tool known as Google Form was used for data collection for the online survey method in this study. The link for questionnaires was emailed to the respondents. They were given three weeks to complete and reply to their responses by email. Two weeks after the samples received the questionnaires, they were reminded to return them by the end of that week. Finally, data was collected from 370 respondents.

After the data was collected through Google Forms, the data was downloaded in Microsoft Excel format. The data was subsequently transferred to the SPSS. The data was analysed using a descriptive analysis, a correlation analysis, a multiple regression analysis and one-way ANOVA. In addition, the normality of the data collected from MCREI, MCCTS-R, and CCPFS was also checked with skewness and kurtosis. Correlation analysis is a statistical tool used to determine the strength of the relationship

between two metric variables. Furthermore, the researcher ran a multiple regression analysis to determine the influence of multicultural academic experience and multicultural counselling competency on the polygamous family structure. Finally, one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the differences between ethnicities in counsellor competency and polygamous family structure. To ensure an equal sample size group comparison, we chose the smallest acceptable size ($n=35$ Chinese ethnic). Then, we randomly selected 35 respondents from the other ethnic groups, namely Malay and Indian.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistical Analysis Findings

The distribution of respondents' gender, age, race, religion, marital status and years of counselling experience are shown in Table 1.

Inferential Statistical Analysis Findings

The normality test for the three variables, multicultural academic experience, multicultural counselling competency and counsellors' competency on the polygamous family structure, was conducted to achieve the main requirements of inferential studies. A visual inspection of their histograms, normal Q-Q Plots, and box plots were normally distributed for MCREI, MCCTS-R and CCPFS among the registered counsellors in Malaysia. The skewness ranged from 0.009 to -0.596, and kurtosis ranged from -0.149 to -0.456 for MCREI, MCCTS-R, and CCPFS. The researcher used the Pearson correlation to test the relationship

between multicultural academic experience and multicultural counselling competency among registered counsellors. The analysed result is shown in Table 2.

Table 1
Profile of respondents

Demographic variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	126	34.1
	Female	244	65.9
Age (years)	Below 25	6	1.6
	26–30	103	27.8
	31–35	89	24.1
	36–40	54	14.6
	41–45	45	12.2
	46–50	24	6.5
	50 and above	49	13.2
Ethnicity	Malay	248	67
	Chinese	55	14.9
	Indian	35	9.5
	Bumiputera Sabah	21	5.7
	Bumiputera Sarawak	11	3.0
Religious	Muslim	265	71.6
	Buddhist	32	8.6
	Christian	43	11.6
	Hindu	28	7.6
	Others	2	0.6
Marital Status	Single	156	42.2
	Married	202	54.6
	Divorced	10	2.7
	Widow	2	0.5
Years of experience in counselling	1–5 years	170	45.9
	6–10 years	67	18.1
	11–15 years	66	17.8
	16–20 years	40	10.8
	21–25 years	18	4.9
	26–30 years	9	2.4

Table 2
Correlation of MCREI, MCCTS-R, and CCPFS

Correlation	r	Sig. p	Strength
MCREI and MCCTS-R	.370*	.000	Moderate
MCREI and CCPFS	.205*	.000	Weak
MCCTS-R and CCPFS	.398*	.000	Moderate

Note. * Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

H1: There is a significant relationship between multicultural academic experience and multicultural counselling competency among RCs. As shown in Table 2, the correlation coefficient obtained was $r=.370, p < .001$. Therefore, a significant moderate positive relationship existed between multicultural academic experience and multicultural counselling competency.

H2: There is a significant relationship between multicultural academic experience and counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure among RCs. Then, the analysed result of testing the relationship between multicultural academic experience and counsellors' competency in polygamous family structures among the registered counsellors. The correlation coefficient obtained was $r=.205, p < .001$. The result indicated a significant positive weak relationship between the two variables.

H3: There is a significant relationship between multicultural counselling competency and counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure among RCs. The result of the analysis of the relationship between multicultural counselling competency and counsellors' competency in polygamous family structures was examined. As shown in Table 1, the correlation coefficient obtained is $r=.398, p < .001$. Therefore, there was a positive significant moderate relationship between multicultural counselling competency and counsellors' competency in polygamous family structures.

H4: Counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure is significantly predicted by multicultural academic experience and multicultural counselling competence among RCs. Accordingly, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether MCREI and MCCTS-R statistically explain CCPFS. The result of the multiple regression analysis is shown in Table 2.

The results in Table 3 indicate that the combination of multicultural academic experience and multicultural counselling competency could statistically significantly explain the counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure, $F(2, 367) = 35.59, P < .05$. The adjusted R^2 value was .158, which means that 15.8% of the variance was explained.

Table 3
Influence MCREI and MCCTS-R on CCPFS

Variables	B	β	t	P
Constant	28.582		3.721	.000
MCCTS-R	.273	.374	7.263	.000
MCREI	.083	.067	1.399	.194

Note. $R^2 = .162, F(2, 367) = 35.59, R = .403, P < .05$

H5: There is a significant difference between the ethnicities among RCs in multicultural counselling competency and counsellors' competency on polygamous family structure. Finally, One-way ANOVA was conducted to test the differences between ethnicity, multicultural counselling competency and counsellors' competency on the polygamous family structure level. The analysed result is shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Comparison of Respondents' Ethnicity on Multicultural Counselling Competency (MCCTS-R) and Counsellors' Competency on Polygamous Family Structure (CCPFS) (n 35 Malay, 35 Chinese, and 35 Indian)

Variable	M	SD	df	p
MCCTS-R			F(2, 102) = 2.54	.084
Malay	183.11	26.81		
Chinese	178.20	24.52		
Indian	191.49	23.38		
CCPFS			F(2, 102) = 8.77	.000
Malay	93.23	14.27		
Chinese	75.83	18.07		
Indian	85.83	19.57		

The multicultural counselling competency was not significantly different for the ethnicity of respondents, $F(2, 102) = 2.54, p = .084$. However, counsellors' competency on the polygamous family structure was significantly different for the ethnicity of respondents, $F(2, 102) = 8.77, p < .001$. The researcher ran an LSD post hoc test to determine the means of various groups that were significantly different from one or more means from the other groups. LSD comparisons showed that there was a significant difference between Malay and Chinese ($p < .001$) with a mean difference of 17.4, and Malay and Indian ($p = .079$) with a mean difference of 7.4. The partial eta squared ($\eta^2 = 0.147$) for counsellors' competency on polygamous family structure indicated a large effect size (Cohen, 1988).

DISCUSSION

The relationship between multicultural academic experience and multicultural

counselling competency among registered counsellors demonstrated a statistically significant, moderately positive correlation ($r = .370, p < 0.01$). These findings align with previous studies conducted by Castillo et al. (2007) and Lee and Khawaja (2012), which also found a positive association between these variables. Castillo et al. (2007) investigated the impact of multicultural training on perceived multicultural counselling competencies among 84 first-year master-level students in counsellor education programs. The results indicated that the multicultural counselling course reduced implicit racial prejudice and increased multicultural counselling competency. Similarly, Lee and Khawaja (2012) found a significant relationship ($r = 0.34, p < 0.01$) between education experience and self-perceived multicultural counselling competency. Additionally, Dameron et al. (2020) reported a positive relationship between multicultural curriculum and counselling competency, where school counsellors exposed to multicultural curricula exhibited higher levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills. Existing research suggests a significant association between multicultural education and multicultural counselling competency.

The current study found a weak yet positive relationship between multicultural academic experience and counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure among registered counsellors ($r = .205, p < 0.01$). As limited studies focus specifically on counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure, we are

unable to present similar findings. However, the findings can be supported by related studies. Castillo et al. (2017) examined the relationship between multicultural training and perceived multicultural counselling competencies, reporting that the multicultural counselling course reduced implicit racial prejudice and increased multicultural counselling competency. This finding supports the notion that multicultural academic experience is related to counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure. It is possible that counsellors' exposure to and interaction with individuals from different ethnicities, such as Malay students, during multicultural classes, contribute to their competency in counselling clients from polygamous families.

The current research findings reveal a moderate, positive relationship between multicultural counselling experience and counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure among registered counsellors ($r = .398, p < 0.01$). Competency in the polygamous family structure increases with higher levels of multicultural counselling competence and vice versa. While no research specifically addresses counsellors' competency with clients from polygamous families, several studies have explored counsellors' competency with LGBT clients. Bidell (2014) examined the relationship between multicultural counselling competency and sexual orientation competence among counselling and psychology students, finding a significant correlation ($r = .546,$

$p < .01$) between the two. In line with the current study, multicultural counselling competence and competency with clients from polygamous families among registered counsellors are related. These results can be explained by the positive association between multicultural counselling competency and the ability to effectively counsel culturally diverse clients, including those from polygamous families, refugees, immigrants, and other diverse backgrounds.

According to the current findings, counsellors' competency in polygamous family structures can be predicted significantly by both multicultural academic experience and multicultural counselling competency. Previous studies predominantly focused on multicultural counselling academics as the predictor for multicultural counselling competency, with limited research addressing the variable model adequately. Pieterse et al. (2016) found that attending a multicultural counselling course increased students' racial experiences, possibly due to exposure and contact with multicultural individuals. It allows for reflection on thoughts, values, and behaviours that may be overlooked in a similar cultural context. When counsellors attend multicultural training and possess high levels of multicultural counselling competency, this can lead to a high level of competency in the polygamous family structure.

Additionally, the current study found no significant difference in multicultural counselling competency based on respondents' ethnicity ($p = .084$), contrary

to the findings of Holcomb-McCoy and Day-Vines (2004), who reported a significant ethnic difference in multicultural counselling competence. Similarly, Jaladin et al. (2020) found substantial differences in self-perceived multicultural counselling competency among four ethnic groups (Malay, Chinese, Indian, and others) among 508 professional counsellors. These findings differ from the current study, which showed that Malay and Indian counsellors scored higher in multicultural counselling competency than Chinese counsellors. The inconsistent results may stem from differences in personal and professional backgrounds and experiences, influencing perceived multicultural counselling competency ratings. However, the current study aligns with Dagang et al. (2013), which found no significant difference in multicultural counselling competency based on ethnicity.

In terms of counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure, there was a significant difference based on respondents' ethnicity ($p = .000$). The findings revealed that Malay respondents ($M = 93.23$) scored significantly higher than Chinese respondents ($M = 75.83$), with a mean difference of 17.4. Malay respondents also scored significantly higher than Indian respondents ($M = 85.83$), with a mean difference of 7.4. Additionally, Chinese respondents scored significantly lower than Indian respondents, with a mean difference of 10.0. The highest mean score in competency on the polygamous family structure was observed among Malay

respondents, which could be attributed to the familiarity and cultural understanding of polygamous practices among Muslims.

Practical Implications

There is a shortage of research in Malaysia on multicultural academic experience, multicultural counselling competency, and competency in polygamous family structures among registered counsellors in Malaysia. However, the present findings hold significance in two main aspects: the relationships between these variables and the competency of counsellors in working with clients from polygamous family structures. The findings of this study establish the relationships between multicultural academic experience, multicultural counselling competency, and competency in dealing with polygamous issues.

Drawing from the Multicultural Counselling Competencies Tripartite Model, multicultural counselling competence comprises three components: awareness, knowledge, and skills (Sue et al., 1992). These components are the foundation for developing the Counsellors' Competency on the polygamous family structure scale, which has undergone rigorous testing to ensure validity and reliability. This instrument is suitable for measuring counsellors' competency in polygamous family structures based on the three sub-constructs of counsellor awareness, knowledge, and skills.

This study carries important implications for counsellor education and training in

Malaysia. Education and training are vital in preparing counsellors to be multiculturally competent. Multicultural academic experiences can enhance counsellors' awareness and knowledge. However, the findings indicate that registered counsellors scored higher in awareness and knowledge than in skills, both in multicultural counselling competency and competency in polygamous family structures. Therefore, practical training and supervision should be emphasised in counselling education. Practical training and supervised practice in polygamous-related issues can develop counsellors' skills and interventions in multicultural counselling. Experiential learning is valuable for developing multicultural skills and competence (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002). Multicultural counselling training can incorporate participatory activities such as role-playing, demonstration, modelling, simulated sessions, and case studies of minority groups, including polygamous families. These activities provide counsellors with multicultural interaction and exposure to diverse peers and clients.

Furthermore, this study holds important implications for the professional development of registered counsellors. Opportunities for professional development through multicultural counselling training should be provided to in-service counsellors. Conferences, seminars, and training workshops on understanding and practising multicultural counselling can be organised to enhance counsellors' current practice. Continuing education

and working experiences are essential for counsellors to meet the training needs of the counselling profession (Farmer et al., 2013). Registered counsellors in Malaysia should continuously improve their multicultural knowledge and skills through various professional development activities to enhance their competence in providing multicultural counselling services. However, there is a limited availability of professional development events focusing on multiculturalism, particularly on culturally complex and sensitive issues such as polygamy. Thus, the relevant departments should organise professional development courses or training that specifically address multiculturalism, focusing on cultural complexity and sensitive matters to benefit registered counsellors.

Limitations and Recommendations of Future Research

The present study used a correlational design, and the cause-effect relationship did not exist in this study. The cause-effect relationship between the variables could be studied in future research. Furthermore, the self-reported measurement, which is the self-perceived multicultural counselling competency instrument, was used in this study. According to Constantine and Ladany (2000), the self-reported measurement may not accurately reflect the respondents' competence and may be affected by attitudes of social desirability. Future studies might need to include third parties' ratings, such as clients and supervisors, to control the social desirability factor in the counsellors' survey.

This study could be the first to examine the relationship between multicultural academic experience and the counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure. In the current study, the counsellors' competency on the polygamous family structure scale is adapted from two instruments because there is no suitable instrument to measure the variable. The reliability and validity of the counsellors' competency on the polygamous family structure scale have achieved a satisfactory level. However, the reliability and validity of the counsellors' competency on the polygamous family structure scale still need to be studied to ensure the scale is suitable for a larger population.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the current study revealed that most registered counsellors in Malaysia perceived themselves as highly competent in multicultural counselling and moderately competent in working with clients from polygamous families. This study's findings also suggested significant positive relationships between the three variables: multicultural academic experience, multicultural counselling competency, and counsellor's competency in the polygamous family structure. There was a significant difference between ethnicity in multicultural counselling competency and counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure. Indian Malaysian registered counsellors have a high level of multicultural counselling competency, and Malay registered

counsellors have a high level of counsellor competency in the polygamous family structure. Meanwhile, multicultural academic experiences and multicultural counselling competency are essential variables in predicting counsellors' competency in the polygamous family structure. This study also provided practical implications for the multicultural preparation course and professional development activities. The reliability and validity of the counsellors' competency on the Polygamous Family Scale can also be studied to ensure that the scale can be used for a larger population. Further studies on the counsellors' competency regarding polygamous family structure are needed to understand this area more deeply.

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