UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

EXPLORING EXPERIENCES OF COUNSELORS IN CRISIS INTERVENTION OF NATURAL DISASTERS IN MALAYSIA

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FPP 2018 29

EXPLORING EXPERIENCES OF COUNSELORS IN CRISIS INTERVENTION OF NATURAL DISASTERS IN MALAYSIA

By

MOHD. ZALIRIDZAL BIN ZAKARIA

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2018

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

Arwah Zakaria bin Ibrahim
Abah…
It is your dedication, spirits and 'doa' that have made this long journey a
success.
May Allah granted heaven to you.

Norlaili A M …
You are my backbone, my soulmate, my love now and forever.
May Allah guide us as we excel together in this life and in the hereafter.

Aqilah, Afiqah and Zaeim …
This not the end…
This is the beginning of your journey to excel together for the success of
ummah.
If I can… you also can…

To all Counselors
in Malaysia and all over the world
who has contributed their physical, mental and spiritual strength
during any disaster…

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

EXPLORING EXPERIENCES OF COUNSELORS IN CRISIS INTERVENTION OF NATURAL DISASTERS IN MALAYSIA

By

MOHD. ZALIRIDZAL BIN ZAKARIA

February 2018

Chairperson: Noor Syamilah Zakaria, Ph.D.
Faculty: Faculty Educational Studies

Crises such as natural disaster are an intrinsic part of life and despite efforts aimed at prevention, crises will continue to occur. Apart from the disaster survivors related issues, counselors are also vulnerable on becoming affected physically and psychologically due to providing assistant for people who are affected by the natural disaster. The main objective of this qualitative research was to conduct a descriptive phenomenological study to explore, understand, and describe the experience of providing crisis interventions during natural disaster among Malaysian counselors. The researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data included field notes and individual semi-structured in-depth interviews. The researcher developed coding categories using ATLAS.ti 7th version. Themes emerged, were refined, and became the six master themes for this research: the immediate response, the disaster survivors, the disaster responders, post-disaster, psychological preparation, and holistic support. This research found that the experiences gained by the counselors are not only within themselves as disaster responders but also with the disaster survivors surrounding them during the disaster situations. The experiences shared by the counselors have also portrayed from the perspectives during the immediate response together with descriptions on the post-disaster support during crisis interventions of natural disaster. Research findings implications, implications for policy and implications for counselors' practices in Malaysia, as well as future research opportunities are thoroughly discussed in this research. From this research, it was informed that providing crisis intervention and psychological support during natural disaster has brought plethora of experience and knowledge that should be shared by counselors not only with their colleagues but also with other disaster responders in Malaysia.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk mendapatkan Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**MENEROKA PENGALAMAN KAUNSELOR
DALAM INTERVENSI KRISIS BENCANA ALAM DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

MOHD. ZALIRIDZAL BIN ZAKARIA

Februari 2018

**Pengerusi: Noor Syamilah Zakaria, Ph.D.
Fakulti: Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan**

Krisis seperti bencana alam adalah satu bahagian intrinsik dalam kehidupan; dan walaupun usaha pencegahan dilakukan, krisis akan terus berlaku. Selain daripada isu-isu yang berkaitan pemandiri bencana, kaunselor juga turut terdedah untuk menerima kesan fizikal dan psikologi kerana menyediakan bantuan kepada orang-orang yang terjejas oleh bencana alam. Objektif utama kajian kualitatif ini adalah untuk menjalankan satu kajian fenomenologi deskriptif bagi meneroka, memahami, dan memerihalkan pengalaman melaksanakan intervensi krisis semasa bencana alam oleh kaunselor Malaysia. Penyelidik adalah instumen utama untuk pengumpulan data dan analisis. Data meliputi nota lapangan dan temubual individu secara separa struktur mendalam. Penyelidik membangunkan pengkodan kategori menggunakan perisian ATLAS.ti versi ke-7. Tema yang terjelma telah disaring dan dijadikan enam tema induk kajian ini iaitu: tindak balas segera, pemandiri bencana, petugas (responder) bencana, pasca bencana, persediaan psikologi, dan sokongan holistik. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa pengalaman yang diperoleh oleh kaunselor bukan sahaja dari dalam diri mereka sendiri sebagai petugas bencana, malahan melalui pengalaman dengan pemandiri bencana di sekeliling mereka semasa situasi bencana. Pengalaman yang dikongsi oleh kaunselor juga telah menggambarkan pelbagai pengetahuan yang diperoleh semasa tindak balas segera bersama dengan pemerihalan mengenai sokongan pasca bencana semasa intervensi krisis bencana alam. Implikasi kepada dapatan kajian, implikasi kepada polisi dan implikasi kepada amalan kaunselor di Malaysia, serta cadangan kajian masa hadapan juga telah dibincangkan secara terperinci dalam kajian ini. Daripada kajian ini, didapati bahawa penyediaan intervensi krisis dan sokongan psikologi semasa bencana alam telah membawa banyak pengalaman dan pengetahuan yang perlu dikongsi oleh kaunselor bukan sahaja dengan rakan sekerja mereka tetapi juga dengan petugas bencana yang lain di Malaysia.

ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the 'Alamin. Thanks Allah for giving me the ability, health and wellness to walk my way through this journey of knowledge exploration. I am very grateful that the submission of this thesis will remarks the beginning of another long journey to giving back to the community what I have took from them. The community has given me all support in this wonderful journey, enriched with experience, knowledge, and values.

Special gratitude to my supervisory committee chairpersons that was first led by Dr. Halimatun Haliliah Mokhtar. The effort was continued by Dr. Maznah Baba and finally, Dr. Noor Syamilah Zakaria took the responsibility to lead this committee to guide and motivate me until today. The gratitude also goes to Associate Professor Dr Abdul Lateef Krauss and Dr. Zainal Madon for the guidance, encouragement and support given throughout this journey.

I would also like to extend my heartiest thanks to my beloved wife, Norlaili Ahmad Mansor for the unconditional love and restless effort with her prayer, encouragement, reminder and full support to ensure I am working hard to finish up this task. Thank you my dear for your patience with all the ebb and flow in our journey of love and affection. To my daughters and son, Nurin Aqilah, Nurin Afiqah and Muhammad Zaeim Arif, thanks for your prayer. Abah always love all of you. This is a beginning of your journey of knowledge and values.

To all the counselors who have shared their experience, you are the best. Your experience has helped me to complete this journey. May Allah always grant all of you with the best condition to serve the nation. Thanks for the sharing which has inspired me to seek more opportunity to ensure all of you are not only serving the nation, but you will be taken care, psychologically.

To all my dear colleagues at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, thanks for the endless support. Let's work together at the best we can to serve the Ummah during disaster and calamities.

Thank you to everyone who has in a way contribute to the success of this journey directly or indirectly. May Allah bless all of you with great health and wellness.

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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v

Declaration by graduate student

I hereby confirm that:

- this thesis is my original work
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This is to confirm that:
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- supervision responsibilities as stated in the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Graduate Studies) Rules 2003 (Revision 2012-2013) were adhered to.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

xii

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDIXES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ten years ago, when I started to become a faculty member and started my career as counselors' educator, I always hoped that I will be able to provide the best theoretical and practical knowledge for my students on preparing them to be the best counselors that they can be. When natural disaster struck, I always admired the crisis responders who play vital roles in giving support to the crisis victims. Counselors are among the crisis responders who will provide the psychological first aid to the crisis victims. Even though they seem to be competent handling the tough tasks, I am curious and always have a big question mark on how do they acquire the specific knowledge? Within my experience, the formal training on providing crisis intervention is minimal in nature. With this curiosity and fascination, along with my desire to understand the experience of crisis intervention of counselors, it has developed my interest to deepen my understanding on the journey to become a devoted crisis counselor.

This chapter begins with a discussion on the background of crisis intervention and the needs of crisis intervention during natural disaster. It also includes an overview of natural disaster situations in Malaysia, the needs for counselors in the crisis intervention of natural disaster and current situations on crisis intervention for natural disaster in Malaysia. It further discusses the background of research, problem statement, research questions, significance of study, limitations of study and summary section.

Background of Study
Crisis is a confronted situation that occurs when individuals cannot solve problems. It can overwhelm the individual to the extent that serious psychopathology, homicide and suicide may result. It increases stress level, anxiety, emotional disturbances and the ability to function normally in daily life task. It also puts individual through a period of psychological imbalance or disequilibrium, which eventually exceeds the individual's available coping mechanisms and cannot be remedied by existing coping strategies (Caplan, 1964; Dass-Brailsford, 2007; Everly & Jeffrey, 2013; James & Gilliland, 2013; Roberts, 2005).

Crisis is also viewed as an opportunity because the pain it induces, impels a person to seek help (Afful & Williams, 2015; Aguilera & Messick, 1990; James, 2008). This help seeking behavior arises due to the crisis event that precipitates a psychological effect or traumatic stress on individual. A typical crisis consists of the following five components: a hazardous event, a vulnerable state, a precipitating factor, an active crisis state, and the resolution of the crisis (Afful & Williams, 2015; Murphy, 2004; Roberts, 1990).
Awareness and understanding of the nature and impact of crisis as well as comprehensive intervention strategies can increase the likelihood that individuals will emerge stronger and more enriched from a crisis. Nevertheless, the awareness and understanding of the nature and impact of crisis alone does

1

not provide individual with adequate ability to ensure their coping ability on crisis. There is always demand for competent counselors in a crisis to provide professional intervention toward achieving potential growth and improved coping abilities. During a crisis, individuals are provided with crisis intervention which triggers opportunities for them to learn new coping skills while identifying, mobilizing, and enhancing what they already have. However, most crises develop into traumas and most traumas begin as crises (Dass-Brailsford, 2007).

"Crisis intervention can lead to early resolution of acute stress disorders or crisis episodes, while providing a turning point so that the individual is strengthened by the experience" (Roberts, 2005, p.5). Adding to that note, Roberts (2005) also asserted that:

> "the goal of crisis intervention is to help individuals reestablish their coping skills and problem-solving abilities by reinforcing their strengths, reduce their potentially harmful situations, and develop protective factors for those who feel overwhelmed by a traumatic event." (p.5)

Crisis such as natural disaster is an intrinsic part of life. Despite efforts aimed at prevention, crises will continue to occur. Natural disaster initially sparked interest in the need for counselors to direct their energy more systematically to disaster work. In cases of natural disaster, trauma-related assistance in response to the disaster or catastrophes is needed locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally (Bowman & Roysircar, 2011). Bowman & Roysircar (2011) added that there is a necessity for counselors and counseling psychology programs to incorporate into their prevention, training, and social justice repertoire.

Counselors Experience

Apart from the disaster survivors related issues on crisis situations, counselors are also vulnerable on becoming affected physically and psychologically due to providing help for people who are affected by crises such as natural disaster. Research showed that social workers including counselors who work with traumatized population are likely to be affected in some ways by secondary traumatic stress (Sweifach, Linzer, & LaPorte, 2013). Figley (1995) defined secondary traumatic stress as "the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other; the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help the traumatized or suffering person" (p.7). According to Roberts (2005), the risk of secondary trauma is higher for those repeatedly exposed to persons who have experienced trauma. Therefore, counselors who work as crisis interveners are vulnerable to have an impact on themselves.

On distinct perspective, experience gained from a crisis can also develops counselors to be resilient practitioners. Resilient counselors tend to be very flexible, adaptable, and optimistic (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2011). They are more capable of withstanding what others might perceive as tremendously stressful. They have characteristics which allow them to be more adaptable as they go through life. They seem to be better prepared physically, socially, and emotionally to handle much of what life

2

throws at them. It is the ability of adults (counselors) who are exposed to a highly disruptive event to maintain a relatively stable, healthy level psychological and physiological functioning (Bonanno, 2004).

Roberts (2005) asserted that an overlooked element of crisis work is the responsibility of the mental health professional to engage in appropriate self-care. He also mentioned that "inattention to elements of self-care can result in fatigue and in traumatic stress reactions on the part of the crisis clinician that can compromise his or her ability to provide mental health care for others" (p. 165). Resilient counselors normally are someone who can provide themselves with good self-care practices. Counselors' self-care is the practice of continual self-renewing behaviors, awareness, intentions, and attitudes that can help to mitigate distress. The consequences of not engaging in self-care may include distress or impairment, thereby putting the counselors at risk for compromising clients' care and potentially harming themselves or their clients (Koehler, 2012). A comprehensive self-care practice serves three primary functions: (a) protecting clients by reducing the risk factors commonly linked with ethical violations, (b) enhancing therapy by promoting and modelling well-being, and (c) protecting counselors against burnout and enhancing the balance between caring for self and others (Porter, 1995).

Juntunen (2011) shared that the experience as a responder in the crisis interventions of natural disaster are rewarding and she always looks forward to participating, it is also stressful in some ways. From the immediate disaster experience,   she faced, it has changed her personal and professional appreciation of the need for counselors who are prepared to fill the unique role of disaster responders. In addition, it has developed her real understanding of the impact of disaster on individuals, families, and community. Juntunen (2011) later suggested that she has identified a few areas worth for further exploration, including the role of counselors in disaster preparedness and disaster response.

Overview on Crisis Intervention
In early 1940's, scholars started to study crisis intervention. A specific conceptualization of traumatic event based on crisis intervention can be traced back in the work of Erich Lindemann (1944). Lindemann and his colleagues from the Massachusetts General Hospital introduced the concepts of crisis reactions and intervention in the aftermath of the Cocoanut Grove fire in 1943. The concepts are based on the acute and delayed reactions of the fire survivors and the family members of its victims (Dass-Brailsford, 2007, p.95). Lindemann (1944) emphasized that the outcome of crisis was greatly influenced by the intervention of key individuals. He also noted that the survivors and family members of the Cocoanut Grove fire shared similar emotional responses, along with the need for psychological assistance and support.

Lindemann (1944) work has created awareness that in crisis many individuals suffer loss and experience pathological symptoms but have no specific psychiatric diagnosis. It was within Lindemann (1944) contention that responses to sudden grief are normal, and transient as well as need

not be considered pathological. He theorized that "normal" responses to grief include preoccupation and identification with the deceased, feelings of guilt and expressions of hostility, disorganization in daily functioning, and somatic complaints. As Lindemann (1944) worked with others from Massachusetts General Hospital to assist survivors who had lost loved ones in the Cocoanut Grove fire, he began to realize that helpers other than psychiatrists could assist people in coping with their sudden grief (Puleo & McGlothlin, 2001).

Honoring and giving further expansion of Lindemann work, Gerald Caplan (1961 in Dass-Brailsford, 2007) later introduced the four stages of a crisis reaction: (1) An initial rise in tension occurs in response to an event; (2) Increased tension disrupts daily living; (3) Unresolved tension results in depression; and (4) Failure to resolve the crisis may result in a psychological breakdown. Later in 1964, Caplan developed the concept of "preventive psychiatry" which proposed that early intervention following a disaster or traumatic event can promote positive growth and well-being (Jackson-Cherry & Erford, 2014). Baldwin (1979) later wrote that "crisis intervention, perhaps more than any other model for helping, is strongly interdisciplinary in both theoretical development and in practice" (p.43).

Within the period of Lindemann and Caplan early works in the 1940', crisis intervention issues were also focused on the major stressor events at that particular period which was derived by the World War II and has led to a serious implication among family members whom experienced disorganization and changes in functioning when other family member left home to participate in the war (Hill, 1958). Families which had the most difficulty reorganizing and adapting to the absence of their loved ones seemed to experience the greatest degree of distress (Hill, 1949). This situation has led Hill (1958) to suggest a model of family stress which includes the family resources, perceptions, and experience within the crisis. Hill later named this model as the ABC-X model of family crisis.

In 1982, with the assumption that systems naturally evolve and become more complex from time to time, McCubbin and Patterson came out with a variance of Hill's ABC-X model and introduced the double ABC-X model. This double ABC-X model has added recovery and growth following crisis to complement the original model.

Later in the 21st century, Beverly Raphael introduced the term "psychological first aid." She emphasized on the importance of attending to basic survival needs (based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs) before attempting to more traditional form of counseling (Jackson & Erford, 2014; James, 2008; Raphael, 2000).

As we walk through the chronological history on the early work of crisis intervention, it seems clearly that the focus of scholars was on the perspectives of the victims or survivors or the significant others that are related to the traumatic events. Most of the early writing on crisis intervention (Baldwin, 1979; Caplan, 1964Caplan, 1964Hill, 1949,1958; Lindemann, 1944Hill, 1949,1958; ⌯OBJ⌯OBJ⌯)⌯OBJ⌯ were not emphasize and

4

focused on the responder or interveners issues in providing crisis intervention. As the interest of the crisis intervention knowledge has walk through many decades of evolution and development, it is only a couple of decades now that scholars start to focus on the impact of crisis intervention work on the crisis responders and interveners.

Crisis Intervention in Natural Disaster and Natural Disaster Situations in Malaysia
Natural disaster are defined as ecological phenomenon that can happen suddenly without notice or awareness, and require immediate external assistance of humans to assess the needs of the disaster and the population affected (Simmons, 2010). Counselors are in a unique position to engage in disaster relief efforts because of their values and training, particularly around work with diverse clients (Bowman & Roysircar, 2011).

The Malaysian National Security Council (MNSC) Directive 20 (Majlis Keselamatan Negara, 2012) defines disaster as "an emergency situations of some complexity that will cause the loss of lives, damage property and the environment, and hamper local social and economic activities" (p.2). Within other perspective, natural disaster are defined as catastrophic events resulting from natural causes such as floods, landslides, and mudslides; over which man has no control (Ibrahim & Fakhru'l-Razi, 2006). Within the first decade of the second millenniums, Malaysians have been given tremendous experience on natural disaster. As Ibrahim and Fakhru'l-Razi (2006) further elaborated their findings on clustering the disaster types in Malaysia, they concluded that natural disaster were 49 percent of total disaster in Malaysia whereby most of the natural disaster were resulted from heavy rains (floods) and landslides, which were 26 percent of it.
In Malaysia, a specific track on the serious implementation of crisis intervention can be traced only within the development of the National Social Policy, which had been endorsed by the Cabinet in 1993. This Policy on its third objective mentioned that we should strengthen and develop social support system and social services. To achieve this objective, there are 22 strategies and its 17th strategy has addressed the needs for every organization to provide a 'trained and skilled crisis intervention team' which always prepared to handle various social crisis effectively in the respective organization.

Within the past decade, the process of giving crisis intervention during natural disaster solely depends on the anchorage of counselors and social workers from the Malaysian Department of Social Welfare (DSW). The Department Social Welfare (DSW) was established in April 1946. It has evolved through many phases in fulfilling its role in national development. From its involvement with major problems caused by the Second World War, the role and functions of the department have expanded to include prevention and rehabilitation services of social issues and community development. As one of the government agencies with a vital role in social development, it has been placed under several Ministries. The Counseling Division of DSW was established on 1 April 1998 following the restructuring of the department through the Public Service Department

5

directive. This section was originally called Counseling Division. The division created because of formulation and enforcement of Counsellors Act 1998 (Act 580). In the preliminary stages of the first two years of implementation of the Act, this section is headed by a director that also serves as Registrar of Counsellors and became the first Secretary of the Board of Counsellors. Through their Community Psychology Branch, the Counseling Division of DSW has been planning, developing, implementing, coordinating and monitoring the interventions related to functionality of disaster and crisis victim at the headquarters, state, county and institutions level (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat Malaysia, 2016). According to the Malaysian National Security Council (MNSC) Directive 20, Department Social Welfare as part of the main government assistance and recovery agency are in charge of providing welfare assistance, counseling services (including crisis intervention and psychological support), logistics and other related support in disaster management (Majlis Keselamatan Negara, 2012).

In 2013, the Malaysian Crisis Intervention Team (MCIT) was established to serve as another provider of crisis intervention services in Malaysia. It is anchored at the Psychological Service Division, Public Service Department. The MCIT members consist of combined effort from all counselors who are serving within the government offices in Malaysia. Within its restricted perimeter, the MCIT later has seek approval from the Malaysian National Security Council (MNSC) to be listed as part of the support service team during national disaster within the parameter of MNSC Directive 20 (2013). With this effort, the strength of psychological support has been increased in providing crisis intervention during natural disaster. In early 2015, the MCIT team has provided crisis intervention and psychological support in the states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Perak, and Pahang to the community members who were affected by a tremendous flood wave during the end of 2014. The combined effort of crisis intervention and psychosocial support were also given by the Ministry of Health through their Mental Health Psycho Social Support (MHPSS) team that consists of psychiatrist and counselors during these devastating situations.

As I have explained the overview of crisis intervention from the early days of Lindemann and Caplan and towards the crisis intervention of natural disasters in Malaysia, this research is focusing on excavating all the experience gained by DSW counselors providing crisis intervention and psychological support during natural disasters. Earlier in this chapter it has been mentioned that the DSW generally and their counselors specifically served as the main government assistance and recovery agency that provided welfare assistance, counseling services (including crisis intervention and psychological support) and logistics in the evacuation centers. Therefore, the DSW counselors will be interviewed in this research to provide specific knowledges of experience in performing their task within their jurisdiction. The knowledge of experience gained will serve in fulfilling the gap of knowledge that are not yet been excavated within the Malaysian context of counselors providing crisis intervention and psychological support during and post natural disasters.

6

Problem Statement

A disaster does not only affect individuals, families, community, and work places but it also can affect disaster responders including counselors. Morris & Minton (2012) asserted that the professional counseling literature includes very limited attention to crisis preparation and practice experience of professionals. Although the international literature pertinent to understanding the effects of disaster has been published over the past 25 years (Cronin, Ryan, & Brier, 2007), research on this area within Malaysian context is sparse specifically in addressing the experience and reaction of counselors during and after the event of natural disaster.

Juntunen (2011) suggested that an interesting area of future inquiry for disaster response might involve interviews with counselors who have engaged in disaster response works to identify experience that particularly important in their deployments as crisis responders during natural disaster. Supporting this idea, Jacobs, Leach, & Gerstein (2011) also asserted that there are needs for greater inclusion by counselors in research, training, and interventions surrounding disaster and catastrophes. Natural disaster initially sparked interest in the need for counselors to direct their energy in a more systematic way to disaster work (Jacobs, et al. 2011). As an additional information, over the last ten years from 2000 to 2009, more than 2.2 billion people worldwide were affected by 4,484 natural disaster (Kellett & Sparks, 2012).

Sweifach, Linzer, & Laporte, (2013) added that one understudied area of research that involved the ways professionals' sort out inner conflict among personal and professional interests and obligations following a disaster. The inner conflict may involve their cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of disaster response and later can be reflected as compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious traumatization. It may manifest the same symptoms as post-traumatic stress disorder, including disturbed sleep, anger, fear, suppression of emotions, nightmares, flashbacks, irritability, anxiety, alienation, feelings of insanity, loss of control, and even suicidal thoughts. This suggestion has created a tremendous gap of knowledge on crisis intervention and disaster response works within Malaysian context which seemed to be an important knowledge among Malaysian counselors.

The development of counseling in Malaysia itself during the last 10 years has experienced a tremendous growth spurt with factors of evidence such as increased number of counselor education programs; increased number of counseling related workshops, seminars, and conferences organized; increased effort for instituting licensure for counseling; and greater attention given to mental health and counseling in mass media (See & Ng, 2010). Nonetheless, there is still limited information gathered from the perspective of the counselors in exploring their experience preparing and providing crisis intervention and psychological support during natural disaster. The experience of Malaysian counselors is not yet properly documented for knowledge sharing or the benefits of others. A properly documented Malaysian counselors' experience on crisis intervention and psychological support is a significant document that will provide information on the preparation, support and understanding of issues of how to enhance the service in the future.

The lack of literature on the experience of counselors or other types of crisis interventions and psychological support within the Malaysian context has added to my enthusiasm in providing a holistic understanding from the descriptions and explanations on the experience gained by the Malaysian counselors who have served as crisis responders with the intention to prepare other Malaysian counselors toward the same task for the future. This research is also essential to readdress the imbalance of knowledge by conducting a descriptive phenomenological qualitative study to investigate on how working with natural disaster situations could affect the life of counselors both personally and professionally.

Purpose of Study
A purpose statement establishes the direction for a study and also provides a specific synopsis of the overall aim of the research (Mccaslin & Scott, 2003). The basic purpose of a phenomenological study is to understand from the point of view of the individual life experience with a phenomenon and to reduce it to a description of the universal essence in order to be able to discover the meaning of it (Van Manen, 1990; Creswell, 2006; Englander, 2012)

Thus, the purpose of this qualitative research is to conduct a descriptive phenomenological study to explore, understand, and describe the experience of counselors who provide crisis intervention and psychological support during natural disaster in Malaysia. The knowledge gained from the understanding of experience can be used as a benchmark and guideline for their future preparedness so that it will not affect their personal and professional life. It can also help to increase the knowledge of coping skills to the counselors in preventing any types of secondary traumatic stress. This descriptive phenomenological research also sought to explore all the experience through detailed and in-depth data collection process, involving multiple sources of information. The data were gathered from individuals' in-depth interview transcripts and relevant documents including counselors' notes and pictures of crisis intervention and psychological support activities.

Research Objectives
Based on the purpose of this study, the objectives of this research were:

1. To explore and describe the experience of counselors providing crisis interventions during natural disaster in Malaysia
2. To describe how do counselors manage the knowledge from the experience of providing crisis interventions during natural disaster pertaining to their personal and professional stances.

Research Questions
The research questions have emerged from my own inquiry: As little is known regarding the issue, this research sought to develop a substantive description from the data gathered. As such, the empirical area for this research is focused on the phenomenon of counselors who had experience providing crisis

8

intervention and psychological support during natural disaster. This research has answered the following research questions:

1. What are the experience of providing crisis interventions during natural disaster in Malaysia?
2. How do counselors manage the knowledge and experience pertaining to their personal and professional stances?

Research Assumptions
This section reflects what I believed to be true around the phenomenon under investigation from the initiation through the end of the research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Boeije, 2010; Maxwell, 2012; May & Perry, 2011). For this research, I have made four assumptions based on my educational experience as a counseling student at a bachelor's level and a master's level in Malaysia; as a student affairs counselor for eight years at a public university in Malaysia; as a counselor educator at a public university in Malaysia; and as part time workplace counselors at a public university in Malaysia.

The four assumptions that I made were: (1) counselors have minimum understanding on crisis intervention due to lack of formal training, (2) crisis interventions would be best understood through the experience gained by counselors together with facilitation from counselor educators, (3) counselors would experience crisis intervention in a negative way due to the effect of crisis in their personal and professional life, and (4) counselors are in vulnerable condition to have impacted from various forms of traumatic stress from crisis interventions provided during the disaster situations.

The first assumption was centered on the idea that counselors have minimum understanding on crisis intervention due to lack of formal training. Based on my experience as a counseling student, I noticed that majority of Malaysian counselors do not acquire the crisis interventions knowledge at their bachelor's degree nor their postgraduate degree. This assumption was supported based on the premise that the Board of Counselors (Malaysia) does not require any crisis intervention course as a mandatory course at either undergraduate or postgraduate study programs. I was fortunate to be able to help compiling documents needed for a new postgraduate program in my workplace and I was able to include one crisis intervention course as part of the curriculum.

The second assumption focused on how crisis intervention would be best understood through the experience gained by the counselors together with facilitation from a counselor educator. Based on my experience as a counseling student and as a students' affairs counselor, I assumed that crisis intervention would be best understood through the experience gained by the counselors together with facilitation from a counselor educator; who would introduce, explain, demonstrate, and deliver the contents of the syllabus. This assumption was based on the premise that crisis intervention course usually is taught by counselor educators, who are expected to have extensive experience and real-life examples on providing crisis intervention and psychological support during various type of man-made or natural disaster.

9

The third assumption concentrated on how counselors would experience crisis intervention in a negative way because of crisis in their professional and personal life. Based on my experience as a counseling student, as a counselor educator, and as a counselor, I assumed that counseling students would experience crisis intervention in an adverse way due to its complicated contents area. In addition, I perceived crisis intervention as a stressful course due to its contents that may leave an impact of traumatic stress due to the vulnerability of some people who may have exposed to traumatic events in their life.

The fourth assumption targeted on the issue is that counselors are in a vulnerable situation to have impact of various forms of traumatic stress gained from providing crisis intervention thus knowledge for self-care should be adhered. Based on my experience as a counselor educator, I assumed that counselors would not acknowledge the impact of traumatic stress to themselves until they realize the changes occur within them. This assumption was based on the premise that counselors are open to gain impact to secondary traumatic stress due to overexpose to their clients' crisis issues.

Significance of Study

Crisis situations have powerful effect on clinicians (Wachter, Minton, & Clemens, 2008) and even experienced counselors desire additional preparation and support when faced with crises (Wachter et al., 2008). This research explored and tried to understand the invaluable experience gained by counselors in providing crisis intervention services during natural disaster. It is hoped that the findings of the research may lead to the development of Malaysian based self-care modules that can be the utilized by crisis counselors in balancing stress and compassion outcomes of crisis intervention experiences. It can also be benefitted as disaster risk reduction modules for other crisis responders.

As the equilibrium model of crisis intervention has indicated the importance of creating balance in crisis; thus, there is a significant need to understand the elements that arise within the experience of counselors who are providing crisis intervention in Malaysia. Therefore, the specific challenges, needs, and concerns of counselors must be explored and put into writings to ensure the shared knowledge is beneficial to others. The gap between knowledge from the stressful experience and compassion elements from literatures and expert opinion would determine the pathway in developing the readiness of counselors to serve the nation during crisis situations. On the other hand, findings in this research can also contribute in providing a source of literature in crisis intervention and disaster response experienced by counselors in Malaysia. Currently, it is difficult to have compilation of literature within the Malaysian context, thus this research may work as a catalyst for more research on crisis intervention and crisis responder within the traumatic stress issues for the country

In addition, this research would eventually allow the related agencies and authorities such as Psychological Management Division, Public Service Department; Department of Social Welfare; Ministry of Health; and Malaysian

10

Disaster Management Agency to have well-documented findings related to crisis counseling, crisis intervention and disaster risk reduction. The findings would be a starting point in helping the agencies to further enhance the information gained and later ensuring that all counselors are well-equipped with proper knowledge relevant to serve during crisis situations. It can also provide knowledge in protecting all vulnerable parties especially counselors from the impact of gaining traumatic stress effect prior to providing crisis intervention services.

Delimitations of The Research

This section provides the information about delimitations of this research. Creswell (2003) explained that limitations and delimitations are important parameters that establish boundaries, exceptions, reservations, and qualifications in every research endeavor. Essentially, limitations are settings that restrict the scope of research and may influence the research outputs; and are not within the researcher's ability to manage. On the other hand, delimitations are borders that the researcher imposes prior from the beginning of the research. For this research, delimitations are also important to specify the research focus (Creswell, 2003).

For this research, there were four research delimitations identified: (1) the participants selected were eight counselors who participated in individual semi structured in-depth interview sessions, individual follow-up interview sessions when needed, and individual member check sessions; (2) the participants were all counselors from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW); (3) all participants have at least certain experience providing crisis intervention during natural disaster in Malaysia 4) the research genre opted to generate answers for descriptive phenomenological inquiry design.

Definition of Terms
Counselors
Counselors refers to those individuals who received formal training from recognized local universities as listed by the Board of Counsellors under the Act 580 of 1998. Within this research, counselors are referring to the Department Social Welfare counselors who served as part of the main government assistance and recovery agency during natural disasters within the jurisdiction of Directive No. 20 of Malaysian National Security Council.

Natural disasters
Natural disaster are defined as ecological phenomenon that can happen suddenly without notice or awareness, and require immediate external assistance of humans to assess the needs of the disaster and the population affected (Simmons, 2010). Within other perspective, natural disaster are defined as catastrophic events resulting from natural causes such as floods, landslides, and mudslides; over which man has no control (Ibrahim & Fakhru'l-Razi, 2006). Within the perspectives of this study, most of the natural disasters experience are related to floods.

Psychological support

The term psychological support refers to strategies for helping the clients meet the psychological needs of ordinary people who have experienced extraordinary events. It focuses on helping people deal with the emotional, cognitive, physiological, and behavioral reactions to traumatic events (Jacobs, 2007) .

The immediate response

An immediate response remarks the crucial phase during the wake of disaster events where crisis intervention and psychological support response took place. During the immediate response phase, counselors need to minimize the negative impacts of disaster, to be resilience, to take pressure away from the disaster survivors, and also to promote safety and security through specific actions and resources (Akers, 2007; Aldunce, Beilin, Handmer, & Howden, 2014).

The disaster survivors

Disaster survivors are individuals who literally are survived in the aftermath of a disaster situations and they are dislocated from their affected home to evacuation centers; and forced to leave behind all their belongings (Sommers-Flanagan, 2007).

The disaster responders

Juntunen (2011) asserted that disaster responders are always being portrayed as brave and bold individuals who sacrifices their lives on the line for others. As disaster responders, counselors are also being pictured as highly altruistic individuals who have good sensitivity and trust from their work with disaster survivors.

Post-disaster

The post-disaster context is viewed as period where efforts can be directed at increasing the resilience of individuals and community to face of future disaster threats. Post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery programs should be some wide opportunities to work with community and serve the local needs. Post-disaster context offers huge opportunity for disaster risk reduction and improved re-development especially on the role conflict of disaster survivors, social networks and community characteristics that increase the effectiveness of the post-disaster recovery period (Hutton, 2001; Joakim, 2011; Shaw, 2003).

Psychological preparation

Psychological preparation remarks one essential element which counselors must prepare while providing crisis intervention on the wake of natural disaster. Being psychologically prepared when a disaster is threatening can help the counselors to feel more confident, more in control, and better able to make effective emergency plans (The Australian Psychological Society, 2009).

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has presented the early framework for this research. It has established the idea of crisis intervention and counselors 'experience of crisis intervention and provided an overview of general crisis intervention and specific literature on crisis intervention in natural disaster situations. The problem statement has clearly stated the needs of more in-depth information from counselors who have engaged in disaster response works to identify experience that particularly important in their deployments as crisis responders during natural disaster. It has also addressed the need to explore ways of counselors overcome inner conflicts between personal and professional interests and obligations following disaster. Two research questions and four research assumptions are tabled together with the significance of this research, the delimitations of this research, and definitions of terms that are used throughout the research.

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