

UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***INFLUENCE OF SPIRITUALITY, RELIGIOSITY AND MULTICULTURAL
COMPETENCY ON TRAINEE COUNSELORS' SELF-EFFICACY IN
DEALING WITH LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES AMONG PRIVATE
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS***

NEERUSHAH SUBARIMANIAM

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By

NEERUSHAH SUBARIMANIAM

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Science**

March 2018

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Specially dedicated to:

My father, Mr. Subarimaniam Narayanan and my mother, Ms.Thangam Muthusamy,

&

Sister, Rajeswary Nagarajan and Brother-in- Law, Nagarajan Perumal,

&

Brother, Sattiyanathan Subarimaniam

&

Nephews, Yayswin Rajkumar Nagarajan and Sujaay Rajkumar Nagarajan

&

Niece, Sharaana Abisah Nagarajan

I love you all...



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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NEERUSHAH SUBARIMANIAM

March 2018

Chairman : Noor Syamilah Zakaria, PhD
Faculty : Educational Studies

Spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency help trainee counselors to navigate the challenges of being professional helpers. The evolution and integration of spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency have been mushrooming in a number of research fields. Spirituality is the sense of interconnectedness with the Supreme Being and religiosity is defined as community and cultural beliefs that involves practices, rituals, and validation from a group of people. Multicultural competency is one's awareness, knowledge, and skills about various cultures. The purpose of this research is to examine the influence of spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency on trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues. A total of 148 respondents from three private universities in Malaysia participated in the research through simple random cluster sampling. There were a total of four instruments used to measure spirituality, religiosity, multicultural competency, and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues respectively. Data were analyzed using Pearson Correlation followed by Multiple Regression. Correlation analysis revealed that there is a positive relationship between spirituality and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues ($r = 0.241, p < .05$), religiosity and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues ($r = 0.163, p < .05$), and multicultural competency and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues ($r = 0.418, p < .05$). However, the r value of the correlation analysis between spirituality and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues shows low correlation. On the other hand, the strength of relationship between religiosity and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues is negligible. While the coefficient of r

value between multicultural competency and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues reflects a substantial relationship. Next, the researcher performed multiple regression and the analysis revealed that all three independent variables which are spirituality [$F(3, 144) = 17.9, p = .004$], religiosity [$F(3, 144) = 17.9, p = .007$], and multicultural competency [$F(3, 144) = 17.9, p = .000$] influenced trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues. Multicultural competency, ($\beta = 0.452$) has the strongest influence on trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues followed by spirituality, ($\beta = 0.210$) and religiosity, ($\beta = 0.199$). The findings showed the importance of spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency on improving trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues. Hence, this research is vital as it provides the idea of incorporating spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency in the process of shaping the trainee counselors who eventually would be competent in dealing with legal and ethical issues in counseling profession.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Sarjana Sains

**PENGARUH KEROHANIAN, KEAGAMAAN, DAN KEBOLEHAN
PELBAGAI BUDAYA TERHADAP EFIKASI SWADIRI KAUNSELOR
PELATIH DALAM MENDEPANI ISU PERUNDANGAN DAN ETIKA
DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR UNIVERSITI SWASTA**

Oleh

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Mac 2018

Pengerusi : Noor Syamilah Zakaria, PhD
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Kerohanian, keagamaan, dan kebolehan pelbagai budaya mendorong kaunselor pelatih sebagai seorang pembantu profesional dalam mengharungi segala cabaran yang dihadapi. Evolusi dan integrasi kerohanian, keagamaan, dan kebolehan pelbagai budaya semakin berkembang dalam pelbagai bidang kajian. Kerohanian melambangkan hubungan yang erat dengan Tuhan manakala keagamaan adalah kepercayaan budaya dan komuniti yang melibatkan amalan, ritual, dan pengesahan daripada masyarakat. Kebolehan pelbagai budaya pula menunjukkan kesedaran, pengetahuan, dan kemahiran tentang pelbagai budaya. Tujuan kajian ini dilaksanakan adalah untuk mengenal pasti pengaruh kerohanian, keagamaan, dan kebolehan pelbagai budaya terhadap efikasi swadiri kaunselor pelatih dalam mendepani isu perundangan dan etika. Seramai 148 orang responden telah dipilih secara persampelan kluster rawak mudah daripada tiga buah universiti swasta di Malaysia. Pengkaji telah menggunakan empat instrumen kajian yang berbeza untuk mengukur kerohanian, keagamaan, kebolehan pelbagai budaya, dan efikasi swadiri dalam mendepani isu perundangan dan etika. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan Korelasi *Pearson* dan Regresi Pelbagai. Analisis korelasi menunjukkan hubungan positif antara kerohanian dan efikasi swadiri dalam mendepani isu perundangan dan etika ($r = 0.241, p < 0.05$), keagamaan dan efikasi swadiri dalam mendepani isu perundangan dan etika ($r = 0.163, p < 0.05$), dan kebolehan pelbagai budaya dan efikasi swadiri dalam mendepani isu perundangan dan etika ($r = 0.418, p < 0.05$). Walau bagaimanapun, nilai r hasil daripada analisis korelasi antara kerohanian dan efikasi swadiri dalam mendepani isu perundangan dan etika menunjukkan tahap hubungan yang

rendah. Tahap hubungan korelasi antara keagamaan dan efikasi swadiri dalam mendepani isu perundangan dan etika pula boleh diabaikan. Hubungan korelasi antara kebolehan pelbagai budaya dan efikasi swadiri dalam mendepani isu perundangan dan etika berada di tahap sederhana. Seterusnya, hasil kajian Regresi Pelbagai menunjukkan bahawa pemboleh ubah iaitu kerohanian [$F(3,144) = 17.9, p = .004$], keagamaan [$F(3,144) = 17.9, p = .007$], dan kebolehan pelbagai budaya [$F(3,144) = 17.9, p = .000$] merupakan peramal kepada efikasi swadiri dalam mendepani isu perundangan dan etika. Kebolehan pelbagai budaya merupakan peramal yang paling kuat ($\beta = 0.452$), diikuti dengan kerohanian ($\beta = 0.210$), dan keagamaan ($\beta = 0.199$). Dapatan kajian ini membuktikan kepentingan kerohanian, keagamaan, dan kebolehan pelbagai budaya dalam menambah baik efikasi swadiri kaunselor pelatih. Maka, kajian ini adalah penting dalam menyediakan idea untuk mengintegrasikan kerohanian, keagamaan, dan kebolehan pelbagai budaya dalam proses pembentukan kaunselor pelatih yang kompeten terutamanya apabila mendepani isu perundangan dan etika dalam profesion kaunseling.

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*They walked into my life
Manifested the colors of rainbow
Cherished me in their hearts
During sunny and rainy days
With endless hours supporting me
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Thus, here I wish to grow
The flowers of gratitude
To show how much I appreciate them.*

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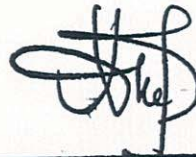
I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 29 March 2018 to conduct the final examination of Neerushah a/p Subarimaniam on her thesis entitled "Influence of Spirituality, Religiosity and Multicultural Competency on Trainee Counselors' Self-Efficacy in Dealing with Legal and Ethical Issues among Private University Students" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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Name of Member of Supervisory Committee: Wan Marzuki Wan Jaafar

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AACD	American Association for Counseling and Development
ACA	American Counseling Association
AMCD	Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
APA	American Psychological Association
ASERVIC	Association of Spirituality, Ethical, and Religion Values in Counseling
ASU	Augusta State University
CACREP	Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs
ELICSES	Ethical and Legal Issues in Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale
EMU	Eastern Michigan University
GRC	Gender Role Conflict
H	Hypothesis
HELP	HELP University
IIUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
M	Mean
MCCs	Model of Multicultural Competencies
MCKAS	Multicultural Counseling, Knowledge, and Awareness Scale
MQA	Malaysian Qualification Agency
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
N	Frequency

OUM	Open University Malaysia
PERKAMA	International Counseling Association of Malaysia
RCI-10	Religious Commitment Inventory-10
RCOPE	Brief Religious Coping Scale
RPSS	Religious Problem Solving Scale
RRICC	Respect, Responsibility, Integrity, Competency, and Concern Model
SD	Standard Deviation
SEDLEI	Self-Efficacy in Dealing with Legal and Ethical Issues
SIWB	Spirituality Index of Well-Being
UKM	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
UM	Universiti Malaya
UMS	Universiti Malaysia Sabah
UMT	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
UNITAR	UNITAR International University
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
UPSI	Universiti Perguruan Sultan Idris
USIM	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia
UTM	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
UUM	Universiti Utara Malaysia
VIF	Variance of Inflation Factor
ZPRED	Standardized Predicted Values
ZRESID	Standardized Residual

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Those who have dedicated their lives to helping others have struggled with ethical issues.” (Stein, 1990, p.1.)

1.1 Chapter Introduction

Counselors hold certain principles, concepts, theories, and personal qualities as backbone of their counseling practices. One of the principles is the adherence to ethics as stated in the Act 580 (Malaysian Counselor Act, 1998). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) requires all trainee counselors to obtain demonstrated knowledge in eight core areas: (a) professional counseling orientation and ethical practice; (b) social and cultural diversity; (c) human growth and development; (d) career development; (e) counseling and helping relationships; (f) group counseling and group work; (g) assessment and testing; and (h) research and program evaluation (CACREP, 2016).

One of the core areas which is closely related to the current research is ‘professional counseling orientation and ethical practice.’ The enumeration of ethical codes enables a group of people and those served by the members of the group to make justification on the ethical responsibilities performed in common (Freeman, 2000). It is necessary to maintain our decency and to follow the standard guidelines set by the counseling professions (Mohd Jaladin & Lau, 2013). Mat Rani, Wan Jaafar, and Mohd Noah (2017) found that registered counselors in Malaysia project better ethical behaviors and have more ethics awareness and compliance compared to non-registered counselors. This creates more curiosity on the trainee counselors’ ethical knowledge, ethical identity, and ethical commitment.

Thus, the context of ethics in counseling is elaborated further in the next chapter and this chapter presents the foundation knowledge of current research encompassing research context, research objectives, research hypotheses, significance of research, and the definitions of all significant terms used in the research. It is necessary to present the basic essence of research to enhance understanding of the entire research.

1.2 Research Background

According to Mohd Jaladin and Lau (2013), ethics is defined as a traditional philosophy branch which involves evaluation of humans' behaviors and it is crucial to categorize those behaviors either as 'right' or 'wrong'. They also mentioned that the decision-making process needs moral reasoning abilities and specific ethical guidelines. According to Zakaria (2013), ethics are the ideal standards set and enforced by professionals who regulate the counseling profession.

Bersoff (1975) mentioned that codes of ethics are formed based on the professionals' points of view and rarely formed based on the ideas and opinions given by the clients who receive counseling professional services. This scenario clearly shows the importance of considering ideas given by both users and providers of counseling service in producing codes of ethics. It is practically significant to be mindful that the counseling professionals, who practice ethical codes, possess counseling experiences, and counseling knowledge are able to build trust in their clients.

Bokhari, Saadan, Mohd Pilus, Syed Hassan, Jano, Mohd Ishak, and Mahmud (2014) stated that codes of ethics encompass with elements of positive and negative behaviors among the society. These elements should be clarified by the society and enforced by the law. Protection of confidentiality and informed consent are among the issues discussed in forming counseling ethical guidelines. Besides the formation of ethical guidelines, Mullen, Lambie, and Collen (2014) shared the idea of developing legal and ethical issues in counseling self-efficacy scale which will measure trainee counselors' preparedness in dealing with ethical issues.

Mullen, Lambie, and Collen (2014) mentioned that ethics involves decision-making process; and in the context of counseling setting, ethics is an interactional process which needs counselors' confidence and knowledge in making right decisions. The research by Mullen et al. (2014) also highlighted about the importance of integrating ethical knowledge into clinical work. The process of preparing insightful counselors is worthy of attention in the counseling practice, especially in facing ethical and legal issues. Furthermore, codes of ethics govern the principles of ethical behaviors and punishment for misbehaviors which are addressed to its members (Welfel, 2013). This is when legal and ethics merge to form a new area of interest.

The growing interest in the area of ethics has built confusion between legal and ethical issues. There are many cases have been reported related to legal and

ethical issues in counseling. Stein (1990) mentioned about few famous classic cases in one of his books entitled "Ethical Issues in Counseling". One of the issues explained by Stein (1990) is Tarasoff case. The Tarasoff case which occurred in California has changed the counseling professions' views on the importance of being ethical and understanding the ethical context. The psychologist, Dr. Lawrence Moore was the major source of ethical confusion in the Tarasoff case. Dr. Lawrence Moore failed to warn intended victim regarding Mr. Poddar's intention to kill Miss Tatiana Tarasoff. Mr. Poddar loved Miss Tarasoff and they dissolved their relationship after several dates. Mr. Poddar obsessed, started stalking Miss Tarasoff, and later met a psychologist few times due to emotional crisis. Mr. Poddar made his true intention and killed Miss Tatiana Tarasoff. Here, the psychologist was charged to be negligent because he failed to notify the police and victim's parents regarding Mr. Poddar's intention to kill Miss Tatiana Tarasoff.

Another example related to ethical issues in counseling is Miranda Warning. The Miranda Warning which was established in 1966 consists of statement of rights given to an arrested person (Stein, 1990). This statement clearly reflects the comparison between the utilization of Miranda Warnings which is for defendants and informed consent which is for clients. Counselors who failed to obey the counseling ethical guidelines shall be facing the Miranda Warnings too.

Furthermore, Stein (1990) shared about "Buffalo News", Western New York's daily newspaper which reported about an interesting issue in the year of 1988. The story was about a few doctors who used genetic materials obtained from their leukemia patient. The doctors did not request permission from their patient and were doing research on the patient's genetic materials. Moreover, the patient was coming for appointments almost for seven years and the doctors continued taking additional specimens for their further personal and professional gains. Finally, the doctors successfully achieved the goals of their research and made an agreement with a pharmaceutical and bioengineering company, subsequently received royalties. The patient became aware of the doctors' activities and charged them for using him as the sample of their research without his prior permission. This incident reminds us about the importance of informed consent as the Californian court mentioned that the conception of informed consent evolves from the ethical concepts such as dignity and privacy (Stein, 1990).

Trainee counselors and counseling professionals ought to know about these cases as reflection of the ethical standards held in the society and it is crucial for trainee counselors to take rational decisions in every ethical dilemma. Besides informed consent and confidentiality, ethical issues are also resulted

due to other various complications and these issues have been raised in multiple professional settings such as conferences and workshops (Mohd Isyak, Amat, & Abu Bakar, 2012). For instance, the ethical issue involving an anti-gay counseling student which occurred in 2012 was a major case that has alarmed all the trainee and registered counselors. This recent case involved a trainee counselor, Miss Jennifer Keeton who was a former graduate student at Augusta State University (ASU), Georgia, United States of America. Miss Keeton had negative views and perceptions on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and according to her, LGBT is not in favor with the teachings of Christianity. Miss Keeton holds strong religious values and thus, she refused to alter her beliefs although she knew that counselors should not impose their own values on clients and should accept every client as a whole. The decision of the judge in this lawsuit was not in Miss Keeton's favor. Miss Julea Ward, a former Eastern Michigan University (EMU) student also experienced the similar issue. She was expelled from the counseling program due to her negative views on LGBT and refused to provide counseling services to LGBT clients.

In Malaysia, the ethics knowledge among counselors is found to be at moderate level and it is essential for them to increase their ethics knowledge to ensure effective delivery of counseling services (Mat Rani, Wan Jaafar, Mohd Noah, Ghazali, & Mahmud, 2017). Trainee counselors should understand about the nature of counseling profession, obstacles, and circumstances that may occur to avoid misunderstandings with clients and to face ethical issues confidently. The Malaysian Counselors Act (1998) acts as a legal resource that provides guidelines and protects the counselors and clients within Malaysian setting. It has eight components (Mohd Isyak et al., 2012) and two of these are related to the current research. The eight components are: (a) Preliminary; (b) The Board of Counselors; (c) The Malaysian Counselors Advisory Council; (d) Registration of Counselors and Practicing Certificates; (e) Bodies Corporate Practicing as Counselors; (f) Disciplinary Proceedings; (g) Offenses and Penalties; and (h) Miscellaneous. The two components that are closely related to the current research are Disciplinary Proceedings and Offenses and Penalties. Counselors and trainee counselors have to refer to Malaysian Counselors Act (1998) not only when they are facing legal and ethical issues, but when they would want to study and practice counseling.

Besides Malaysian Counselor Act (1998), there are a few organizations that work to hold the standard of counseling profession and till today, they are striving to maintain our own counseling professional identity. The Board of Counselors (Malaysia) has introduced the ethical framework as the guidance for counselors in the country. The ethical outlines consist of six golden principles which are autonomy, justice, beneficence, non-maleficence, fidelity, and veracity (Ismail, 2012; Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2011; Houser,

Wilczenski, & Ham, 2006; Bokhari et al., 2014; Mohd Isyak et al., 2012; Mohamed, 2000).

These principles can be used as guidelines when dealing with legal and ethical issues in counseling and they are considered as basic moral principles that guide trainee counselors in the decision making process. Autonomy refers to liberation where clients have freedom to be self-governing within the framework of their own society and culture; while non-maleficence refers to trainee counselors' behaviors and actions that do not harm or hurt the clients. Beneficence is the trainee counselors' practice that promotes the welfare of clients while justice is being fair and giving equal treatment to every client. Next, fidelity refers to keeping promises and making of realistic commitments to build therapeutic relationship with clients (Mohd Isyak et al., 2012). Finally, veracity refers to being honest to build trust which is essential in therapeutic counselor-client relationship.

In addition, International Counseling Association of Malaysia (PERKAMA International) has addressed the ethical knowledge too. The PERKAMA International is an official Malaysian based counseling association that focuses on counseling profession and practices. It also provides seminars, conferences, trainings, stands as a platform for counselors to acquire necessary information regarding counselors' codes of conducts, and help counselors deal with problems including legal and ethical issues (Mohd Isyak et al., 2012). Furthermore, PERKAMA International promotes the professional development of its experts, provides professional resources to help community with the mental and social health issues, and strengthens networking among members across disciplines and career stages (PERKAMA International, 2017).

The Board of Counselors (Malaysia) and the PERKAMA International are developed and based in Malaysia. Besides these two local entities, there are two other international organizations which are significant in the counseling field. The American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American Psychological Association (APA) have their respective codes of ethics too. The APA has introduced Respect, Responsibility, Integrity, Competency, and Concern (RRICC) Model: A model of ethics that highlights top five ethical values which are associated with ethics codes.

The top five ethical values help trainee counselors to navigate the challenges of being professional helpers. Besides the top five ethical values, Garfield, Isacco, and Sahker (2013) mentioned that spirituality and religiosity are also effective coping behaviors that can be used in facing any dilemmas. The study on essence of spirituality, religiosity, and one more variable which is multicultural

competency would be the main focus of the current research. Spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency may help trainee counselors enhance their SEDLEI in counseling. Spirituality is being studied more and being highlighted frequently especially in recent decades (Gladding, 2013). Spirituality can be blossomed in every trainee counselor and used as a foundation for counseling services rendered.

The Association of Spirituality, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) highlighted few competencies to address issues regarding spirituality and religiosity (Cashwell & Watts, 2010). The establishment of two new competencies by ASERVIC which are spirituality and religiosity shows the necessity of integrating them into counseling practice. Mohd Dagang, Raja Ibrahim, and Abu Bakar (2014) reported that there are only four higher education institutions that offer counseling courses related to religion in Malaysia and they are all focused on Islam. The studies relevant to spiritual competencies are also very limited. Religion practices in counseling such as reciting Al-Quran has already being implemented by registered counselors in Malaysia. However, counselors still face problems in applying religion elements in counseling because they think that religion matters are too sensitive to be discussed in counseling sessions (Hamjah & Muhamad Arib, 2015).

Thus, it is crucial for trainee counselors to keep abreast with the information relevant to spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency to ensure productivity in counseling. Trainee counselors also should keep abreast with the counseling related information provided by established counseling organizations such as the Board of Counselors (Malaysia), PERKAMA International, ACA, and APA as trainee counselors should be competent in dealing with legal and ethical issues in counseling. Since counselors and trainee counselors are abide by laws and ethical standards, it is compulsory to follow the codes of ethics when dealing with legal and ethical issues or otherwise they will have to face the penalties by law. This research provided opportunity to evaluate influence of spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency on trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues. According to Mullen, Lambie, and Conley (2014), counselors' self-efficacy affect the accuracy and decision-making in ethical issues. The current research focuses on trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues. However, the idea of using self-efficacy stems from Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura.

Bandura's triadic reciprocal causation revealed that a person's behaviors are influenced by social environment, personal forces, and overt behaviors. Thus, a conclusion can be made that self-efficacy is a powerful agent that influences

one's overt behaviors and one's adaptation in an environment. Curry, Arbuthnot, and Witherspoon-Arnold (2015) stated that efficacious counselors would be able to succeed in any new or difficult task they enroll. People who have high self-efficacy would view dilemmas as challenges rather than obstacles (Sawyer, Peters, & Willis, 2013).

Moreover, efficacious individual would exercise handling threatening situations to gain control over those situations (Sawyer et al., 2013). Therefore, efficacious trainee counselors probably would be able to face legal and ethical issues, subsequently make appropriate decisions. Moreover, it can be concluded that spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency have positive impact on trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues. Spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency may improve trainee counselors' performance during the challenging period of dealing with legal and ethical issues.

1.3 Research Context

This research implemented a quantitative approach. It evolved around the context of ethics in counseling followed by three independent variables which are spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency. This research also focused on self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI) as one of the significant measures needed by trainee counselors to confront with legal and ethical issues.

1.4 Problem Statement

Limited research on trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with ethical and legal issues warrants further research and it is considered as the research gap that would be filled by the current researcher. Mullen et al. (2014) conducted a pioneer research and mentioned that there is no assessment used to identify trainee counselors' confidence in dealing with legal and ethical issues. Furthermore, there is lack of studies performed on the influence of spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency on trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI). This could be due to the complexity of ethics as Mullen et al. (2014) described ethical and legal issues as complex and cover a large number of topics.

In addition, there is lack of proper and clear solutions to the ethical dilemmas (Hill, 2004; Zakaria, 2013; Zakaria & Warren, 2016). Thus, this research revealed the idea of incorporating spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency into the counselor education syllabus. The idea of incorporating spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency would help to prepare trainee counselors and future counselors to deal with legal and ethical issues

effectively by boosting their level of self-efficacy. To date, there are many local higher learning institutions offer counselor education training programs in Malaysia. Unfortunately, some of the programs still do not meet the standard learning hours as required by the Board of Counselors (Malaysia) (Mohd Ishak et al., 2012). Some of the counselor education training programs are now in the process of upgrading their total number of learning hours from 36 credit hours to 48 credit hours due to the benchmark set by the Board of Counselors (Malaysia) (Mohd Ishak et al., 2012). This implementation is necessary and pivotal to meet the needs of counseling professionalism in Malaysia (Mohd Ishak et al., 2012). Revolution in counseling education training program would provide knowledge focusing on clear solutions to the ethical issues.

In addition, W. Ahmad, Baru, and Othman (2013) shared that there are numerous issues and problems faced by human beings due to misinterpretations of spiritual and religious elements, especially in Malaysia. Spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency are important elements that should be planted in the heart of every trainee counselor in providing a holistic approach especially when dealing with legal and ethical issues in counseling. Curry et al. (2015) further stated that there are individuals who could not afford to digest element such as religiosity due to their social world which is accumulated with the spectrums of racism, caste system, and classism. According to Clair and Denis (2015), racism is defined as domination that occurs when a superior racial group is used to prescribe social status of other racial groups. Meanwhile caste system refers to humans' power in society and their position in the division of labor (Riswan, 2014). The spectrum of social classes in society is divided into three which are lower class, middle class, and upper class (Riswan, 2014). Finally, classism refers to a system that ranks people based on economic status, level of education, job, and family lineage (Brantley, Frost, Pfeffer, Buccigrossi, & Robinson, 2003). People who work for the dominant group are being controlled, work for wages, and make the dominant group's living.

Furthermore, counseling profession in Malaysia has transited from infancy to pubescence stage (Chin & Kok-Mun, 2010). However, many challenges still remained. Trainee counselors should put effort to prepare and be competent especially in coming years, as it would be more challenging due to technological advancements, job demand, and growth in population. According to Chin and Kok-Mun (2010), trainee counselors need to be mindful of personal and professional challenges by acquiring good counseling skills, knowledgeable, and have strength to meet the new expectations of counseling profession. Thus, it is crucial for trainee counselors to have elements of spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency as they are essential in the future counselors' holistic development.

The next issue as per current situation is that the counselor education system, syllabus, facilities, and professionalism of counselor educators are quite different at all public and private universities. The first psychology counseling program was introduced by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in 1979 (Hisham Ismail, 2011) and one year later, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) introduced pure counseling program focusing on school counseling services. Next, the International Counseling Association of Malaysia (PERKAMA International) was established in 1982 followed by enactment of Malaysian Counselors Act (580) in 1998. All these initiatives involved professionals from the public universities. Moreover, public universities offer more opportunities for time off for research purposes and research funding compared to private universities (Wai, 2013). Thus, this reflects the need of more research involving trainee counselors and clients at private in a more effective and efficient way.

Furthermore, there should be balanced focus on both private and public universities to enhance the collaboration of both parties in developing and enhancing the practice of counseling. The counseling entities need to play significant role in educating counselors, trainee counselors, and public about their rights in counseling and also about the entire process of counseling. Every positive move by the counseling professionals would lead to the growth of counseling field in Malaysia and eventually increase the public's confidence for the services rendered by the counselors.

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are as follows:

- (a) To measure the level of spirituality, religiosity, multicultural competency, and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI) among respondents;
- (b) To examine the relationship between spirituality, religiosity, multicultural competency, and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI);
- (c) To determine the variables that influence respondents' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI)

1.6 Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

- (a) What is the level of spirituality among respondents?
- (b) What is the level of religiosity among respondents?

- (c) What is the level of multicultural competency among respondents?
- (d) What is level of self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI) among respondents?
- (e) Is there any significant relationship between spirituality and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI)?
- (f) Is there any significant relationship between religiosity and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI)?
- (g) Is there any significant relationship between multicultural competency and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI)?
- (h) Which variables influence respondents' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI)?

1.7 Research Hypotheses

The research questions are tested by the following hypotheses:

- H₁: There is significant relationship between spirituality and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI).
- H₂: There is significant relationship between religiosity and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI).
- H₃: There is significant relationship between multicultural competency and self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI).
- H₄: There is significant influence of spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency on respondents' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI).

1.8 Research Significance

This research provided the idea of incorporating spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency into real self of trainee counselors. Trainee counselors should instill spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency to enhance their self- development as trainee counselors before stepping into the real counseling settings. Many researchers have been studying about the idea of integrating spirituality, religiosity and multicultural competency into counseling since decades ago (Corey, 2006; Plumb, 2011). The implementation occurred gradually and today, it is evident that the need to prepare counselors who are competent in the aspects of spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency are growingly becoming a reality (W. Ahmad, Baru, & Othman, 2013). The implementation would eventually help trainee counselors to understand the importance of spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency in providing clients with therapeutic helping sessions. In addition, this research hopefully can assist trainee counselors to become aware of the need to be efficacious. Trainee counselors should understand that the higher level of self-efficacy can prepare them to become better decision makers,

provide them more confidence to deal with ethical issues, and finally make them feel competent to tackle any issues presented by their clients.

Conducting counseling sessions without certain level of self-efficacy would deteriorate trainee counselors' performance. According to Bandura, it is always true that well-prepared counselors will show greater self-efficacy when dealing with legal and ethical issues (Sawyer et al., 2013). Efficacious counselors would also be able to stand and fight for justice despite any circumstances and challenges. Moreover, this research provided insights that in the current modernized world, basic personal qualities are just not sufficient to produce good trainee counselors. Each day, clients are facing with more life challenges and extraordinary issues. Therefore, trainee counselors need to be well-prepared to infuse other core domains such as spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency within themselves and throughout their helping services. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the task of incorporating spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency within self is not only a practice but it also involves trainee counselors' effort in understanding the clients' expectations and current trend of issues brought by clients.

Spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency are miracle qualities that trainee counselors should instill within them to tackle clients' situational and developmental problems. The current research hopefully can be part of future literature reviews where it shall enhance the future researchers' knowledge to produce innovative strategies to help trainee counselors deal with clients. Counseling professionals can improve the counselor education training programs by integrating spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency to prepare trainee counselors deal with various profession challenges. In the current research, the researcher does not intend to change the counselor education system. However, the researcher would like to add some opinions in improving the existing knowledge in counselor education training programs especially in the area of legal and ethics in counseling.

Moreover, this research hopefully can change trainee counselors' perspectives on the integration of spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency in counseling. There are possibilities for trainee counselors to focus on the skills they have mastered and their understanding about counseling theories, rather than reflecting on their personal values. This research focused on the spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency. Thus, the current research can help trainee counselors to balance their focus on every aspect of counseling and finally, understand about trainee counselors' own spiritual, religion, and multicultural competency elements. Additionally, this research can contribute to the benefit of trainee counselors, counselors, and society. Counselors and trainee counselors would get to know about the relationship

between self-efficacy and spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency. This knowledge is essential to enhance society's understanding about counseling and future researchers may invent new formulation and theory to experience the revolution of counseling ethics education.

1.9 Definition of Terms

The researcher has defined the main terms used throughout the research to enhance the understanding on what have been presented in writing. The terms are as follows:

1.9.1 Spirituality

Spirituality involves an active search of a person to become connected with the Supreme Being and to find meaning of life (Gladding, 2013). Post and Wade (2014) defined spirituality as one's feelings, behaviors, and thoughts as a result from a search for the sacred. While Dalmida, Holstad, Dilorio, and Laderman (2012) mentioned that spirituality is a person's search for purpose and meaning of life which involves transcendence, self-transcendence, and a personal connection with the highest power.

In the context of current research, spirituality is measured based on trainee counselors' self-efficacy and life-scheme. Spirituality Index of Well-Being (SIWB) is used to measure trainee counselors' perceptions of their spiritual quality of life.

1.9.2 Religiosity

Religion is defined as an individual's behaviors, thoughts, and experiences as a result from a search for sacred that gets support and validation from a society (Post & Wade, 2014). According to Dalmida et al. (2012), religiosity is associated with worship that is organized by a group of people. Moreover, Ault (2010) defined religiosity as cultural and social beliefs that involve traditions and rituals.

In the context of current research, religiosity is measured based on trainee counselors' interpersonal and intrapersonal religious commitment. The Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10) is used to measure to what extend trainee counselors address their religious beliefs.

1.9.3 Multicultural Competency

Multicultural competency is associated with the differences between counselors and clients and those differences can be the result of traumatic life events, socialization, or ethnic environment (Gladding, 2013). Furthermore, Nelson-Jones (2009) stated that multicultural counseling involves clients from various cultures, different levels of assimilation, and they can differ from the counselors in the aspect of race, social class, biological sex, marital status, gender role identity, sexual and affectionate orientation, values, physical disability, religion or philosophy, and age.

In the context of current research, multicultural competency is defined as trainee counselors' self-perceived awareness and knowledge about multicultural counseling. Trainee counselors' awareness of multicultural competencies in counseling is measured using Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS).

1.9.4 Self-Efficacy in Dealing with Legal and Ethical Issues (SEDLEI)

Maples and Luzzo (2005) defined self-efficacy as an individual's beliefs regarding his or her ability to accomplish a task successfully. On the other hand, Mullen et al. (2014) stated that self-efficacy is a powerful agent that affects counselors' decision making during stressful situation. Self-efficacy is also defined as an individual's determination about his or her ability to complete a task given successfully (Curry et al., 2015).

In this research, trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI) reflects their preparedness in handling legal and ethical issues in counseling. The researcher used Ethical and Legal Issues in Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale (ELICES) to measure trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues. They are measured based on three factors: (a) general ethical and legal issues in counseling self-efficacy; (b) suicide, violence, abuse, and neglect self-efficacy; and (c) counselor development and wellness self-efficacy.

1.10 Research Limitations

Firstly, the respondents participated in this research were from private universities. There was limited number of counseling students studying at masters' level in private universities in Malaysia. A total of three private universities participated in the research. Thus, the research scope was smaller and the results represented a smaller group of students compared to the bigger

number of counseling students studying at masters' level in public universities. Next, there were limited previous studies conducted to examine trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues. The sources to support trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI) based on the three domains which are spirituality, religiosity, and multicultural competency were not many as compared to general self-efficacy studies. Furthermore, the term 'self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues (SEDLEI)' itself may create confusion to many readers as it reflects multiple contexts such as self-efficacy, legal, and ethics.

Moreover, the four variables which are spirituality, religiosity, multicultural competency, and SEDLEI are measured based on one instrument each. A total of four instruments were used and the suitability of instruments used for the current research should be revised. There are many other instruments that can be used to measure these variables and may yield better results as compared to the current findings.

1.11 Chapter Conclusion

The focus of this research is to identify variables that influence trainee counselors' self-efficacy in dealing with legal and ethical issues. Thus, this chapter provided overall view of the research. It is essential to present the objectives and significance of a research before describing other published research. Furthermore, the researcher identified research hypotheses, research questions, and described about the important terms that are used throughout the writing of current research. Researcher also shared about various ethical related cases and the entities that play significant role in developing the noble counseling profession.

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