

# Counsellor's Resilience as a Moderator in the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy among Trainee Counsellors

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This study aims to identify the emotional intelligence, resilience and self-efficacy of trainee counsellors who have taken internship courses at the selected organisations. Emotional intelligence plays an important role in assisting counsellor trainees to provide effective counselling services (Clemons, 2017) and is also linked to the counsellors' ability to provide effective counselling services by applying counselling skills in the session. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to identify emotional intelligence and self-efficacy of counsellor trainees as well as to determine resilience as a moderator between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in trainee counsellors. A questionnaire was distributed to 118 respondents at public universities (UA) which offer counselling programs. In order to measure emotional intelligence, the Emotional Intelligence Self-Description Inventory (EISDI) questionnaire developed by Groves et al., (2008) was used. Trainee counsellors resilience was measured using the Resilience Scale by Wagnild and Young (2003), while trainee counsellors self-efficacy was measured using the Counsellor Activities Self Efficacy Scale by Lent, Hill & Hoffman (2003). These three questionnaires were translated using the back to back translation method. The findings show that the level of resilience and self-efficacy among trainee counsellors is moderate, while their level of emotional intelligence is high. Pearsons' analysis shows that emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with self-efficacy. However, self-efficacy does not have a buffer affect in the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. The findings of this study are expected to be the starting point for producing



exercises that emphasise emotional intelligence and counsellor's self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** *Emotional intelligence, Self Efficacy, Resilience, Counsellor Trainees.*

## **Introduction**

Emotion is deemed to be the main component in counselling. Effective counsellors not only rely on the ability to identify, reflect, assist and manage clients' emotions but also to manage their own emotions as well. Emotional intelligence can be identified as an individual's ability to identify and manage one's emotions as well as to motivate and identify others' emotions by developing friendly relationships with them (Goleman 1998). Whereas Muda, Ishak and Yusof (2014) state that emotional intelligence is a set of competencies or skills based on emotion which enables one to manage life properly. Intelligence can be defined as the ability (i) to examine one's own emotions in order to know and evaluate one's self, (ii) to use those tendencies to guide or facilitate towards goal attainment, (iii) to recognise the feelings, needs, desires, problems or frustrations of others, (iv) to recognise the importance of religious values as pioneers of life, and (vi) to use life experiences (self or client) as guidance in solving problems.

Knowledge of emotion is developed through experience and a counsellor's ability to identify clients' complex emotions within themselves. This knowledge as well as the ability to apply and understand emotional content is the key to the main therapeutic construct in counselling which is known as empathy. Mayor and Salovey (1997) embrace that individuals with high emotional intelligence are capable of managing their own emotions as well as others.

Previous studies have supported that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among counsellors (Clemons, 2017). Trainee counsellors acquire competencies and counselling skills through training as well as learn the ability to apply this knowledge in various stages involved, such as in attending skills, reflection and conclusions during counselling sessions (Easton, Martin & Wilsson, 2008; Ivey, Packard & Ivey, 2006). The enhancement of a counsellor's competence and skills is based on the counsellor's ability to understand basic assumptions about human emotional intelligence. A study conducted by Bedwell (2002) shows that a counsellor's emotional intelligence is higher than that of others in a normative sample. Easton, Martin and Wilsson (2008) also conclude that counsellor emotional intelligence has a significant relationship with counsellor self-efficacy.

Counsellor self-efficacy is the counsellor's perception of their ability to successfully conduct counselling sessions with clients and exhibit appropriate behaviours as a counsellor (Lent, Hoffman, Hill, Treistman, Mount & Singley, 2006). Therefore, an effective counsellor is a



counsellor who is capable of adapting in the counselling profession and is skilled in applying counselling skills such as focusing behaviour, interpretation and reflection that were utilised during sessions.

There are several factors that affect emotional intelligence, such as the ability to identify emotions, to express emotions and to use emotion to solve problems. These factors are predictors of counsellor self-efficacy. The ability to understand and evaluate emotions helps in creating appropriate emotions in producing clients' desired behaviours as well as dealing with clients' emotional-related issues is key to an effective counselling process. (Bedwell, 2002; Martin, Easton, Wilson, Takemoto & Sullivan, 2004). Counsellors need to be prepared to deal with challenges that will emerge from the process of building relationships with clients until the intervention process as the main purpose of this process is to assist clients in understanding their problems.

Research or study on counsellors self-resilience is very limited. Self-resilience is one of the factors that provides a helping hand in the adaptation process when an individual is facing challenges in life. A study conducted by Wang (2009) found that individuals with high self-resilience have better coping abilities. Kinman and Grant (2011) conclude that emotional intelligence will help in improving self-resilience and enhance one's psychological well-being at the same time.

Internship is one of the compulsory courses in a counselling program. It is where trainee counsellors will face real challenges in handling and giving counselling services to clients in an organisation. Therefore, the effectiveness of the session will depend or rely on the ability of the trainee counsellors to apply the skills learned in class. In addition, as Clemons (2017) has suggested, the effectiveness of counselling sessions is determined not only by the skills but also by the emotional intelligence and self-resilience possessed by the counsellor trainees.

### **Statement of Problem**

In Malaysia, the importance of the counselling profession has been demonstrated through the establishment of the Counselling Act 580 (1998) as well as the emergence of counselling programs at public universities. The purpose of this program is mainly to produce efficient and effective counsellors that are capable of providing proper counselling services. Therefore, in training as a counsellor is important to strengthen counselling competencies among counselling students so as to ensure clients can be helped in a more efficient manner (Ghazali, Noah, Jaafar & Hassan, 2017). Nor, Jaladin, Yusof and Sumari (2017) revealed that emotional intelligence is an important component needed for a trainee counsellors' personal self-development as they need to deliver counselling services to their clients professionally. This is evident when there are indiscretions and absences in counselling services due to poor emotional



intelligence and lack of counselling skills as well as counsellor's own qualities (Nasir, 2011; Hashim & Amnah, 2005). In line with this, Mansor and Yusoff (2013) emphasise that understanding of personal growth and development are essential both for education and training purposes of future counsellors. However, studies on the development of personal training of counsellors are still limited (Mansor & Yusoff, 2013; Grafanaki, 2010).

## **Literature Review**

### ***Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy***

Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as the ability of individuals to understand the thoughts, feelings and emotions of themselves and others. Emotional intelligence can be seen as the potential that individuals acquire which enables them to recognise and manage their own feelings and those of others properly as well as be able to motivate themselves (Goleman, 2001). Emotional intelligence is the most important aspect in terms of human evaluation or assessment. Goleman (1998) argues that emotional intelligence is the strongest indicator of an individual's success in life, i.e. 80 percent, while the remaining 20 percent comes from intellectual intelligence.

Goleman (2001) has proposed the Emotional Intelligence Model that demonstrates the integration of several key components, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. The combination of these components is important as it can enhance the capabilities of the individual and the organisation as a whole (Goleman, 2001). This model has been supported by several previous studies indicating that emotional intelligence plays an important role in handling and resolving conflict such as marriage (Zadeh & Tabrizi, 2014; Agha, Mokhtaree, Sayadi, Nazer & Mosavi, 2012; Shatte et al., 2011), job performance and job satisfaction (Cafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008; Sy, Tram & O'Hara, 2006).

In addition, studies by Gharetepeh, Safari, Ashaei, Razaee and Kajbaf (2015) show that emotional intelligence is positively associated with self-efficacy, whereas emotional intelligence can generate positive reactions in life. Dev, Kamalden, Geok, Abdullah, Job and Ismail (2018) explain that emotional intelligence can help individuals to develop attitudes that will reduce disruption of self-efficacy through emotional control.

Other previous studies have also shown that emotional intelligence levels affect an individual's self-efficacy (Maulod, Piaw, Ahmad & Wei, 2017; Gupta, 2012; Nasir, 2011). However, studies on the relationship between emotional intelligence, skills competence and personal development are still limited only to counselling teachers (Nasir, 2011) and trainee counsellors (Ghazali et al., 2017). This can be clearly shown as many researchers argue that the effectiveness of a counsellor comes from a combination of personal exploration, skills and



personnel development as well as knowledge (Nasir, 2011; Welfel, 2006; Siron, 2004). A study by Easton, Martin and Wilson (2008) on 118 professional counsellors and trainee counsellors suggested that emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are significantly related. The findings also show that professional counsellors and trainee counsellors with high emotional intelligence are more likely to consider themselves capable and competent in counselling skills.

### ***Resilience as a Moderator***

Resilience is complex and multifaceted trait which refers to an individual's ability to cope with high environmental pressures, demands and pressures without negative effects (Kinman & Grant, 2011). People with low resilience will either have unhealthy behaviours or negative beliefs about themselves when facing difficulties in their lives (Smokowski, Reynolds & Bezruczko, 1999).

Several studies have shown that self-resilience/resilience plays an important role in predicting various aspects of life. Undoubtedly, previous findings have shown that self-resilience/resilience is negatively associated with physical and mental health (Grossman, 2014; Hjemdal, Vogel, Solem, Hagen, & Stiles, 2011; Garcia & Calvo, 2012; Wagnild & Collins, 2009). Consistent with previous studies, self-resilience is also positively associated with life satisfaction (White, Driver & Warren, 2012; Liu, Wang & Li, 2012) and self-efficacy (Caltabiano & Caltabiano, 2006).

In addition, self-resilience is also considered to have a buffer effect on risk factors and negative life impacts (Kashyap, Kumar & Krishna, 2014) especially in challenging work environments (Howard, 2008). In the context of social work, self-resilience is a key factor in dealing with work-related stress and thus minimises the risk of injury (Stanley, Mettilda & Arumugam, 2018). In accordance, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), explains that the way individuals deal with stress is determined by their assessment of the available resources in order to meet the demands. The basic principle of this model is that the interaction between demands and individual factors will determine emotional outcomes as well as achievement (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Recent findings have proven that self-resilience/resilience acts as a source of minimisation in a stressor-strain relationship, where individuals that have high self-resilience will attain more positive experiences as well as constructive cognitive processes and thus generate active responses in social, flexible and self-efficacy (Izquierdo, Riskey, Garcia & Tebar, 2018; Austin, 2017; Lanz & Bruk-Lee, 2017; Wei, Sh goals & Qibo, 2011). However, there are also inconsistent findings in previous studies which clearly state that self-resilience does not act as a moderating factor (Vinothkumar & Prasad, 2016). A study by Clemons (2017) on trainee

counsellors also shows that self-resilience does not act as a moderator in the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy.

### ***Research Questions***

The research questions of this study are:

1. What are the levels of resilience, emotional intelligence and counsellor activity self-efficacy among trainee counsellors?
2. Is there a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and counsellor activity self-efficacy among trainee counsellors?
3. Are resilience and emotional intelligence significant predictors of counsellor activity self-efficacy among trainee counsellors?
4. Does resilience act as a moderator in the relationship between emotional intelligence and counsellor activity self-efficacy among trainee counsellors?

### **Research Methodology**

#### ***Sample***

This study is a survey-based study using a set of questionnaires. This study was conducted at public universities which offer counselling programs, namely Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) and Bestari University College (UCB). The purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of samples based on the specified criteria. Based on this specific criteria, 118 counselling students who are undergoing counselling practicum were selected as respondents of this study.

#### ***Instrument***

##### ***Section A (Demography)***

The first section of the questionnaire emphasises the respondent's demographic information which includes age, gender, race, religion, place of internship as well as theory used/chosen by the counsellor trainee.

##### ***Section B (Brief Resilience Scale)***

The Brief Resilience Scale that is developed by Smith, Dalen, Wiggins, Tooley, Christopher and Bernard (2008) was used in this study. The scale consists of six items, three positive items (items 1, 3 & 5) and three negative items (items 2, 4 & 6). Self-efficacy was measured using the Five Likert scale, from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (Example item: "I tend



to recover quickly after experiencing a problem”). Smith, et al. (2008) also reported reliability towards The Brief Resilience Scale was good with Cronbach alpha values of 0.80 to 0.91. Nevertheless, the Brief Resilience Scale reliability coefficient in this study was 0.50. out of 10 items. However, Pallant (2001) has stated that a Cronbach alpha of 0.50 is considered good for instruments with less than 10 items.

### ***Section C (Emotional Intelligence Self-Description Inventory)***

Emotional intelligence was measured using 24 items from the Emotional Intelligence Self-Description Inventory (EISDI) which was developed by Groves, McEnrue and Shen (2008). The instrument is comprised of four stages, namely emotional perception and assessment, the use of emotion to facilitate thinking, emotional understanding and emotional control management. Respondents were asked to rate on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (Example item: "I can often imagine what others might think"). Higher scores obtained on each scale indicate higher levels of emotional intelligence. The reliability coefficient for the Emotional Intelligence Self-Description Inventory in this study was 0.91.

### ***Section D (Counsellor Activity Self Efficacy Scale)***

The Counsellor Activity Self Efficacy Scale (Lent, Hill, & Hoffman, 2003) was used in this study to measure the level of self-efficacy of a counsellor consisting of three sections, namely Part I (Helping Skills), Part II (Counselling Session Management) and Part III (Counselling Challenge). Part I (Helping Skills) consists of 15 items, namely cognitive skills (6 items), exploratory skills (5 items) and action skills (4 items). Part II (Counselling Session Management) has 10 items that assess the ability to handle the flow of counselling sessions. Part III (Counselling Challenge) consists of 10 items meant for relationship conflict and six items for distress clients. Respondents were asked to rate their confidence in their ability to practice each skill using 10 Likert scales ranging from 0 (not confident) to 9 (very confident) (Example: "Help your clients explore their thoughts, feelings, and actions"). Higher scores indicate higher confidence in one's counselling ability. In accordance with Lent, Hill and Hoffman (2003), the reliability coefficient for the Counsellor Activities Self Efficacy Scale in the study was 0.97.

## Research Findings

### *Descriptive Analysis*

#### *Respondent Demographic*

The study involved 118 respondents consisting of 94 men (79.7%) and 24 women (20.3%) who were undergoing an internship at various organisations. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 24 and 26, which was 86 in total (72.9%). Meanwhile, this study also involved 26 respondents (22.0%) aged 21 to 23 and six respondents (6.1%) aged 27 to 29 years. The majority of respondents are Malay (108) (91.5%), and 2 were Chinese (4.2%). In addition, the study also involved 4 Indian respondents (3.4%) and 1 respondent (0.9%) from Sabah. Furthermore, the distribution of respondents by religion indicated that the majority of the respondents in this study were Muslim, a total of 108 people (91.5%). Meanwhile, there were 4 Christian respondents (3.5%) and the rest, Hindu and Buddhist, had the same percentage distribution of 2.5 % (3) respectively. In summary, the demographic distribution of respondents involved in the study is shown in Table 1 below:

**Table 1:** Distribution Frequency Table of Respondents Demographic

Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	94	79.7
	Female	24	20.3
Age	21-23 Years Old	26	22.0
	24-26 Years Old	86	72.9
	27-29 Years Old	6	5.1
Race	Malay	108	91.5
	Chinese	5	4.2
	Indian	4	3.4
	Sabah	1	0.8
	Sarawak	-	-
Religion	Islam	108	91.8
	Hindu	3	2.5
	Buddha	3	2.5
	Christian	4	3.3

#### *Levels of Resilience*

The majority of the respondents had a moderate level of resilience ( $m = 2.72$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ), which was 106 (89.8%). Only 10 respondents (8.5%) reported to obtain high levels of self-resilience, and the rest, a total of 2 (1.7%), had low self-resilience as detailed in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Distribution Frequency Table of Resilience

Levels	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	2	1.7
Moderate	106	89.8
High	10	8.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### *Levels of Emotional Intelligence*

Table 3 shows that 108 respondents' emotional intelligence was at a high level ( $m = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ), which is 91.5% of respondents. Meanwhile, only 10 respondents (8.5%) showed moderate levels of emotional intelligence. Clearly, the regulation and management factors of emotion are the highest dimensions that contribute to the emotional intelligence of the respondents as reported in Table 4.

**Table 3:** Distribution Frequency Table of Emotional Intelligence

Levels	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Moderate	10	8.5
High	108	91.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 4:** Summary of Average Mean Score For Emotional Intelligence Dimensions

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Levels
Perception and appraisal of emotion	3.87	0.45	High
Facilitating thinking with emotion	3.83	0.49	High
Understanding emotion	3.85	0.55	High
Regulation and management of emotion	3.90	0.53	High
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.86</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>High</b>

### *Levels of Self-Efficacy*

Overall, Table 5 shows that the self-efficacy levels among counsellor trainees were moderately confident ( $m = 5.76$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ), whereas a majority of respondents, 63 (53.4%), had moderate self-efficacy compared to 55 (46.6%) who obtained a high degree of self-efficacy. In addition, Table 6 shows that helping skills was the highest dimension that contributed to respondents' self-efficacy.

**Table 5:** Distribution Frequency Table of Self Efficacy

Levels	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Moderately Confident	63	53.4
Very Confident	55	46.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 6:** Summary of Average Mean Score For Self-Efficacy Dimensions

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Level
Helping Skills	6.24	1.03	Very Confident
Management of Counselling Session	6.18	1.24	Very Confident
Challenges in Counselling	5.05	1.62	Moderately Confident
<b>Overall Percentage</b>	<b>5.76</b>	<b>1.16</b>	<b>Moderately Confident</b>

### *Inferential Analysis*

#### *Emotional Intelligence and Self-Efficacy*

Correlation analysis revealed that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy ( $r = .54$ ,  $p < .01$ ), where high emotional intelligence led to an increase in self-efficacy. On the whole, all variables are interrelated. The mean values, standard deviations and correlations between variables, namely predictor variables (emotional intelligence), criterion variables (self-efficacy) and moderator variables (self-resilience) are clearly shown in Table 7.

**Table 7:** Mean, Standard deviations and Correlations between Variables

	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Emotional Intelligence	3.87	0.45	-	-	-
2. Self-Efficacy	5.76	1.16	.54**	-	-
3. Self-Resilience	2.72	0.49	-.28**	-.22*	-

**Nota:** \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

#### *Predictor and Moderator Factor*

The regression analysis showed that only emotional intelligence ( $\beta = .511$ ,  $SE = .082$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) predicted self-efficacy. In addition, Table 8 also reveals that self-resilience did not affect buffer in the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy ( $\beta = .032$ ). Thus, alternative hypotheses stating that self-resilience acts as a moderator in the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are rejected.

**Table 8:** Multiple regression analysis Table with self-efficacy as a criterion variable

	<i>Standardised coefficient <math>\beta</math></i>		
	<i>Step 1</i>	<i>Step 2</i>	<i>Step 3</i>
		<i>Additive Model</i>	<i>Interactive Model</i>
<b>Control Variables</b>			
Gender	-.131	-.078	-.077
Level of Education	-.072	-.095	-.094
Duration of Study	-.003	.038	.035
<b>Dependent Variables</b>			
Emotional Intelligence		.511**	.514**
Self-Resilience		-.088	-.092
<b>Two-Way Relationship</b>			
KE×KD			.032
$R^2$	.021	.310	.311
$\Delta R^2$	.021	.289	.001
F change	.824	23.490	.153
Df	3,114	2,112	1,111

**Note:** \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; KE: Emotional Intelligence; KD: Resilience

## Discussion

The trainee counsellors' self-resilience/resilience in this study was at a moderate level. As noted by Kinman and Grant (2011), self-resilience/resilience is a complex and multifaceted trait which refers to the individual's ability to cope with environmental difficulties, demands and high pressures without negative effects. The counselling profession is also tremendously exposed to traumatic situations or stories on a daily basis and it is part of the job description (Decker, Brown, Ong & Stiney-Ziskind, 2015). Recent studies have revealed that trainee counsellors' are more prone to compassion fatigue as they face various stressors such as anxiety, performance angst, gaps in theory and practice, lack of experience and supervision, unrealistic expectations of client development and ethical and legal misunderstandings (Merriman, 2015; Roach & Young, 2007; Smith, Robinson & Young, 2008 ). Therefore, self-resilience/resilience is one of the protective factors that can be utilised in ensuring and maintaining the well-being of the counsellor (Meyer & Ponton, 2006). Pramo, Bistamam and Arip (2017) explain that resilience is a behaviour and attitude that can be learned on its own and not necessarily trained. However, continuous training and learning can enhance one's self-efficacy. Can (2018) recommends that career counsellors and industry training supervisors look for ways that can enhance self-esteem and well-being among trainee counsellors. For example,



Miller and Sprang (2017) have developed a component-based practice and supervision model that can be applied during training, supervision and clinical practice that can reduce compassion fatigue. The five components of this model are experiential engagement, managing rumination, intentional narrative, reducing emotional labour and parasympathetic recovery strategies. The components of this skill are based on information derived from the literature on the treatment of psychology and neurophysiological which was practice in managing difficult emotions.

Furthermore, this study also shows that trainee counsellors acquire high emotional intelligence. However, most trainee counsellors are unable to master all of the competencies required because they may not be prepared to face their own emotional problems and are unaware of the potential stresses that commonly occur in the training industry (Star, 2013; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Previous studies have reported that professional counsellors have a higher level of emotional intelligence than trainee counsellors when dealing with client problems (Easton, Martin & Wilson, 2008; Martin et al., 2004). The differences in the level of emotional intelligence are likely due to several factors, namely the job position and the duration of service as a counsellor (Mustaffa, Nasir, Aziz & Mahmood, 2013). While trainee counsellors learn and deepen their counselling skills in order to provide the best quality service to their clients, they also need to deal with clients who face serious problems without good supervision and support (Can, 2018). According to Easton, Martin and Wilson (2008), emotional intelligence is a skill that can be acquired and developed through teaching, practice and experiential learning. Therefore, it is essential that individuals in the counselling profession have the ability to develop a high level of emotional intelligence as it can enhance their effectiveness as a counsellor.

The results of this study also reveal that the level of self-efficacy among trainee counsellors was moderately confident. These findings indicate that most respondents meet the minimum requirements while performing counselling tasks (Jaafar, Mohamed, Bakar & Tarmizi, 2011). Min (2014) revealed that self-efficacy among trainee counsellors was developed during their counselling practice which involves acceptance of tasks and roles, openness to new experiences and realistic perceptions. Therefore, self-efficacy is considered an important predictor of counsellors' performance in improving resilience and provides a stronger response to problem-solving skills (Jaafar, Mohamed, Bakar & Tarmizi, 2009; Martin et al., 2004). However, individual self-efficacy will also rely on the factors that were derived from their own experience (Tschannen & Hoy, 2007; Bandura, 1997). Bakar, Zakaria and Mohamed (2011) reported that experienced counsellors are more likely to be confident in their work than those who are less experienced. This is because trainee counsellors have little opportunity to apply their counselling skills to a wide variety of clients (Easton, Martin & Wilson, 2008).

The findings show that emotional intelligence has a significant relationship with self-efficacy among trainee counsellors. It has been shown that emotional intelligence can stimulate positive reactions that can increase self-efficacy through emotion control (Dev et al., 2018; Gharetepeh et al., 2015). In the context of counselling services, emotional intelligence is considered an important factor for counselling students in seeking counselling as a career as well as enhancing competency in self-efficacy (Martin et al., 2004). Easton, Martin and Wilson (2008) revealed that professional counsellors and trainee counsellors who have high emotional intelligence are more likely to consider themselves capable and competent in counselling skills. Clemons (2017) also states that counselling programs that focus on the development of emotional-related skills will enhance trainee counsellors' self-efficacy. As it is clearly explained, self-efficacy emerged from within themselves which can be employed as professional counsellors in the future.

Previous studies have also shown that emotional intelligence has a strong effect on the performance of counsellor as it can improve their ability to address various client issues such as cross-cultural issues (Martin, Easton, Wilson, Takemoto & Sullivan, 2004; Constatintaine & Gainor, 2001). Undoubtedly, a combination of personal exploration with skill and personnel development, as well as knowledge, can enhance the level of effectiveness of a counsellor (Nasir, 2011; Welfel, 2006; Siron, 2004). In agreement with the Emotional Intelligence Model (Goleman, 2001), it has been proven that the ability of an individual and an organisation is based on a combination of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management (Goleman, 2001). It can be concluded that the aspects in the Goleman Emotional Intelligence Models consist of qualities that are deemed to be important towards the effectiveness in the development of counselling skills. (Easton, Martin dan Wilson, 2008).

Regression analysis revealed that emotional intelligence is an important predictive factor on the efficiency of trainee counsellors. As Ivey and Ivey (2003) point out, the ability to observe and interpret one's own and others' feelings is crucial, and that this can lead to a greater effectiveness of counselling sessions. Martin et al. (2004) also stated that emotional intelligence is a core trait that can be used to distinguish between counsellors with other professions. In addition, the findings of a preliminary study by Martin et al. (2004) have shown that emotional intelligence plays a unique role in selecting and training professional counsellors.

However, findings have indicated that resilience is not a moderating factor in the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among trainee counsellors. This finding is consistent with previous studies which demonstrate that emotional intelligence possessed by trainee counsellors affects their self-efficacy irrespective of whether they attain low or high resiliency (Clemons, 2017). These findings indicate inconsistencies with the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), explaining that the interaction



between demands and individual factors determines emotional outcomes and achievement (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)

### ***Implications of the Study***

The findings derived from this study can be used as a source of reference for counselling programs in both public and private universities as this can produce effective counsellors through intervention programs which can enhance the emotional intelligence and personal development of trainee counsellors. This is in line with the recommendation from the Malaysian Board of Counsellors (2003), which propose that aspects of human growth and development are important and need to be emphasised in both teaching and learning for counsellor trainees at public universities.

### ***Limitations and Future Study***

This study used a quantitative method, whereby the analysis was limited only to the scope of study. Previous studies were conducted merely based on trainee counsellors' experiences which solely relied on the quantitative data derived, as these findings did not take into account other external perspectives or factors (Min, 2014; Grafanaki; 2010). Therefore, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods can be considered for future study purposes as more information can be gathered as well as to avoid biases in data analysis (Dyer, 2006; MacDonald & Friedman, 2002).

In addition, although self-control is often viewed as a personality trait that contributes to the negative effects of stress and promotes adaptation, it is also conceptualised as a result or process (Machuca, 2010; Ahern, Kiehl, Sole & Byers, 2006). Therefore, studies on the level of resilience among trainee counsellors as a potential source of coping with adversity, as well as avoiding the detrimental effects of stress, needs to be carried out.

### **Conclusion**

In general, emotional intelligence is an important predictor of self-counselling competency among trainee counsellors. Although self-control is not a moderating factor between the counsellor's emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, there are other factors that may influence a counsellor's self-efficacy, such as spiritual intelligence, personality and possibly the commitment to the counselling profession. Therefore, besides clinical counselling training, other programs that are related to the development of emotional intelligence for future counsellors can be applied in counselling education both formally and informally.



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