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Emotional intelligence, skills competency and personal development among counseling teachers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study is to analyze the relationship between the levels of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-control, self-motivation, empathy and social skills) and skills competency and personal development of secondary school counselors in Johor. Sixty secondary school counselors were randomly selected as respondents. The study was carried out quantitatively using questionnaires as instruments to obtain data. The study shows that majority of the respondents have moderate level of emotional intelligence and high level of skills competency and personal development. In addition, it is also found that the relationship of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-control, self-motivation, empathy and social skills) and skills competency is at medium strong level. Meanwhile, emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-control, self-motivation, empathy and social skills) has a strong and significant relationship with personal development. Therefore, it can be concluded that strengthening emotional intelligence in educational practices will refine and enhance personal development and skills competency among secondary school counselors.

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Key words: *Emotional intelligence; counselors; personal development.*

1. Introduction

In recent years, low-test scores, drop-out rates, abuses and cases of school violence are among the major issues in education and students' lives (Low, 2004). According to Vela (2003) and Khata et al., (2011), although there are progressive efforts carried out to improve students' performance in schools, students' success rates continue to decline. Thus schools require counselors who are able to master a variety of counseling skills to allow them to remain productive and effective in a challenging environment. School counselors need to build resilience in order to cope with the challenges in realizing the aspiration of the country. One aspect that needs to be emphasized is the ability to share high levels of emotional intelligence (Mohd Najib et al., 2002).

A study by Goleman (1995) shows that intellectual intelligence contributes only 20 percent to one's success while the remaining 80 percent of a person's success in life is contributed by emotional intelligence. According to Goleman (1998), people with accurate self-assessment are aware of their strengths and weaknesses; reflective, learn from experience; open to candid feedback, have new perspectives, continuously learning, and practise self-development. He also posits that people with a high

level of adaptability can smoothly handle multiple demands, shift priorities and change rapidly; adapt their responses and tactics to fit fluid circumstances and are flexible in how they see events (Panah et al., 2011). In fact, findings from western studies demonstrate that emotional intelligence plays an important role in the working environment (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1996; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Weisenger, 1998) and is related to self-esteem (Constantine, 2001; Williams, 2001; McManus, 2001; Easton 2004). According to them, elements of emotional intelligence and confidence in the process of counseling can be regarded as a core built-quality counseling services. Sabariah (2004) states that an *effective* counselor has a combination of personal exploration and growth through competency of knowledge and skills training. Hence, emotional intelligence and skills competency as well as personal development are the variables that have been focused a lot and are important elements in enhancing counseling services.

Emotional intelligence, skills competency and personal development are the professional indicators that show the true picture of the counseling services that are allied to professional identity. However, the issue detected is a perception that the deficiencies in the counseling services are due to poor command of emotional intelligence, lack of counseling skills and personal qualities among counselors including the secondary school counselors (Mohammad Hashim & Sharifah Amnah, 2005). This is consistent with the view of Abd. Rahman (2000) which suggested that counseling services in schools must go through the process of enhancement and transformation involving the three elements: emotional intelligence, skills competency and personal quality improvement of the counselors. Therefore, an effort should be made to identify the level of emotional intelligence because it provides valuable information for school counselors in assessing self-effectiveness to increase the efficiency of counseling skills and personal development.

2. Purposes and research questions

The purposes of this study are:

- 1) To identify the level of emotional intelligence of secondary school counselors.
- 2) To identify the difference between levels of emotional intelligence in accordance with demographic factors of secondary school counselors.
- 3) To study the level of leadership competencies of secondary school counselors.
- 4) To identify the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership competencies of secondary school counselors.

The research objectives of this study are:

- 1) What is the level of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-control, self-motivation, empathy and social skills) of secondary school counselors?
- 2) Are there different levels of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-control, self-motivation, empathy and social skills) in accordance with demographic factors (gender, school location, designation grade and duration of service) of secondary school counselors?
- 3) What are the levels of counseling leadership competencies (competency skills and personal development) of secondary school counselors?
- 4) Is there a relationship between emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-control, self-motivation, empathy and social skills) and counseling leadership competencies (competency skills and personal development) of secondary school counselors?

3. Methodology

This is a case study which examined a population consisting of 60 secondary school counselors in Johor. Data analysis is based on the frequency calculations, percentages and the mean score obtained through the respondents. Analysis using t-test and one way ANOVA were used to determine whether there are significant differences in emotional intelligence levels of respondents according to demographic factors (sex, school location, position grade and duration of service). Moreover, inferential analysis (Pearson r correlation) was used to observe the relationship between emotional intelligence and skills competency and personal development of the secondary school counselors.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Level of emotional intelligence

The results of the analysis show that the respondents, who are secondary school counselors, have moderate level of emotional intelligence with a mean value of 3.41. The mean of the four categories of emotional intelligent which are: emotional self-recognition capabilities, the ability of emotional self-control, self-motivation and empathy, is at medium level with mean values of 2.75, 2.92, 3.60 and 3.60 respectively.

Only one category of emotional intelligence among the respondents, which is social skills, is at the highest level with a mean value of 4.19.

4.2. Emotional intelligence level differences according to demographic factors

Table 1. Differences of emotional intelligence according to demographic factors

Level of Emotional Intelligence	P	Results
Gender	0.959	No Difference
School Location	0.171	No Difference
Designation Grade	0.001	Has Difference
Years of Service	0.000	Has Difference

Table 1 shows the results of analysis of different levels of emotional intelligence according to demographics of the respondents. The overall findings of the analysis show that there is no significant difference in the level of emotional intelligence based on respondents’ genders and school location. However, there is significant difference based on designation grade and years of services of the respondents.

4.3. Levels of skills competency and personal development

The findings of the overall analysis show that the levels of skills competency ($M = 4.89$) and personal development ($M = 4.93$) of the respondents are high. This proves that the respondents acquire a high level of skills competency and personal development.

4.4. The relationship between emotional intelligence and counseling leadership competencies

Table 2. Pearson correlation between emotional intelligence and skills competency

Emotional Intelligence Variables	r	Skills Competency P
Self-Awareness		0.124 0.382
Self-Control		0.118 0.406
Self-Motivation		0.412** 0.002
Empathy	0.581**	0.000
Social Skill		0.626** 0.000
Overall Emotional Intelligence	0.645**	0.000

* Significant at 0.05
 ** Significant at 0.01

Table 2 above shows that the relationship between emotional intelligence and skills competency is medium- strong and positive based on the value of correlation coefficient of each emotional intelligence domain. Coefficient value for the whole emotional intelligence domain is $r = .645$, $p < .01$). These findings show that the increase in emotional intelligence leads to the enhancement of counseling leadership competency (skill competency).

Table 3. Analysis of Pearson correlation between emotional intelligence and personal development

Emotional Intelligence Varibales	r	Skills Competency P
Self-Awareness		0.207 0.141
Self-Control		0.149 0.293
Self-Motivation		0.297* 0.033
Empathy	0.670**	0.000
Social Skill		0.608** 0.000
Overall Emotional Intelligence	0.666**	0.000

* Significant at 0.05
 ** Significant at 0.01

Overall, the findings of the study show that the relationship between emotional intelligence and personal development is medium-strong and positive based on the value of correlation coefficient of each emotional intelligence domain. Coefficient values for the whole emotional intelligence domain is $r = .666$, $p < .01$. These findings show that the increase in emotional intelligence leads to the enhancement of personal development.

The study shows that the counselors possess moderate level of emotional intelligence. Competency of the highest level of emotional intelligence for social skills domain shows the conformity of the importance of this domain in secondary school counselors' profession. Meanwhile, the lowest competency level in the domain of self-consciousness gives an overview that they need to enhance their knowledge and skills by attending training courses, professional training and other forms of appropriate training. The level of emotional intelligence does not show differences based on genders and school location. Regardless of genders and school location, each of the counselors has the opportunity to have a high level of emotional intelligence and vice versa. Subsequently, there is some difference on levels of emotional intelligence based on designation grade and years of services of the counselors. This shows that the secondary school counselors with high-grade designation have a tendency to have higher levels of emotional intelligence. The findings of the study also confirm that skills competency and personal development among school counselors are at a high level. This indicates that counselors involved in this study have good skills competency and personal development that contribute to their professionalism. On the whole, the results show that the level of emotional intelligence has a strong and positive significant relationship with skills competency and personal development. In this context, the level of emotional intelligence identified tends to influence the level of skills competency and personal development. In addition, the components of personal development show a stronger relationship compared with the skills competency.

5. Conclusion

In the last few decades, Malaysia has been profoundly changed by the forces of globalization, modernization and industrialization and by a strong educational transformation process. Indeed, Malaysia has come a long way in its educational journey. Apparently, every country in the world believes in investing in education, as a means to achieve greater socio-economic progress and human capital development such as emotional intelligence. This is because emotional intelligence will predict success (Van der Zee, Thijs, & Schakel, 2002), can be taught (Tucker et al., 2000) and promotes well-being (Bar-On, 2005). The study in understanding emotional components toward skills competency and personal development, shows low levels of emotional intelligence and self-awareness among school counselors which need to be addressed in order to develop effective counseling services in the educational system. It shows that the level of emotional intelligence among school counselors has an equivalent relationship with skills competency and personal development. Meanwhile, this study proves to be significantly important for the nation in order to prepare the teachers, not only with high capabilities in the intellectual intelligence, but also in enhancing the aspect of emotional well-being as part of the crucial components in their lives.

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