Exploration of self-care practices from coping strategies perspective among trainee counsellors

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

Self-care practices regarded as one of the most important components for the profession of counselling. Besides, self-care practices are also recognized as an essential necessity for trainee counsellors in becoming helping professionals in future. Nonetheless, there is insignificant in previous studies regarding self-care practices among trainee counsellors. The purpose of this study is to explore self-care practices from a coping style perspective among trainee counsellors. This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design in exploring the self-care practices among trainee counsellors at one of the universities in Sarawak, Malaysia using Six Part Story Method. The application of Six Part Story Method helps in exploring the self-care practices by illustrating the drawing through the six boxes. The data was collected through group counselling sessions and data was analyzed using the BASIC Ph Model. Overall, six themes have emerged from the findings. The results from these findings shows that trainee counsellors are highly dominant in Social and Physical Dimensions. Besides that, this study also proposes on determining the suitability of Six Part Story Method in counselling approach. This study has contributed to the existing knowledge on the self-care practice in context of trainee counsellors. It enhances awareness to the society especially people in counselling field on the importance of practicing self-care when experiencing stressful circumstances.

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Introduction

University students are constantly influenced by several stressors in line for their particular life circumstances and the environment particularly the society. Some of the intensive demands that are placed on counselling students could contribute to high rates of stress, poor self-care practices and increased risk of suffering physical illness which could lead to unproductivity in their daily functioning (Mayorga, Devries, & Wardle, 2015). Stress is common among university students and it occurs from a wide range of issues such as a demanding course, academic overload and lack of time meeting other commitments. Furthermore, trainee counsellors always have to allocate time in competing demands and time pressure developing from family and academic res responsibilities. Consequently, the current generation of undergraduates' students are more stressed out compared to previous generations which can lead to depression, anxiety or stress (Teh et al., 2015).

A survey done by the Ministry of Health Malaysia (n.d), National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015 showed that the prevalence of mental health problems among adults at age 17 and above has increased from 10.7 % in 1196 to 29.2% in 2015. Further research is needed because young adults nowadays which also include

counselling students experience a variety of emotional and personal demands which can easily give impact to their quality life (Bradley et., 2013). Concerning these issues, counselling students are expected to maintain their physical, mental and emotional health in a good condition in order to provide support towards others. Those in the social professions often work with clients that undergo emotional pain, receiving that pain, but not always take good care of themselves. As stated by Shapiro, Brown & Biegel (2007), therapists are at risk for professions related to the professional training of future therapists. Past similar research by Thompson, Frick & Trice-Black (2011), had discussed that a lack of life balance and boundaries could affect their stressful nature of being a counsellor. There was quite limited research of self- care awareness among counselling students using art therapy as an approach in general and Malaysia in particular.

Self-care

Self-care has developed in popularity and has been seen as a positive support in explaining the effects of stress particularly among trainees counsellor over the years. The welfare of clients and the counsellor itself is paramount in the field of professional self-care. Self-care is important for everyone to remain effective for professional and personal commitment. According to Gentry, 2002 (as cited in Coaston, 2017), self-care is defined as any activity to refill and refuel an individual in healthy ways. Self-care requires proactive efforts to engage in activities outside work that refill energy. As stated by Myers et al. (2012), the studies defined self-care practices as the engagement in activities that promote individuals' psychological, physical and emotional well-being. Self-care practices are important for counsellor as being a counsellor can be demanding due to often overwhelming emotions of the clients. This statement was supported by Bradley. Whisenhunt, Adamson and Kress (2013) refers to self-care as experiences to enhance counsellor' wellbeing in order to manage their own stress and creating life balance.

There is a disconnection of the actions between knowledge and self-care practice in their life (Dennis & Morris, n,d). Without the practice of self-care, trainee counsellor may experience difficulties in counselling competency this could harm the client intentionally (Shuffield, 2019). A study by Mayorga, Devries and Wardle (2015) found a correlation found between self-care and stress level. The study highlighted the results that there was a significant negative relationship between the levels of self-care and stress for the sample. Taking that into consideration, students will experience high levels of stress if there are less students engaged in self-care practices. The studies are limited to the correlation does not indicate causation and other extraneous variables are possibly could motivate for the findings of this study. Further studies are required to find a connection of self-care and stress levels among Master's counselling students. However, Mayorga, Devries and Wardle (2015) also mentioned that the study is focusing only on counselling students, and the participants experienced high levels of stress. For that reason, the results suggested greater emphasis on self-care could encourage the need for trainee counsellor to practice self-care with focus on avoiding harmful stress and burnout.

Previous studies were limited to examining self-care practices among counselling undergraduate students, but the existence of literature has revealed a number of gaps and shortcomings. As the potential threats for trainee counsellor distress in practicum are various, trainee counsellors often begin their studies with unclear expectations about their role (Jackson, 2015). Added to that, a study by Moore, Bledsoe, Perry, and Robinson (2011) mentioned that self- care practices are needed for students who are preparing to be a professional counsellor. They are not prepared to be a high quality counsellor unless they have learned to take good care of themselves first.

Undergraduate students, including trainee counsellor are vulnerable to stress such as heavy academic responsibilities and overloaded schedules. As indicated by Lawson and Myers (2011), counsellors who invest time in engaging in their own self-care are more likely to assist clients focus on self-care behaviour. Trainee counsellors are also students in university, therefore conducting counselling sessions while being a student at the same time may often be stressful. This situation makes it important for trainee counsellors to understand and practice self-care to avoid themselves from burnout. Trainee counsellors need to be aware of these potential impairments since it can affect both the personal and professional wellness of counselling abilities, as well as might interrupt their quality of life.

Taking that as a consideration, this study is also supported by the study of Romanti et al. (2014), which identified that younger age has been found to be related to have more emotional exhaustion. The study had suggested creating self-care awareness may help trainees to establish healthy behaviours in their career in the future. The practices of self-care enhances one's wellbeing such as coping strategies helps a person deal with stressful events. There are multiple ways to practice self-care in daily life such as drawing or having self-affirmation. A study has found that trainee counsellors have a greater level of mental and emotional wellness than the normal population of students. However, it does not mean trainee counsellors are resistant to distress.

They indeed have more challenges to master the uncertainty of the nature of comprehension studying in counselling field (Smith et al., 2007).

Coping Strategies

Coping is multi-dimensional and the concept of coping strategy is similar to self-care aimed at moderating the impact of stress. Coping is defined as a short-term response to threatening or harmful stimuli and emotional reactions (Lazarus & Folkman, 2004). A quantitative study by Kausar (2010) has found out that academic workload appeared as predictors of stress in students. The more students spend their time on overloaded academic work, the stress level will eventually rise.

While coping has been shown to be a useful strategy for mitigating stress, self-care plays an important role in the utilization of coping strategies. Coping strategies can help adjust a stressful situation by changing the situation that causes the stress or may include strategies and mind relaxation. According to Rahimi, Baetz, Bowen and Balbuena (2014), they found that six coping styles were more significant predictors of satisfaction than personality behaviors as they mentioned that coping strategies such as engaging in relationships help offset the feelings of loneliness.

According to Green (2010), there were significant correlations between coping styles and self-care practices within demographic subgroups among psychology graduate students. Coping strategies and self- care were addressed in the discussion as positive relationships were found between self-care strategies and Task-Focused Coping. Studies by Skovholt, et al., 2001 (as cited in Green, 2010) suggested a practitioner practice positive coping skills can help in reducing burnout. Ayala, Ellis, Grudev and Cole (2017) also found that emphasis on self-care and coping by graduate training programs was related to three increased scores on quality of life measures among trainees.

Besides that, self-care and coping strategies studies among psychology graduate students were also conducted by El-Ghoroury et al. (2012), and they have found out that most of the students have at least one significant event in their personal or professional lives that has impaired for their competency. They attempted to measure self-care by consisting of various wellness promoting and activities as well as coping strategies.

Stress

Stress is known as a common phenomenon all around the world during every human lifetime. Stress is a feeling of emotional and physical tension which can arise from any event that makes individuals feel frustrated or anxious. It could happen as the body is reacting to a challenge or demand such as meeting a deadline. According to the theory of cognitive appraisal by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), undergraduates or students who experience imbalance between resources and the demands of their surroundings are predicted to have a high level of stress. This theory is supported by the study of Gnilka, Chang and Dew (2012), which they have investigated to what degree of the relationship between counsellor trainees' perceived stress and coping strategies influenced their perceived working setting with clients and supervisors. There are also extended studies regarding these findings where they are using different samples made up to study among counselling students at Master level for their practicum and internship experiences. Findings are also consistent with previous studies.

Due to the lack of literature specific to counselling students, a broader study of self- care and stress literature may offer the interventions of self-care practices that arise from stress could be applied to counselling students. A cross-sectional study involving dental students from universities in Malaysia reported a high level of stress has given negative impacts on the students learning ability (Babar et al., 2015). This showed that students are experiencing a significant amount of stress irrespective of their courses since stress is experienced by many documented that higher education students is very stressful because stress is one of the important factors that have emotional impact on academic performance of the students (Salam et al., 2015). Hence, this study indicated that students who are continuously having a high level of stress were emotionally and mentally exhausted may because of different factors but academic demands have become an important factor.

Previous research has shown that students who reported high levels of stress were less likely to take good care of themselves and more likely to suffer risky health behaviour. As stated by Green (2010), it appears to be reasonable that persons studying in challenging fields such as psychology or counselling would find that self-care is more vital to their mental well- being. This explains the essence of practicing self-care as a part of coping with life stresses is important to positively handling emotionally and physically stressful events. Some self-care strategies can be dysfunctional in one situation and in contrast, it also can be functional in other situations. For example, treating oneself cake after completing a group assignment is more functional than eating cake every night to deal with stress.

Six Part Story Method

Six Part Story Method (6PSM) is a highly structured art therapy model which helps individuals in the therapy settings to explore personal stories which the clients may be difficult to express or convey (Dent-Brown, 1999). The individual may experience shame or embarrassment to share their thoughts and have a need for more structures and supported metaphor based models. With the facilitation of therapists, the clients are provided with a blank paper or slate which they can draw and create stories. Six Part Story Method was developed by Mooli Lahad as a tool for identifying coping mechanisms from stress and anxiety (Dent-Brown, 1999).This method can be used as a correspondence in exploring self-care strategies. 6PSM can be used within individual and group counselling sessions. Dent-Brown and

Wang (2006) has conducted a study related to the mechanism of story making: 6-Part Story Method as he concluded that the use of Six Part Story Method for identifying coping strategies was one of the main purposes. In the previous studies of self-care practices were constrained to the use of 6PSM as a method of analysing self-care practices. However the components of self- care practices can be used to analyse as there were correlation with BASIC Ph Model. The individuals are free to create their own character and story of their choice. Conversely, it is recommended for clients to develop personal and original stories instead of mythological stories. The story told by clients may address relationships, obstacles in their life and how they cope with them.

BASIC Ph Model

The BASIC Ph Model was also created by Dr. Mooli Lahad which shows how the model serves as a meta-model in understanding coping and resilience. BASIC Ph Model suggests that every human has the distinctive ability to use each component or dimension as a part of coping strategies. However, some individuals would use any coping or self-care strategies that they are comfortable with which they have developed across time (Laykin, 2012). The components of self- care can be practiced in life to achieve life balance. There are six major components that describe individual attempts to survive and thrive. It helps as an empowering mechanism which supports individuals to manage daily life stresses and increase life satisfaction. Practicing self-care requires an individual to continuously put effort in keeping all the components of self-care balance as possible (Romero, 2019). The BASIC Ph is broken into six dimensions in analysing the self-care practices: Belief (B), Affect (A), Social (S), Imagination (I), Cognitive (C) and Physiological (Ph). Each of the six components of BASIC Ph is as follows to describe the human code of survival. (Lahad & Leykin, 2015). This study also suggested that each individual has a personal combination of these components which forms their coping style or self-care strategies.

The research objectives for this study are to explore the self- care practices among trainee counsellors using the Six Part Story Method, to identify the high dimensions of self-care practices from coping strategies perspective based on the BASIC Ph Model and to examine the suitability of the Six Part Story Method in counselling approach.

Results and Discussions

The data were extracted and analysed accordingly to answer the second research question for this study. The second research question guiding this study identifies the high dimensions of self-care practices among trainee counsellors. Through the use of BASIC Ph Model in analyses in this study has coded six main themes identified from this study. The six themes of determined coping strategies as self-care practices included are Belief, Affect, Social, Imagination, Cognitive and Physical.

Participant	Belief	Affect	Social	Cognitio n	Imagination	Physical
A	X	X	X			X
B		X	X		X	X
C			X			X
D	X		X	X		X
E			X		X	X
F	X		X	X		X
G			X			X
H			X			X

Table 4.10: The high dimensions of self-care based on BASIC Ph

Table 4.10 displays the high dimensions of self-care practices of participants analysed using Basic Ph Model. The findings of this study included the all high dimensions shown by all the participants and analyses based on the BASIC Ph Model as a whole throughout all the sessions. The recorded data showed the dimensions of the trainee counselor most engaged in for self-care practices are Social, Physical and Belief followed other dimensions. The findings will be discussed further as indicated below with the self-care practices dimensions from coping style perspective among the participants. The quoted storyline of all participants and data analyses obtained from counselling sessions in exploring the self-care practices of trainee counsellors is stated as following findings.

Theme 1: Belief

B has shown strong belief in her religion in which she has faith in her God when she is facing hard times.

"Lagi satu saya recite rosary, macam zikir Kristian punya, saya akan rasa tenang."

D showed a strong Belief Dimension is a session whereby the main character is about D herself who has a dream to open a children centre especially for those who are neglected. The main character is a shy person, timid, and does not have the confidence to achieve her mission. However, she believes that to have such a big dream, she needs to trust herself and be brave in front of many people.

"...ada kanak-kanak Aina nak buka satu pusat untuk kanak-kanak terbiar. Yang keempat halangannya adalah malu, tak berani dan tiada keyakinan diri pastu nak tempuh halangan tu nak jadi berani dan nak yakin depan orang ramai."

Another participant which is F had shown highly Belief Dimensions in two sessions by using the Six-Part Series Method. The main character is referring to F herself who likes nature. She believes in herself that dealing with the country's development is quite complex, but she will keep trying to achieve her mission so that the world becomes a better place to stay. The main character knows it's kind of hard to achieve, but she has confidence in herself that small things do matter. F storyline is expressed as below,

"jaga pokok dan halangannya adalah pembangunan pastu ni cara saya deal with it ialah spread the message through the internet pastu ni walaupun dia tidak berjaya but atleast people will aware about it."

Besides that, F also portrayed strong Belief Dimension in the next session. There is an expression of belief system in her story in which the main character is about a child who is facing a struggle of having cancer.

"How she deal with it. So dia acceptance lah sebab acceptance ni adalah kunci. Dia punya penting sekali dalam kehidupan, masalah, apa apa jak yang berlaku. Penerimaan sangat penting. Baru dia boleh rasa disayangi dan menyayangi orang lain sebab bagi saya first ada jak bad side orang tu kalau orang tu ada kanser kan, pasti orang tu rasa orang lain kesiankan dia, like she gonna die. Tapi actually, bagi saya it is a blessing bagi mereka sebab they already know, their time is limited. Pastu mereka pun mereka akan mati one day, so apa mereka kumpul selama mereka hidup, bagi saya adalah kebaikan sebab they knew it earlier."

Theme 2: Affect

Every single one of the women participants have expressed strong Affect Dominant in at least one session in their storyline. A expressed the main character feelings as follows,

"Saya rindukan adik saya...Saya kan jenis orang kalau bangun tidur tidak boleh dikejutkan kasar saya akan rasa cemas"

B conveys the main character emotions in her storyline in two different stories. The first story is regarding the main character feeling content if she received the positive energy from her friends and family to be able to sleep soundly. This is because the main character feels that she is all wrong for things that happened between her and her siblings. By mentioning she needs a good vibe to continue smiling shows that she needs a sense of love and belongings.

"So saya rasa bersalah lah sebab saya rasa saya punca semuanya. So itu akan mengganggu fikran saya yang menyebabkan saya susah nak tidur. Apa yang saya akan buat untuk menghadapi halangan saya akan selalu keluar dengan kawan supaya saya terima positive vibes mereka supaya saya dapat jadi happy dan dapat senyum."

In the next session, B also has shown high Affect dimensions in her storyline which as following below,

"Share happiness dan kasih sayang saya dengan dorang. This few days saya selalu call mak saya and bagitahu nenek saya kurang sihat then saya rasa macam sedih sebab before this kan saya memang rapat dengan nenek."

"Dia bagi kata-kata yang menyedihkan saya kat sini and apa yang jadi obstacles kat saya sekarang ni memang jarak saya dengan family saya lah sekarang."

Participant C has express her emotions in such dialog below,

"And then ialah orang sekeliling banyak complain tentang kerja yang kita buat. Sakit hati bah dengar orang cakap macam contoh bahasa kamu salah."

Participant E said it in the following ways;

"Dan cara nak atasi nya self-love lah. Saya sayangi diri saya dulu…"

Theme 3: Social

All of the eight participants are highly involved in Social dimensions in their sharing through the use of Six-Part Stories Method. Social dimensions refers to the relationship that exists in society and people who need companionship in their life. The participants have mentioned they require social interaction occurring at least one or more characters.

In A story, the social dimension is highly utilized in all three counselling sessions. In the second session, the main character of A's story is about herself who lived far from home. Her mission is to study well and try to hang out more with her friends so that she won't miss her sister. The main character managed to deal with her obstacles by contacting her family about her sister and asked help from her friends to distract her worry towards her sister who has been sick. The content of the story created by A to describe the social elements,

"Saya memang tahan nangis lalu terus videocall bapa saya lalu bapa saya terus senyum-senyum sebab dia tahu saya risau kat adik saya lalu bapa saya cakap adik saya okay cuma mata kail terkena dekat kulit mata dia. Pastu cara yang nak hilangkan kerisauan saya ialah belajar dan cuba untuk berjumpa dengan kaunselor dan yang menolong saya ialah kawan-kawan saya dan keluarga sayalah"

While in the third session, A also portrayed Social Dimension in her storyline. The main character is A's father who is sick of gout and still working in his late adulthood. The main character mission is to take care of his own health and not to work hard. His family has become his obstacles in stopping working hard, but at the same time, his family is the only one who can help to complete the mission. The storyline is portrayed as below,

"…bapak saya ni sakit macam kalau dia kuat kerjakan dia akan kena gout. Misi untuk dia adalah jaga kesihatan dan jangan terlalu kerja berat lah….Pastu yang akan tolong support dia adalah family kami adik beradik kamilah. Dan halangan dia adalah kami lah. Sebab kami semua masih belajar dan perlukan duit."

For the fourth session, Social dimension is also seen in A story. The main character is herself who is looking for a house to stay in for the next semester. She brought together her friends in the storyline to help her complete her missions. Her story will be ended if only she got into a college.

"misi saya ialah cari tempat tinggal lah untuk sem depan ataupun saya cuba aktifkan diri dengan aktiviti kolej lah. Yang ketiga, mendorong saya mestilah diri

saya sendiri, kalau bukan saya untuk tak aktifkan diri di kolej, kemungkinan saya tidak akan dapat kolej lah. Lepastu kawan-kawan lah. Saya mahu kami sama-sama tinggal satu kolej."

Social Dimensions also existed in Participant B storyline. B faced troubleness to adapt to a new environment. In these cases, the main character struggles to adapt in the university since she is a first year student and keeps missing home. Below are the stories of the main character who needs other people in her life to keep her stays on the lane and complete her mission.

"saya selalu call mak saya, talk dengan mereka yang saya ada masalah ini-ini dan dia suruh express saja apa yang saya mahu cakap"

"Yang support saya family, kawan-kawan, lecturer dan adik beradik saya dan orang lain yang memberi positive vibes dengan saya…,Apa yang saya akan buat untuk menghadapi halangan saya akan selalu keluar dengan kawan supaya saya terima positive vibes…"

"Spend time dengan nenek saya shopping dengan adik beradik saya sebab adalah sebab tu. "

C also mentioned other people as the main character in her story acts as a reflection to her want and need,

"Main character saya ialah mak. Kedua mak saya tidak pernah marah kita orang dan dia sangat baik. Dan character yang menolong saya ialah adik saya sebab saya "Watak utama saya ialah adik. Dan yang ni saya nak balik rumah supaya saya dapat main dengan adik saya"

Participant D mostly stated that who can support her through hard times is the one who surrounds the main character which are family and friends.

"...dan yang akan menolong saya ialah mak bapak saya yang banyak membantu dan adik-adik yang menjadi semangat. Dan yang support pun kawan-kawan dan kucing…, So D akan cakap dengan family cari benda untuk motivated untuk D sendiri nak taknak D kena habiskan apa yang D mulakan."

"Pastu yang support adalah komuniti sebab Aina rasa komuniti ni penting pastu family of course dan kawan-kawan."

"Pastu yang ketiga, untuk dapatkan benda ni saya perlukan support daripada keluarga dan kawankawan. Saya tak tahu support yang macam mana, tapi itu mungkin untuk masa jangka yang panjang."

Participant E has touched upon other people in the story. E also set the boundaries in professional context.

"Okay yang dalam ini ialah bukan saya itu kakak saya dekat UITM." "watak sampingan yang support saya family, client kawan"...

Saya kan kalau saya nak buat sesuatu tu saya jenis yang saya takkan fikir orang sekeliling saya bukannya selfish lah cuma macam contohlah kalau kawan saya ajak jalan lah saya takkan ikut sebab saya nak habiskan kerja saya. Saya sangat tekad nak habiskan walaupun lama sudah tak berjumpa lepak-lepak.

"Lepastu apa yang jadi dorongan saya, lecturer."

Participant F mentioned on the need to seek support from people lose to the main character,

"pastu yang akan tolong saya adalah ibu, husband atau pakar jaga pokok"

"Pastu yang ketiga ini, siapa yang tolong dia untuk capai misi tu adalah pihak hospital which is doctor, nurse and family dia. Ni mama papa dia"

Participant G shared about her personal preferred supportive interaction with other people and the participant also used another character that he is well known for his storyline.

"Pastu orang yang akan menolong watak ini adalah rakan-rakan groupmates yang dapat menolong dalam markah kita and mereka dapat cooperate well dalam menolong kita dari segi support…, then nya akan carik kawan yang akan membantu nya dalam komuniti yang memberi aura positif"

"Watak utama ialah adik yang recently baru habis SPM. Mission nya adalah nak sambung belajar. Yang support tentulah keluarga, kawan-kawan dan cikgu sekolah…. So cara dia nak cope dengan masalah tu dia akan berbincang dengan parent or cikgu kaunselor di sekolah"

Participant H also showed the same social behavior by using other main characters in her story and how other people including family and friends helped the main character in completing the mission. The interaction of the

main character and supported character showed that the participants relied on the social factors in problem solving of achieving their mission. It is said below,

"main characternya adalah adik perempuan saya yang sekarang tinggal dekat kampung dengan makcik sebelah bapa saya…. And yang ini adalah orang yang menolongnya adalah saya, adik lelaki dan kakak saya sebab kmk semua pernah menjadi pengawas and kalau dia ada masalah dia akan share dengan kami dan halangannya ialah sekarang dia tinggal dekat rumah makcik so dia sekarang susah untuk focus bila study sebab makcik saya kuat control dan kalau dia keluar waktu malam, makcik saya akan complain dekat bapa saya"

"Macam mana saya nak deal dengan masalah saya sendiri, saya kena apa… macam motivate diri sendiri, support dari family dan kawan….Kalau dengan kawan kan… saya macam study group tu, ada dengan kawan study, saya salu sama dorang dari fakulti lain. Kalau dorang ada masalah, saya akan dengar then saya kan cakap lah apa yang rasa. Bagi pandangan atau pendapat."

Theme 4: Imagination

Participant D has shared her story which takes place in her dream for the future. The main character in her story is money. The main character is a non-living object but plays a big role in the participant's lives later on. D places money as a main character because she dreams of the money she would have in the future where she wanted to travel, help other people, and give back to her family as well as shopping. Participant D has imagined her storyline as follows,

"Watak utama dalam cerita ini adalah duit. Duit yang tinggal dalam beg duit saya. So duit ni apa yang saya nak buat, saya nak pergi melancong, saya nak tolong orang, saya nak bagi balik mak saya, saya nak beli rumah, beli kereta dan saya nak shopping"

The Imaginative Dimension also illustrated by Participant F in both sessions that she has joined. Participants F has been drawing her stories in imaginative context often with a living character who she has never met. The story is set within a world similar to the Participant's life. She is inspired to use her imagination to create a world with love. In the first drawing, F draws an imaginative world of her living in a developmental country with nature. Despite the fact that the character is about herself, the participant wanted to describe the content of the story in an imaginative context devoted to the creation of the future world. The main character also mentioned her husband who would help her in completing her mission, yet she is currently unmarried which symbolises that the story is in imaginative theme.

"Saya nak tanam pokok dan jaga these kind of animals...Saya nak tanam pokok dan jaga these kind of animals, pastu yang akan tolong saya adalah ibu, husband…"

In another story of Participant F also has high Imaginative Dimensions. The main character for her story is about a young child who is struggling with cancer. Participant F has drawn an imaginative character in her storyline. This unveils that imaginative content is included. The participant imagines that the character is living her life with no hair due to the illness. The participants do not end the story happily, but the greatest love story of a child with people surrounding is described in such a way as a wonderful and beautiful day.

"Cerita saya ni very random, saya main pick saja. Cerita ni takda kena mengena dengan saya. Story about seorang kanak-kanak perempuan yang menghidapi penyakit kanser. Lepastu, as you can see dia takda rambutlah sebab kalau chemotherapy kan diorang kan hilang rambut."

Theme 5: Cognitive

Participants B has high Cognitive dominants whereby the main character is B herself. She wanted to think positively in her daily life. There is a thing going on in her mind which eventually leads to her lack of sleep. The main character always tends to think more when she is alone. When there is no distraction, it is then she recalls about the past and tries to predict onto the future. It struck the main character when she started to question herself whether her decision of becoming a student is all her fault. So the dialog below shows that she has a strong cognitive dimensions,

"Mission saya, saya nak cuba berfikiran positif ...And benda yang mengganggu saya ialah fikiran sayalah sebab mungkin saya selalu sangat duduk sorang-sorang so saya selalu fikir diri saya ada masalahlah. Contoh macam saya selalu terfikir perbualan saya dan kakak saya tentang belajarlah. Dia cakap macam tu mungkin sebab dia dulu tak dapat sambung belajar sebab masalah kewangan."

E also described her story by using a cognitive element, meaning that there is a pattern of thought in the storyline.

"Apa yang menganggu saya, fikiran saya sendiri. Apa yang saya akan buat, saya akan buat juga berfikirlah untuk carrymark ka apa ka…"

Theme 6: Physical

The story includes physical solutions or activity needed mostly in dealing with the participants' obstacles. All of the participants are highly using the Physical dimensions in their storyline. A used all physical dimensions in all of her sessions. It is mentioned in three different stories as follows,

Pastu cara yang nak hilangkan kerisauan saya ialah belajar…"

"dia terpaksa cari duit dan terus bekerja. Pastu yang ini dia mesti berehatlah dan makan ubat supaya sakit dia kuranglah."

"Yang ketiga, mendorong saya mestilah diri saya sendiri, kalau bukan saya untuk tak aktifkan diri di kolej, kemungkinan saya tidak akan dapat kolej lah...Yang ni, saya cuba untuk seimbangkan masa assignment dengan aktiviti ini."

B makes use of the physical action in her storyline that exists in two sessions.

"Dan challenges yang saya dapat ialah saya susah nak tidur dan second ialah handphone sebab saya main game and third ialah time management saya walaupun saya takda kekangan buat kerja last minit tapi of course lah saya ada buat juga...cara saya nak atasi masalah saya yang susah mahu tidur sampai pagi so saya tidak membuang masa dan kalau saya letih saya akan tidurlah"

"Saya nak spend quality time dengan dia orang. saya nak balik rumah…."

Next is Participant C. C only shows high physical dimensions in dealing with her obstacles for only one session.

"...saya harap minggu depan kerja saya habis and then yang keenam nak balik nak makan jalan-jalan dengan diorang"

D mentioned briefly on the physical activities she wanted to do to feel at ease,

"...saya nak graduate sebab sem ni rasa nak giveup nak belajar. D nak buat mak ayah happy dan nak dapat kerja banyak dapat duit nak travel satu dunia..."

While Participant E stands in need of requiring a physical solution to help the main character. The main character gets some 'me' time for herself.

"Dan sekarang saya dalam process nak suruh dia contact balik dengan mak saya and cerita tu end dekat situ je."

"Berehat secukupnyalah. Macam walaupun saya suka bekerja saya boleh berehat 15 minit dulu baru sambung kerja balik

F also have mentioned on the applying the physical action into the problem solving,

"Saya nak tanam pokok dan jaga these kind of animals,...spread the message through the internet"

G shared his story involving Physical dimension,

"...menaikkan semangat dengan melihat video-video motivasi belajar and then nya akan carik kawan yang akan membantu nya dalam komuniti"

Last Participant H also draws physical activities in all of the three sessions.

"Dia ni jenis main game ataupun dia share masalah dengan kami melalui Whatsapp atau Wechat."

"kalau ada masa free saya nak bersukan dan release stress dengan bermain di luar dan yang ni saya biasa study tengah malam sebab kalau jadual kami orang kebanyakan jadual malam so nak fikir rehat sebentar sambil fikir tu nak urus hal- hal yang tidak berkaitan dengan akademik"

Discussion

Exploration on the self- care practices among trainee counsellors using the Six Part Story Method

Through the process of self-care practice exploration in this study has found that each of the participants managed to draw and share stories using the Six Part Story Method. The results of this study suggest that all trainee counsellors are aware of the significance of self-care and the ability of them to manage stress and anxiety when in pressure. The self-care practices are expressed in various manner according to the participant's preference abilities to take care of themselves. One of the main findings in this study was the importance of balanced sequences used in the boxes of Six Part Story Methods that are shown in continuous context of storyline.

In this study, the researcher did not focus on the only the fifth box in detecting the self- care practices in a coping strategies perspective, yet the researcher uses all information in the each box in exploring the self-care practices. For example, the money as the main character shows that there is information that could be detected in terms of imagination coping strategies used by the participants. A study by Lahad (2017) mentioned that it is important for the researcher to pay attention and determine the dimensions the participants utilize in discovering the self-care practices.

Besides, the trainee counsellors are known to experience numerous responsibilities and stresses in academic duties and practical work. This is consistent study in the literature by Mayorga (2015) which proposed that counselling students are subject to various ranges of challenges in their work field and additionally, self-care remains an essential way of dealing with stressful circumstances. On top of that, trainee counsellors also have to compete on the demand and pressure appearing from family or on a personal level. This study resulted in the findings from the application of Six Part Story Method shows that the trainee counsellor were mostly having stressful circumstances due to their academic demand as well as personal problems for instance family issues. This illustrates that the participants in this study are mostly drawn issues emerged from academic responsibilities and family which eventually affect their thoughts and emotions.

Identification of the strength dimensions of self-care practices from coping strategies perspective based on the BASIC Ph Model.

In particular, the study highlights that all of the participants are highly utilized in Social Dimension in practicing self-care. This theme focuses on the intentions of the importance in nurture and deepen the social relationships provided by others namely family and friends. In this study, the interaction with a variety of peers and family served a critical role in supporting the trainee counsellors in coping with stressful circumstances. Additionally, it also appears that trainee counsellors most frequently mentioned on the need to surround themselves with family and friends for emotional support in both joy and distress events. In addition to social self-care, the trainee counsellor also reported that they tend to seek for security and support from other people when they feel helpless. In a way, the role of positive social interactions are considered as solutions to achieve personal well-being and overall life satisfaction due to problems that arose within work. This correlates with studies in the literature that have shown that having supportive relationships are associated with strong protective factors to diminish perceived stress and increase emotional well-being (Pope et al., 2017).

Next is followed by the Physical Dimensions which are also highly used by trainee counsellors in coping with their obstacles. These premises have been supported with previous research by Hansson, HilleraS and Forsell (2005) which the physical self-care strategies is most commonly reported, yet social support has the strongest association with healthier well-being which is contrary to the literature. The physical self-care practices are identified through the use of physical activities for instance exercise and taking "me" time in completing their work. Most of the participants preferred to express their stressful thoughts and emotions through physical health, relaxation and set limits by creating plans on how to take care of the problems. In this

study, it is found that the trainee counsellors are using the physical aspects in a straightforward behavior and developing physical activities to come up against the unbearable academic schedules. Knowing when to hold a temporary gap due to hectic workload and too many deadlines somehow helps with effective concentration and refreshes them from exhaustion of work. The findings showed that all of the participants are using physical dimensions as self-care practices when they come across stressful life events.

Apart from that the self-care strategies that have been stated before, the participants also engage other self-care practices which are Belief, Affect, Imagination and Cognitive. However, there are only several participant practices that practice accordingly in certain dimensions. For instance, Participants B is highly strong in Imagination dimensions while the other participants are not engaging in that particular self- care practice. Not surprisingly, this study appeared to show that the trainee counsellors have varied self-care practices as coping strategies and they preferred their own self-care strategies depending on their best options to face the frustrating occurrences. It is possible that in general, the trainee counsellor is capable of resolving their emotional distress individually without help from others. This is supported in the literature that self-care itself is a wide range of practices that with particular balance for an individual's functionality (Martorell- Poveda et al., 2016).

Likewise, the trainee counsellors are also dominant in utilizing Belief Dimensions. A study done by previous research which Belief or spirituality has recommended as the most positive factor engaged by trainee counsellors to improve self-care (McLellan, 2016). However, this study is contradictory to the results of the previous study because the use of Belief Dimensions is not that dominant among the participants. Only certain participants used beliefs and spirituality into action of putting their worriedness at ease. There are certain participants that use belief self-care by relying on the moral value to guide finding the meaning and understanding of life such as the worship of God.

Imagination self-care practices are a non-dominant dimension used by the participants. Imagination stories is the most unique application in this study because new stories are created which the creator is inspired to share. Only one participant actively used imagination in her storylines. The imagination dimension is expressed through creativity as a means of coping with distress. There is a need to consider the imagination is not dominantly used because adults tend to seek more action in problem solving then using their imagination. In this study, imagination helps to gather information that comes from the outer world and take the information into their own sentiment and reality. The researcher considered that maybe this study was conducted among adults, hence adults have a low imagination process compared to the children. This study coincides with studies by Lahad (2017) indicating that data analyses among children have the tendency to have high imagination compared to adults. This may be the fact that adults engage in others self-care strategies that involve more towards behavioral and cognition.

Affection and cognition self-care practices both consistently demonstrate connection in this study. The participants did mention the negative and positive emotions they have faced when having problems. They either reflect it in negative or in positive ways such as worried and happy. The trainee counsellor works the self-care practices by acknowledging and having a self-reflection towards their feelings. This is supported by a study that affect self-care helps in a way that improves chances of survival and leads to being rational in cognitive as well as behavior thatare appropriate to perceive things in given situations (Mayorga, 2015).

Examine the suitability of Six Part Story Method in Counselling Approach

The administration of Six Part Story Method in counselling approach helps observed on the behaviors of the participants that they are more interested in sharing their illustrated stories through stories making and drawing. This findings linked with the previous study indicated that storytelling offered ways of incorporating their knowledge with their personal experience in a significant way (Culligan, 2018).

Simultaneously, the clients also indirectly made a problem solving their solution in context of coping by practicing self-care. This shows that the application 6PSM helps directly with the intervention by promoting solution focused strategy accordingly with their perspective without the counsellor's continuously intervene during the session. This overarching aim of using this method by storytelling opened new possibilities and varieties for the clients to become aware of different ways to meet their needs even in stressful conditions (Culligan, 2018). Therefore it seems that the Six Part Story Method was a suitable method used in counselling sessions with the standardized instruction in providing the trainee counsellor opportunity to have a sense of autonomy over their problem solving.

This gives a better understanding towards the researcher as a counselor with deeper understanding of changes in ways of handling the obstacles faced by the clients in stressful circumstances. As mentioned by Lahad (2012), the approach helps to observe the client towards growth and recovery which is relevant to all

different kinds of ages. This research discovers that this type of story making can provide clients a safe experience that elicits more thoughtfulness of the individuals and struggle they face. This study coincides with study by Lahad (2012), the uses of 6PSM eventually enable counsellor to be in tune with clients and enable other clients to join in support the client's journey.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study has succeeded in exploring self-care practices from a coping style perspective among trainee counselors using Six Part Story Method. Trainee counsellors have different self-care practices as a coping strategy influenced by their availability and preferences. The second objective for this study is achieved due to the fact that analysing the self-care practice using the BASIC Ph had revealed six major themes of self-care practices by the trainee counsellors. There are two high dimensions which are social and physical that frequently used by participants in practicing self-care. Lastly, the findings suggested the suitability of the findings in counselling approach. These findings contribute to the existing knowledge that could be used in future research in coping with stressful events and designed specifically for all range of ages.

The implications of this research are able to fill in the knowledge gap of exploring self- care practices among trainee counsellor in Malaysia. Since most of the studies regarding self-care practices were only conducted related to the medical field and other helping professions, there is limited research exploring self-care by using Six Part Story Method. Therefore, this study developed to enhance the literature of future research regarding self-care in coping strategies perspective in Malaysian context. Additionally, the findings of this study can be used as future source references to increase knowledge in exploring self-care and create awareness on the importance of practicing self-care. Hence, knowledge and information and understanding of applying self-care practices during stressors could be spread and the public will be educated on the prominence effect of self-care in managing emotion and well-being.

The study also gives implication applies to the trainee counsellor at a personal and professional level. Each and every trainee counsellors who have joined as a part in this research are individually responsible for their own self-care practices which may be informed prior to this research. The self-care habits practiced by trainee counsellor validates the general inference that is it important for them to maintain self-care practices in daily life to reduce levels of stress. According to this research, it appears that there are a variety of ways for the individual to engage in self-care in behaving towards the self-care. This study is a good approach to remind students in counselling courses of the importance in practicing self-care as part of their life as well as throughout the training program. Furthermore, this research can be considered as a useful reference to enrich art therapy in counselling session which is barely known approach in counselling session. The counselling students can gain knowledge on the usage and promote the effectiveness of the Six Part Story Method towards clients in counselling approach.

This study has emphasized on the self-care practice commonly practiced by traineecounsellors in handling their issues. Although this study is focusing on exploring the self- care practices from coping style perspective among trainee counsellor, it is believed that there is room can be done for future exploration in regards to this matter. The same method could be implemented into practice, however prior understanding on the application of the Six Part Story Method should be considered. Practitioners should also modify and promote more on the Six Part Story Method in such a manner that it will fit the specific needs of clients in counselling sessions along with taking note of particular details given by the participants.

owever, more research is needed for counselling field to promote self-care due to the limited knowledge gap discussed in the literature. This could be an opportunity for future researchers to discover more in regards to this topic perhaps by adopting a quantitative research design method study to obtain more reliable and accurate findings. Furthermore, the researchers are also suggested to collect data using different sampling procedures in selecting samples. This is to encourage a non-bias result in this study.This study has only one male in representing the counselling students. Hence, the data cannot be generalized. A good ratio of the races, gender and background data of participants provides the best order in creating samples that can truly be representative of a particular population and allowing the generalization of findings from sample which in this study, the trainee counsellors.

Besides, it is also recommended to expand the sample size to improve the accuracy of the findings and data analyse in future research. In addition, the time frame for the qualitative study should be extended for the data collection since the aim of repeated implementation of the Six Part Story Method is to observe the changes and development of participants (Lahad, 2012). It also for the future researcher to be able to get sufficient time in planning and conducting sessions with large groups of participants. It provides more reliable findings due to the sample size increasing. Even though this research is concentrated on the counselling students from one

university only, the results show that practicing self-care benefits them and helps to reduce their level of stress. Generalization the results onto all the trainees counsellors cannot be made, this study recommends emphasizing on lacking the understanding of self-care practices by the participants in this study. The findings resulting from this study is hoped could encourage counselling educators to place greater emphasis on the need of counselling students to practice self-care with the aim to reduce stressors and fatigue.

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