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EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING GROUP WORK AMONG COUNSELLOR EDUCATORS AND COUNSELLING TRAINEES

By

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY,

UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

(SCHOOL OF EDUCATION)

2018

DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis entitled "**EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING GROUP WORK AMONG COUNSELLOR EDUCATORS AND COUNSELLING TRAINEES**" is my own composition. I have acknowledged all the sources and the thesis has not been submitted for an award to any other university or institution.

Salmah Mohamad Yusoff

.....

(Signed)

.....

(Date)

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The study would not have been possible without the participants, the counsellor educators and counselling trainees. Their willingness to be involved in the research was key to the completion of this thesis.

I am blessed to have mentors, friends and acquaintances like you.

DEDICATION

The PhD journey will not be possible
without the enormous support from my beloved husband
Kasvenda Kassim

and children
Muhammad Zaim Aiman
Nur Qasdina
Muhammad Zuhdi Altamis.

I have been blessed with the support of my parents
Rapiaah Abu Shaid, Hj. Kassim Daud and Hjh Jamilah Perdos.

To my family who have been my constant support, thank you very much.

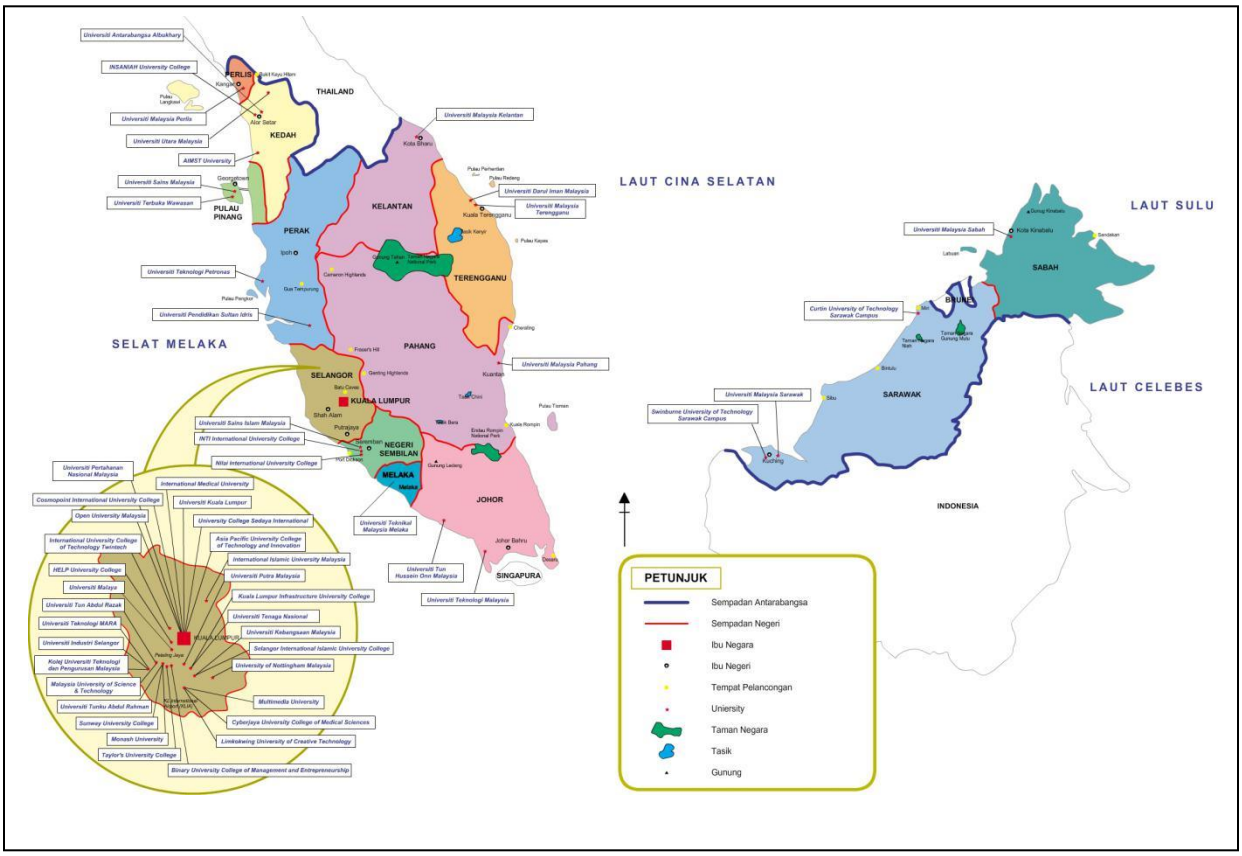
To my late father and mother
Hj. Mohamad Yusoff Kechik, Rosni Hj Abdul Rahman
may Allah bless both of you ...Al Fatihah

To them, I dedicate this thesis.

ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the experiences of counsellor educators and counselling trainees of teaching and learning group work. Group work is one of the core courses that aims to prepare trainee counsellors to be group work leaders. However, there is no specific research that explores the preparation of counselling trainees for group work practice from both trainees' and educators' perspectives. In this qualitative study, the counsellor educators' and counselling trainees' experiences of teaching and learning group work courses are explored. As a collective case study, in-depth exploratory data was collected from six group work lecturers and six groups of undergraduate counselling trainees from three Malaysian public universities and analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis highlighted three important components, which are: 1) experiential learning activities, 2) therapeutic factors in group work training, 3) personal qualities in relation to teaching and learning group work and 4) the interaction of experiential learning activities, personal qualities and therapeutic factors during the teaching and learning group work. These elements are interrelated in the process of understanding both educators' and trainees' experiences to promote the best practices in teaching and learning group work courses, especially for informing counsellor educators about the process of teaching and learning group work in counsellor education.

MAP OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN MALAYSIA



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ABBREVIATIONS

ACA	Australian Counselling Association
ASGW	The Association for Specialists in Group Work
CACREP	Council for Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programs
MOHE	Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education
MQF	Malaysian Qualifications Framework
UNIMAS	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the eleventh Malaysia Plan 2016-2020, improving counselling services was listed on the national agenda as part of the concept of anchoring growth on people (Malaysia, 2015), highlighting the importance of counselling services 18 years after the Counsellors Act 1998 being enacted (Act 580). The act was developed to serve as a guideline for professional counsellors in the context of counselling practices, while also standardising counsellor training. Accreditation of a counselling program requires higher education institutions in Malaysia to fulfil the standards and guidelines from both the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and Board of Counsellors (Malaysia). The Board of Counsellors (Malaysia) has provided The Malaysian Standards and Qualification of Counsellor Training (2003; 2011), which listed eight core curricular areas including: i) Professional identity; ii) Social and cultural diversity; iii) Human growth and development; iv) Career and lifestyle; v) Helping relationship skills; vi) Group Work; vii) Assessment and psychological testing; and viii) Research, project or program evaluation to be offered in the counselling program. This necessitates a counselling trainee to undergo 252 hours of counselling practicum and 504 hours of counselling internship. Apart from individual and family counselling, the credit hour requirement can also be met by carrying out group work sessions. All three types of face to face counselling sessions for the practicum together require a minimum of 96 hours and 192 hours for internship. This is indicative of the importance of group work as it emphasises both the theoretical and practical element of the curriculum. The practical component must be carried out during the practicum and internship.

This research is focused on current practices of teaching group work in undergraduate counselling programs at Malaysian universities by exploring, documenting, analysing and presenting the voices of counsellor educators and counselling trainees. This chapter begins by describing the development of counselling services and training in Malaysia, and author's motivation in carrying out this research. Then, the research objectives and questions, operational definitions of terms used, theoretical framework, significance of the study and organisation of the thesis will be presented accordingly.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

The history and development of counselling in Malaysia has been documented in various contexts, such as practice, training, standard and issues in the profession (Abdul Halim & Sharifah Bee, 2000; Abdul Malek, Nor Junainah, & Azizah, 2013; Glamcevski, 2008; Quek, 2001; Scorzelli, 1987; See & Ng, 2010). Its evolution is evidenced by the number of counsellor education programs offered at public and private universities, the growing number of counselling training, workshops, seminars and conferences, as well as the enactment of Counsellors Act 1998 (Act 580) (See & Ng, 2010).

Counselling training in Malaysia was initiated in the early 1960's (Abdul Malek *et al*., 2013; Quek, 2001; See & Ng, 2010). In 1967, the Faculty of Education, University of Malaya offered guidance and counselling as an elective subject in their Diploma of Education (Abdul Halim & Sharifah Bee, 2000). Subsequently, the Ministry of Education conducted an in-service course at the Language Institute, Kuala Lumpur followed by career in 1969, which was attended by 275 guidance teachers. Guidance seminars were also held at a secondary school in

Bukit Bintang in 1970. Formal counselling training began in the 1980's due to the demand for guidance and counselling teachers at schools (Quek, 2001; See & Ng, 2010). In 1984, the Guidance and Counselling Unit was established under the School Division of Ministry Of Education (Quek, 2001). School counsellors are vital in group guidance, while also carrying out other duties, such as student record; individual inventory; informational service; counselling; placement, referral and consultation; parental conferencing; resource coordination and evaluation (Quek, 2001). Furthermore, a team of consultants from the United States provided in-service training for drug counsellors in the Ministry of Social Welfare (counselling services), Ministry of Home Affairs (drug rehabilitation) and Department of Prison too, apart from school counsellors (Scorzelli, 1987). Therefore, the increasing demands for the profession led to the establishment of a formal counselling training in Malaysia.

Counselling training in Malaysian universities is offered at undergraduate and postgraduate level and was first offered in the 1980's. In 1981, the Agriculture University of Malaysia (currently known as Universiti Putra Malaysia) launched the Bachelor of Education in Guidance and Counselling (Abdul Halim & Sharifah Bee, 2000) and subsequently, the master's programme in 1987 (Quek, 2001). In the 1990's, there was further development in public universities, with the offering of post-graduate courses at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 1993, an undergraduate programme in 1998 and postgraduate course in 1999 at the University of Malaya (Quek, 2001). To date, 39 counselling programs are listed on the Ministry of Higher Education's (MOHE) website (https://app.mohe.gov.my/iktiraf/semakan.php) as an acknowledged program

for public services in Malaysia. Out of them, 21 programs are offered at undergraduate level, while the rest are at diploma and postgraduate level.

The enactment of the Counsellors Act 1998 (Act 580) in Malaysia required a counselling program to follow the standards and guidelines for counselling training developed by the Board of Counsellors (2011). The board functions specifically 'to determine the standard of counselling training programmes' (Counsellors Act, 1998, p.10). The act was established not only to protect counsellors and the national counselling profession, but also to maintain the guidance and standards of domestic training. The Technical Committee on Counsellor Training and Education, Board of Counsellors (2011) is responsible in ensuring the program's quality, using the standards and qualification of counsellor training as a guideline for its setup. The standard and qualification for counsellor training in Malaysia (Board of Counsellors, 2011) requires an undergraduate counselling program to offer six credit hours of group work, which is equivalent to two group work courses.

Counselling programs in both public and private higher education institutions must be accredited by the MQA, whose main role is to implement the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) as the basis for quality assurance of higher education. MQF serves as a declaration of the qualifications and quality in education system, described as follows:

> Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) is an instrument that develops and classifies qualifications based on a set of criteria that is agreed nationally and benchmarked with international practices, and which clarifies the academic levels learning outcomes and credit system bases on student academic load. These criteria are accepted and used for all qualifications awarded by higher education providers. Hence, MQF integrates with and links all national qualifications. MQF also provides education pathways through

> which it links qualifications systematically. This will enable the individual to progress in higher education through transfer or credits and recognitions of prior learning, acquired from formal, non-formal and informal learning without taking into account the time and place in the context of lifelong learning. (Malaysian Qualifications Framework, p. 1)

Programmes or qualifications that conform to MQF will be listed on the Malaysian Qualifications Register's (MQR) website, displaying the program, qualification and its higher education providers accredited under the Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007 (Act 679). MQR is basically the reference point for accredited programmes that has been awarded to higher education providers. Using the "counselling" keyword search on the MQR website on 11th December 2016, there were eight undergraduate counselling programs listed from Malaysian public universities: i) Bachelor of Psychology with Honours (Counselling Psychology) from Universiti Malaysia Sabah, ii) Bachelor of Counselling with Honours from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), iii) Bachelor of Counselling from Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT), iv) Bachelor of Education (Guidance & Counselling) from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), v) Bachelor of Counselling with Honours from Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), vi) Bachelor of Counselling (Hons) from Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), vii) Bachelor of Education with Honours (Guidance and Counselling) from Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) and viii) Bachelor of Counselling from University of Malaya (UM). These higher education degrees in counselling follow the standardised guidelines, underpinning to the professionalization of this area in Malaysia. In the group work sessions, a counselling trainee needs to lead the sessions during the counselling practicum and internship. During the internship, student evaluations are based on their performance in terms of management, filing system, individual

counselling, group counselling, psychological assessment and developmental program (Jabatan Pengajian Tinggi, 2011). This reinforces the importance of the component in counselling services, as highlighted by the standard and qualification for counsellor training (Board of Counsellors, 2011) and Jabatan Pengajian Tinggi (2011).

The standard has also suggested titles for the group work courses to assist in the design of courses in order to be accredited, which include: i) Group counselling, ii) Group procedure, iii) Group theory and technique, iv) Group dynamic and process, and lastly, v) Group and group communication. Different universities use various course titles, for example at Universiti Malaya: i) Group Leadership, and ii) Group Dynamics and Procedure; at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak: i) Group Dynamic, and ii) Counselling Laboratory II (Group); and at Universiti Utara Malaysia: i) Group Counselling Theory and Practice, and ii) Group Counselling Skills. However, each university counselling program is given autonomy in the design of their group work courses based on the guidelines and standards. Throughout this study, current practices for group work training in counsellor education will be added to the current literature.

Despite significant growth of counselling training in Malaysia, there is a need for counsellor education research as only a few studies have been conducted in the context of Malaysia. Hence, this study will explore the current and actual practices of experiential group work training in the undergraduate counselling program.

1.2 THE NEED FOR RESEARCH IN GROUP WORK TRAINING

It can be challenging for counsellor educators to educate and train new undergraduate students with group work skills. Swank and McCarthy (2013) have argued that newly graduated students entering postgraduate level counselling training might have limited experience, especially with specific skills. Therefore, counselling training at undergraduate level may be a bigger challenge as most of the students are fresh off pre-university and diploma courses. Furthermore, extensive research has shown that experiential learning is a renowned and prominent approach for group work in counsellor education (Coker & Majuta, 2015; Cox, Bañez, Hawley, & Mostade, 2003; Downing, Smaby, & Maddux, 2001; Ohrt, Ener, Porter, & Young, 2014; Rivera *et al*., 2004). Such learning activities include observation of group work sessions, personal group experience and simulation sessions (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) to develop group leadership skills. However, literature on undergraduate experiential group work training is lacking compared to postgraduate level, with studies based in other countries and only focusing on certain aspects. The components include: development of counselling profession (Bektaş, 2008); the impact of group counselling on trust (Gültekin, Erkan, & Tüzüntürk, 2011); counselling practicum (ALADAĞ, 2013); multicultural counselling (Kağnici, 2014); and helping skills training (Chui *et al.*, 2014; Hill, Spangler, Jackson, & Chui, 2014; Jackson *et al*., 2014; Spangler *et al*., 2014). Despite significant growth in experiential learning and counsellor education literature, there are few studies in the context of Malaysia (Branson, Cardona, Ng, & Killian, 2016). Hence, this study will explore the current and actual practices of experiential group work training in the undergraduate counselling program.

Secondly, little attention has been directed to bridging the literature on therapeutic factors in group processes and teaching and training group work in counsellor education. In a real group work setting, the group leader might face challenges due to unsuccessful sessions, necessitating awareness for any positive, neutral or negative forces occurring in the process (Masson, Jacobs, Harvill, & Schimmel, 2012). Moreover, the element of personal development group in counselling training allows a counselling trainee the opportunity to experience being a client (Robson & Robson, 2008) and explore the meaning of therapeutic factors. It was found that group members might face issues of safety and trust, which may affect the success of the entire group as a whole (Robson & Robson, 2008). Therefore, in order to identify therapeutic factors in a group, Yalom has presented 11 therapeutic factors that can influence the process of changes among group members (Masson *et al*., 2012; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) and benefit a client's growth (Lese & MacNair-Semands, 2000). It has been asserted that 'among Yalom's many contributions to the field of group work, perhaps the most salient is the description of the therapeutic factors'(St.Pierre, 2010, p. 19). This is evident as most of the current literature focuses on identifying Yalom's therapeutic factors occurring in group work (Coker & Majuta, 2015; Lese & MacNair-Semands, 2000; Ohrt *et al.*, 2014; Spargo, Orr, & Chang, 2010). Any lessons extracted from such literature may guide further studies, evolving experiential group work training. Besides, Holmes and Gahan (2006) have suggested that such elements may also exist in the teaching and learning process. In another study, Howell (2011) compared group therapy and organisational literature and found the 'most important knowledge to incorporate in future leadership development programs from the group psychotherapy

literature pertained to cohesion, interpersonal learning, and insight as well as levels of group process and stages of group development' (p. ii). Therefore, this study will explore the gap in the literature on therapeutic forces in group process and teaching and training group work, focusing on such forces that cause teaching and learning group work to be successful, benefiting both counsellor educators and counselling trainees.

Thirdly, the unsuitability of students enrolling in counselling programs has become a challenging issue in counsellor education (Brear & Dorrian, 2010; Brear, Dorrian, & Luscri, 2008; Foster, Leppma, & Hutchinson, 2014). Students lacking self-awareness and possessing interpersonal problems, inadequate applied skills and knowledge deficits may find that their professional development to becoming a competent counsellor is affected (Brear & Dorrian, 2010). The importance of a counsellor educator in dealing with problematic students in experiential groups and counselling trainees as a whole has been emphasised in previous studies (Goodrich & Luke, 2012). Their professional identities are developed from the combination of personal characteristics and counselling training received during their studies (Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014). Based on my experience, candidate admissions into public universities are evaluated by MOHE based on academic results and co-curricular achievements without any interview to identify their suitability as a counsellor. Due to this enrolment system, counsellor educators will face challenges in developing counsellor identities in a counselling trainee during their training, including during group work training. The counsellor educators play a major role in developing counsellor identity (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Reiner, Dobmeier, & Hernández, 2013). The professional identity of the counsellor educators

themselves is also of utmost importance, as they will be the person of authority to transmit such identity to counselling trainees (Calley & Hawley, 2008). St.Pierre (2010) has also highlighted the need to identify the characteristics of competent experiential group facilitators, as it will also influence trainee experiences. Therefore, the personal characteristics of an effective group leader is important in group training research. Hence, this study seeks to establish the personal qualities that both the counsellor educators and counselling trainees should have and experience during group work training for them to become a professional group work leader.

In the context of Malaysia, there is limited empirical research focused on counselling training and counsellor education since the publication of the standard and qualification for counsellor training (Board of Counsellors, 2011). Previous studies have focused on the development of counselling training (Abdul Halim & Sharifah Bee, 2000; Glamcevski, 2008; Quek, 2001; Scorzelli, 1987; See & Ng, 2010); issues pertaining to counselling practicum (Lily Mastura, 2001; Norwati & Wan Mazwati, 2013; Rahimi & Nor Shafrin, 2010; Ruhani, 2012b); information technology in counselling training (Sulaiman & Megat Daud, 2013; Wan Marzuki, Normazlina, Borhannudin, & Ahmad Fauzi, 2012); the counselling performance among counselling trainee (Wan Marzuki, 2011); supervisory relationship (Ruhani, 2012a); self-reflection among counselling trainees (Norzaliza, Wan Marzuki, & Ahmad Fauzi, 2014) and supervisees' working alliance (Nor Mazlina, Wan Marzuki, Rohani, & Sidek, 2016). Furthermore, most national group work-related studies are on specific theoretical perspectives, such as the application of Gestalt Theory in group guidance for student self-development (Mohammad Aziz Shah, Rapidah, Aslina,

& Samsiah, 2013); the effectiveness of person-centred therapy on self-concept, depression and resilience among teenagers (Fauziah, Fatimah, Salina, & Nasrudin, 2014); rational emotive behaviour therapy (Amalia & Sidek, 2013; Mastura, Amat Senin, Sidek, Jamaluddin, & Wan Marzuki, 2014); cognitive behaviour therapy (Firdaus, Oei, & Mohd Jamil, 2011; Mohammad Aziz Shah, Fatimah, Ahmad Jazimin, Syed Sofian, & Nazariah, Abd. Samad, 2011); and cognitive psychology (Fauziah *et al.*, 2014). To date, no specific research has explored the preparation of counselling trainees for group work practice. Abdul Halim Othman and Sharifah Bee Aboo Bakar (2000) have mentioned that "major issues and problems confronting counselling and counsellor education in Malaysia are much the same as those faced by other societies that attempt to implement foreign ideas and experiences" (p. 17). Recent evidence also suggests the necessity of exploring the influence of culture on counselling (Mansor, 2010). This research aims to contribute to the profession in Malaysia by enhancing group work training credibility.

Finally, in order to understand the context of teaching and learning, previous studies in higher education have scrutinised both the educators (Brew, Riley, & Walta, 2009; Rickinson & Lundholm, 2008) and students' views (Fulbrook, Rolfe, Albarran, & Boxall, 2000; Rickinson & Lundholm, 2008). For issues related to counsellor pedagogy, one particular study on the counsellor educator's attitude on teaching career courses has been conducted to determine a pattern (Osborn & Dames, 2013); it recommended an intensive case study to examine the nature of the course from the perspective of both student and lecturer. Seward (2014) has also conducted research on multicultural counselling pedagogy, looking at students' learning experiences in the particular course. However, very

few studies in the counsellor education literature have explored the parties' experience in teaching and learning issues. Therefore, this research will examine the process of preparing undergraduate counselling trainees for group work practice, and addressing the gap in the counsellor education literature. The focus will be on experiential learning activities, therapeutic factors experiences, and the development of personal qualities.

1.3 THE FOCUS OF THIS STUDY

This qualitative study explores the experiences of counselling trainees and counsellor educators during teaching and learning group work in an undergraduate counselling program. This study will address the gap in the counsellor education literature, particularly regarding experiential learning activities, therapeutic factors experiences, and the development of personal qualities. A case study approach has been adopted for this research (Creswell, 2009; Denscombe, 2010; Simons, 2009), involving a selected case from different geographical areas, with documentation on multiple perspectives and viewpoints about the program (Simon, 2009). This case study research aims to identify the participant's experiences as a learner (counselling trainee), and the lecturer (counsellor educator) during group work training on an undergraduate counselling program at Malaysian universities. As a collective case study, it involves cases from three public universities in Malaysia.

This study will further the understanding of the nature of teaching and learning group work courses for undergraduate counselling programs in Malaysian universities. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1. What are the experiential learning activities involved in reflecting good practice in teaching and learning group work?

RQ2. What are the therapeutic factors involved in reflecting good practice in teaching and learning group work?

RQ3. What are the personal qualities of counsellor educators and counselling trainees in relation to their participation in teaching and learning group work?

RQ4. In what ways do the interaction of experiential learning activities, personal qualities and therapeutic factors in group work training promote the teaching and learning process?

The research objectives are:

RO1. To explore the experiential learning activities involved in reflecting good practice in teaching and learning group work.

RO2. To examine the therapeutic factors involved in reflecting good practice in teaching and learning group work.

RO3. To investigate the personal qualities of counselling trainees and counsellor educators in relation to their participation in teaching and learning group work.

RO4. To understand the ways in which the interaction of experiential learning activities, personal qualities and therapeutic factors in group work training promote the teaching and learning process.

1.4 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

This section defines the specific terms used in this thesis.

1.4.1 Undergraduate counselling program

In this research, undergraduate counselling program refers to bachelor degree courses in counselling offered by Malaysian Public Universities. The program is approved by the Board of Counsellors (2011) by following the current standard and qualification for counsellor training.

1.4.2 Group work training

Group work training involves the process of training of leadership skills among counselling trainees to become a group leader. The group work training includes knowledge, skills, and experiences for all undergraduate counselling programs to become a group leader. The undergraduate counselling curriculum included group leadership courses as one of their core courses to train the counselling trainees to become a group leader.

1.4.3 Group work courses

In this study, group work courses refer to the compulsory courses in the undergraduate counselling program in Malaysian Universities. Based on the standard and qualification for counsellor training in Malaysia (Board of Counsellors, 2011), the undergraduate counselling program is required to offer two group work courses as their core courses. The courses cover topics such as

group dynamic principles, therapeutic factors in groups, group counselling theory, group work skills and types of groups.

1.4.4 Counselling trainee

Counselling trainee refers to students enrolled on undergraduate counselling programs at selected Malaysian Public Universities. The counselling program is accredited by MQA and Board of Counsellors (Malaysia). This research includes counselling trainees who have taken both group work courses in their counselling program.

1.4.5 Counsellor educator

Counsellor educator refer to counselling teaching staff from Malaysian universities with a postgraduate counselling degree. In this study, the counsellor educators had experience in teaching group work courses and used group work approaches in their courses.

1.5 MY BACKGROUND AND ITS INFLUENCE IN THIS STUDY

I started my career as a tutor at the Department of Counselling UNIMAS in 2001. UNIMAS offered the Bachelor of Counselling in 1999. When compared to other higher education programs offered in Malaysia, the counselling program is subject to a professional body's approval. In 1998, the Malaysian parliament enacted the Counsellors Act 1998 which requires the Board of Counsellors (Malaysia) to regulate the profession in Malaysia. It is also related to issues pertaining to counsellor education, training guidelines for the counsellor education curriculum, counsellor educator's qualifications and ethical issues. Undergraduate counselling programs were required to follow the guidelines in order to be accredited by the MQA and approved by MOHE. Designing the

program was a challenge for our counselling department due to the necessity of considering the mission and vision of the department, faculty and university, in addition to adhering to the Board of Counsellor's (Malaysia) guidelines. Initially, the program was inclined towards organisational counselling, but generic courses must also be offered as it is at the undergraduate level. Its structure might be similar to a core course, but with different content and focus as per the vision and mission of the department, faculty and university.

The experience in teaching group work courses during the tutorship was kick-started by the task of assisting counsellor educators who were teaching the courses. Group counselling sessions were facilitated with the counselling trainees as clients. I am aware that experiential group counselling sessions for the counselling trainees was an important component of the group work course. This is as per Yalom's suggestion, that a personal group experience is accepted as training in group counselling courses (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). However, there is much debates and ethical issues related to leadership for counselling trainees (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005), like the dual relationship between the course instructor and counselling trainees in such sessions. Additionally, the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) are of the opinion that a counselling trainee's participation in experiential group cannot be graded in their academic achievement (Goodrich, 2008). I believe that incorporating experiential learning in group work courses will help enhance both the counselling trainees' personal and professional development.

In 2006, I was appointed as a lecturer after completing my postgraduate degree in Guidance and Counselling and was assigned to teach group work courses (Group Dynamic and Group Counselling Laboratory). The Group Dynamic

course exposes counselling trainees to concepts and practices in group dynamics, group stages, group counselling theories and group counselling leadership, whereas the Group Counselling Laboratory course prepares them to lead the group work session. They will learn to conduct needs assessment and assess the client's problem, identify goals, prepare a group session plan, and write counselling reports and documentations. The content of group work courses varies between universities. Furthermore, the teaching approaches, creativity and client focus may also be different as some universities prepare their counselling trainees to work in different settings, such as schools, communities, higher education institutions, or workplaces. I have found it challenging to ensure that the counselling trainees were competent with their leadership skills, as they were also in the process of developing their basic counselling skills. Such experiences in teaching group work courses, involvement in the process of the undergraduate counselling program and obtaining approval from the relevant institutions have inspired my interest in researching group work training in Malaysia. Therefore, I have developed a research proposal to fulfil the literature gap in counsellor education, particularly related to group work training in undergraduate counselling programs. Due to dealing with clients across multi-cultural backgrounds, there is an apparent need to be more culture-conscious when approaching group work training and theory.

However, I am aware that my experience in teaching group work courses may influence the way in which I interact with participants and interpretation of data. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) asserted that 'the researcher's personal agenda, personal demons, or personal "axes to grind," which skew the ability to represent and present fieldwork and data analysis in a trustworthy manner (p.

294). In order to reduce the researcher's bias, triangulation methods were used in this study to verify the findings from multiple cases from various sources and sites.

This research addresses the need for in-depth research in group work training for counselling programs by exploring the experiences of both counsellor educators and counselling trainees in the teaching and learning processes. Hence, it is hoped that this study will explore the current and actual practices of experiential group work training in an undergraduate counselling program, while investigating the literature gap on therapeutic forces within this context. This study will also scrutinise the personal qualities that both counsellor educators and counselling trainees will develop throughout their experience in teaching and learning group work.

1.6 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis is comprised of six chapters, with Chapter One introducing the study, the need for research, research aims, operational definition of terms, my background and its influence in this study and the organisational structure. Next, Chapter Two reviews the literature on counsellor education in the context of both the international and local settings, and presents the current model of teaching in counsellor education and group work training. Chapter Three discusses the procedure for conducting the research and explains the method and qualitative approaches taken. Then, Chapter Four reports on the main-themes and sub-themes that emerged from the study, while Chapter Five provides extensive discussion on the findings. Finally, Chapter Six summarises the key findings and

provides recommendations for future research and practice of group work training.

1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the introduction and background of the research in the local context, with a discussion of the author's motivation and research interest for devising the study. The main reason for this study is due to the limited knowledge on the preparation of group work practice for counselling trainees. Despite the many foreign studies that may aid counsellor education in Malaysia, the need for local research and evidence is vital. The ensuing chapter will highlight relevant research literature regarding group work training.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This study aims to explore the experiences of undergraduate counselling trainees and counsellor educators in teaching and learning group work. As mentioned earlier, there is no specific research exploring the preparation of counselling trainees for group work practice from both trainees' and educators' perspectives. In the counselling profession, group work is a crucial part of their daily work in providing counselling services, so group work training of great importance in counselling training. There is a growing body of research about group work intervention (Fauziah *et al*., 2014; Rose & Steen, 2011; Whitten & Burt, 2015), but unfortunately, there is a lack of research about the teaching and learning experience of counsellor educators and counselling trainees during group work training. In Chapter One, I elaborated on counselling training in the Malaysian context, emphasising the importance of group work training in counsellor education. This chapter is comprised of five parts, Section 2.1 opens the topic in hand with a review of group work training in counsellor education, focusing on the teaching and learning group work model and the influence of standard and professional bodies in counsellor education. Next, Section 2.2 describes experiential learning, highlighting its role in group work training, while Section 2.3 expounds therapeutic factors in group work and the process of teaching and learning. Then, the personal qualities of counsellors, counsellor educators, and group leaders are reviewed in Section 2.4, with an additional focus on counsellor characteristics. Finally, Section 2.5 provides the theoretical framework that illustrates an understanding of self and experience of counsellor educators and counselling trainees and their development using a person-centred approach.

2.1 GROUP WORK TRAINING IN COUNSELLOR EDUCATION

The development of group work training is one of the core components in the counsellor education program, as the counselling trainees are trained to be a group leader. One of the objectives of this study is to examine the experience of counsellor educators in preparing counselling trainees to conduct a group work session. There are various approaches used to describe how group work and counselling training should proceed within the group work and counsellor education literature. Indeed, in-depth discussions on applying the group counselling model during counsellor training has been documented since the 1970's (Andry, 1975; Berman, 1975; Jacobs, Brown, & Randolph, 1974). One author particularly urged for 'training in group therapy to be introduced after the trainee has acquired extensive theoretical and practical experience in individual therapy' (Berman, 1975, p. 329). Prior to the suggestion, he outlined a model for group psychotherapist training which encompasses several important aspects including didactic seminar, simulation seminar, process groups and therapy groups, observation, supervised *in vivo* therapist and clinical case conference (Berman, 1975). Jacobs *et al.* (1974) also proposed a training model comprising practice and feedback, participation in a growth group, as well as modelling and instruction. In their respective works, the component of experiential training was the main focus (Berman, 1975; Jacobs *et al*., 1974).

Several authors (Connor, 1994; Trotzer, 2006) developed an integrated model for counsellor training. Connor asserted the fundamental idea that 'the belief that didactic as well as experiential learning has its place within a total counsellor training programme, which is aimed at producing professional practitioners' (Connor, 1994, p. 26). Connor emphasises the four stages of learning cycle,

which are Stage 1: Attitudes and values; Stage 2: Knowledge and skills; Stage 3: Client work and supervision; and Stage 4: Reflection and evaluation. Based on these stages, the general consensus is that the application of group work training is in Stage 2, whereas the other stages support learning development (see Figure 2.1).

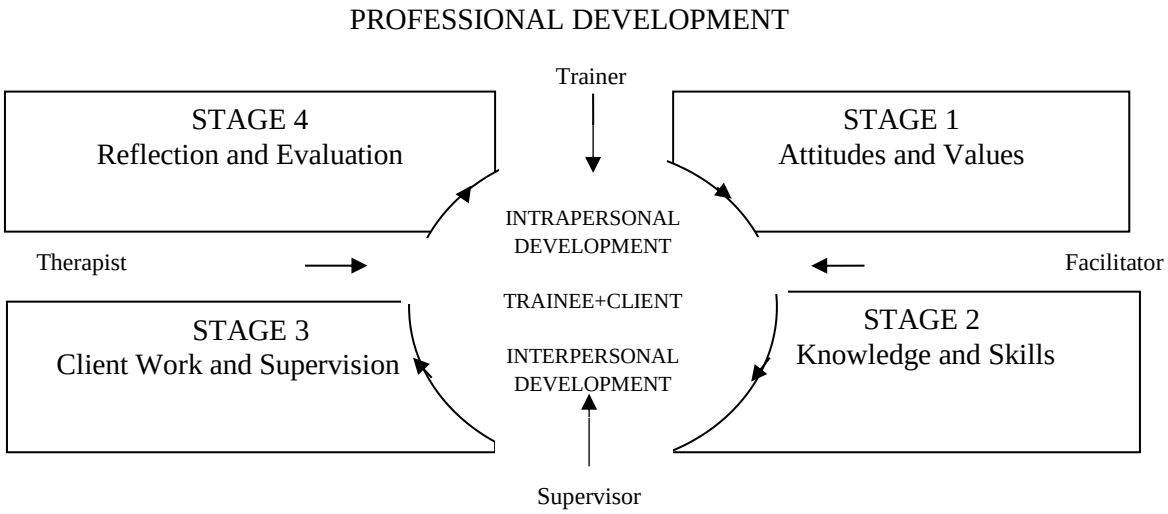

Figure 2.1: The model for training competent and reflective counsellors

The model also highlighted the interpersonal and intrapersonal development of counselling trainees throughout the experiential group experience during counselling training (Connor, 1994). It incorporated the group work experience in their counselling training as a trainee experience aspect of the group process such as trust building, immediacy, risk taking and experimentation. In my experience, the components of experiential group are incorporated in the group dynamic course, which gives trainees an opportunity to experience a process of personal growth. Even though the application of the experiential group experience may differ between counselling programs (such as conducted in the group work course or across the counselling program itself), it was proven

beneficial to the development of counselling trainees (Pollard, 2015; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

Additionally, several authors have highlighted the element of supervision, and combined didactic and experiential methods in group work training (Trotzer, 2006; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005), considering an experiential component as an essential learning experience in group work training. Trotzer listed five basic training components for an effective group worker: i) acquisition of knowledge and information about group process (academic component); ii) experiential involvement as a participant in group process (experiential component); iii) development of strategies, skills, and techniques to be used in the leadership capacity (skills component); iv) observation of leadership models and group processes in a variety of venues (observation component); and lastly, v) supervised experience in the leadership role (supervision component). Furthermore, he believes participation in the experiential group should not be evaluated according to the trainee's academic grade, as any involvement and level of self-disclosure in the setting is dependent on their choice (Trotzer, 2006).

The importance of the teaching and learning processes in group work training was also emphasised by Yalom and Leszcz (2005). Yalom, a prominent group psychotherapist, stressed the obligation to 'appreciate the need for rigorous, well-organised group training programs and offer programs that match the needs of trainees' (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, p. 544). Subsequently, he has suggested four major components that are vital in group training: i) observation of experienced clinicians; ii) close clinical supervision of trainees' maiden groups; iii) a personal group experience, and iv) personal psychotherapeutic work

(Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Additionally, the importance of group work training is to teach 'trainees not only how to do but also how to learn' is also reinforced accordingly (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, p. 562). In relation to the counselling trainees, the experiential method in teaching group work is required to transfer the element of knowledge into skills and practice. Extra emphasis is placed on group work supervision, which requires establishing a supervisory alliance between counsellor educators and counselling trainees.

Another aspect of training experience for group leaders has also been proposed (Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2014), consisting of: i) personal psychotherapy for group leaders; ii) self-exploration groups for group leaders, and iii) group supervision for group leaders, all of which have also been highlighted by Yalom and Leszcz (2005) and Trotzer (2006). Corey *et al.* (2014) reinforce the need for counsellor educators to pay attention to ethical issues in group work training. Training components are not solely dependent on didactic method, so a trainee must be informed of the nature of the course, the potential risks, and benefits of experiential methods. Group work training is influential for both the trainees and professional counsellors, serving as a reminder that group leaders must be aware of their limitations when conducting population-specific groups, such as children, college trainees, or on outpatient basis. The ethical aspects are key components in the profession, particularly in terms of training and practice, as they involve dealing with clients (Davenport, 2004; Noriah, Salleh, & Abu Yazid, 2012). Moreover, Corey *et al*. (2014) assert that 'for proficient group leaders to emerge, a training program must make group work a priority' (p. 85). It is unethical to lead group counselling sessions without prior understanding of how to lead an effective group (Masson *et al*., 2012).

Besides the model of teaching and learning group work, the counselling associations also play a role in the counsellor education curriculum. The international association has highlighted different curriculum domains and components in their counsellor education literature. As counsellor educators, this curriculum domain serves as guide for the design of counsellor education courses. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) requires counselling training to include knowledge based learning, therapeutic competencies, development of self-awareness, professional development, skills work and practice placements (BACP, 2012). The core curriculum domains highlighted are: a) the professional role and responsibility of the therapist; b) understanding the client; c) the therapeutic process; and lastly, d) the social, professional and organisational context for therapy. However, the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) differs by highlighting nine elements in their Accreditation of Counsellor Higher Education Courses, including: a) admission; b) self-development; c) work-based training and assessment; d) professional supervision; e) practical skills training; f) theory; g) professional development; h) assessment; and finally, i) course evaluation (ACA, 2012). Both BACP and ACA do not specify group work training as part of their core curricula.

Since the enactment of the Counsellors Act 1998 (Act 580), developing professional practice for counsellors in Malaysia demands for a proper focus on group counselling itself and group counsellor training. Furthermore, the standard and qualification for counsellor training in Malaysia (Board of Counsellors, 2011), marks the development and establishment of counselling training in Malaysia. Serving as a guide to develop counselling programs in Malaysian universities, even though it requires a review and elaboration in a more precise

and comprehensive manner, according to research. When compared with the ASGW Professional Standards for the Training of Group Workers (ASGW, 2000), standard and qualification for counsellor training in Malaysia (Board of Counsellors, 2011) only offers a general guide for counsellor education and is not specifically for group work practice. Despite applying western models in counselling education programs, the uniqueness of local society and education must be factored in.

Previously, studies on accreditation and credentialing in counsellor education focused on various aspects of the counselling profession and training. However, those specifically on accreditation issues related to group work training are limited to western-based sources. Therefore, the establishment of ASGW guidelines and standards for training group workers is important in the development of such curricula and guidelines (Gillam, 2004; Guth & McDonnell, 2004; Thomas, 2006; Wilson, Rapin, & Haley-Banez, 2004). An ASGW founding document has recognised group work, reflecting universal values among group workers and providing general guidelines for training goals. Furthermore, Guth and Mcdonnell (2004) have suggested program reviewing for group work educators in order to satisfy the core training competencies, and class activities are planned properly across class stages ‘to address and reinforce competencies’ (p. 105). A new phase of teaching group work and challenges to link class goals will be presented to the educators so as to meet the competencies requirements.

With regard to the Malaysian context, group work is a compulsory course in the undergraduate counselling program offered at Malaysian universities. The

Standards and Qualification of Counsellor Training (2011) Section 2.6 (p. 12-13) has elaborated on the guidelines for the group work curriculum, encompassing various topics including: i) Group dynamic principles (e.g. group process level, development stage theory, role and behaviour of group members, and therapeutic factor in group); ii) Group leadership styles and approaches; iii) Group counselling theory, explaining the similarities and differences using research and related reading materials; iv) Group counselling methods, which includes orientation and leader's behaviour, criteria and screening method, and member selection via group effectiveness evaluation; v) Approaches used for other types of groups (e.g. task group, focused group, support group, prevention group, psychoeducational group, and therapy group); vi) Standards for group leaders training; and finally, vii) Ethical and legal considerations. The process of teaching and learning will prepare a counselling trainee to acquire specific leadership skills. However, the standard only serves as a guide for counsellor educators to design the group work curriculum, the teaching and learning experience among both educators and trainees may vary. As group work is advantageous when helping clients, it is important for group leaders to be trained properly.

Several researchers have highlighted guidelines that will assist educators in designing group counselling courses (Gillam, 2004; Wilson *et al.*, 2004). In order for counselling programs to provide sufficient knowledge and skills in specific group work training, the ASGW (2000) in the United States has made available three foundation documents that serve as specialisation guidelines: ASGW Best Practice Guidelines (ASGW, 1998), ASGW Principles for Diversity-Competent Group Workers (ASGW, 1999), and ASGW Professional

Standards for the Training of Group Workers (ASGW, 2000). With regard to Malaysia, as yet, the standard and qualification for counsellor training (Board of Counsellors, 2011) guidelines are not as specific and detailed in the philosophy of group work training for specific groups and populations.

The establishment of counsellor education programs is also increasing in other countries (Leung, Guo, & Lam, 2000; Leung, 2004). In Hong Kong, Leung (2004) suggested the setting up of a system of certification or registration based on academic training and practical experience. The focus is on how the entire profession must 'develop a consensus on what constitutes professional counselling, and what qualifications, training, and credentials are needed for someone to become a professional counsellor' (p. 243). Furthermore, the demand for professional counsellor training in China is high due to increasing mental health issues (Cook, Lei, & Chiang, 2010). Despite the expectations for western-based ideas to influence the direction for Chinese counsellor training programs, 'culturally appropriate and sensitive strategies' (p. 63) should be considered (Cook *et al*., 2010). Hence, most countries exert their own uniqueness when establishing standardisation in counselling education.

Several researchers have specifically and critically considered the issues arising when teaching group work for counsellors (Choudri, 1999; Killacky & Hulse-Killacky, 2004; Romano & Sullivan, 2000). Besides specific group work courses, Killacky and Hulse-Killacky (2004) have since implemented teaching group counselling across the curriculum to enhance group competencies skills (GCS) among the trainees. GCS is implemented in three counselling courses, which are Career Development and Life Planning, Theories of Counselling, and

Counselling Techniques. For example, its implementation in Theories of Counselling courses is as follows:

> The instructor provides a written agenda for each class. Thus, trainees immediately know that the basic class structure always involves some type of check in, a work segment, and a closing activity. From the first class meeting she models how a leader begins a group, keeps the group on task in accomplishing its goals, and closes a group. As trainees work in small discussion groups and engage in theory debates, she models basic core skills including cutting off, drawing out, holding and shifting the focus, and clarifying and summarizing group member statements. Trainees observe how a graduate class can be conceptualized and then facilitated in a way that balances attention to course content and interpersonal learning. She always includes a closing round where she asks trainees to give examples of how they plan to integrate and apply their course content to future assignments in the class and to life outside of the classroom setting (p. 92).

In relation to counsellor educators, the process of teaching group work may take place beyond group work courses. The element and group work concept can also be embedded in other counselling courses. This kind of approach gives trainees continuous exposure on how to become a group leader.

In this section, I have reviewed the international literature on various models and approaches in teaching group work, demonstrating the importance of an appropriate system in this field. Based on the literature, the counsellor educator should consider a few aspects in teaching and learning, such as professional body guidelines in counsellor education, appropriate cultural strategies in teaching and teaching group work beyond group work courses. However, the focus is not solely on teaching, but is also inclusive of other elements like personal development of the counselling trainees, supervision, teaching alliance and ethical issues. Since experiential learning components are crucial in developing group work leader's competencies, the challenges that counsellor educators face to develop the suitable activities must also be addressed. The next section will

include a discussion on experiential learning and how counsellor educators embed it in group work training. While some of the teaching group work model explained in this section focussed on various elements to be considered, the next section elaborates experiential learning, providing a different perspective on what is required to train a group leader.

2.2 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN GROUP WORK TRAINING

The counsellor educators play a role in identifying a suitable theoretical approach in the counsellor education program. As counsellor educators, the theoretical approaches will help to achieve the desired learning outcome from particular courses. Yalom and Leszcz (2005) assert that there are counselling programs that focus solely on training trainees to individually counsel, expecting them to translate individual therapy skills into group therapy skills on their own. Realistically, 'it is essential that mental health training programs appreciate the need for rigorous, well-organised group training programs and offer programs that match the needs of trainees' (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, p. 544). However, it is important to incorporate the underpinning learning theory to guide the counsellor educators in their teaching and learning activities. Barrio Minton, Wachter Morris and Yaites (2014) conducted a ten-year content analysis of 230 peer-reviewed articles of teaching and learning published in the American Counselling Association. The study found that only 26.95% (n = 62) of articles were related with aspects of pedagogical foundations. The authors highlight the importance of preparing a counsellor educator to become a 'teacher-scholar' to ensure the counselling students are well trained to help their clients. Over one third of pedagogical articles (n = 21) cited experiential education (Kolb, 1984). Although the articles were based on specific ACA journals, the concept of the

importance of pedagogical research and experiential learning theory to group work training research was highlighted.

Experiential learning is highly regarded in the process of developing a professional counsellor (Corey *et al*., 2014; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Guth & McDonnell, 2004; Pollard, 2015; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). A study by Furr and Carroll (2004) showed that most counselling trainees benefited from experiential learning and field experiences for their professional development. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is specifically driven by the works of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget and Carl Rogers, greatly influencing the field of counsellor education training (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Based on ELT, learning is defined as 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience' (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194). Additionally, Osborn, Daninhirsch and Page (2003) have described experiential learning by asserting that 'education is effective when trainees are directly in touch with something that is meaningful to them, receiving guided reflection and analysis of such experience' (p. 15). Kolb's experiential learning 'portrays two dialectically related modes of grasping experience - Concrete Experience (CE) and Abstract Conceptualisation (AC) and two dialectically related modes of transforming experience - Reflective Observation (RO) and Active Experimentation (AE)' (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194). Based on Kolb's model, the trainees will undergo a cycle of four stages: (1) involving themselves in a concrete experience; (2) continue with reflective observation which demands unbiased perspective towards learning situation; (3) followed by engaging in abstract conceptualisation which are then (4) ability to experiment in a more complex situations with what they have learned (Atkinson & Murrell, 1988;

Murrell & Claxton, 1987). Kolb's model can be utilised in planning a program that includes phases of abstract conceptualisation and extended concrete experience (Sugarman, 1985). Sugarman (1985) reinforced the idea that 'these cycles provide trainees with maximum learning while preventing boredom and alienation' (p. 267). He added the model 'can also be used to represent the counselling process, because what is counselling if not a process of learning and exploration?' (Sugarman, 1985, p. 267). This idea is supported by Atkinson and Murrell (1988), who used Kolb's experiential learning theory as a model for career counsellors to design career exploration activities which empower clients to search for their future career. For example, in the Reflective Observation stage, the clients reflected on their experience on a career site visit (such as desired personal qualities for a particular job).

Despite of years of criticism of Kolb's model (Bergsteiner, Avery, & Neumann, 2010), many researchers have documented the application of experiential learning in counsellor education curricula, such as career counselling (Fulton & Gonzalez, 2015; Parks, 2012), art and counselling (Ziff & Beamish, 2004), multicultural counselling competencies (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002), and spirituality in counsellor education (Leseho, 2007). However, experiential activities for group work training may display differences and similarities when compared to other counselling courses. Based on Kolb's model, counsellor educators can utilise experiential strategies to design experiential activities to teach skills in group work (Killacky & Hulse-Killacky, 2004; Osborn *et al*., 2003; Riva & Korinek, 2004). However, there is still 'limited evidence in the literature that group experiential training that has been linked to and processes of experiential education that fit established principles' (Osborn *et al*., 2003, p.

14). Several authors deemed that the experiential component is necessary in teaching and learning group work (Chang, Bhat, & Chen, 2017; Guth & McDonnell, 2004; Wilson *et al*., 2004; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Guth and McDonnel suggest that the educators prepare experiential component activities across the beginning, middle and end stages of the course to meet the core training competencies. In recent study on small group experiences among counselling students during group work training, Pollard (2015) found that 'participants in this study left their small group experiences feeling partially prepared to function as future group facilitators' (p. 100). A key point from this study emphasised that experiential activities are a crucial component in preparing the trainee to achieve core competencies to become a group leader.

Osborn *et al.* (2003) found that trainee evaluation can be done using Kolb's learning cycle, which can also be used to identify trainee's learning experience in small group counselling sessions. Their findings show that only one out of three groups manage to go through all four-experiential education processes, as they were able to apply the knowledge in group processes. Moreover, other related experiential learning in group studies have particularly explored leadership skills through modelling (Riva & Korinek, 2004), application of group skills in other counselling courses (Killacky & Hulse-Killacky, 2004), and trainee attitudes in experiential groups (Anderson & Price, 2001). Nevertheless, there are limited resources that have investigated various experiential activities using Kolb's learning cycle in group work training.

Furthermore, the Skilled Group Counselling Training Model (SGCTM) has been developed to focus on teaching low-level and high-level group counselling skills

(Downing *et al*., 2001; Smaby, Maddux, Torres-Rivera, & Zimmick, 1999). In this model, the counselling trainees are required to demonstrate a group leader's skills during a simulation session. In comparison with other experiential group work training models, SGCTM is highly structured in skills training. It has been employed in training 18 skills that can be categorised into three counselling stages: exploring, understanding, and acting. Some elements found in the training model include: 'i) training in group counselling skills that focus on interaction and immediacy; ii) emphasising skills acquisition over personal growth experiences; iii) providing systematic feedback and evaluation of trainees' skills performances by instructors and peers; iv) using structured self-disclosures to ensure privacy and reducing the chances of developing dual relationships; v) incorporating follow-up and evaluation of skills demonstrated by counsellors-in-training during actual group counselling sessions; and finally, vi) providing opportunities for trainees to link the use of counselling skills with higher order cognitive strategies' (Downing *et al*., 2001, p. 158). Ohrt *et al*. (2014) asserted that 'structured experiences that allow for practice, feedback, reflection, and processing in a controlled environment appear to be key aspects of group leader development' (p. 155-156). In line with Kolb's learning cycle, the counselling trainees are given complex and highly structured activities to develop their leadership skills. Regarding current practice, counsellor educators may employ various models, such as experiential learning activities, to ensure the trainees achieve specific leadership competencies.

Echoing similar models of teaching group work, several researchers combined didactic teaching and experiential learning (Gillam, 2004; Trotzer, 2006). Gillam (2004) proposed the acronym PEDAGOGY as a tool for the counsellor educator

in planning either didactic and experiential components. Regarding the experiential components, 'the fourth and fifth domains, signified by the letters A and G, underscore the importance of providing experiential opportunities for students, with the assumption that hands-on experiences in the application of the course content is critical to translate theory to practice (p. 76). Trotzer (2006) incorporated academic and experiential requirements in the design of a group work course. However, Coker and Majuta (2015) highlight their cross cultural challenges in teaching the group work concept during didactic and experiential learning experiences in Botswana. For example, during the didactic portion, students show their respect with silence, this attitude continues during the experiential group activities where 'often students would look to the group facilitators to provide structure, advice, and reassurance that they were doing things the "right" way' (p. 111). Even though the authors assert that 'universities that educate graduate counselling students generally comply with the professional accreditation standard by teaching the group class didactically along with an experiential laboratory' (Connolly, Carns, & Carns, 2005, p.5), the counsellor educators should be culturally alert to the group work concept and application that may impact the clients. Thus, with regard to the current study, even though previous research and models may guide a counsellor educator in designing their group work training, there is a need to tailor the activities according to Malaysian culture.

It is worth noting that the modelling component also helps counselling trainees to integrate the skills and techniques used by their instructor (Barlow, 2004; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Riva and Korinek (2004) have described that 'the goal of modelling and experiential learning is to help trainees use normal classroom

events as demonstrations of group theory and group dynamics' (p. 61). Even though the ACA Codes of Ethics and Standards does not require that specific skills competencies are taught through modelling (Riva & Korinek, 2004), the experience may help the trainees to model certain behaviour during actual group counselling sessions. For example, Yalom and Leszcz (2005) address the need for the group leader to demonstrate a 'non-judgemental acceptance and appreciation' towards clients in a group session. The respectful interactions modelled by the educators will educate the students on how to communicate as a group leader. Cohen and DeLois (2002) shared their experience in co-teaching group work courses and they discovered 'that the co-leader relationship can mirror the developmental stages of the group, also suggests an area for further examination and consideration' (p. 35). Even though it was a challenging process to model co-leadership to the students, they agreed that 'a willingness to share leadership and ideas, mutual respect, a commitment of time to plan and debrief, an openness to feedback, and flexibility in the classroom are an important aspect in co-leadership model' (p. 36-35). They assert that 'group work courses are a natural setting for modelling that leadership approach' (Cohen & DeLois, 2002, p. 35). In real group sessions, the co-leadership model gave an opportunity for group members to observe the interactions of the group leader (Fall & Menendez, 2002). The authors emphasised that 'co-leaders who treat each other with respect can teach group members about good communication, handling disagreement, and other elements of negotiating a healthy relationship' (p. 26). A key point of the research is that the modelling techniques are being used to teach specific group leadership competencies. However, besides an emphasis on

the co-leadership model, current research may explore how the counsellor educators employ a modelling component in group work training.

In order to prepare trainees for real situations, group simulation can be implemented in the counsellor education program (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2001; Marotta, Peters, & Paliokas, 2000; Romano & Sullivan, 2000). If these trainees are involved in such activities, it will enhance their understanding of the group dynamic and process (Romano & Sullivan, 2000), encourage active participation in class activities (Bergsteiner *et al*., 2010), and help them transfer the skills into practice (Downing *et al*., 2001). Romano and Sullivan (2000) proposed Simulated Group Counselling (SGC) as a component of the training model for group workers 'to develop group leadership skills by engaging trainees in an ongoing group experience' (p. 366). It has been suggested that due to its similarity to the actual group, group simulation will allow trainees to experience being a member as well as a leader. In the research, trainees were involved in role playing a character with various problems, such as career issues, relationship and family issues, and academic matters. Each pair of trainees participated as both leader and member, whereas the leader's role will be assumed for two consecutive weeks. Finally, Romano and Sullivan concluded that 'SGC has provided a safe and realistic experience for the practicum training of group workers and limited dual relationship ethical concerns' (p. 374). Educators generally agree that 'simulation can be effectively used in curriculum delivery (Issenberg, Chung, & Devine, 2011, p. 843).

Furthermore, counsellor educators are also encouraged to incorporate outdoor activities in their group dynamic courses (Briggs, Staton, & Gilligan, 2009;

Hatch & McCarthy, 2003; Marotta *et al*., 2000). Previous research indicated that implementing time-limited group is beneficial for clients (Collins *et al*., 2012; Jennings, 2007; Robak, Kangos, Chiffriller, & Griffin, 2013). Trainees were allowed to be group leader during an adolescent leadership camp, handling all planning, implementation and assessment stages, which is similar to an actual experience (Briggs et al., 2009). Another experiential activity proposed by Hatch and McCarthy (2003) is the application of challenging courses for counsellor training in group work, allowing trainee interaction outside the traditional education settings. Facilitators were invited from a community recreation centre and group activities were processed using group work skills. Therefore, trainees were able to experience the element of trust, teamwork and group cohesion during such activities. Additionally, Marotta *et al.* (2000) also incorporated outdoor experiential training to develop interpersonal relations among group members. The facilitators were trained to handle dynamic group interactions among members to demonstrate effective interpersonal relationships in the workplace. The experience of being a client will encourage the personal growth process (Downing *et al*., 2001; Robison, 2012). Falco and Bauman (2004) have also allowed their trainees the option to attend group sessions that are either 'facilitated by the instructor, co-facilitated by the instructor and a doctoral trainee, or facilitated by another qualified professional in the community' (p. 187). By employing independent counsellors for these sessions, dual relationship issues can be reduced (Shumaker, Ortiz, & Brenninkmeyer, 2011). Despite the benefit of outdoor experiential activities related with group work training, counsellor educators may employ different strategies based on their own teaching approaches.

As a counselling process involves reflection from both counsellors and clients, reflective practice is also deemed as important in the literature (Schon, 1987; Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998). It has been found that writing a reflective journal is one of the activities carried out in the counsellor education program (Corey, 2012; Griffith & Frieden, 2000; Jones *et al*., 2008; Miller, 2014; Russo, 2001). This exercise facilitates reflective thinking (Griffith & Frieden, 2000), helps trainees to reflect on self-understanding and professional development (Lepp, Zom, Duffy, & Dickson, 1996), and also in evaluating training transfer (Brown, McCracken, & O'Kane, 2011). Journal reflections have also helped trainees to reflect on their learning experience (Hensley, 2002; Luke & Kiweewa, 2010). Hensley (2002) proposed a two-way fishbowl model in the teaching group process and leadership, combining both didactic and experiential learning. Trainees were asked to reflect and describe their experience during the group work courses, and one trainee in particular revealed that he has learnt to express feelings and concerns. Furthermore, clients are also required to write journal reflections to help them reflect on the issues discussed (Corey, 2012; Miller, 2014). An entry will generally be introduced by a misunderstanding or issues in hand that needs to be solved (Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998). As Nelson and Neufeldt (1998) have explained, 'reflection occurs either within the context of the learner's capacity to tolerate the ambiguity of not knowing or an educational setting whereby he has the space to struggle with ideas as well as the safety to experience not knowing as acceptable (p. 81-82)'. They have also suggested the idea that 'educating reflective practitioners involve providing the space to reflect, the permission and encouragement to reflect, the knowledge of how to inform one's reflective process, and a safe relational environment in which to

consider one's personal and interpersonal experience' (Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998, p. 82). Moreover, Schon (1987) elaborated further by stating that 'trainee's learning is enhanced when she can voice her confusions, describe elements of what she already knows, or say what she makes of a coach's showing or telling' (p. 301). Finally, he concluded that 'when coach and trainee are able to risk negative judgements, and revealing confusions or dilemmas, they are more likely to expand their capacities for reflection in and on action. Thus, they are more likely to give and get evidence of the changing understandings on which reciprocal reflection depends' (Schon, 1987, p. 302). In this process, a counselling trainee must be able to engage in reflective observation stages based on Kolb's model. Given that the benefits of reflection in learning has been discussed in previous research, the reflection journals used in relation with experiential activities conducted by educators will be explored in this study.

Participating in experiential group as a client is an essential experiential component in group work training (Barlow, 2004; Corey *et al*., 2014; Falco & Bauman, 2004; Trotzer, 2006; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). It can provide a comprehensive experience in a short time (Cox *et al*., 2003). Being a member in a growth group has been considered as a way to enhance a trainee's self-growth and experience leadership skills since the 1970's (Jacobs *et al*., 1974). However, those who participate in personal growth groups must seek the member's permission to share their learning experiences with their respective instructors (Trotzer, 2006). Throughout the whole journey, the trainees will discover and experience self-acceptance, self-disclosure, sharing process, countertransference and leadership skills (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Pistole and Filer (1991) have found that experiential strategies have been perceived as useful by trainees in

learning group counselling concepts. However, they also highlighted ethical issues, such as the dual relationship among clients and leader, indicating discomfort during sessions (Anderson & Price, 2001).

Shumaker *et al.* (2011) summarised three important elements to promote ethical experiential group experiences, which are 'systematic instructor self-reflection, the informed consent of trainees, and self-disclosure training' (p. 127). Morrissette and Gadbois (2006) initially suggested that counsellor educators consider the various ethical implications when trainees disclose personal information in class, proposing that educators control the extent of self-disclosure. Therefore, in order to maintain trainee welfare, lecturers should facilitate the discussion and understand trainee's readiness to share issues concomitantly. Experiential group training allows trainees to participate in personal therapy, but this is a much-debated issue among researchers. Some of its positive implications include the practice of handling fear of confronting people, dealing with the loss of a beloved, and generating genuine care in a group (Luke & Kiweewa, 2010). Furthermore, it can also help trainees understand the feelings of a client, experience personal development and acquire positive changes (Kumari, 2011). Trainees will be able to learn in the context of emotions (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Additionally, one particular advantage of the activity is that 'the character of those who are fit or unfit to exercise this profession will be revealed and they will be helped accordingly' (Malikiosi-Loizos, 2013, p. 42).

The experience both as a group leader (Ohrt *et al.*, 2014) and group member (Romano & Sullivan, 2000) allows trainees to grow personally and develop their leadership competencies at the same time, such opportunity is beneficial for a

leader (Ohrt *et al*., 2014; Rubel & Kline, 2008). A counselling trainee must 'acknowledge that nothing can replace real world experience and actually get in there to do it' (Ohrt *et al*., 2014, p. 105). Furthermore, it will be easier for leaders to understand group member's behaviours (Caplan, 2005). Caplan (2005) has suggested that the group leader self-discloses a relevant issue in order to model for safe disclosure for group members. 'This includes a type of knowledge that helps them to conceptualise group interaction, assists them in formulating their actions, and knowledge that is specific to their groups and group members' (Rubel & Kline, 2008, p. 149). By leading a group, the leaders show increased confidence and knowledge levels (Rubel & Kline, 2008). Nevertheless, counsellor educators find it challenging to design course components that suit such necessary competencies (Guth & McDonnell, 2004). The authors suggest that counsellor educators design the appropriate experiential at the beginning, middle or end class sessions. However, the importance of the process of forming a group was highlighted before the group can start (Corey *et al*., 2014; Gladding, 2012; Masson *et al*., 2012). Corey *et al*. (2014) assert 'the importance of giving careful attention to the preparation of the members for a successful group experience' (p. 148).

An innovative group work training model has been designed using a combination of different training disciplines. Marotta, Peters and Paliokas (2000) have outlined an interdisciplinary model for graduate education trainees, emphasising group developments, dynamics, and specific group-related skills. The ASGW training standards have been utilised as a guide to develop skills and knowledge competencies. This model consists of five active learning processes: i) videotaping; ii) journaling; iii) outdoor experiential courses; iv) simulation

games for team building; and lastly, v) sociometrics and learning integration. This model also encourages effective collaboration between counsellors and other professional education staff (Marotta *et al*., 2000). Moreover, journaling is also used in nursing education (Lepp *et al*., 1996), mathematics education (Francisco, 2005), and human resource development (Brown *et al*., 2011). Such development of an integrative model indicates a new approach for group work training. The ethical aspect in teaching group work courses has also been highlighted in group work training research (Cummings, 2001; Osborn *et al*., 2003; Riva & Korinek, 2004). In particular, Osborn *et al.* (2003) has suggested that a clear objective and group procedure will help to improve experiential activities in group training, requiring written and informed consent prior to its commencement. The instructor in charge must also be competent in processing class discussion modelling the circumstances of the group work (Riva & Korinek, 2004).

The literature gives an insight on how experiential learning is embedded in counsellor education, especially in group work training (Downing *et al.*, 2001; Gillam, 2004; Marotta *et al.*, 2000; Ohrt *et al*., 2014). However, in order to make the comparison of previous literature and this study's findings easier, the data will be grouped into a few areas found in the literature such as application of experiential learning activities in group work training and findings centred on the undergraduate counselling program, which are still under research.

In summary, the literature on counsellor education continues to regard experiential learning as an important approach in group work training. In

addition to the theoretical approach underpinning teaching strategies, therapeutic factors also contribute to the process of teaching and learning.

In summary, the literature on counsellor education continues to regard experiential learning as an essential pedagogical theory in teaching group work. However, most research has been conducted among graduate education trainees, thus a study on such aspects at undergraduate level would contribute to existing knowledge. The literature also highlighted that key authors of group work research emphasise experiential learning in their teaching and learning model. Even though some authors highlight the ethical issues regarding the implementation of experiential activities in group work training, the contribution of such an approach to the personal growth of trainees cannot be denied. In addition to the theoretical approach that underpins teaching strategies, therapeutic factors also contribute to the process of teaching and learning.

2.3 THERAPEUTIC FACTORS

The group leader needs to aware of the group members requirement to '(1) feel accepted by the group, (2) know what is expected, (3) feel they belong, (4) feel safe' (Masson *et al*., 2012, p. 51). The conducive group offers a safe social environment for clients (Winship & Hardy, 2007). Despite the importance of therapist skills that will promote a conducive group environment, the interactions among group members is also significant to promote change (Erdman, 2009). Therapeutic forces is a group process to promote change among group members (Corey *et al*., 2014; Masson *et al.*, 2012; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Regarding the importance of therapeutic factors in group work, counsellor educators need to educate the trainees on the concepts and practical aspect of these forces. On

becoming a group leader, the counselling trainee are not only trained to focus on the content, but also the dynamic and group process. Therapeutic factors are curative influences on group members in group psychotherapy (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Therapeutic factors in group work are widely researched and found as positive forces for group members (Lindsay, Turcotte, & Montminy, 2006; Restek-Petrovi *et al.*, 2014). However, there is a lack of resources on therapeutic forces from a teaching and learning perspective. In this study, the teaching and learning process conducted by counsellor educators provides elements of therapeutic forces to the learning process of counselling trainees. In order to understand the gap in the literature on therapeutic factors in group work and the teaching and learning context, selected therapeutic factors literature were reviewed with a focus on the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of group. Next, it was explored whether there are references to therapeutic factors literature regarding the teaching and learning context. The literature on therapeutic elements that contribute to the effective process of teaching and learning, particularly in counsellor education, was also reviewed.

2.3.1 Therapeutic factors in group

The concept of therapeutic factors originated in the group therapy literature in the 1960s, especially by Dr Irvin Yalom, a prominent researcher and author in group psychotherapy (Gold, Kivlighan, & Patton, 2013). The literature related to Yalom therapeutic factors has basically evolved from the group psychotherapy field (Ahmed, Abolmagd, Rakhawy, Erfan, & Mamdouh, 2010; Lindsay *et al*., 2006; Restek-Petrovi et al., 2014; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Yalom and Leszcz (2005) proposed eleven therapeutic factors that will promote therapeutic change in group processes, including instillation of hope,

universality, imparting information, altruism, the corrective recapitulation of the primary family group, development of socialising techniques, imitative behaviour, interpersonal learning, group cohesiveness, catharsis, and existential factors. The definition of therapeutic factors (see Table 2.1) has been simplified as shown below and reviewed by Lindsay *et al*. (2006).

Therapeutic Factor	Definition
Instillation of hope	The relief and optimism developed by group members when they see other members in similar circumstances making progress and improving their condition, or when they observe their certainty that they will recover
Universality	Group members' awareness of commonalities in their concerns and feelings and those of other members
Imparting information	Information and advice provided by the group leader and other group members
Altruism	What group members feel when they recognise that they are helping other members
Learning from interaction	When members experiment with new ways of relating to others in the group and when they try out new ways of responding to the approaches of other members
Imitative behaviour	Results of observing the behaviour of others within the group and hearing how they describe their behaviour outside the group
Cohesion	Belonging to a group of people and feeling accepted by them
Catharsis	Emotional expression relating to past events as well as to here- and now-material
Family re-enactment	Correctively reproducing the family environment (roles, methods of relating, feelings, cognitive system) within the group
Existential factors	Group members' awareness of issues of responsibility, existential isolation, finiteness and the meaning of life

Table 2.1: Yalom's Therapeutic Factors (Lindsay *et al*., 2006)

Experiences that group members go through in the context of Yalom's therapeutic factors have been discussed in the group work literature, such as in group psychotherapy (Ahmed *et al*., 2010; Lindsay *et al*., 2006; Vlastelica, Pavlović, & Urlić, 2003), personal growth group among trainees (Robison, 2012) and psychosis patient (Restek-Petrovi *et al*., 2014). However, there are

various findings that correlate with most beneficial therapeutic factors. Lindsay *et al.* (2006) found that factors mentioned the most in men's domestic violence groups are imparting information, universality and altruism. The study has showed that imparting information, especially referring to 'the educational component of the groups studied and is an element frequently found in programmes for domestic violence perpetrators' (p. 43). Similarly, instillation of hope, group cohesiveness and existential factors have also been found to be the most important factors in psychosis patient groups (Restek-Petrovi *et al*., 2014). The findings have revealed that patients remain in therapy due to elements of hope. Based on Yalom's questionnaire on therapeutic factors, the items that are related to instillation of hope are: 'a) seeing others getting better are inspiring to me, b) knowing others have solved problems similar to mine, c) seeing that others have solved problems similar to mine, d) seeing that other group members have improved encouraged me, and lastly, e) knowing that the group has helped others with problems like mine encouraged me' (Ahmed *et al.*, 2010, p. 213). Erdman (2009) stated that the development of socialising techniques gave the group members the 'opportunity to replace inadequate or maladaptive cognition and behaviours with more effective ways of conceptualising their world and interacting in it' (p. 22). He added, using various approaches for development of socialising techniques with individuals with hearing problems may 'enable to develop coping strategies and compensatory skills to minimise their communication problems' (p. 22).

The therapeutic factor questionnaires have been developed to ensure these factors are empirically studied (Lese & MacNair-Semands, 2000; Restek-Petrovi *et al.*, 2014). The Therapeutic Factors Inventory (TFI) was developed (Lese &

MacNair-Semands, 2000) and the study aims to validate the instrument to identify the strength of certain therapeutic factors. Recently, Tate *et al.* (2013) developed and conducted an initial analysis of the Conceptualisation of Group Dynamics Inventory (CGDI). This tool assesses 'the abilities of group counsellors to accurately conceptualise group members' subjective perceptions of important group dynamics' (p. 147). Yalom's therapeutic factors underpinning the development of GDI focus on group cohesiveness, universality and altruism. Besides these tools, other researchers used Critical Incident Questionnaires (CIQ) to identify the therapeutic forces in a group (Colmant, 2005; Waldo, Kerne IV, & Kerne, 2007). The CIQ was given to participants to answer the following questions: 1) What event (incident, interaction) from this group session was most helpful to you? 2) Describe what happened, the feelings you experienced, and how the event was helpful to you? The study conducted by Waldo *et al*. (2007) involved 99 males who attended six ongoing groups at a domestic violence treatment centres. The results indicated that the higher percentages of hope, information and existentialism were found during the guidance sessions, while universality, cohesion, and interpersonal learning received a higher percentage during the counselling session. This research contributed to the empirical findings of therapeutic factors that promote change among clients.

Regarding the counsellor education context, the understanding of forces that contribute a positive change among group members are important for counselling trainees. However, there is only limited research on therapeutic factors in groups involving trainees as their participants (Gold *et al*., 2013; Kivlighan Jr. & Mullison, 1988; Ohrt, 2010; Ruhani & Mohd Yusuf, 2015;

Smith & Davis-Gage, 2008). There is research related to the therapeutic factors and group climate (Gold et al., 2013), therapeutic factors and group stages (Kivlighan Jr. & Mullison, 1988), therapeutic factors and development of self (Ruhani & Mohd Yusuf, 2015), and therapeutic factors and experiential training group (Ohrt, 2010; Smith & Davis-Gage, 2008). The trainees found that the group facilitator established an environment of trust, thus promoting cohesiveness among group members (Smith & Davis-Gage, 2008). In relation to the group stages, Yalom 'suggests that early in group life instillation of hope, guidance, and universality would be viewed as relatively more important, while self-disclosure, interpersonal learning, and self-understanding would increase in importance as the group matured' (Kivlighan Jr. & Mullison, 1988, p. 453). Such experiences may give a counselling trainee experiential learning on how the therapeutic forces evolve in group work. Reflection on being clients and relating with the therapeutic elements may help trainees to perform the same process as the group leader. However, this type of research will not specifically educate the trainee on how the process of therapeutic factors occur in a group. In the next section, literature concerned with therapeutic forces elements in teaching and learning will be discussed.

2.3.2 Related research on therapeutic factors in a teaching and learning context

Besides the experience of therapeutic factors through experiential group training, offering therapeutic forces experience in group work classes will contribute to the experience of therapeutic forces in teaching and learning. However, very little is known about the therapeutic factors in such a teaching and learning context. Gillam (2004) claimed that a classroom is a task group and counsellor

educators can utilise Yalom's eleven therapeutic factors which are relevant to students' development. He suggested that counsellor educators plan didactic and hands-on classroom experiences based on Yalom's therapeutic factors, which will positively impact trainee's learning. Yalom's therapeutic factors (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) have been found to guide a group leader in formulating effective tactic and strategies in a group context. Indeed, Gillam (2004) asserted that counsellor educators who embed therapeutic factors in their teaching strategies will positively impact on future group leaders. He proposed that the elements of universality, imitative behaviour and interpersonal learning can be incorporated in group work classes:

> … a well-facilitated group class is likely to assist students in experiencing the therapeutic factor of universality as they realise they share with others the initial apprehensions about the ability to become an effective group worker. In addition, student skill development should be enhanced through the therapeutic factors of imitative behaviour and interpersonal learning (p. 81).

However, that article is descriptive in nature and no previous study has investigated therapeutic factors in the context of group work courses. Previous studies on therapeutic factors used counselling trainees as their group work participants (Gold *et al*., 2013; Kivlighan Jr. & Mullison, 1988; Ohrt, 2010; Ruhani & Mohd Yusuf, 2015; Smith & Davis-Gage, 2008). These studies address therapeutic factors in the group work context and the facilitators act as group leaders. The studies are not looking at the educators as leaders and utilise a therapeutic factors element in their group work courses.

Several key authors in group work also assert the importance of the therapeutic element in group (Corey *et al*., 2014; Masson *et al.*, 2012). Corey *et al*. (2014) suggested that 'constructive changes' might evolve among members if

therapeutic factors appear in group sessions. Several therapeutic forces in groups have been listed, such as: a) self-disclosure and the group member, b) self-disclosure and the group leader, c) feedback, d) confrontation, e) cohesion and universality, f) hope, g) willingness to risk and trust, h) caring and acceptance, i) catharsis, j) the cognitive component, k) commitment to change, l) freedom to experiment and humour. Moreover, Masson *et al.* (2012) considered that there are 15 forces that can contribute to a therapeutic group: clarity of purpose; relevance of purpose; group size; length of each session; frequency of meeting; adequacy of setting; time of day; the leader's attitude; closed or open groups; voluntary or involuntary membership; members' level of commitment; level of trust among members; members' attitudes towards the leader; the leader's experience and readiness to deal with groups, and co-leadership harmony. Additionally, a study conducted of participants of Psychology in Real World course (Holmes & Gahan, 2006) revealed that therapeutic factors, like universality, instillation of hope, imitative behaviour and interpersonal learning, occur throughout the experience in this 12-week course of community based learning focusing on understanding themselves and others. The authors indicated that the element of therapeutic factors was important, thereby promoting change among group members. These issues may be relevant in Malaysia context, how therapeutic factors encounter by Malaysian educators and trainees.

Therapeutic factors also have an elemental role in group work training (Bernard *et al.*, 2008; Gillam, 2004; Killacky & Hulse-Killacky, 2004). Gillam (2004) found that counsellor educators play a key role as a leader during group work classes, as effective facilitation will enable trainees to experience therapeutic factors. This is because 'they will realise that they share with others the initial

apprehensions about the ability to become an effective group worker' (p. 81). By planning the activities to align with such factors, the class will be positively affected.

Killacky and Hulse-Killacky (2004) have also suggested that both verbal and non-verbal group counselling skills are used commonly during class sessions. When counsellor educators show concern, trainees will experience therapeutic factors like universality, instillation of hope, imparting information, and providing feedback during the practical sessions. Apparently, 'the combination of all group competency skills noted will contribute to the mastery of counselling techniques, and subsequently influence a productive learning environment' (Killacky & Hulse-Killacky, 2004, p. 93). According to the guidelines for practitioners in the practice of group psychotherapy, cohesion is considered to be the most important therapeutic factor in a group leader (Bernard *et al*., 2008). They have specifically suggested that the 'group leader should establish clarity regarding group processes in early sessions since higher levels of early structure are predictive of higher levels of disclosure and cohesion later in the group' (p. 469). The importance of therapeutic factors in the group process is linked to 'positive therapeutic outcome' (p. 497).

Yalom and Leszcz (2005) have defined 'cohesion' as:

> ..... the attraction that members have for their group and for the other members. It is experienced at interpersonal, intrapersonal, and intragroup levels. The members of a cohesive group are accepting of one another, supportive, and inclined to form meaningful relationships in the group (p. 75).

Yalom and Leszcz (2005) also asserted that 'highly cohesive groups are more stable groups, with better attendance and less turnover rate' (p. 75). Moreover,

Bohecker, Wathen, Wells, Salazar and Vereen (2014) have developed the Mindfulness Experiential Small Group (MESG) curriculum to fulfil the requirement necessitating counselling trainee to experience being clients. The curriculum has incorporated three of Yalom's therapeutic factors: (a) imparting information (b) group cohesion, and (c) interpersonal learning. The second phase of this curriculum involves activities related with mindfulness to facilitate cohesion within group members. Any meaningful relationships that help to create cohesiveness in a group may be between the members and group leader, among co-leaders or among group members (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

Several studies investigating therapeutic factors have also been carried out in group supervision (Linton, 2003; Phan, Rivera, Volker, & Garrett, 2007; Werstlein & DiAnne Borders, 1997). The participants were 42 masters-level counselling practicum students from four different university training programs (Linton, 2003), 200 counsellors-in-training master's students (Phan *et al.*, 2007) and four master's-level counselling students (2 men and 2 women) with their doctoral-level supervisor (Werstlein & DiAnne Borders, 1997). The study revealed a contradictory perception of the importance of therapeutic factors, for example, a supervisor emphasised group cohesiveness, whereas their supervisees guidance (Werstlein & DiAnne Borders, 1997). Linton (2003) used a revised version of Yalom's Therapeutic Factors Scale (TFS-R) to show that these therapeutic factors were ranked helpful to least helpful: instillation of hope, guidance, altruism, interpersonal learning-output, group cohesiveness, catharsis, interpersonal learning-input, universality, self-understanding, identification, existential factors, and family re-enactment. Whereas, in his study, Phan *et al* (2007) developed the Group Dynamics Inventory 'as a teaching tool to help

supervisors and/or instructors to monitor the dynamics in the essential counselling courses that utilise group supervision in counsellor training settings such as practical, internships, and fieldwork placements' (p. 242). These studies indicate the need for further research on therapeutic factors outside group psychotherapy literature.

Carl Rogers highlighted the presence of a therapeutic relationship in the person-centred approach (Mearns, 2003; Tudor, Keemar, Tudor, Valentine, & Worrall, 2004). In particular, Mearns (2003) said that a 'person-centred counsellor will want to be beside the client rather than being on the side of the client' (p. 55). The counsellor needs to understand the client's view and experience from their point of view to help them in analysing any issues from various perspectives. According to Rogers (1951), 'the whole relationship is composed of the self of the client, with the counsellor being depersonalised for the purpose of therapy, into being the client's other self' (p. 208). The client will feel secure as he experiences the presence of 'someone who respects him as he is, and who is willing to help him in taking any direction that he chooses' (Rogers, 1951, p. 209). However, counsellors may face the initial anxiety and fear in dealing with patients in the initial stages (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003). Furthermore, therapeutic relationships between supervisor and counselling trainees have been highlighted since the early 1970's. Smith (1976) has suggested for supervisors to 'help trainees cope with the intense personal and professional evaluations they receive from their group members (p. 14)'. Some of the problems that a prospective group counsellor may face are: 'i) developing a trustworthy relationship with their supervisors and fellow group trainees; ii) learning how to assume group leadership role; iii) establishing a satisfactory co-leader

relationship; iv) knowing when to disclose information about themselves to their counselling groups, and finally, v) learning how to integrate theory and practice' (Smith, 1976, p. 14-15). This study also emphasises that trainee counsellors require professional trust from the supervisor in group counselling supervision. There is a need for 'the security that they can reveal themselves without being analysed under a microscope and the feeling that they can make mistakes and try out new techniques without having to worry about whether or not they agree with their instructor and their peers' (Smith, 1976, p. 15).

The positive working alliance between trainees and instructors is an important characteristic in predicting the quality of learning (Hammer, 2006; Jones, Mirsalimi, Conroy, Lynn Horne-Moyer, & Burrill, 2008; Ruhani, 2012; Smith, 2011; Triana, 2007). Rogers (1967) has applied 'trainee-centred teaching' practices, based on his beliefs on therapeutic principals, reflecting the importance of building a relationship between client and counsellors. Such a trainee-centred approach requires both trainee and lecturer participation (Schapira, 2000). This relationship is referred to as 'supervisory alliance', and indicates of its status as 'supervision not only conveys technical expertise and theoretical knowledge, it also models the profession's values and ethics' (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005 p. 548). It is believed that 'without ongoing supervision and evaluation, originals errors may be reinforced by simple repetition' (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005 p. 548). Robak *et al.* (2013) believe that the therapeutic relationship is a 'central component' in the process of counselling and psychotherapy. Prior to such opinions, Rugutt and Chemosit (2009) concluded that 'trainee-faculty interaction is a statistically significant predictor of trainee motivation' (p. 24). Similarly, Lovén (2003) is of the opinion that counsellors should take the

initiative and have patience in their relationship with clients, which is the key component in a counsellor-client relationship. Lindblom-Ylänne, Trigwell, Nevgi and Ashwin (2006) mentioned that 'teachers whose approach to teaching is categorised as student-centred in a particular context see teaching as facilitating student learning or students' knowledge-construction processes or as supporting students' conceptual change' (p. 286).

Other therapeutic elements in the personal development group have been found to be related with safety elements in a group (Robson & Robson, 2008). Such findings show that the forming of a safety group involves the process of establishing group contract, sharing process, getting to know each other, the appropriate physical space, and understanding of group purposes. In such a setting, the element of adequacy has been defined by Masson *et al.* (2012) as:

> Members will tend to come regularly if the location is easily accessible. ...the leader should consider the convenience factor. Another consideration is the privacy of the meeting room. ...whether the room is comfortable, what the wall decorations are like, what the lighting is like, and whether the seating arrangements and chairs are comfortable (p. 55).

Pastner *et al.* (2014) studied the development of therapeutic attitudes in teaching and learning in psychotherapy. Their findings show that adjustment and kindness are beneficial therapeutic attitudes among trainees. Pew (2007) has also elaborated further on trainee's positive attitude and motivation, asserting that 'andragogy also calls for learner control, measures of knowledge acquisition based upon performance standards, and the voluntary involvement of trainees in the learning activity' (p. 18). This is supported by Bennetts (2002), who has stated that mature trainees are prepared to adapt to challenges found in their

counselling curriculum. Besides that, the element of fun in teaching and learning also creates a positive attitude in experiential learning (Lee & Yim, 2004):

> Self-motivation is the element that is most stressed upon in experiential learning. Motivating the participants to join is an important step. Hence, promoting the leadership training group with fun and exciting games is a successful tactic in attracting and increasing the motivation of the participants. They are excited and happy because they have foreseen that they can play and enjoy themselves in the group (p. 79).

A key point from this study is preparing fun and attractive activities in leadership training to motivate participants, thus creating a positive attitude towards teaching and learning.

Masson *et al*. (2012) reinforced the significance of leaders that have a positive attitude when conducting group sessions. If any issues are hindering their abilities to comfortably lead a group, the leader must find alternatives and solutions. The study also concluded that 'a group made up of members with commitment will be much easier to lead than one with members who have little or no commitment'(Masson *et al.*, 2012, p. 58). Similarly, Davis and Arend (2013) also suggested that teachers use group learning and team-based approaches in exploring trainee attitudes and feelings. Such approaches may incorporate group stages (e.g. forming, norming, storming, performing) and Yalom's therapeutic factors into their teaching techniques. Employing these ideas efficiently will help when exploring attitudes, feelings and perspectives, or in identifying a group's stages or characteristics. It can also assist in setting group expectations, norms and guidelines, which will prove beneficial towards the overall teaching and learning processes.

According to various works on teacher attitude in teaching and learning, effective teachers usually listen to their trainees appropriately (Hill, 2014; Johnson, 2008). In the sample of 107 graduate trainees from the southeast United States of America, such teachers were described as fun and enthusiastic, interested in listening to trainees, and value trainee's experiences (Hill, 2014). In the context of counsellor education, a study by Coll, Doumas, Trotter, and Freeman (2013) examined trainees' change of professional attitude after attending core counselling courses. It is established that in Ethics in Counselling, significant changes can be seen in comparison with Foundation of Counselling and Counselling Theory and Skills. Hence, further studies should replicate the findings by involving participants from various universities.

In terms of the learning situation, Knutson (2001) stressed the importance of classroom interaction from a social interaction perspective. Educators need to facilitate the interactions and understand the trainees' language ability (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, McIntyre, & Demers, 2008). By using an appropriate language suited to the trainee's background, it will help them in understanding the concept of culturally sensitive counselling practice (Bezanson & James, 2007). Waggoner (1984) asserted that 'therapy can be conceptualised as an interpersonal communication exchange which alters the client's experience. The counsellor's vocabulary is a primary factor in alteration' (p. 10). Furthermore, to encourage self-reflection of cultural identity in a group setting, Johnson and Lambie (2012) suggested using multicultural-focused group experience as part of group counselling courses. The element of cultural sensitivity is undeniably a vital component of professional qualities in counsellor educators. Bemak and Chung (2004) have stated that 'to effectively teach group work from a

multicultural perspective, group counsellor educators must be culturally competent and understanding of cross-cultural and socio-ecological issues that impact group process and content' (p. 34). Similarly, Jabbar and Hardaker (2013) have proposed a culturally responsive teaching framework for business schools, which is composed of cultural consciousness, resources, moral responsibility, cultural bridging and the higher education curriculum. The framework is based on the approach of Villegas and Lucas (2002), emphasising that:

> ....culturally responsive teachers (a) are socio-culturally conscious, (b) have affirming views of trainees from diverse backgrounds, (c) see themselves as responsible for and capable of bringing about change to makes schools more equitable, (d) understand how learners construct knowledge and are capable of promoting knowledge construction, (e) know about the lives of their trainees, and (f) design instructions that build on what their trainees already know while stretching them beyond the familiar (p. 20).

In summary, the element of therapeutic factors has been comprehensively studied in group psychotherapy literature. However, the contribution of therapeutic elements in teaching and learning requires more empirical research, thus filling a gap in the literature.

2.4 PERSONAL QUALITIES IN THE COUNSELLING PROFESSION

2.4.1 Personal qualities of good counsellors

The counsellor binds with ethical standards in dealing with clients, which demands professional and personal qualities. In the context of teaching and learning, counsellor educators play a role in the process of developing qualified counsellors, either in their knowledge and skills competencies. However, the personal qualities of the counsellor are to become a good counsellor practitioner

and ensure a positive outcome in the counselling relationship (Wheeler, 2000, 2002). Thus, personal qualities of both counsellor educators and counselling trainees are an important element to ensure effective counselling relationships. The early stages of counsellor training are expected to be influenced by the Rogerian principal of 'trainee-centred teaching', promoting congruence, respect and empathy (Rogers, 1967). The need for congruence in teachers is elaborated further as follows:

> Learning will be facilitated, it would seem, if the teacher is congruent. This involves the teacher being the person that he is, and being openly aware of the attitudes he holds. It means that he feels acceptance towards his own real feelings. Thus, he becomes a real acceptant towards his own real feelings and a real person in the relationship with his trainees. He can be enthusiastic about subject that he likes, and bored by topics that he does not like. He can be angry, but he can also be sensitive or sympathetic. Because he accepts his feeling as his feelings, he has no need to impose them on his trainees, or to insist that they feel the same way. He is a person, not a faceless embodiment of a curricular requirement, or a sterile pipe through which knowledge is passed from one generation to the next (Rogers, 1967, p. 287).

The element of being congruent proposed by Rogers shows the importance of counsellor educators to be real in teaching and learning context with trainees. This concept also applies to counsellor and client's relationships. Rogers (1967) has underlined its importance as 'it is less important that a teacher covers the allotted amount of curriculum, or use the most approved audio-visual devices, than that he be congruent and real, in his relation to his trainees' (p. 287). The implication of acceptance and understanding towards trainees learning can then be rationalised as 'significant learning may take place if the teacher can accept the trainee as he is, and can understand the feelings he possesses' (Rogers, 1967, p. 287). Therefore, in order to implement this humanistic approach as a teaching style, counsellor educators need to promote 'a relationship and an atmosphere

that is conducive to self-motivated, self-actualising and significant learning' (Rogers, 1967, p. 293).

Furthermore, a counsellor's personal qualities is of vital importance in the profession due to its impact on clients (Campbell & Christopher, 2012; Wheeler, 2000). The studies have listed personal qualities for a good counsellor as being personable, open, secure, self-aware, animated, sincere, confident and self-reflective, therefore, highlighting the importance of a training program that promotes professional development (Wheeler, 2002). She is of the opinion that 'therapists are trained by their life experiences as well as by the training programme they follow' (p. 439). Moreover, Campbell and Christopher (2012) have concluded that 'the quality of the therapist's therapeutic relationship and personal characteristics are key determinants of positive therapy outcomes' (p. 213). Additionally, BACP have also highlighted specific qualities that a professional counsellor should have, like care, diligence, courage, empathy, identity, humility, integrity, resilience, respect, sincerity and wisdom (BACP, 2015). Homrich, DeLorenzi, Bloom and Godbe (2014) are of the opinion that 'inexperienced trainees who may not be familiar with expectations for acceptable professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal counsellor conduct, or how these standards are applied in evaluation processes, are disadvantaged from the beginning of their graduate programs' (p. 139). Categorisation of conduct has been established with 'three themes of conduct expected of graduate trainees in clinical training: (a) professional-behaviours that are expected of the profession and/or of individuals entering into an occupation with defined training and performance qualifications, (b) interpersonal-behaviours that occur in interactions or in relationship to others, and (c) intrapersonal-behaviours that

are characteristic of internal functioning or qualities of the self' (p. 54). Empathy has also been found to be an important component in a helping profession (Irving & Dickson, 2004, 2006).

A counsellor educator requires certain characteristics to willingly work with learners and be responsible to the organisation. Connor (1994) asserted that a counsellor educator or counsellor trainer 'works primarily with a group of learners; a trainer usually works with a team of others; a trainer usually works for or within a training organisation; a trainer is accountable to several stakeholders including the learners, the employer, the employing authority, academic-award bearing organisations and professional counselling organisations' (Connor, 1994 p. 8-9). This model has elaborated the shifting roles from counsellor to counsellor trainer along five dimensions: professional role, client, task, helping and learning medium and the desired outcome (see Table 2.2).

	The counsellor	**The counsellor trainer**
Role	Counsellor	Trainer
Client	Client	Learner
Task	Personal Growth	Professional Development
Medium	Relationship	Learning Situation
Outcome	Personal Competence	Professional Competence

Table 2.2: From counsellor to counsellor trainer (Connor, 1994)

Both counsellor and counsellor educators have their target audience to develop and achieve specific goals in a relationship. In order to achieve professional competence as a counsellor, there is a need to pay attention to the personal qualities of trainees as both personal qualities and professional identity are interrelated with each other (Amelia *et al.*, 2012). Amelia *et al.* (2012) also

identified irrelevant personal qualities that a counsellor should not have, such as being rebellious, discriminatory and extremely critical. However, the interpretation of personal qualities may vary, for example, 'Malaysian believes that being too direct can be interpreted as rudeness and even offensive, particularly when they are stating a point of view which may not be well-received by others' (p. 209).

Other than that, the group leader's personal qualities will enable them to play an effective role when leading group work. In counsellor education training, a counselling trainee models after the counsellor educator that teaches the group work courses. Corey *et al*. (2014) stated that 'group work educators must manage multiple roles and fulfil many responsibilities to their trainees, some of which include facilitator of a group, teacher, evaluator, and supervisor' (p. 88). The varied roles might either positively or negatively impact on the performance. Similarly, Trotzer (2006) argued that a counsellor educator who acts as a group leader in an experiential group might inhibit the trainees to participate in the group. However, if an outside professional leads the experiential group, the counsellor *educator* might lose the opportunities to understand the trainee's needs throughout the group processes (Trotzer, 2006).

Specific characteristics for a group leader have been highlighted by key authors of group work (Corey *et al*., 2014; Masson *et al*., 2012). According to Corey *et al*. (2014), identification of standard characteristics for a competent group leader is difficult. However, some values have been suggested including: courage; willingness to model; presence; goodwill, genuineness, and caring; belief in group process; openness; non-defensiveness in coping with criticism; becoming

aware of subtle cultural issues; being able to identify with a client's pain, personal power, stamina, commitment to self-care, self-awareness, sense of humour, inventiveness; and personal dedication and commitment. Additionally, Masson *et al*. (2012) have also suggested more characteristics like 'comfort with oneself and others; a liking for people; comfort in a position of authority; confidence in one's ability to lead; and the ability to tune in to others' feelings, reactions, moods, and words' (p. 28-29). A group leader must have the 'experience with individuals, experience with groups, planning and organisational skills, knowledge of the topic, a good understanding of basic human conflicts and dilemmas, and a good understanding of counselling theory' (p. 29-31). Until recently, little research has identified personal qualities of counselling trainees, particularly to achieve competency in group leadership.

In relation to group leadership, the experience gained when conducting groups will enable expert leaders to develop their enthusiasm and caring professional qualities (Rubel & Kline, 2008). Enthusiasm is described as 'participants' attitude of enjoying the complexity and unpredictability of leading groups, while caring refers to 'participants' attitude of being interested in group members and being committed to their well-being' (p. 147-148). Taking care of personal wellness is a vital aspect in the counselling profession, for both the counsellor and client (Lawson, Hazler, & Kottler, 2007; Lily Mastura, 2001). In summary, a number of studies have highlighted the personal qualities required for counsellors as they are dealing with clients to achieve a specific outcome. The next section will discuss the involvement of counselling standards and professional bodies in relation with the criteria for trainees and counsellor educators.

2.4.3 The standard criteria for trainees and counsellor educators

The suitability of the candidate for a counselling program has been highlighted by Wheeler (2002), as she emphasised that 'using a culinary analogy, the way the pudding is stirred and baked has much to answer for, but without handpicked, good-quality ingredients, the result may be less than satisfactory. So, it is with counsellor training: the outcome depends not only on the programme delivered but also on the suitability of the participants' (p. 427-428). Standard and professional bodies have highlighted the criteria for a counselling trainee. For example, in the United States of America, trainee entry into counselling programs is controlled by certain professional bodies (CACREP, 2015) to ensure that they fit the criteria. The standards require an academic selection unit committee to consider: 1) each applicant's potential success in forming effective and culturally relevant interpersonal relationships, either individually and in small-group; 2) each applicant's aptitude for graduate-level study; and 3) each applicant's career goals and relevance to the program. Gatekeeping issues in professional programs have been extensively researched (Brear *et al.*, 2008; Glance, Fanning, Schoepke, Soto, & Williams, 2012; Lafrance & Gray, 2004), such issues have been outlined using several codes in the 2014 ACA Code of Ethics. Moreover, Lafrance and Gray (2004) have identified factors of trainee unsuitability in professional social practice, such as: 'i) personal qualities that each social worker brings to the profession; ii) the capacity and willingness of social workers to become more aware of how the environmental factors contribute to their values, beliefs and attitudes, iii) the capacity to develop professional social work relationships with clients, colleagues, and finally, iv) the congruence between what individuals bring to the profession and the values,

principles and beliefs of the social work profession (p. 329)'. It is important to recruit a suitable trainee for the counselling program as the trainees may impact the process of training. The counselling program is responsible for trainees that have been accepted into their program, thus, it is challenging for counsellor educators to design their courses and select suitable approaches in dealing with trainees from various backgrounds, interests and characteristics. In relation to the training of group leaders, specific characteristics are required to become an effective leader (Corey *et al*., 2014; Masson *et al*., 2012).

The counselling trainee assessment process is also highlighted in the accreditation documents. According to the 2016 CAREP Standards, the important aspects that require consideration in applicant selection are: (1) relevance of career goals, (2) aptitude for graduate-level study, (3) potential success in forming effective counselling relationships, and (4) respect for cultural differences (p. 6). In Section B1.3, BACP (2012) also stated that the counselling program must show how applicants are assessed for the following attributes or the potential for developing them: i) self-awareness, maturity and stability; ii) ability to make use of and reflect upon life experience; iii) capacity to cope with the emotional demands of the course; iv) ability to cope with the intellectual and academic requirement; v) ability to form a helping relationship; vi) ability to be self-critical and use both positive and negative feedback; vii) awareness of the nature of prejudice and oppression; viii) awareness of issues of difference and equality; ix) ability to recognise the need for personal and professional support; and finally, x) competence in, or the aptitude to develop generic professional skills, including literacy, numeracy, information technology, administrative skills, self-management skills, and communication

and interpersonal skills. Additionally, Section B2 has expounded on teaching and learning issues (BACP, 2012). In Section B2.1 especially, all course staff must be appropriately qualified and able to demonstrate competence between them to cover all elements of the course. Both Sections B1 and B2 focus on the important aspects for trainees and educators. The process of application selection that is stated in the accreditation documents reflects the seriousness of a professional body in selecting the appropriate candidate in their counselling program.

Other than personal qualities, counsellor educators are also required to satisfy the professional guidelines of the Board of Counsellors (Malaysia) in order to contribute to its professional identity. As such, counselling teaching staff must be registered with the Board with the following qualifications: i) postgraduate level of counselling degree, ii) priority given to those who are experienced in counsellor education, and iii) experience in counselling research. The standards also specify two related important aspects, which are trainee-teaching staff ratio and the minimum qualifications of the counselling teaching staff. The ratio is determined to be 1:15, which is an appropriate ratio for a teaching and learning exercise; it includes the practicum, internship supervision, and research project. Moreover, counsellor educators must also follow the Counsellor's Code of Ethics (2011) provided by the Board. The code of ethics outlines the general responsibilities, including having the knowledge of multicultural issues, research and practice integration, teaching ethics, ethical relationship between trainee and educator, theory and innovation techniques, field placement and professional disclosures. The responsibilities (Section F. 6, p. 31-32) are summarised as follows:

a) Counsellor educator must develop, implement and oversee counsellor education program, and be proficient as both teacher and practitioner. They must be knowledgeable in the aspects of ethics, legislation and regulation of the profession, skilled in applying the knowledge and subsequently able to make trainees and individuals aware of their responsibilities. The counsellor educator must conduct training and counselling education programs ethically and also act as a professional role model;

b) They must adopt materials related to multicultural/diversity in all professional counsellor development courses and workshops;

c) They must develop education and training programs that integrate academic research and supervisory practice;

d) They should make trainees aware of their ethical responsibilities and professional standards, adopting aspects of ethics in the overall curriculum;

e) When teaching innovative counselling procedures and techniques, they must clarify that the counselling technique/procedure is either "not yet proven" or "currently being developed";

f) They must have clear policies regarding field placement and other clinical experiences during training programs. They should also verify that the field supervisor is qualified to carry out supervision and also inform about their professional responsibilities and ethics; and

g) Before starting counselling practice placement with clients, trainee counsellors should clarify their status as trainees and explain how it can influence limitations of confidentiality.

The requirements from professional bodies and counselling standards for both trainees and educators show the importance of the profession to maintain the qualities of future counsellors. They emphasise the specific criteria for counselling trainees and the teaching and learning processes of counsellor

education, thus also implying that teaching group work prioritises the issues of trainees, educators and teaching and learning.

2.4.3 Related research on personal qualities in the counselling profession

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the quality of counsellors in the counselling profession (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003; Howieson & Semple, 2000; Setiawan, 2006). A comprehensive review of articles regarding the therapist's personal attributes, conducted by Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003), identified the following characteristics: flexible, experienced, honest, respectful, trustworthy, confident, interested, alert, friendly, warm, and open contribution to the therapeutic alliance between therapist and clients. A study conducted of Australian psychotherapy and counselling training bodies added new literature on the personal qualities of counsellor, which include 'intelligence, wisdom and a capacity for analytical thought' (Richardson, 2009). Another important aspect is the credibility of counsellors to be sensitive to cultural differences (Zhang & Dixon, 2001). This study was conducted to investigate the difference between culturally responsive and culturally neutral counsellors among Asian international students. The findings indicated that counsellors with cultural awareness had a positive impact on the client's perception of the counsellor's expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness.

Previously, most literature has presented personal qualities issues from the practitioner point of view, but the clients' point of view is vital as they are interacting with the counsellors (De Stefano, Mann-Feder, & Gazzola, 2010; Gallagher, Tracey, & Millar, 2005; Howieson & Semple, 2000). Based on

clients' perspectives, the studies highlight the positive qualities of counsellors as 'high levels of listening, understanding, honesty, acceptance, and competence' (Gallagher *et al*., 2005) and being friendly, trustworthy, and respectful (De Stefano *et al*., 2010). Interestingly, qualities related to ethical aspects, such as keeping confidentiality (Howieson & Semple, 2000; Setiawan, 2006), were also highlighted by clients. The clients also valued the counsellors or guidance teacher 'who listened, who treated them with respect, was understanding and approachable, who did not label or categorise them as 'bad' or 'good' and who could be trusted and would preserve confidentiality' (Howieson & Semple 2000, p. 382). These studies provide more reason to listen to the client's voice as the qualities required positively impacted on counselling relationships.

Apart from focusing on the counsellors themselves, there is also research related to the counselling trainee's personal qualities (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003; Foster *et al*., 2014; Pope & Kline, 1999). Recently, Foster, Leppma, and Hutchinson (2014) conducted a study on trainees' perspectives about preferred and non-preferred characteristics of counselling applicants and students. The trainees identified characteristics such as 'inappropriate displays of emotions (e.g., outbursts in class), low self-esteem, inability to accept responsibility, apathetic attitude toward the counselling profession, and inability to show warmth and empathy' (p. 199) to be avoided for future counselling trainees. In addition, the students identified positive personal qualities such as 'self-acceptance, listening skills, genuine care for others, and wellness' (p. 197). Jabbar and Hardaker (2013) argued that academicians need to be more aware of trainee's background and culture, as producing culturally responsive counsellors will help in dealing with diversified clients. However, despite the study of related

personal qualities of counselling trainees, Pope and Kline (1999) claim that there is a lack of agreement regarding most important characteristics of effective counsellors and whether such characteristics are responsive to training. In their study, 22 personality characteristics of potential students were ranked by experts, indicating that empathy, acceptance, and warmth are among the most important characteristics of trainees and cooperatives, with capability and warmth the most highly responsive to training. This study informed counsellor educators about characteristics that are responsive to training that may guide a teaching and learning process.

The qualities of counsellor educators have also been highlighted in the literature (Buller, 2013; Connor, 1994; Feltham & Dryden, 1994). In his study, Buller (2013) engaged with ten counsellor educators who were recipients of outstanding teaching awards in counsellor education, or selected as an excellent teacher by the head of department. The findings indicated that the educators highlighted qualities such as '(1) pride in being a teacher, (2) passion for teaching, (3) communicating care for students, (4) initiating challenging experiences, and (5) authenticity (p. 120-121) describing their personal style as teachers. In order to enhance the performance of educators, Connor (1994) proposed a training program for counsellor trainers. She has specifically stated that 'there is a great need for a professional training and development course for counsellor trainers, which will cover the following important areas: education; teaching and learning strategies; experiential training workshop; counselling research; codes of ethics and standards for trainers; dynamics of training relationship; group process and group dynamics; managing the tutorial; assessment of policies procedures; development of training materials;

development of resource bases; facilitation skills; training placement; work shadowing; mentoring; and training supervision' (p. 11-12). Such training will be helpful in terms of learning, understanding the trainees' needs, and preparing effective teaching and learning methods. Therefore, exposure to various types of training will allow counsellor educators to develop their professional identity.

Apart from that, various factors such as feedback from co-teachers and mentoring play a role in contributing to counsellor educators performance. Feltham and Dryden (1994) advise counsellor trainers to get feedback from co-tutors or another trainer about their teaching and learning process. 'Even though systematic and regular supervision of trainers is not a well-developed field, many trainers seek out other experienced trainers with whom they discuss training issues in detail' (Feltham & Dryden, 1994, p. 45). Mentoring also impacts on developing a novice interest in the profession (Santoro, Pietsch, & Borg, 2012). Feldman, Arean, Marshall, Lovett, and O'Sullivan (2010) listed three types of mentors in the university setting: career mentor, scholarly-mentor and co-mentor. Career mentor generally guides the mentees in the more general area of career development, while scholarly mentors are experts of the mentee's research area. In fact, Milsom and Moran (2015) stated that the lack of a mentoring process can 'create stress and frustration', therefore, counsellor educators must act as scholars and practitioners, combining education into practice (Patton, 2000). Such factors may also contribute to the development of the personal and professional qualities of counsellor educators.

In summary, the literature in this section shows the importance of the personal qualities of counsellors, counsellor educators and counselling trainees as they

contribute to positive outcomes in counselling sessions. However, there are a limited number of studies available in the literature looking at personal qualities of counsellor educators or trainees in relation to teaching group work. The following section will discuss further how the process of teaching and learning in counsellor education involves the elements of experiential learning, therapeutic factors and personal qualities.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A PERSON-CENTRED APPROACH

The main aim of this study is to explore the experiences of undergraduate counselling trainees and counsellor educators in teaching and learning group work. A person-centred approach will act as a framework to investigate the experience of counsellor educators and trainees in teaching and learning, focusing on the aspects of experiential learning, therapeutic factors in group work and personal qualities of both counsellor educators and counselling trainees. Carl Rogers' person-centred approach emphasised that 'all human beings have a natural propensity to learn, and learning is equivalent to personal change, forward moving, and growth' (Tan, 2008, p. 28). Studies related with a person-centred approach were conducted in various aspects either in psychotherapy, counselling and teaching and learning itself. Looking at multicultural counselling research, many studies approved a person-centred approach as an effective treatment for multicultural clients (Quinn, 2013). Quin (2013) explored key facets of the person-centred approach in educational organisations. Interestingly, a process of learning used in the study, such as the quality of the relationship and sense of belonging, shows a similarity with Rogers' theory and 'both models suggest that empathic, unconditional and

genuine relationships are likely to have a positive impact on an individual's openness to experience and to learning' (p. 221). In other study, Bryan, Lindo, Anderson-Johnson and Weaver (2015) used Carl Rogers' person-centred model as a framework to explain interpersonal relationships in nursing education. Based on the model, the attributes of lecturers were divided into realness (being compassionate, fair, and reliable), prizing (trust and respect) and empathetic understanding (considerate and non-judgemental). The study found a realness as the most significant element to produce positive relationships with students. The person-centred approach was also incorporated in a model of creative teaching (Ferch, Iris St, Reyes, & Ramsey, 2006). The authors presented a model of person-to-person learning consisting of several attributes, such as effective communication, teacher congruence, mutual respect, and trust building, that enhance the implementation of a person-to-person learning environment. In this model, the authors creatively designed a four-step teacher congruence (spotlight, opener, spotlight, and deepener) for educators to 'generate a positive learning community' (p. 158). Rogers also highlighted the uniqueness of the individual, as he asserted that 'the person-centred therapist holds is paralleled by his insistence on individual uniqueness. He believes that no two persons are ever alike and that the human personality is so complex that no diagnostic labelling of persons can ever be fully justified' (Thorne, 2007).

Although international research has been conducted on Carl Rogers' person-centred approach, a very limited number of studies use this framework in the specific counsellor education program in the Malaysian context. Several Malaysian studies incorporated a person-centred approach in their research, such as using the person-centred model as a theoretical approach in counselling

intervention (Fauziah *et al.*, 2014; Mardiana, Halimatun Halaliah, & Asnarulkhadi, 2011; Zakaria, Wan Ibrahim, Asyraf, & Fadzli, 2012) and investigated common theories used in counselling sessions (Aslina, Ahmad Jazimin, Che Anuar, Mohammad Aziz Shah, & Faizura, 2016; Zakaria & Asyraf, 2011). The person-centred approach has provided constructive changes among clients and become a major principle in developing counselling modules in higher learning institutions (Mardiana *et al.*, 2011). A study conducted among 241 Malaysian counsellors also highlighted that the person-centred approach is widely used by Malaysian counsellors (Zakaria & Asyraf, 2011). Out of 241 respondents, 142 respondents (58.9%) did not highlight their theoretical approach and 33 respondents (13.7%) used a person-centred approach. Apparently, a person-centred approach is widely accepted among Malaysian counsellors and educators. However, no specific research has been conducted with regard to the teaching and learning context. The current study will contribute to counsellor education literature by considering the person-centred framework in a Malaysian context, particularly in teaching and learning group work at undergraduate level.

In relation with group facilitation research, Thomas (2007) used a person-centred facilitator education model as a theoretical interpretive framework. This model 'focuses on the personal qualities of the emerging facilitator and the interpersonal relationship between the facilitator and group' (p. 44). A person-centred approach will be used as a framework in this study to understand both counsellor educators and trainees experience in teaching and learning group work, focusing on the experiential learning experience, therapeutic factors and personal qualities that contribute to the process of teaching and learning group

work. A person-centred approach (Rogers, 1951; Tudor *et al*., 2004) has been utilised to examine the topic in-depth, as it provides a framework that organises an inquiry into understanding self and total personality. This theory offers an understanding of how particular experiences shape the understanding of self and reality perceived by an individual. According to this approach, total personality consists of element organism, phenomenal field and self. Organism can be described as the 'visceral, sensory, bodily, instinctual, unselfconscious aspects of human being', while self is the 'product of an organism's capacity to reflect on its own experience on itself, and to look at itself as if from outside' (Tudor *et al.,* 2004, p. 25*)*. This theory is based on the assumption that 'every individual exists in a continual changing world of experience, of which he is the centre' (Rogers, 1951, p. 483). This private world is referred to as the phenomenal field perceived by the individual and consciously experienced. The key point of the theory is of what the organism perceives in the phenomenal field, as this 'perceptual field' is called reality. Based on Rogers (1951), total personality consists of experience and self-structure (see Figure 2.2).

In this study, reality is perceived by counselling trainees and educators based on their experience with any particular training. The same experience may be perceived differently by both parties based on their perceptions.

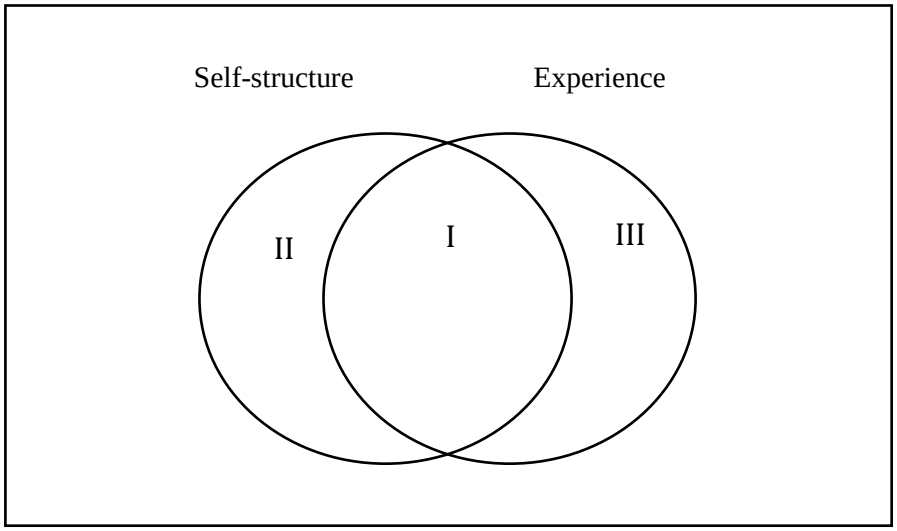

Figure 2.2: The Total Personality (Rogers, 1951)

In Figure 2.2, total personality indicates a personality that is congruent with an individual's sensory and visceral experience. The overlapping area represents the part of the personality that is congruent and integrated (as in Figure 2.3), and is explained as follows:

> *Experience*. The circle represents the immediate field of sensory and visceral experience. It represents all that is experienced by the individual, through all the sense of modalities. It is a fluid and changing field.
>
> *Self-structure*. The circle represents the configuration of concepts, which has been defined as the structure of self, or the concept of self. It includes the patterned perceptions of the individual's characteristics and relationships, together with the values associated with these aspects. It is available to awareness.
>
> *Area I*. Within this portion of the phenomenal field, the concept of self and self-in-relationship is in accordance with the evidence supplied by sensory and visceral experience.
>
> *Area II*. This area represents the portion of phenomenal field in which social or other experiences have been distorted in symbolisation and perceived as a part of the individual's own experience.
>
> *Area III*. In this realm, sensory and visceral experiences are denied for awareness because they are inconsistent with the structure of self.

This theory also proposes that since 'experience occurs in the life of the individual, they are either: a) symbolised, perceived, and organised into some relationship to the self, b) ignored because there is no perceived relationship to the self-structure, or c) denied symbolisation or given a distorted symbolisation because the experience is inconsistent with the structure of the self' (Rogers, 1951, p. 503). This emphasises the understanding of how human beings experience their world, in a situation whereby 'if we could empathically experience all the sensory and visceral sensations of the individual, could experience his whole phenomenal field including both the conscious elements and also those elements not brought to the conscious level, then we should have the perfect basis for understanding the meaningfulness of his behaviour and for predicting his future behaviour (Rogers, 1951, p. 494-5). As it is, person-centred counselling is a process 'to understand how an individual client experiences his or her world' (Mearns, 2003, p. 53). Gassner, Gold and Snadowsky (1964) mentioned that a number of experiments reported that human-relations training leads to changes in the phenomenal self' (p. 33).

Total personality is conceptualised by self-structure and experience, which will help in understanding how counsellor educators and trainees develop their personal and professional identity, based on their experience of teaching and learning group work. Tudor *et al.* (2004) suggest that person-centred training deals with the elements of personal development, skills, practice, supervision, assessment and course structure. The authors assert 'a person-centred training puts the person of the individual therapist-to-be at the heart of the training process' (p. 64). The training is focused on 'the process of facilitating people to find increasingly accurate, comprehensive and satisfying ways of implementing

their personal value' (p. 66). Rogers (1951) suggest that trainees experience a personal therapy to learn how to be empathic with clients 'at a deeper and more significant level' (p. 432). Later, Rogers (1961) also emphasised that:

> The degree to which I can create relationships, which facilitate the growth of others as separate persons, is a measure of the growth I have achieved in myself. In some respects this is a disturbing thought, but it is also a promising or challenging one. It would indicate that if I am interested in creating helping relationships I have a fascinating lifetime job ahead of me, stretching and developing my potentialities in the direction of growth (p. 56).

In relation to the teaching and learning context, counsellor educators may facilitate a process of teaching and learning that provides counsellors with an experience of a personal growth process. Thus, such experience may help the trainees to show empathy towards clients.

The person-centred approach also highlights the element of therapeutic conditions, which is unconditional positive regards. 'Unconditional positive regard is an extremely difficult attitude to develop' (Mearns, 2003, p. 4). The therapeutic relationship with clients requires the counsellor 'to create a context where the client can explore all his thoughts and feelings, integrating past events and future aspirations into his understanding of present behaviour' (Mearns, 2003, p. 55). Rogers (1951) asserted the importance of suitable candidates for training as therapists, suggesting 'the selection of potential therapist upon criteria established by research' (p. 435). A person-centred counsellor is an empathic listener, caring, genuine and congruent (Corsini & Wedding, 2011). The therapeutic elements in teaching and learning, and experience in learning group work will also help us to understand how a counselling trainee develops their personal qualities in order to become a group leader.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented relevant research regarding counsellor education literature, particularly in the process of teaching and learning group work, focusing on experiential learning, therapeutic factors, personal qualities and the theoretical framework for this study. In conclusion, the preparation of a group work leader should go beyond the pedagogical aspects of teaching to other aspects, including focusing on the element of therapeutic factors and personal qualities. This is where a person-centred theory framework becomes important, as it will guide the identification of processes in teaching and learning which may affect the experiences of counsellor educators and counselling trainees. These teaching and learning processes which focus on the interaction of experiential learning, therapeutic factors and personal qualities will be analysed as factors that contribute to the growth and competencies of counselling trainees to become a group leader.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This study aims to explore the journey of teaching and learning group work by both counsellor educators and counselling trainees in an undergraduate counselling program. Three universities engaged in the case study approach to explore the subjective experiences of counsellor educators and counselling trainees. The introductory step addressed the broad research question: "What are the teaching and learning experiences of counsellor educators and counselling trainees in the process of teaching and learning group work?" Specific research questions in terms of the counsellor educator's experience and counselling trainee's learning were then formulated after the data collection and analysis as follows:

RQ1. What are the experiential learning activities involved in reflecting good practice in teaching and learning group work?

RQ2. What are the therapeutic factors involved in reflecting good practice in teaching and learning group work?

RQ3. What are the personal qualities of counsellor educators and counselling trainees in relation to their participation in teaching and learning group work?

RQ4. In what ways do the interaction of experiential learning activities, personal qualities and therapeutic factors in group work training promote the teaching and learning process?

In this chapter, the research design and methodology employed are elaborated, including: the philosophical worldview proposed in the study, the rational for choosing a qualitative case study, the research context, data collection methods, data triangulation, ethical considerations, data analysis, the researcher's role and chapter summary.

3.1 THE PHILOSOPHICAL WORLDVIEW PROPOSED IN THE STUDY

Researchers hold different worldviews, resulting in different approaches to their works. In this qualitative research hearing the participants' voices, a social constructivist worldview was adopted as described by Creswell (2009):

> Social constructivist holds assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences-meanings directed toward certain object or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied (p. 8).

This study aims to investigate counselling educators' and trainees' experiences and perceptions of group work training, especially in the context of Malaysian counsellor education. As a constructivist researcher, the investigator believes that reality is created by the participants of any system (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). Group work training in each university allows trainees to experience the environment in a natural setting, resulting in personal and unique episodes for the learning process.

This exploratory study guided the researcher to understand and interpret as Heppner *et al*. (2008) noted:

> In the constructivist paradigm, there are no truths to be discovered; therefore, there can be no conjectures. Thus, data are not collected with the aim of determining whether or not observations are consistent with conjecture. Rather, data lead to interpretations that then lead the investigator in directions that may not have been anticipated, causing the investigator to reinterpret already collected data or to collect additional data, often in ways unimaginable when the investigation began' (p. 13).

The interpretivist seeks to understand the subjectivity and multiple realities, searching for meaning in their studies (Pring, 2004). The need for this research based on a gap in the literature was outlined in Section 1.2 and the researcher's motivation to perform this study in Section 1.5. Based on literature review and my experience as a group work course counsellor educator, teaching approaches employed by fellow educators are subjective and varied. As this study involves counselling trainees from different universities, their views and experiences are also perceived to be subjective. Therefore, this qualitative research seeks to understand the voices and experiences of counselling educators and trainees.

However, according to the interpretivist paradigm, the process involved is beyond exploring, describing and clarifying both parties' experiences. An interpretivism researcher presents the explanation of why and how to provide interpretation and meanings based on the participants' stories. According to Patton (2002):

> 'Interpretivism involves explaining the findings, answering 'why' questions, attaching significance to particular results, and putting patterns into an analytic framework. It is tempting to rush into the creative work of interpreting the data before doing the detailed, hard work of putting together coherent answers to major descriptive questions. But description comes first' (p. 438).

Thus, to explore the experiences of counsellor educators and counselling trainees, the case study approach was chosen to achieve an in-depth understanding of their journey in the teaching and learning group work course.

3.2 THE RATIONAL FOR CHOOSING A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY APPROACH

This exploratory study adopted qualitative inquiry to attain an in-depth understanding of the topic investigated, and aimed to identify the participant's experiences as a learner (trainee) or a teacher (counsellor educator) in group work teaching and learning activities. A case study has been defined in various ways as per Table 3.1 (Creswell, 2009; Denscombe, 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Simons, 2009). However, all descriptions agree that a case study represents a unit of analysis as a case.

Author	Definition
Miles and Huberman (1994)	'A phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case is, in effect, your unit of analysis' (p. 25).
Simons (2009)	'… case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a real-life context' (p. 21).
Creswell (2009)	'Case studies are a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in-depth of a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals' (p. 13).
Denscombe (2010)	'The case study approach can use a wide range of social phenomena as the unit of analysis. It can be based on things like an individual, an organisation, an industry, a workplace, an educational programme, a policy or a country' (p. 55)

Table 3.1: Definition of a case study

Simons (2009) pointed out that 'if one is conducting a collective case study, he might select cases from different geographical areas to explore any regional or institutional cultural differences between how the issues are experienced in each.

This is not to ensure representativeness, but to explain differences' (p. 30). Furthermore, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) elaborated further that multisite case studies 'involve collecting and analysing data from several cases and can be distinguished from single case study that may have subunits or subcases embedded within' (p. 40). The case study will 'document multiple perspectives, explore contested viewpoints, demonstrate the influence of key actors and interactions between them in telling a story of the programme or policy in action' (Simons, 2009, p. 23). Nevertheless, Simon also stated that a large amount of case study data and the researcher's subjectivity may be considered as a weakness of case study research. It is advisable for researchers to organise and make sense of the data, and to always reflect their involvement in the work (Simons, 2009).

Therefore, the multisite case study approach is suitable for exploring the counsellor educator's experience in group work training and documenting multiple viewpoints from the trainees learning it. The participants were from three public universities in West Malaysia, consisting of six counsellor educators and six focus groups of undergraduate counselling trainees (see Figure 3.1). The data collected from the participants from different universities contributed towards data validation via the triangulation process.

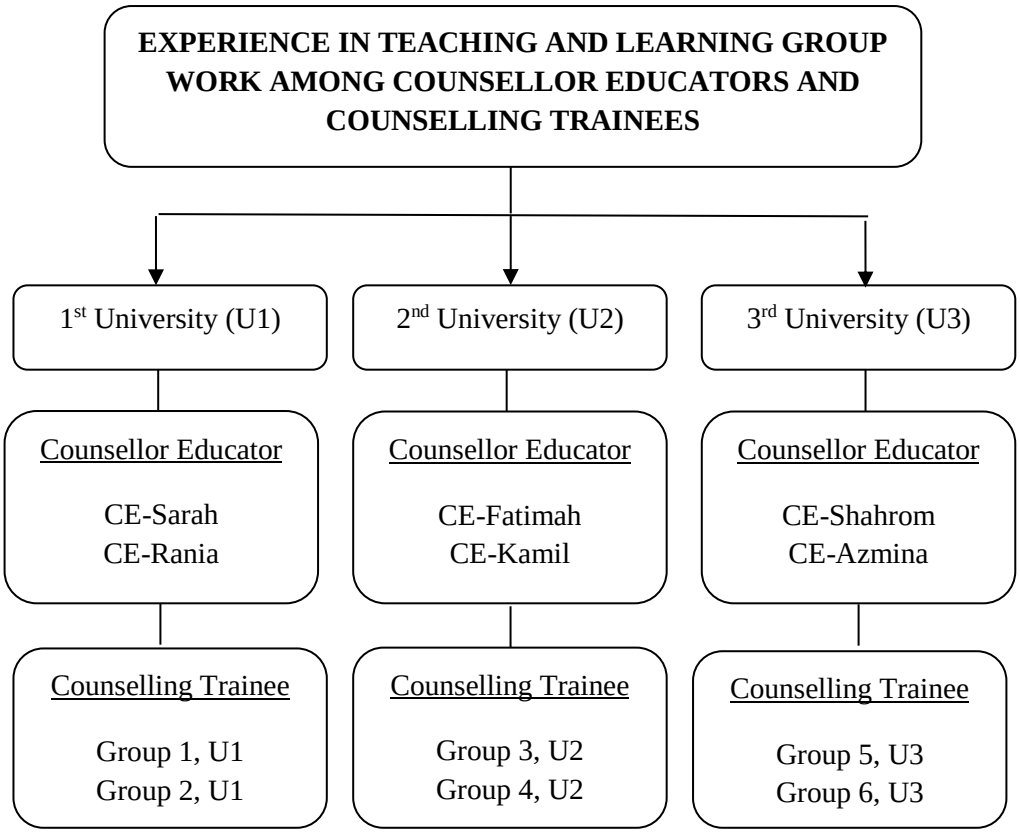

Figure 3.1: The selection of research participants

Participant selection (see Section 3.4) was based on their knowledge and experience in the research area, specifically counsellor educators who teach group work courses and are involved in group work training on an undergraduate counselling program. The counselling trainees were selected from undergraduate students who had undertaken the group work courses during their undergraduate program.

3.3 THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

3.3.1 Research sites

This study involved three public universities in West Malaysia offering an undergraduate counselling program listed on the MQR's website as an approved

program. Purposive sampling was employed to help the researcher to understand the problem and research questions (Creswell, 2009) and to gain more insight into the case (Simons, 2009). The three universities were purposively selected due to their adherence to the Standards and Qualification of Counsellor Training (2011), offering two group work courses in their undergraduate counselling program (see Section 1.1).

3.3.2 Getting access to the research sites

At this stage, I sought advice from a colleague who had conducted research in a Malaysian higher education institution regarding the procedures involved with gaining approval to conduct research. My primary concern was delays in acquiring approval from selected universities from West Malaysia, as I live in East Malaysia.

An application form to conduct a research also had to be submitted to the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). The standardised application form was sent to the Department of Planning and Research, with a copy of a research proposal attached. Within two weeks, a letter granting the approval to proceed with the research in the selected universities was received from the Department of Planning and Research, Ministry of Education Malaysia (see Appendix D). However, the subsequent stages were dependent on each university's consent to agree and allow for the research to be conducted.

Next, a formal letter was sent to each university's Vice Chancellor, with the MOHE's approval letter attached, followed by an email to the Head of Department of the Counselling Program elaborating the research and seeking

their approval to conduct the study in their department. Once they received an approval letter from the Office of Vice Chancellor, the Department granted permission for the counsellor educators and trainees to participate in the research. Prior to approval, follow-up calls to the Department were also made to determine whether they had received approval from the Vice Chancellor to initiate the research.

3.3.3 Preliminary interviews to understand the experiences of counsellor educators and counselling trainees in group work training

Pilot studies can be designed to test preliminary ideas or methods and explore their implications. A pilot study was conducted to familiarise the researcher with the topic area, and then to test whether the interview and group discussion topics would reflect the actual data collection process. The criteria for the selection of pilot case or cases can be 'convenience, access, and geographic proximity' (Yin, 2009, p. 93). Yin (2009) also stressed the importance of a pilot case study 'to refine your data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed' (p. 92). As a counsellor, I may experience conflict on focusing the interview session as I may conduct it as a counselling session. However, based on my experience as a counsellor, conducting counselling sessions (individual or group) acquire different goals. The preliminary interviews with counsellor educators and trainees allowed a boundary between research and counselling sessions to be established.

In counselling sessions, a counsellor will use skills like paraphrasing, reflection of feeling and questioning to explore the issues being discussed. During the interview session, I was able to use these particular skills to explore the

counsellor educator experience. These skills helped me not to be dependent on the scheduled interview questions, but to freely explore the experience within the scope of the research topic.

Yin (2009) asserted the need for a researcher to experience the case study protocol before embarking on the actual study. Preliminary interviews should be conducted to acquire specific skills like asking good questions, being a good listener, and exercising adaptiveness and flexibility (Yin, 2009). Initially, this particular study was based on two research questions: 1) How do counsellor educators/trainee counsellors perceive and experience group work training at Malaysian Universities? and 2) How does group work training prepare the trainee counsellors in practice?

The main data collection method for this research were interviews with the counselling lecturers and focus group interviews with the undergraduate counselling students. The preliminary interview process was divided into two steps: 1) interview with the counsellor educator, and 2) focus group interview with the counselling trainee. Firstly, counsellor educators were invited to answer the interview questions based on the research questions and other topics related to their teaching experience. This input was beneficial in highlighting the main issues in this teaching and learning area. As a researcher, I am aware of my own personal views and interpretations of the topic as per my own experience. For example, I employ an experiential leadership assignment as one of the teaching strategies in group work, whereby trainees conduct their session with actual clients. The location these sessions is organised by me and my colleague, as well as the transportation of the trainees to the location due to the lack of public

transport in our university area. I am aware that I have my own justification in designing my experiential leadership assignments, but this will not prevent me from exploring and listening to other educator's own experiences.

Thus, the preliminary interviews provided pilot data but also allowed me to experience the process of conducting an interview. The interviews with counsellor educators revealed that the main categories were: i) experiences in teaching group work courses, and ii) counsellor educator's motivation and attitude in teaching group work courses.

Subsequently, focus group interviews were conducted with undergraduate counselling trainees from my department who had undertaken group work courses. These student participants were known to me, but I was on study leave, so had no teaching contact with the trainees. Twenty trainees volunteered to participate, and were divided into two focus groups. The first group consisted of nine trainees, while the second group had eleven trainees. The Dean's permission to conduct the preliminary study was acquired to adhere to ethical procedures. The interview questions were developed based on Krueger's (1998) categories of questions, which are comprised of opening questions, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions and ending questions.

This preliminary interview allowed the identification of appropriate themes and categories in order to develop the interview schedule for the actual study. They also gave me hands-on experience to practice as a novice researcher, and also boosted my confidence to initiate the actual study. From the focus group interviews with counselling trainees, the main categories that emerged were: i) the useful learning experiences in group work courses, ii) the useful learning

experiences outside of group work courses and iii) other issues on group work competencies faced by the participants. Based on the experience during the interview sessions, the actual interview schedule was then prepared (see Appendix E and Appendix F).

3.3.4 Research participants

The participants were counselling trainees and counsellor educators from undergraduate counselling programs in Malaysian universities, with the trainees allocated into two focus groups and interviews for the counsellor educators for each university respectively.

3.3.4.1 Counsellor educators

I acknowledge the formalities of approaching MOHE and the universities as a crucial component of data collection process in Malaysian public universities. Nevertheless, convincing participants to be involved is also as important, as the researcher aims to interview two counsellor educators and conduct two focus group discussions with the trainees in each university.

Group work courses offered in the first (U1) and third university (U3) are taught by the same counsellor educators, while different lecturers teach the courses in the second university (U2). Therefore, to understand the counsellor educator's experiences and satisfy the objectives of the research, I invited two counsellor educators from each university to participate in the research.

After approval was obtained from the Vice Chancellor from U1, I contacted the Head of Department of the counselling program and identified counsellor educators who had experience in teaching group work courses and using group

work approaches in their courses. Rania who teaches such courses and Sarah who had previously taught trainees were contacted via telephone and then interviewed at the faculty. The Head of the Counselling Department for U2 and U3 also granted permission to conduct the research with their counsellor educators, which is how Fatimah and Kamil (U2), and Shahrom and Azmina (U3) were recruited. They were also contacted via telephone and email to arrange interview sessions at their respective offices. Table 3.2 below shows the interview schedule.

Date	Counsellor Educators	University
23rd February 2011	CE-Sarah	U1
10th March 2011	CE-Fatimah	U2
11th March 2011	CE-Kamil	U2
16th March 2011	CE-Shahrom	U3
17th March 2011	CE-Rania	U1
16th May 2011	CE-Azmina	U3

Table 3.2: Schedule of interviews for counsellor educators

3.3.4.2 Counselling trainees

The recruitment criterion for trainee participation in the study is that they were third year trainees who have undertaken taken group work courses during their undergraduate counselling program. As participation was voluntary, there was a possible risk of bias if only high achieving trainees participated in the study. Therefore, I requested the department to invite trainees of all ranges of academic achievements to participate. Table 3.3 exhibits the dates scheduled for the focus group interview sessions for each university:

Date	Trainees	University
8th March 2011	Group 1	U1
8th March 2011	Group 2	U1
10th March 2011	Group 3	U2
11th March 2011	Group 4	U2
15th March 2011	Group 5	U3
16th March 2011	Group 6	U3

Table 3.3: Schedule of interviews for counselling trainees

3.4 METHODS OF COLLECTING DATA

In this study, data was collected from interviews with six counsellor educators and focus group interviews with counselling trainees from the three universities.

3.4.1 Interviews of counsellor educators

The purpose of the interview questions 'is to explore specific issues and perspectives in depth in order to generate data, which will contribute, along with data obtained from other methods, to inform and answer the overall research questions' (Simons, 2009, p. 32). Furthermore, (Creswell, 2012a) expressed that the open-ended questions in qualitative research were asked 'so that the participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings' (p. 218). Moreover, Yin (2009) also categorised interviews as one evidence source in case study research, which has been explored further in previous research (Barlow & Antoniou, 2007; Halliday & Soden, 1998), specifically touching on lecturer experiences in teaching and learning issues using this method. However, the disadvantage of this methods is that the information reported is based on the interviewer's points of view (Creswell, 2012a).

As a counsellor, I am aware of my role as a researcher, thus initiated the interview session by building a good rapport with the counsellor educator. During the interview sessions, I focussed on the content as well as non-verbal communication, for example, using facial expressions and body posture to identify the interviewee's emotions and asking further questions related to the issue being discussed. Counselling skills like questioning, paraphrasing, reflection and clarification have been utilised to understand and explore the participant's thoughts, feelings, thinking and experience (McLeod & McLeod, 2011; Okun & Kantrowitz, 2007). The experience during the preliminary interviews allowed the boundary between interviews and counselling sessions to be established. I used my counselling skills to explore the issues related to the research questions. In order to build trust (Ryen, 2004), the researcher should show empathy (Macnaghten & Myers, 2004) throughout the interviews, which I achieved by using reflection of feelings, paraphrasing skills and also paying attention to the non-verbal behaviour of the interviewee. Summarisation skills (Okun & Kantrowitz, 2007) have also been used in to confirm with the participants what has been told and discussed. During the session, I also observed the counsellor educator's working environment, while summarisation skills were employed again at the end for conclusion purposes. My counselling skills helped me to organise the flow of the interview sessions.

In this study, six counsellor educators agreed to participate in the interviews, conducted from February to May 2011, with five conducted in their office, while one session occurred in the counselling laboratory. Each participant received a formal letter of invitation to participate, with the informed consent letter (see Appendix G) attached. The informed consent outlined the information that the

participants have ‘the right to know that they are being researched, the right to be informed about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at any time (Ryen, 2004, p. 231). After obtaining permission, the sessions were audiotaped using a MP3 recorder and conducted in the Malay language due to participant preferences, with notes and important points recorded throughout the sessions.

The interview schedule (see Appendix E) was prepared as a guide to explore the counsellor educators’ views, experience and attitudes towards teaching counselling trainees group leadership and skills, particularly in group work courses. This schedule was developed based on the literature and primary interview findings with the counsellor educator. The main areas were: i) experiences in teaching group work courses, ii) counsellor educator’s motivation and attitude in teaching group work courses, and iii) views on trainee’s attitudes in learning group work courses.

The flow of the conversation was also based on the counsellor educator’s story, views, thoughts and feelings, and did not strictly follow the interview protocol.

3.4.2 Focus group interviews of counselling trainees

In order to explore the trainees’ perceptions and experiences regarding group work training, focus group discussions were chosen as the method for data collection. A focus group ‘is a group of 7 to 10 people, recruited on the basis of similar demographics, psychographics, buying attitudes, or behaviour, who engage in a discussion, led by a trained moderator, of a particular topic’ (Greenbaum, 2000, p. 3). Focus groups have been found to be successful as a

method of extracting trainee's opinions and understanding their experience in learning (Fife, 2007). In this study, focus group interviews allow the ideas, views and experiences of the trainees regarding certain topics to be explored. The structure allowed trainees to share their experiences and encouraged discussion with fellow participants in comparison with an in-depth interview.

As a researcher, I employed group work skills such as linking, clarifying, and focusing when conducting the focus group interviews, based on my prior experience of conducting group work and teaching group counselling classes. I am also aware of the types and limitations of exploration during the discussion and opted to direct the discussions as per the research questions and issues related to the topic. New issues or topics that emerged during the sessions were also noted, as I tried my best to qualitatively listen to their thoughts and explore issues based on their concerns. 'Focus groups allow researchers to explore predetermined topics in depth, and allow for the emergence of previously unconsidered topics as well' (Fife, 2007).

Focus group interviews encourage participant dynamics, reduce the pressure for interviewee to answer questions, and maintain participant's motivation and energy (Greenbaum, 2000). Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook (2007) have stressed its importance, as 'the objective is to better understand the group dynamic that affect individuals' perceptions, information processing, and decision making' (p. 9). However, there is the risk that the discussion in focus groups might be dominated by certain members (Greenbaum, 2000; Creswell, 2002; Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007), thereby affecting the findings.

The focus group moderator should possess excellent personal and professional characteristics, including communications skills, facilitative of group dynamics, attentive to objectives and directions, responsiveness to body language, and respecting confidentiality (Greenbaum, 2000). They are tasked with the need 'to create an open space in which the discussion keeps going first through the exchange of arguments (Flick, 2009, p. 199). In addition, Creswell (2002) has mentioned that 'focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information and when interviewees are similar to and cooperative with each other' (p. 206). Smithson (2008) also asserts that 'they permit researchers to observe a large amount of interaction on a specific topic in a short time' (p. 358). However, Winship and Repper (2007) argue that 'it is where there are differences of opinion among participants that some of the most valuable insights might emerge' (p. 129). Given that this study aimed to examine the experiences of undergraduate counselling trainees in their group work courses, focus group discussions provided the means of allowing and promoting interactions (Smithson, 2008). Additionally, the target participants are not meant to represent a population (Macnaghten & Myers, 2004).

Smithson (2008) also discussed the practicalities of arranging focus groups. In this study, 8-10 trainees from the same university were invited to join the focus group. In order to participate, they must have already been enrolled in two group work courses in their undergraduate counselling program, which are generally the third-year undergraduate counselling trainees. A total of 54 trainees participated in six focus group discussions, arranged after approval by the department, which were conducted in the group counselling laboratory. In U1,

the first focus group consisted of seven trainees, while the second was composed of one group of three trainees. I began the session by introducing myself, noting their acceptance based on their non-verbal actions towards me during the session. The sessions typically utilised both English and Malay languages as per the trainees' preferences.

Similarly, third year undergraduate counselling trainees who had already undertaken group work courses in U2 participated in this research, with the first focus group consisting of thirteen trainees, while the second group of eleven trainees. The participants received an invitation letter to participate in the study and gave informed consent before participation (see Appendix G). Each session was audio taped with permission, with the assurance of identity confidentiality and safe storage of interview data.

The two focus groups for U3 were also made up of ten third year trainees with experience of learning two group work courses respectively, and were conducted in a meeting room. The preparation of focus group venue is part of the planning stage during the focus group discussion (Macnaghten & Myers, 2004). As a researcher, I noticed the trainees' acceptance during the session as they willingly shared opinions, ideas and experiences. Table 3.4 displays the number of participants for the focus group discussion.

University	Focus group	Number of trainees
U1	Focus Group 1	7
U1	Focus Group 2	3
U2	Focus Group 3	13
U2	Focus Group 4	11
U3	Focus Group 5	10
U3	Focus Group 6	10
TOTAL	6 focus groups	54 trainees

Table 3.4: Focus group participants

The focus group interview schedule (see Appendix F) served as a guide for the sessions, but the flow of the conversation was reliant on the situation, ideas and thought sharing, and overall momentum of the sessions. There was an apparent uniqueness in every group focus session, which highlighted several main issues including: i) experiences in learning group work courses, ii) views on counsellor educators teaching styles and strategies, iii) attitudes in learning group work skills, and iv) recommendation on the improvement of teaching and learning.

3.5 DATA TRIANGULATION

Denscombe (2010) recommended the process of triangulation to increase the credibility of the findings, asserting that multiple data sources in the case study will 'facilitate the validation of data through triangulation' (p. 62). According to Silverman (2010), 'triangulation refers to the attempt to get a 'true' fix on a situation by combining different ways of looking at it (method triangulation) or different findings (data triangulation)' (p. 277). Furthermore, Creswell (2012a) has said that 'validating findings means that the researcher determines the accuracy or credibility of the findings through strategies, such as member checking or triangulation' (p. 259).

In this study, data was gathered from different sources (e.g. interviews and focus group discussion), three different sites (e.g. U1, U2 and U3) and from different participants (counsellor educators and counselling trainees). This entire process increased the study's credibility due to the involvement of various methods, different participating sources, as well as the different sites. As I elaborated in section 1.5, multisite studies are used to reduce researcher bias. In this process, the data collected from counsellor educators and counselling trainees from different sites were triangulated. The interview transcripts from the six counsellor educators and the six focus groups were analysed, with the process of coding, summarising and analysis of the data (Patton, 2002) being conducted thorough the interview transcripts. This process can reduce the bias of using my own experience to interpret the data as I data was collected from several sources and sites.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.6.1 Gaining access

There are several ethical considerations to be addressed during data collection (Christians, 2005; Homan, 1991; Ryen, 2004). Permission to involve the trainees and counsellor educators as participants was obtained from each institution (see Sections 3.32 and 3.33). Each participant was informed of the purpose of the study and received an informed consent form (see Sections 3.61 and 3.62), clarifying the researcher's role and the participant's rights, which included the right to withdraw from the study. Furthermore, approval to conduct the research was obtained from the research ethics committee, School of Education, University of Nottingham (see Appendix C).

3.6.2 Informed consent and anonymity

Researchers should protect the anonymity of individuals (Creswell, 2012a; Homan, 1991), ensuring that personal data is kept in a protected place (Christians, 2005). The nature of the research project involving both counsellor educators and counselling trainees was explained to the participants and they were assured that their name and university would remain anonymous. Furthermore, each participant and university was given a pseudonym, which was used in all transcripts and reports of findings. The audio-recorded files and participants' documents were safely stored on a laptop in folders to which no one other than the researcher, supervisor and examiners had access. They were also given details of my supervisor for their reference.

3.6.3 Confidentiality

The process of maintaining confidentiality was challenging as the study involved both counsellor educators and counselling trainees. The counselling trainees may wish to remain anonymous from faculty members as they gave information regarding their learning experiences. The counsellor educators may also have been reluctant to comment and give feedback as it may impact on their teaching and learning. However, establishing a good relationship during the sessions helped to create trust and the issue of confidentiality was emphasised throughout.

The participants must not be harmed during the study, so it is important to listen to their requests and anxiousness about certain aspects. In this particular study, one of the counsellor educators mentioned that in the event of the research findings being published, new permission and consent are necessary. The trainees also reminded the researcher not to disclose their personal data. They

were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time. As a counsellor educator, I am aware of the aspect of confidentiality as my role is to gather data. The element of confidentiality was highlighted in every session (Bryman, 2004; Flick, 2009). Patton (2002) reminded:

> …. people in interviews will tell you things they never intended to tell. Interview can become confessions, particularly under the promise of confidentiality. But beware of that promise (p. 406).

Counsellor educators and counselling trainees trusted me and were willing to share their experiences. I also maintained the focus of the discussion as Patton (2002) asserted 'staying focused on the purpose of the interview is critical to gathering high-quality data'. This experience of conducting my own group counselling sessions gave me an awareness of how to manage the flow of the discussions. I was also aware that the participants were not my clients and the sessions were not counselling sessions.

3.7 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The analysis and organisation of the data are crucial for qualitative data analysis. Data analysis itself involves the process of making sense of the data (Simons, 2009). Creswell (2012b) proposed various stages of data analysis and representation by case study approaches as shown in Table 3.5.

Data Analysis and Representation	Criteria
Data organisation	Create and organise files for data
Reading, memoing	Read through text, make margin notes, from initial codes
Describing the data into codes and themes	Describe the case and it context
Classifying the data into codes and themes	Use categorical aggregation to establish themes or patterns
Interpreting the data	Use direct interpretation Develop naturalistic generalisations of what was "learned"
Representing, visualising the data	Present in-depth picture of the case (or cases) using narrative, tables, and figures

Table 3.5: Data analysis and representation by the case study approach (Creswell, 2012, p. 190-191)

In the process of data organisation, a file was created for each of participant on the laptop, totalling twelve files (six counsellor educators and six focus groups). Also, a specific folder was created for all the audio-taped records for all participants. See the following section (3.71-3.75) for further clarification of the process related with reading and transcribing the data, data reduction, display and verification, describing the data into codes and themes, as well as classifying the data into codes and themes.

3.7.1 Transcribing the data

Every recorded interview conversation was transcribed manually into a Word document, and in order to extract as much information as possible, the audio-records were supplemented by the notes taken during the sessions. The study encompassed a vast data set, with over fifteen hours of audio interviews (one-to-one and focus group interviews). The data was organised and categorised before deciding on the presentation (Simons, 2009).

The process of data transcribing was very challenging. I conducted the first session and then listened to the recording before initiating the subsequent

educator interview. After successfully completing the next session, an emerging theme was identified, which was then used to guide subsequent interview sessions. During interviews, the educators had the opportunity to share their concerns or discuss issues related to their experience in teaching group work courses, which resulted in new themes.

The preliminary focus group interview guided the development of the theme for the trainee focus groups. During the first focus group, the interview schedule was adhered to, to ensure that all the topics were covered. Subsequent sessions were more relaxed and I asked questions related to topics of the preliminary themes, while allowing the participant-centric flow of discussion. The processes of opening up and listening allowed the trainees to express their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours that correlated with their learning experiences. The researcher is an advocate for the group dynamic process, believing that if group members trust their leader, they will begin to share more personal stories in-depth. The vast amount of data acquired was transcribed by the researcher, with the six interview transcripts amounting to 93 pages, while the six transcripts for the focus group interview were 85 pages long.

3.7.2 Using NVivo to organise the data

The data from the interview transcripts (both one-to one and focus group interviews) was organised using NVivo software, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) that helps the qualitative researcher to organise qualitative data (Flick, 2009; Yin, 2011). The activities in NVivo involve coding the data, forming categories, as well as reducing and organising the data (Flick, 2009).

Prior to the transfer, the data was manually analysed to extract the emerging themes by repeatedly re-reading the transcripts. Each participant's transcript was reviewed a few times to identify the code and theme prior to specific research questions. The analysis of the data for each participant and focus group transcript were guided by the research questions. After the emergence of a few themes, the Nvivo software was used to code the data to form categories. As a researcher, it was important for me to use the software to enhance my analytical skills in the process of analysing the data. Friese (2014) stated that 'to the software, a code is just an object that can be attached to various other objects and whose content can be searched and retrieved. Everything else is up to you' (Friese, 2014, p. 211).

3.7.3 Data reduction, display and verification

Several important components of data analysis are 'data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10-12). Data reduction involves the procedure 'of selecting, focusing and abstracting key data from interviews, observation and field notes' (Simons, 2009, p. 120). Simons also suggests that the researcher displays the data in visual form, enabling them to view the data before deciding on a further course of action. During this stage, I focussed on each interview and focus group data and its detail before proceeding with the data reduction. This was a challenging process because, as a novice qualitative researcher, I needed to carefully select the appropriate data for further analysis. Even though I identified which aspect of the data to be emphasised, I revisited the data that I put aside. This process was followed by the coding process and identification of emerging themes.

3.7.4 Code, coding and categorising

Codes are defined as 'tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). Developed from existing concepts and from raw data, the list may be obtained 'from the conceptual framework, list of research questions, hypotheses, problem areas, and/or key variables that the researcher brings to the study' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 58). Simons (2009) elaborated that the process of 'coding and categorising is systematic, comprehensive (searching all the data until the categories are saturated) and cumulative, gradually building understanding or explanations' (p. 121). Furthermore, Saldana (2009) has also stated that data interpretation is reliant upon the researcher's analytic skills, while coding assists in organising data into categories (Saldana, 2009; Yin, 2011).

During the process of generating the initial code, the preliminary findings were used to identify the pre-selected code for both counsellors' and trainees' interviews. However, in the process of coding the transcript, a qualitative analyst should remain open to inducing new meanings from the data available; this process involves a combination of deductive and inductive analysis.

Saldana (2009) affirms that coding is the transition process between data collection and extensive data analysis. In this study, this process was initiated by examining each individual transcript and performing the initial coding. In order to understand the participant's views and experience in teaching group work courses, the transcripts were read repeatedly to identify the codes and some codes were developed from prior reading (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I was also

aware of any emerging codes that could be generated from either certain parts of the transcripts, or from a whole paragraph in the text.

Table 3.6 below is an extract of the interview with Rania, elaborating on her experience in teaching group work courses for undergraduate counselling trainees.

EXTRACT	CODING
I think my competency in leading a group session is very much based on work experience. Of course, I cannot deny my exposure to the technique and to group theory in class. However, the skill I learned a lot from trial and error. When I was working with NGOs, I ran a support group for rape survivors. It was quite tough and my counselling competencies were not there until I slowly explored some more counselling work. When I had the chance to do counselling sessions, my competency started developing. I also attended counselling to enhance my competencies. I am willing to spend money to attend workshops (CE-Rania, U1).	Working and training experience

Table 3.6: Selected extract from the interviews

The same initial coding processes were performed for the other five participants. Code identification was performed by carefully reading each participant's transcript and developed based on understanding the meaning of the participant's voice. Inductive analysis was employed as the process of coding, not 'trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). Each transcript was treated neutrally to ensure that the emergent codes were according to each participant's uniqueness. Coding reduction was also employed after identification of potential new codes, with an emphasis on emerging themes as it 'maps onto the inductive approach (Braun & Clarke, p. 12).

The focus group discussion transcripts were analysed as per the trainees' views and experience. The key element in thematic analysis is to 'capture something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represent some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10). The data provided rich individual and shared experiences according to the trainees' perceptions of experience in group work training. Displayed below in Table 3.7 is an extract of a focus group interview.

EXTRACT	CODING
If we look at the assignments given by the counsellor educator, all were in order. First, she asked us to be a client with a registered counsellor. Second, we need to undergo the group simulation sessions in the class. The third one, we need to set up a group and find our own clients. All the assignments have the element of practical and we learn from that kind of assignment. We learn how to be a client and we learn to be a group members and leader with our own friends in group simulation. Next, we learn to conduct our own group. We applied our skills in the class and also in the real setting [CE-Zaid, U2].	Group work simulations

Table 3.7: Selected extract from the focus group interviews

Thematic repetition from both one-on-one and focus group interviews successfully validated the process of data triangulation (Silverman, 2010), increasing the credibility of the research.

3.7.5 Identifying shared themes across transcripts

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Such an approach enables careful analysis to find coherent and distinctive themes, as it 'involves the searching across a data set – be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of

texts – to find repeated patterns of meaning' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 15). Table 3.8 describes how the thematic process was conducted.

Phase	Description of the process
Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas
Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis
Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

Table 3.8: Phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

By employing the phases of thematic analysis, the process of identifying shared items was guided accordingly (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The theme searching process was done by continuously looking at both the codes and transcripts, which was challenging. As a researcher, I was required to view the entire code from both sources, whereby Nvivo was employed to first sort the codes into appropriate themes. The software assisted in organising the themes and subthemes that emerged from the analysis, subsequently I manually processed the reviews and thematic organisation. The process of identifying shared themes from both counsellor educators and counselling trainees was a challenging process, repeatedly going through the process of identifying codes, themes and

categories from the interview transcripts. The statement of the participates were compared to the identified significant statements that contributed to the research questions. During the process of data analysis, I needed to understand and interpret the participants' story and experience.

Next, the themes from both the counsellor educators and counselling trainees were revisited to identify shared themes, which were clustered into a few broad categories. Again, this was challenging, as each category consisting of data from both parties had to be revisited. The process of ongoing analysis was followed by defining and checking the themes before the final report, and relating the analysis to the research questions and literature. This process of qualitative analysis was dependent not only on the technical software, but also on the researcher to makes sense of the data. The process of 'forwards and backwards' helped to refine significant categories that consisted of shared themes from both counsellor educators and trainees. Figure 3.2 shows the flow of analysis guiding the process.

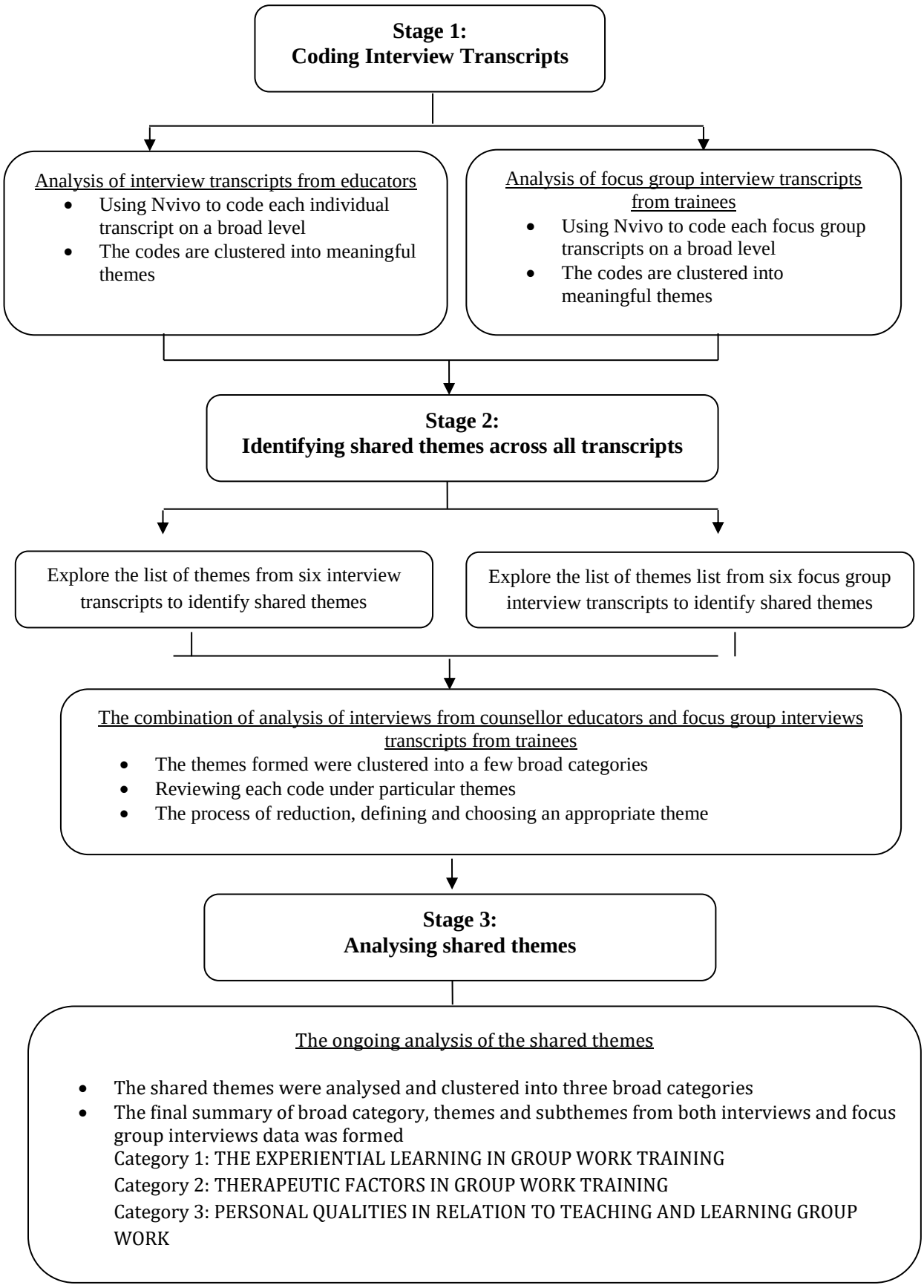

Figure 3.2: The flowchart of the analysis of the data

The processes of reading and continuously revisiting the transcripts took place prior to the final mapping of the data. Table 3.9 below outlines the broad categories, themes and subthemes that emerged from the analytic process.

Broad category	Theme and subthemes
EXPERIENTIAL TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN GROUP WORK TRAINING	Experiential learning activities • Modelling • Group work simulation • Group counselling camp • Self-reflection journal • Participating group work as clients • Experiential leadership
	Challenges of experiential leadership assignment • Managing clients for group work practice • Being recorded • Other responsibilities
	Improving the experiential activities
THERAPEUTIC FACTORS IN GROUP WORK TRAINING	Facilitative approach in teaching group work
	Respect of cultural differences and diversity
	Development of socialising skills in group work training • Encouraging the trainees to express themselves • Classroom interaction • Using appropriate language
	Cohesiveness
	Positive attitude in teaching group work courses • Motivation to enhance the group work courses • Creativity • Extra effort in managing group work courses • Encourage the counselling trainee to learn • Patience in teaching
	Positive attitude towards learning group work courses • Willingness to face challenges • Counselling trainee's responsibility and effort • Initiative in handling group activities • Motivation to attend the group work class • Interest in the counselling program • Interest in group work courses
PERSONAL QUALITIES IN RELATION TO TEACHING AND LEARNING GROUP WORK	Counsellor educator's prior experience • Doctoral research related to group work • Working and training experience • Mentoring by senior group work lecturer
	Counsellor trainee's prior experience • Experience during the secondary schools • Motivation to choose a counselling program
	Personal qualities of counsellor educators

	• Willingness to self-disclose • Genuineness and congruence • Caring • Assertiveness • Adherence to ethics • Interest in training people • Acceptance towards clients • Freedom in teaching
Personal qualities of counselling trainee	• Self-disclosure and sharing • Creativity in handling group work sessions • Initiative and being independent • Enjoy handling group work sessions

Table 3.9 Categories, themes and subthemes (semi-structured interviews with the counsellor educators and focus group interviews with trainees)

Three broad categories were generated from this interpretative analysis parallel to the objective of this qualitative study, which was to explore trainees' and counsellor educators' experiences during the preparation of group work practice in the undergraduate counselling program.

3.8 THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE

The researcher's self cannot be separated from research process and data analysis (Denscombe, 2010), they need to be aware of their position and bias that may impact the findings (Creswell, 2012b). As mentioned before, I have experience in teaching group work courses in my university and undertaking the process of accreditation application for a counselling program from MQA and Board of Counsellors (Malaysia). This experience has enhanced my understanding of the issues present in teaching group work courses, from the educators' and trainees' point of view. The involvement with accreditation document preparation has also shaped my understanding of the influence of standardisation of the counselling education curriculum.

In terms of skill-related teaching courses, I have observed that certain counsellor educators possess the characteristics, motivation and attitude suited to teach skills, especially in group work courses. Normally, the course entails extra hours for trainees to practice their skills. Furthermore, the class is a combination of didactic and experiential activities, requiring counsellor educators to be mentally and emotionally prepared. This is due to the involvement of self-disclosure from trainees during the practical sessions, which may need proper interventional tactics as a modelling session to them. However, I believe that in this study, counsellor educators have their own views, experience and perceptions regarding the group work curriculum in the counselling program. I am also aware of my perception regarding trainees' preferences in the program itself, which is influential towards their readiness in conducting a counselling session. However, I am also positive of the counselling trainees' own uniqueness during their learning journey, as a qualitative researcher.

Miles *et al.* (2014) has highlighted the importance of being aware of the researcher's personal biases when conducting research, while also ensuring that the methods and procedures are present in detail. In Sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.7, the process of data collection has been presented in-depth, which will assist future researchers to repeat or re-analyse the data, a detailed description and explanation of the research is crucial in order to achieve this. Creswell (2012) suggested that 'reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good-quality tape for recording and by transcribing the tape' (p. 251). In this study, I presented a detailed research process to ensure its dependability as 'the research design may be viewed as a prototype model' (Shenton, 2004, p. 71).

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the philosophical worldview, trustworthiness, case study protocol, methods and the process of data analysis. In the following chapter, the analyses and a discussion of the study findings will be presented.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS OF STUDY

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the counselling trainees' and counsellor educators' experiences during the preparation of group work practice in an undergraduate counselling program. This chapter provides the analysis and discussion of research findings from qualitative data collected from interviews with the counsellor educators and focus group with the counselling trainees in relation to their experiences during group work training. The findings are presented with supported direct quotations from the participants. Section 4.1, introduces the interviewees and focus group participants from three universities, elaborating on the group work courses to give a basic understanding of the practices for each university. Section 4.2 details the experiential learning activities for group work training from the experiences of both counsellor educators and counselling trainees. Next, the findings regarding the therapeutic factors in group work and the process of teaching and learning is presented in Section 4.3. Section 4.4 elaborates the findings on personal qualities for both counsellor educators and counselling trainees.

4.1 PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

4.1.1 Counsellor educators (CE) and counselling trainees (CE) from the first university (U1)

The undergraduate counselling programme at U1 offers two group-related courses for counselling trainees, *Group Dynamics and Procedures* and *Group Counselling*. The *Group Dynamics and Procedures* course focuses on topics such as group dynamics, leadership skills, group processes and group counselling supervision. Meanwhile, the *Group Counselling* course emphasises

aspects such as functions and types of groups, stages of groups, theories in group counselling, ethical issues and group leadership. The courses are inter-related, whereby the first course prepares the counselling trainees for the theoretical part of practice, while the *Group Counselling* course emphasises the practical aspects of counselling and involves skills development.

Sarah and Rania teach group work courses at U1 and had experience of teaching both courses. During the interview period, Rania was the current educator in charge for both group work courses, while Sarah taught on the course for the previous cohort. The interview with Sarah was held on 23rd February 2011 at her office in the university (U1), while she was undertaking her doctoral dissertation. She began teaching at the university in 2001 as a counsellor educator with a master's degree qualification and was assigned to teach undergraduate counselling courses, including two related to group work courses. According to Sarah, she was given the responsibility to teach group work courses when she first reported for duty at the university.

The interview with Rania was conducted on 17th March 2011 at her office in the university (U1). Rania was the counsellor educator responsible for teaching group work courses at that particular time. Previously, she had studied at the same university at undergraduate and master's degree level. After working for almost ten years in the counselling profession, she pursued her studies at the same university and as a PhD student she was required to teach several undergraduate counselling courses at the university. Before, she had worked in a women's non-government organisation (NGO), dealing with various serious situations such as rape, domestic violence, child abuse and sexual harassment. Besides working as a counsellor, she was also involved in social work and had

an experience of conducting a support group for rape victims. Her previous work experience and leading groups taught her about conducting group counselling, despite her young age and relative lack of experience in this area.

After working for more than three and a half years at the NGO, Rania then worked as a counsellor at a private counselling community centre and as a private college counsellor, while at the same time furthering her studies through postgraduate degrees. Consequently, she has been exposed to various counselling settings. At the university, Rania had been asked to teach two group courses for the undergraduate counselling programme: *Group Dynamics and Procedures* and *Group Counselling*.

The third-year undergraduate counselling trainees who had experience in both group work courses participated in the focus group discussions. Two focus group sessions were conducted during the study. The first group (Group 1, U1) consisted of seven counselling trainees who had agreed to participate in the study. The session was held at their group counselling laboratory on the 8th March 2011. This environment was conducive as the room was designed for group counselling sessions. I started the session by introducing myself and familiarising myself with the participants' backgrounds. I explained the purpose of the research and gave each of the participants an invitation letter and informed consent form. The counselling trainees were cooperative, receptive and interested in the study. After giving informed consent, the focus group interview schedule was used to guide the focus group discussion.

The second group (Group 2, U1) only comprised three counselling trainees and was held on 8th March 2011 in their group counselling room. A few participants

were unable to attend as they had *ad hoc* programs at the same time, but I decided to continue with the session as the participants agreed to proceed. The session began with a brief introduction on my background and purpose of the research. They seemed happy that my undergraduate background was also in counselling and were willing to participate in this research. The counselling trainees showed positive body language and got involved in the discussion. Below are the pseudonyms used for the interviews and focus group interviews participants for the first university (U1) (see Table 4.1):

Method	Participants
Interviews with Counsellor Educators (CE)	CE-Sarah, U1 CE-Rania, U1
(Group 1) Focus Group Interview with Counselling Trainee (CT)	CT-Siew May, U1 CT-Belinda, U1 CT-Angie,1U1 CT-Vivien, U1 CT-Karen, U1 CT-Brendan, U1 CT-Sze, U1
(Group 2) Focus Group Interview with Counselling Trainee (CT)	CT-Aisya, U1 CT-Farah, U1 CT-Hani, U1

Table 4.1: The participants from U1

4.1.2 Counsellor educators (CE) and counselling trainees from the second university (U2)

The second university (U2) offered two group work courses, namely *Group Guidance* and *Group Counselling* courses. They are not interrelated as they have their own objective and focus. The *Group Guidance* course covers topics such as group history, group guidance dynamics, the roles of group members, group guidance planning and leadership in group guidance. The *Group Counselling* course covers topics such as group counselling processes, the development of

group counselling and leadership in group counselling. Two counsellor educators with experience in teaching a group work course were interviewed from this university, Fatimah and Kamil. Both counsellor educators taught one of the group work courses related to their experience and expertise, Fatimah taught the *Group Counselling* course, while Kamil the *Group Guidance* course. The courses both had lecture and laboratory components.

The interview session with Fatimah was held on 10th March 2011 at her office in the university (U2). She had vast experience in teaching group counselling classes for the undergraduate programme since beginning her career as a tutor after completing her master's degree in counselling. As a tutor, Fatimah was given the opportunity to help the teaching staff in the counselling department in delivering their lectures. At that time, Fatimah was assigned to help one of the senior educators who taught on the group counselling course. The interview with Kamil was conducted on 11th March 2011 in his office at the university (U2). Kamil started work as a counsellor educator after completing his PhD studies at the university in 2004. Before joining the university, he was a teacher with extensive experience in teaching. To date, he has taught various counselling courses such as *Group Guidance* and *Drug Abuse Counselling* in the undergraduate counselling programme, and he taught the group guidance course at the time of the present research. The *Group Guidance* course was not a prerequisite course for the *Group Counselling* course that was taught by Fatimah; both courses had their own objectives and were unique. The courses were also listed as group work courses based on the requirements of the Standards and Qualifications of Counsellor Training by the Malaysian Board of Counsellors. According to Kamil, the *Group Guidance* course at the university

was intended to train future counsellors for schools. He followed the curriculum that was prepared and taught the course based on his experience and creativity. Kamil's PhD research was also related to group training and module development, which gave him an insight in teaching the group guidance course.

The focus group discussion with the counselling trainees at U2 university (Group 3, U2) was organised after obtaining approval from Vice Chancellor and the Head of Counselling Department. The session was conducted on 10th of March 2011 in their group counselling laboratory. The surroundings were quiet, conducive and comfortable for a group work session. Their counselling department had two group counselling labs for counselling trainees to conduct or undergo their group counselling session. They also have a lab technician to handle the booking and technical aspects of the lab. The session started with a brief introduction about my background and the purpose of the research. The counselling trainees were given an invitation letter and informed consent to participate in the research. They showed their cooperation as this research was related to their studies.

The second focus group for the university (Group 4, U2) was conducted the following day on 11th March 2011. Eleven undergraduate counselling trainee willingly participated in the focus group held in their group counselling laboratory. The sessions started with a brief introduction about my background and the objective of the research. The counselling trainees were asked about their background and interest in counselling programme before asking about their experience in group work courses. Below are the pseudonyms used for the interviews and focus group interviews participants for the second university (U2) (see Table 4.2):

Method	Participants
Interviews with Counsellor Educators (CE)	CE-Fatimah, U2 CE-Kamil, U2
(Group 3) Focus Group Interview with Counselling Trainees (CT)	CT-Amran, U2 CT-Nizar, U2 CT-Hasnor, U2 CT-Jehan, U2 CT-Miza, U2 CT-Laili, U2 CT-Adira, U2 CT-Winnie, U2 CT-Wati, U2 CT-Zaid, U2 CT-Wawa, U2 CT-Sofea, U2 CT-Rachel, U2
(Group 4) Focus Group Interview with Counselling Trainees (CT)	CT-Balqis, U2 CT-Fatin, U2 CT-Husna, U2 CT-Jasmin, U2 CT-Mariah, U2 CT-Nida, U2 CT-Syidah, U2 CT-Ummu, U2 CT-Mawar, U2 CT-Mimi, U2 CT-Yati, U2

Table 4.2: The participants from U2

4.1.3 Counsellor educators (CE) and counselling trainees from the third university (U3)

The third university offers two group work courses, *Theories and Techniques of Group Counselling* and *Group Counselling Lab*. The theory course covers topics such as group dynamics, group leadership, stages in group, and theories in group counselling. Meanwhile, the *Group Counselling Lab* course emphasises the practical aspects in handling group counselling sessions. The counsellor educators who participated in this study are Shahrom and Azmina. Shahrom was contacted to be one of the participants and the interview session was held on 16th

March 2011. He positively shared his experience as a counsellor educator during the interview session. He joined the university (U3) in 2008 as a counsellor educator. Previously, he worked in Student Affairs at a public university, managing and dealing with students' issues. Shahrom had an academic qualification in counselling at undergraduate and masters level. He was assigned to teach group work courses, *Theories and Techniques of Group Counselling* and *Group Counselling*, when he started working at the university (U3). These courses are connected and inter-related with each other, having practical and experiential elements where the counselling trainees would experience being a group member and leader. The other counsellor educator was Azmina, she began her career as a tutor at the university (U3) in 2007. She pursued her master's degree in counselling before her appointment as a counsellor educator in 2009. Azmina shared her experience planning the group work activities in her tutorial class. Normally, there are 40 counselling trainees in each undergraduate counselling group, which are divided into several groups for tutorial purposes. Each tutorial group would have a weekly 2-hour session with Azmina. At the university (U3), the tutorials were conducted separately to the class lectures and ran over the 14 weeks of lectures.

Twenty counselling trainees participated in the focus group sessions, with each group consisting of ten trainees who already enrolled for the group work courses. The first focus group session (Group 5, U3) was conducted on 15th March 2011 in a meeting room at the university (U3). The counselling trainees arrived for the focus group discussion meeting on time and were briefed about the background of the research and given a choice either to participate or not in this research. All agreed to participate and showed a willingness to engage in the discussion. The

second focus group (Group 6, U3) also consisted of ten counselling trainees and was conducted on 16th March 2011 in the same meeting room. They also were given an invitation letter and informed consent to participate in the research. I felt accepted by the counselling trainees as they showed their passion and interest in the focus group discussion. The flow of the focus group questions were flexible as I tried to explore their experiences in their group work courses. Below are the pseudonyms used for the interviews and focus groups for the participants from the third university (U3) (see Table 4.3):

Method	Participants
Interviews with Counsellor Educators (CE)	CE-Shahrom, U3 CE-Azmina, U3
(Group 5) Focus Group Interview with Counselling Trainees (CT)	CT-Maya, U3 CT-Lisa, U3 CT-Hanis, U3 CT-Nurul, U3 CT-Adni, U3 CT-Faiza, U3 CT-Hanan, U3 CT-Ismail, U3 CT-Adlin, U3 CT-Inas, U3
(Group 6) Focus Group Interview with Counselling Trainees (CT)	CT-Marsya, U3 CT-Latif, U3 CT-Aida, U3 CT-Nada, U3 CT-Lili, U3 CT-Rana, U3 CT-Salma, U3 CT-Raudah, U3 CT-Yasmin, U3 CT-Siti, U3

Table 4.3: The participants from U3

4.2 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN GROUP WORK TRAINING

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the counselling trainees' and counsellor educators' experiences during the preparation of group work practice in the undergraduate counselling program. In this chapter, the findings based on the research question that revolved around the experience and perceptions of counsellor educators and counselling trainees regarding their experiential learning activities in group work courses are presented and discussed. The research question addressed was "RQ1: What are the experiential learning activities involved in reflecting a good practice in teaching and learning group work?" The data showed that various experiential learning activities took place in group work courses experienced by both counsellor educators and counselling trainees, strengthening the literature on experiential learning activities employed by counsellor educators.

4.2.1 Experiential learning activities

4.2.1.1 Modelling

Modelling is an experiential activity used in the group work courses. As a counsellor educator, Sarah shared her experience in attracting the counselling trainees' attention to the practical session throughout modelling the group session:

> I will model the leader's role during the practicum sessions. The counselling trainees need to attend the practicum sessions as a course requirement. I believed the orientation phase in the first practicum session must be interesting. The creativity in the first session will attract the trainees' attention. I create an exciting atmosphere for the trainees to share about themselves in the first sessions. This will ensure the trainees come to the next group sessions in the following week [CE-Sarah, U1].

Sarah modelled leadership skills in her class to ensure that the trainees understand how to apply counselling skills and techniques. She conducted group activities during class sessions, and involved the counselling trainees as participants. Sarah played the role of a counsellor educator at the same time as facilitating the group sessions. She prepared activities to engage the counselling trainees, believing that creativity in the early stages of group work sessions helps the counselling trainees to focus and pay attention.

The counselling trainees also highlighted the diversified approaches initiated by the counsellor educators when conducting group work classes. The modelling technique was beneficial to them and increased their understanding. Aisya stated:

> She applies lots of counselling techniques in the class, for example how to do a role-play. She will ask someone who wants to be a volunteer to share her problems and ask her to select a few friends to be a significant person in her issues. We can see how the role-plays sessions being conducted with her guidance. It is a good style of teaching compared with giving lectures or reading notes, we might not able how to implement certain techniques [CT-Aisya, U1].

The counselling trainees had clear picture on how to conduct specific techniques throughout modelling and explanation from the counsellor educator. Besides showing a video to the counselling trainees, the counsellor educator also shared her experience in handling clients' cases. The counselling trainee stated:

> The counsellor educator shares her experiences of handling cases in counselling sessions. She elaborated the application of theory in the cases. It was an enjoyable way of teaching and easy to understand [CT-Rana, U3].

The counsellor educator elaborated on how she applied the theory and skills in the cases. This kind of approach gave the counselling trainees a real example on how to deal with clients.

4.2.1.2 Group work simulation

One of the assignments for the group counselling class was group counselling simulations. These sessions were conducted during the class and observed by the counsellor educator. Nurul stated:

> We were divided into few groups during the tutorial sessions. The counsellor educator will handle a group simulations session. He shows and modelled the group work skills like rapport, cut off and reflections [CT-Nurul, U3].

The counselling trainees participated in the group simulation sessions with their colleagues, which involved practicing skills taught and modelled by the counsellor educator. Zaid also mentioned group simulation sessions as part of the assignment given by the counsellor educator:

> If we look at the assignments given by the counsellor educator, all were in order. First, she asked us to be a client with a registered counsellor. Second, we need to undergo the group simulation sessions in the class. The third one, we need to set up a group and find our own clients. All the assignments have a practical element and we learn from that kind of assignment. We learn how to be a client and to be a group members and leader with our own friends in group simulations. Next, we learn to conduct our own group. We applied our skills in the class and also in the real setting [CT-Zaid, U2].

The group simulation sessions were part of class activities and assignments given by the counsellor educator to the counselling trainees. They involved practicing skills, facilitating and modelling the leadership process in the group work class by the counsellor educators. The counselling trainees also alternately role-played being a leader and handled the sessions. The counsellor educator observed and gave comments and feedback to the trainees.

Fatimah shared her experience of managing group simulation sessions:

> The group simulations are part of the activities conducted in class. The counselling trainees are asked to conduct a group simulation session and act as a clients and leaders. I monitor and facilitate the sessions. Comments and feedback are given directly during the simulation sessions. Sometimes I ask the trainees to videotape the sessions and we discuss, give comments and feedback in class [CE-Fatimah, U2].

Fatimah gave direct comments to the counselling trainees when they handled a group simulation in class. The comments and feedback helped the counselling trainees to have a better understanding of the knowledge and skills involved in group counselling. Fatimah also admitted that she was quite directive and firm with her trainees, she was strict during her lectures, and sometimes trainees felt uncomfortable with her teaching style. For example, she would criticise trainees who made mistakes during group work simulations in class:

> At one time, I had already touched on one of the topics in class, and the trainees should have read about the topic before the next class. During the group simulation, I found that the counselling trainee (leader) focussed on one of her client (friend) for more than ten minutes. I had discussed that particular issue in the previous class. I stopped the leader and directly gave my comments that she should not focus on one person for more than ten minutes and let the client start rambling. I asked the trainee to take action when the clients keep rambling (CE-Fatimah, U2).

Shahrom also ensured the counselling trainees underwent group counselling simulations during their tutorial time, as he stated:

> In the tutorial time, I conduct group work simulation sessions with my trainees. I will be a leader, and they will be group members. The trainees are divided into three groups and each group will have ten to twelve members. If there are too many counselling trainees in the tutorial, I use the fishbowl technique, where a group of trainees will experience a group work session with me and the others will observe from outside the group [CE-Shahrom, U3].

Shahrom used the tutorial time to conduct group counselling simulations, leading the group to guide the counselling trainees on how to conduct group work

sessions. The counselling trainees were able to experience group work as clients, observe group sessions and give comments and feedback. The counselling trainees also shared the feedback given by the counsellor educator during the group simulation sessions:

> The group simulation sessions were interesting compared with normal lectures. While performing the counsellor's role, the counsellor educator will guide and giving feedback. The process of understanding leadership skills becomes easier and interesting [CT-Miza, U2].

The counsellor educator showed her concern on counselling trainees' learning by observing the simulation sessions. The immediate feedback ensured that the counselling trainees learnt and understood the correct way to conduct group sessions. Hasnor commented on the counsellor educator guidance in conducting and experiencing the group work sessions:

> The counsellor educator will focus on the leader's role during the group simulation. She will guide the leaders and stress about the do's and don'ts in conducting the group sessions [CT-Hasnor, U2].

The counsellor educator focused on the counselling trainees' role as leaders during the group simulation sessions. The trainee received the support given by the counsellor educator throughout the guidance and feedback in the simulation sessions. The counsellor educator also commented and gave feedback to the counselling trainees after they had submitted their assignment. The trainee stated:

> The counsellor educator has the initiative giving a written feedback for each of the trainees after they finished their assignment in handling a group work sessions. The trainees will know their strength and weaknesses from the feedback [CT-Hani, U1].

Other trainees agreed and explained further:

> I believed the comments, critiques and feedbacks from the counsellor educator were important. If I running the sessions without any feedback, how am I going to know my mistakes & improve my skills? [CT-Hanis, U3].

> I did not mind if the counsellor educator criticises and tell my mistakes. I think we will learn more and remember the mistakes. I believe it was important to be monitored and supervised when conducting the counselling sessions [CT-Faiza, U3].

These experiential learning activities give the counselling trainees the opportunities to receive direct feedback from the counsellor educator. The counsellor educator can also take the opportunity to comment and give feedback on the counselling trainee's skills during the session.

4.2.1.3 Group counselling camp

The teaching and learning experience did not only take place in the university compound but also outside the university. One such activity was a counselling camp organised for few days off campus. Latif shared his experience:

> The counsellor educator tried new teaching approaches by organising the counselling camp for the trainees. The camp runs for three days and variety of counselling techniques exposed by the counsellors [CT-Latif, U3].

The counsellor educator invited an independent counsellor to handle a marathon group counselling session during the counselling camp. The activities were designed to expose the counselling trainees to counselling techniques and skills. The counselling trainees also observed the skills used by the counsellor, as Rana stated:

> I enjoyed the counselling camp as we were exposed to a new counsellor. It was a good alternative in learning new skills and their approaches in handling group work [CT-Rana, U3].

The counsellor educator also mentioned the exposure to counselling camp as part of their activities to expose their counselling trainees to the group work experience. Shahrom took his counselling trainees on a three-day, two-night counselling camp to expose them to group counselling. This was part of the experiential learning activities in his group counselling course. In these time-limited group sessions, counselling trainees had the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings with their friends and experience group counselling as a client. Shahrom invited registered counsellors from other institutions to lead groups. The sessions also gave the counselling trainees the opportunity to observe the facilitators' leadership skills. These marathon group sessions were carried out over eight sessions within three days. Shahrom shared his passion for conducting group counselling camp:

> We do a marathon group session at our group counselling camp. It will be eight sessions over the three days and two nights of camp. The trainees need to cook on their own, and camping equipment is provided. They will arrange the cooking schedule, manage the transportation from the university to the campsite, and buy the materials for cooking. They need to manage the camp activities as part of training them about group dynamics and leadership skills. For group counselling sessions, they will be more about self-development. I get help from my friends who practice counselling at outside agencies. The objective is to provide the trainees with a new experience of group sessions [CE-Shahrom, U3].

Shahrom incorporated the counselling camp as one of the most important assignments in his group work course. This approach showed the unique approach of Shahrom's teaching style to enhance the counselling trainees' understanding and knowledge about group strategies and skills. Shahrom strengthened the counselling trainees' knowledge and skills with experiential

experience in group counselling sessions. The counselling trainees had the opportunity to experience a group as clients led by invited counsellors.

4.2.1.4 Self-reflection journal

One of the assignments given by the counsellor educators in the group work courses is writing a self-reflection journal. The self-reflection journal was used by the counsellor educator as an evaluation of the group activities that counselling trainees completed. It was also used as a self-reflection for the counselling trainees after undertaking specific activities given by the counsellor educators. Shahrom spoke about the self-reflection journals given to his counselling trainees during the group counselling camp:

> Each trainee is asked to write a self-reflection after attending the eight group counselling sessions during their counselling camp programme. They have to write down what they have gained from the activities. This is also an evaluation for that particular activity [CE-Shahrom, U3].

In addition, Shahrom also asked his counselling trainees to write a self-reflection journal after the simulation sessions in the group counselling tutorial classes. Every week they needed to write a self-reflection in their notebooks and Shahrom read the written reflections to give feedback to the trainees. This kind of assignment helped to promote the self-growth of counselling trainees, as Shahrom said:

> I ask the counselling trainees to write a self-reflection on a weekly basis after their group simulation session in the tutorial classes. They write their reflections in a notebook and I will give them comments and feedback. I tell the trainees that it is a journey to understand and explore themselves. I encourage the trainees to write about their thoughts and feelings so that they will learn to know about themselves [CE-Shahrom, U3].

Azmina also used self-reflection assignments in her tutorial class. During the tutorial sessions, the counselling trainees discussed certain topics and issues, Azmina facilitated the group process and encouraged the counselling trainees to share their thoughts and feelings. At the end of the tutorial period, the counselling trainees were asked to write their personal reflections, as Azmina stated:

> I enjoy conducting the tutorial sessions. There will be in-depth teaching and learning process with that kind of approach. I am enjoying it and so are the trainees. I also ask the trainees to write a self-reflection base on the tutorial session experience. It will be part of the course assignment. That was the individual assignments and they will reflect the experience from the activities conducted in the tutorial group [CE-Azmina, U3].

The written reflections were part of the assignment given by Azmina and the trainees reflected on their experience of sharing and discussions during the tutorial. This was an individual assignment to help them reflect on their own thoughts and feelings throughout the tutorials. All the counsellor educators used written reflections as part of the assignments in their group work courses to encourage the trainees to reflect on their own thoughts and feelings.

This type of assignment made counselling trainees reflect on what they have learned and was based on their experience of conducting and attending group work practical sessions. Siew May commented:

> The reflection paper was part of the assignment for the group work course. We were required to write a reflection paper after conducted a group counselling sessions with a client [CT-Siew May, U1].

The counselling trainees wrote a self-reflection paper to express their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Another trainee, Rachel, also mentioned the advantages of writing a self-reflection paper:

> I like the assignment given by the counsellor educator. It started with meeting a registered counsellor and attended a group counselling sessions with them. Next, we conducted our own group and wrote a self-reflection and a report. The third assignment is conducting and attending a simulation session during our group counselling class and writing a self-reflection after the simulation session. I like it, because I like to write a reflection. It makes me think about what I have learnt [CT-Rachel, U2].

4.2.1.5 Participating in group work as clients

Participating in groups as clients is one of the experiential learning activities in the group work courses. In this study, the counsellor educators include this type of assignment at the early stage of their practical group elements. Zaid shared his experience:

> If we look at the assignments given by the counsellor educator, all were in order. First, she asked us to be a client with a registered counsellor. Second, we need to undergo the group simulation sessions in the class. The third one, we need to set up a group and find our own clients. All the assignments have the practical element and we learn from that kind of assignment. We learn how to be a client and we learn to be a group members and leader with our own friends in group simulation. Next, we learn to conduct our own group. We applied our skills in the class and in the real setting [CT-Zaid, U2].

The counselling trainees were asked to participate in the group counselling sessions with the counsellor in their university or independent registered counsellor elsewhere. They experienced being a client and underwent the group work process with a group work counsellor. The counselling trainees also had opportunities to observe the skills of the leaders and leadership style in conducting the group work sessions.

4.2.1.6 Experiential leadership

In addition to being clients in group simulations, group counselling camp and attending group counselling sessions with registered counsellor, the counselling

trainees were asked to carry out their own group counselling. One of the trainees shared their client's feedback regarding the group experience:

> The clients are juniors from other programs in the university and they never experience get into group counselling room. When I bring them to the counselling room, they felt very safe and secure. The clients said they never have the time for themselves before, sitting in a quiet and peace room, thinking about their own problems, and share their own feelings. It was a new experience for them [CT-Aisya, U1].

The counselling trainees managed their own group and were responsible to find their own clients. They were required to play an active role in this type of assignment, as they were required to run the group for a few sessions. The counsellor educator also gave them the freedom to use their preferable language with the clients. Vivien stated:

> The counsellor educator allowed us to use appropriate language with clients and I am using Chinese language, as all my clients were Chinese. This is because some of the clients were not very good in English or Malay [CT-Vivien, U1].

She was allowed to use her mother tongue during the group counselling sessions. Similarly, Brendan shared his experience inviting clients to participate in the group counselling sessions. He stated:

> I have the chance to meet with a junior trainee while involving with previous university activities. I am using this opportunity to invite them to participate in the group work for self-improvement purposes. I am pleased to have a group of members who willing to get involved in the group session [CT-Brendan, U1].

The counselling trainees had experience interacting with their juniors during their university program. The good relationship with others enabled the process of getting clients easier. The counselling trainees were also required to write a self-reflection journal after conducting the group sessions with clients:

> The reflection paper was part of the assignment for the group work course. We were required to write a reflection paper after conducted a group counselling sessions with a client [CT-Siew May, U1].

As a counsellor educator, Sarah implemented the practical session in the group leadership course:

> Counselling trainees are divided into three groups in the practical sessions. I only conduct three or four sessions. What they need to do for the rest of the session is alternate leadership, and I will be the observer. They must identify from week one the person among their friends who will co-lead with them. The group must come up with a theme, activities that need to be done in a session and make a short group proposal. That is one of the ways that the trainees can experience becoming the client and the leader in group work (CE-Sarah, U1).

In this course, the class was divided into lectures and practicum sessions. During the practicum sessions for the group leadership course, Sarah facilitated the first three weeks of group work activities, with the trainees conducting the following sessions.

4.2.2 Challenges of the experiential leadership assignment

4.2.2.1 Managing clients for group work practice

There were various types of assignment used by the counsellor educators for the group counselling courses. One of the challenges highlighted by counselling trainees was to find their clients for their own group. Jehan shared her feelings when given the assignments and tasks from the counsellor educator:

> I was a bit worried when receiving too many tasks for this course especially conducting our own group counselling. It is quite challenging because of the needs to find our own clients. The lecture suggested that we invite trainees from other programs to become a group member [CT-Jehan, U2].

Another trainee stated:

> One of the assignments given in the group counselling course was to handle a series of group work sessions with clients. I am not interested in this kind of assignment because I need to handle more than one client at a time. It was not easy to setup the meeting, time, date and venue. Mostly the clients are the students from our own university and sometimes it difficult to arrange the time for the counselling sessions. Our free time was not same with the clients. Sometimes it de-motivates me to run the sessions because it was difficult to get them together [Ct-Aisya, U1].

The counselling trainees needed to find their own clients for the group counselling assignments. One of the trainees shared her challenges in the process of managing and handling clients for the group work assignment:

> There were a lot of constraints in managing the group counselling sessions with the client. The sessions were often rescheduled based on the suitable time for group members and leader. The venue is a counselling lab but always changes and sometimes it affects the process of recorded the group sessions [CT-Balqis, U2].

Other counselling trainees, Jehan and Aisya, also highlighted the issues of managing the schedule for the group sessions:

> The other constraint was to gather all the clients for the group sessions. It was a challenge to set the appropriate time and find a suitable place to run the group sessions. Sometimes it was difficult to find a right and suitable time for the clients and leader [CT-Jehan, U2].

> One of the assignments given in the group counselling course was to handle a series of group work sessions with clients. I am not interested in this kind of assignment because I must handle more than one client at a time. It is not easy to set up the meeting, time, date and venue. Mostly the clients are students from our own university and sometimes it is difficult to arrange the time for the counselling sessions. Our free time was not the same as the clients. Sometimes it demotivates me to run the sessions because it is difficult to get them together [CT-Aisya, U1].

Similarly, Jasmin and Ummu shared their worries:

> It was not easy to get the members to join our group. Sometimes we seem like forcing people to become a client. So, the clients were not really prepared to become a group member. The group sessions become not real and I am not happy with the situation [CT-Jasmin, U2].

> I think all the group counselling assignments were ok. The only weakness is findings the clients for our group sessions. When we ask our friends at the college to become group members, they seem to be forced and do not voluntarily become clients. The problems they shared in the groups sometimes were not real. I just thinking if the counsellor educator can find real clients for us to run group sessions [CT-Ummu, U2].

In order to conduct the group counselling sessions, the trainees must manage and prepare a schedule for both the leaders and group members, thereby challenging their abilities and managing skills as they also had other commitments. Miza voiced out her concern about the issues of recruiting and inviting clients to be group members:

> I realise the task was difficult and try my best to do it. The main concern is getting the clients to participate in the group sessions. I am afraid the clients feel obliged involved with the groups. The clients were also students and have their own task and assignment to be completed [CT-Miza, U2].

The participation of the clients in the group counselling sessions was on a voluntary basis. The counselling trainees had to invite people to become a member of the group, usually university students, who feared that their involvement in the group sessions could disrupt their study time. These issues worried the counselling trainees as they had to complete the assignment and at the same time, faced the challenges of recruiting clients.

4.2.2.2 Being recorded

Besides that, the counselling trainee was not confident being recorded while handling the group sessions. Trainees reported that this made the sessions unrealistic and they could not focus while conducting the groups:

> I am not very confident enough, especially during the recording of my group counselling sessions. Sometimes I forgot what I am going to carry out during the sessions, I feel like people are watching me during the recording session. I am not comfortable with that. I know the sessions need to be recorded for counsellor educator to evaluate our leadership skills [CT-Wati, U2].

4.2.2.3 Other responsibilities

There were some assignments that needed to be completed in that particular semester, which made them unable to focus, as Wawa mentioned:

> As a university student, we are not only focussed on academia but also have other commitments. We also active in our college activities and need to manage the balance between academic and college life. The group counselling assignment takes a lot of time for clients and us. The assignments were good but challenging to run and conduct within a semester. As we have other commitments, sometimes we cannot spend much time on the group work courses [CT-Wawa, U2].

Laili was in agreement, stating that:

> I agreed and the assignment given can enhance our competencies in group work skills. The limitation always in the situation of managing our time and clients in our group counselling assignment [CT-Laili, U2].

The counselling trainee raised the issues of managing their time to accomplish the assignment. They also said that it was their responsibility to complete the assignment for other courses. Inas highlighted that other course assignments caused her to be less focussed on the counselling courses:

> Apart from having other commitment in college activities, we also need to manage the assignment in other courses. Some of the courses have a heavy workload, even though it was not our core courses in our counselling program. It creates pressure and stress, as we also need to focus on our core courses [CT-Inas, U3].

The other responsibilities challenge the counselling trainees to manage the assignment properly, as they cannot give their full attention to the course:

> The group work assignments were done in an *ad hoc* time period because of the limited time and other responsibilities. As we have other assignments and commitments, we cannot fully focus on the group work courses [CT-Laili, U2].

Besides completing group work assignments, the counselling trainee were also required to allocate some time for other courses, however, some of the courses had a heavy workload, shifting the trainees' focus to other courses.

4.2.3 Improving the experiential activities

Despite the challenges faced by the counselling trainees to conduct their own group counselling sessions, they suggested ongoing sessions for their group counselling practice. One trainee mentioned:

> It is good if we start our counselling practice during our second semester and continue it until the final semester. We were going to face the real clients and right now, the sessions normally conducted within the university students. We need to enhance our counselling practice to be competent and effective in handling the counselling sessions [CT-Inas, U3].

The counselling practice normally took place within the university, but as they were going to work with different types of people, the counselling trainees suggested the need to practice with outsiders. The counselling trainees voiced their need to be exposed to various types of clients:

> I also agree the need to practice counselling skills with clients outside our university. If we keep meeting clients among university colleagues, we will not expose to different type of communities [CT-Nada, U3].

Aida added that their group work practices involved various types of clients:

> I like the experiential learning activities. I suggested the group counselling sessions to be conducted with outside clients, not only from our university friends. These are important to broaden our mind with variety of cases. We will get a lot experience when we handle the clients like handicapped clients, drug addicts, patient in the hospital etc. We will learn different approaches to tackle different clients. We will more open-minded and expose to ideas and new experience [CT-Aida, U3].

Besides having experience with various types of clients, the trainees also mentioned exposure to culturally diverse clients. As Hanan stated:

> Beside the university students, it is good if we were exposed handling client from different cultures. We have many different races in our country like Malay, India and Chinese. There is a need to experience it to prepare a good mindset [CT-Hanan, U3].

Nada was in agreement with Hanan:

> The counselling trainees need the exposure with different background of clients. When the counsellor understands the client's different, they will have an idea to help the client in accordance with client's needs [CT-Nada, U3].

The counselling trainees highlighted the importance of having experience dealing with different types of clients. They were exposed to university students during their studies, but exposure to different types of clients would provide them with better experience and confidence to handle groups in the future. In terms of getting clients for group counselling assignments, Yati and Jasmin suggested:

> The counsellor educator informs us to conduct our own group counselling at the early semester. We struggle to learn about the group skills and at the same time recruit clients for our own group. I would like to suggest the group work lecturer to recruit potential clients for the students before the semester started so as to make the group process easier [CT-Yati, U2].

> I really hope that the client was prepared for this course. Since I was staying off campus, it is quite difficult for me to find clients [CT-Jasmin, U2].

As the time allocated for them to handle the group sessions was limited to one semester, they proposed the counsellor educator to recruit potential clients for their group work assignment, making the process of getting and recruiting clients

easier. Mawar suggested the time allocated for their group counselling sessions should be stated in their course schedules:

> The time for the group counselling sessions should be included in the timetable. This will be easier for counselling trainees to manage their time, as it was not clash with other courses [CT-Mawar, U2].

The counselling trainees also proposed that counsellor educators allocate a fixed schedule in their timetable for them to conduct their own group, helping them to manage their time and reduce the conflict in the preparation of their own group counselling sessions. The counselling trainees also suggested a few improvements in their undergraduate counselling course, particularly in the group work courses. Jasmin suggested that minor courses should be replaced with counselling courses especially with a practical element:

> I would like the minor subject to be replaced with counselling practicum. It is also good if the program or our department have a mutual understanding for counselling trainees to practice in the school for getting clients. It will be easy for us to communicate with the school and reduce the administrative issues [CT-Jasmin, U2].

This would help trainees to focus more on counselling as it involved both knowledge and practice. One counselling trainee suggested that the undergraduate counselling program focus more on the counselling courses:

> Our counselling program should 100% focused on counselling. I believe if we want to be a good school counsellor, we need to learn more about counselling and not mixed it with other subjects in this four-year program. I agree with the suggestion to replace the minor subject with our counselling skills courses. We will be more prepared to help the clients [CT-Yati, U2].

They also suggested including more practical group counselling throughout their undergraduate counselling courses. The trainees felt that it was not enough to practice group counselling skills in just one semester:

> I think the practical elements in the group counselling courses are less than in the individual counselling course. We are exposed to individual counselling sessions from the second semester of our studies. However, for the group counselling courses, we only practice during the course that is taught in that semester [CT-Brendan, U1].

> I agree with my friend that we need to include more practical elements of group counselling during our studies. I was not confident when I went to start my group counselling session. I believed I would become more confident after doing more sessions. It is not enough for us to practice the sessions only in one semester. Looking at the percentages, there is a 50-50 likelihood that I will conduct group counselling sessions in the future [CT-Siew May, U1].

> After completing my group work courses, I felt I need to learn more on how to be a group leader. There is a thing that we not prepare, my confidence level was very low because there is still a lot that I need to learn [CT-Karen, U1].

The counsellor educators also suggested additional time for group work sessions. Sarah was happy with her responsibilities as a counsellor educator in the area of group work, if given the opportunity to improve this course, she would:

> If I could improve this course, I want to add a session for a group work practicum assignment. My only worry is whether trainees will be ready to do extra group work sessions for their given task. As a counsellor educator, I can supervise their work by evaluating it through video recordings and so on. The only thing is the willingness factor among trainees, because they have a huge number of credit hours plus co-curricular activities to juggle. Maybe in terms of practice, they may not have enough time; however, initiative needs to be taken (CE-Sarah, U1).

One other trainee also agreed the need for the counselling department to have collaborations with schools:

> I agree with the suggestion to increase the amount of practice for the group work sessions. I also suggest that the counselling program networks and cooperates with schools as we are going to be a school counsellors. The counselling program can have a mutual understanding with the school to provide clients for us, the trainee counsellor [CT-Fatin, U2].

The mutual understanding with the school will help the counselling trainees to have collaborate with the schools to organise counselling sessions. The other trainee suggested dividing the group counselling courses into two semesters:

> I agree with the suggestion for the group work course to be divided into two courses. The first one will focus on learning the theory and skills. Next, after understanding the theory and skills we can focus on the practice which is offered in another semester [CT-Nida, U2].

The counselling trainees found the experience of attending the group counselling course in one semester was not enough as they needed to undergo a lot of processes and complete different assignments. Mariah also agreed, she mentioned:

> I also want to voice out the same issues as we have three big assignments in this semester. If the group counselling courses was offered over two semesters, we can attend the group counselling sessions with a registered counsellor and undergo the group simulation sessions in the first semester. Later on, after gaining the experience, we conduct our own group counselling in the next semester [CT-Mariah, U2].

The counselling trainees felt that there was a need to separate the tasks given into two semesters. Ismail also voiced out the need to add a practical element:

> That is what I mentioned before that the subject not related with counselling should be minimised and increase the amount of practice [CT-Ismail, U3].

Another trainee, Nurul, suggested that undergraduate counselling program should focus more on their core courses during their third and fourth years of study:

> The university and minor courses can be offered during our first year of studies. However, the counselling program should focus on counselling courses in our third and fourth year of studies. We need to practice the counselling skills more as we are to going into the internship in our last semester [CT-Nurul, U3].

Faiza also highlighted the importance of adding the element of practice as they would go into their internship during their final semester:

> I guess before we go into our internship, we need to warm up our counselling skills, both individual and group counselling. At least we remember the steps, process and skills. It does not matter if the practice is not included in credit hours. As long that we warm up the skills every semester [CT-Faiza, U3].

Several trainees suggested the element of practice in group work skills should be continuous. The practice should not only focus on particular sessions, but there is a need to undergo continuous skill practice during their fourth year of studies. Furthermore, they suggested that the practical aspect should be monitored and supervised by the counsellor educators, as Faiza commented:

> I do not mind if the counsellor educator criticises and tells me my mistakes. I think we will learn more and remember the mistakes. I believe it was important to be monitored and supervised when conducting the counselling sessions [CT-Faiza, U3].

In summary, there were various experiential teaching approaches used by the counsellor educators in group work courses, so counselling trainees were exposed to different types of experiential learning, which consisted of practical elements. They played the role as leaders and group members. In addition to the practical element in their assignments, the counselling trainees were also required to write a reflection paper to reflect on their experience after undergoing or leading group work sessions. Various suggestions for improvement have also been discussed in this section.

4.3 THERAPEUTIC FACTORS IN GROUP WORK TRAINING

This chapter provides an analysis and discussion of research findings from qualitative materials collected from interviews with the counsellor educators and focus groups with the counselling trainees in relation to their experiences during group work training. The interviews conducted with the counselling trainees offered additional data about the counsellor educators from their point of view. This section addresses the second research question "RQ2: What are the therapeutic factors involved in reflecting a good practice in teaching and learning group work?" Yalom's therapeutic factors and other literature on therapeutic factors in teaching and learning guide these findings related to the research questions.

4.3.1 Facilitative approach in teaching group work

During the lectures and practical sessions, the counsellor educators sometimes conducted activities that involved participation of the counselling trainees. These required the trainees to share their thoughts and feelings, and were facilitated by the counsellor educators. This group process sometimes affected the counselling trainees' emotions and feelings. This situation required the counsellor educators to model and play an appropriate role with the counselling trainees. Rania shared her experience handling this situation with her trainees:

> I do not play a role as a group counsellor while conducting group activities with the trainees. I make it clear to them that I cannot see them for counselling sessions because it is not healthy to have a dual relationship. If the trainees are emotionally affected, I will spend some time with them to check their condition. If I cannot really guide them, I will refer them to the counsellors. I do more coaching and guidance, and do not so much have a counsellor role [CE-Rania, U1].

In this situation, Rania guided the trainees to share their feelings and thoughts in the class sessions. As a counsellor educator, Rania would show how a counsellor would respond in this particular situation. Rania provided guidance for the trainees rather than being a counsellor. The counselling trainee also found the benefit of the teaching approaches used by the counsellor educators. The counsellor educator showed empathy and concern for trainees:

> I am comfortable with the counsellor educator and her teaching style. She shows empathy and understands my problems. I think she uses the client-centred approach as she is concerned with others [CT-Angie, U1].

The nature of group work courses consisting of group activities and practical work gave counselling trainees the opportunity to share their issues and problems with their friends, as well as the counsellor educator's roles as a coach and guidance, they also acted as a facilitator. Azmina shared her experience facilitating the sessions during their tutorial time:

> During my tutorial class, I ask trainees to share their thoughts and feelings with their friends in dyads, depending on the topic given to them. Then, I will ask them to share with other members of the class. In this kind of session, I facilitate them to share their thoughts and feelings with their friends. I do not think of this kind of activity as a group counselling session. However, the trainees sometime become emotional and I will handle the situation [CE-Azmina, U3].

Azmina facilitated the tutorial sessions so that the counselling trainees could communicate and interact with each other. The counselling trainees had the opportunity to share their own issues and opinions as well as feedback in the tutorial. Azmina played the role as a facilitator to encourage the counselling trainees to communicate and give feedback to their friends. Sarah also facilitated the discussion related with core elements in group work courses, such as group dynamics, leadership style and counselling techniques.

Sarah shared:

> During the group work class, the trainees learn topics such as group dynamics and leadership styles. I encourage them to move more towards discussion. I use PowerPoint slides, provide them with reading materials, and bring them towards question and answer sessions. [CE-Sarah, U1].

The process of sharing skills and technique not only at knowledge level, but the trainee also experiences being a client and understands the technique throughout the role-play session. The counsellor educator facilitates the sessions as Aisya shared about her counsellor educator:

> She applies lots of counselling techniques in the class, for example how to do a role-play. She will ask someone who want to be a volunteer to share her problems and ask her to select a few friends to be a significant person in her issues. We can see how the role-plays sessions being conducted with her guidance. It is a good style of teaching compared with giving lectures or reading notes, we might not able how to implement certain techniques [CT-Aisya, U1].

The counsellor educator facilitates hands-on activities during classes. The activities gave the trainee ideas on how to apply them in their own groups. Ismail shared his excitement following the teaching experience by his group work lecturer:

> I learn a lot of knowledge and counselling skills from the counsellor educator. He was not mainly lecturing but modelled and shows how to conduct the skills like paraphrasing, rapport and group process. He also exposed us with outside class activities by bringing us to outside camp counselling. It was fun and exciting [CT-Ismail, U3].

The practical element in the group work courses benefits the trainees' understanding and application of knowledge and skills. The facilitating process also involves sharing with trainees how to apply suitable activities in the group.

One of the trainees, Salma, found that the group activities handled by the counsellor educator can be applied to the counselling sessions:

> I am excited to come for this class in this semester. The counsellor educator conducted a lot of group activities that can be applied in our counselling sessions [CT-Salma, U3].

4.3.2 Respect of cultural differences and diversity

The importance of understanding differences in clients' backgrounds and culture was highlighted by the counsellor educators. Sarah made an attempt to expose multicultural experiences in her group work class. For the group counselling sessions, the counselling trainees were divided into a few groups with different backgrounds:

> As group counsellors, we cannot pretend that we know everything. If our clients do not understand what other group members are talking about, we may need to ask for further explanation. In Malaysia, we have different races like Malay, Chinese and Indian. People might have different upbringings, values and thinking. I expose my trainees to understanding each other's culture through experiencing a group containing members from different backgrounds [CE-Sarah, U1].

The group counselling sessions aimed to provide the counselling trainees with experience as clients and as counsellors. In the group, the counselling trainees played a role as a client and as a leader. Sarah designed the groups to include members from different backgrounds, ethnicities and genders, ensuring that the counselling trainees experience multicultural relationships in the group.

Besides that, as a counsellor educator, Kamil also incorporated the spiritual element into teaching the group guidance course. He created a unique and conducive environment in his group guidance class through religious practices. For the Muslim trainees, Kamil guided them to pray at the beginning of the

semester, hoping that the semester would run smoothly and they would have good health. The prayer was also recited at the end of the semester, expressing gratitude to Allah and the hope that they would excellence in the world and hereafter. The non-Muslim trainees were also asked to pray in their own ways.

Kamil asserted that Malaysian cultural and religious value should be taken into account in teaching, as he stated:

> I start my lecture with reciting Surah Al-Fatihah for Muslim trainees, and the others will say their prayers based on their own religions. I believe that I need to incorporate our own culture into my teaching. At the end of the class, I will recite Tasbih Kaffarah to get blessings from Allah on what has been taught [CE-Kamil, U2].

Surah Al-Fatihah is the first chapter of the Qur'an and read during every Muslim prayer. Recitation of Tasbih Kaffarah is common practice for Muslims at the end of gatherings to ask forgiveness from Allah SWT. Kamil used both prayers to start and end his lectures to get blessings from Allah SWT. At the same time, Kamil showed respect to other counselling trainees from different religions and asked them to recite their own prayers. This experience showed the counselling trainee how to embed a spiritual element into group work practice.

The counsellor educator showed her openness in dealing and interacting with trainees. Aisya shared her thoughts about how her counsellor educator showed respect towards her trainees:

> She shows the respects towards us on the issues related with different values and religion. When it comes to the religious issues, she will ask for other perspectives and opinions [CT-Aisya, U1].

The counselling trainees were also allowed to use their preferred language in their group work session. The counsellor educator gave them the freedom to use

their preferable language with the clients. The counsellor educator educated the counselling trainees to identify an appropriate language to use with clients. Vivien stated:

> The counsellor educator allowed us to use appropriate language with clients and I am using Chinese language, as all of my clients were Chinese. This is because some of the clients were not very good in English or Malay [CT-Vivien, U1].

The languages of instruction for undergraduate classes were Malay and English. Rania provided space for her trainees to communicate in her class using the languages that they were more comfortable with. The trainees communicated among themselves either in Malay, English or Mandarin. Rania reiterated her belief:

> Language cannot be a limitation for learning. I believe that to help the trainee they must be allowed to ask questions in their own language. If they don't have the channel, they will not express themselves. I use PowerPoint slides in English, all the English comes from the textbook, but I try my best to translate into Malay to help them understand (CE-Rania, U1).

4.3.3 Development of socialising skills in group work training

The development of the socialising technique is one of the elements in Yalom's therapeutic factors which help the clients to develop their social skills. Based on these findings, the counsellor educators also play a role in developing the socialising skills among the counselling trainees. The counsellor educators encourage the trainees to express themselves (see section 4.3.3.1), initiate classroom interactions (see section 4.3.3.2) and use appropriate language (see section 4.3.3.3).

4.3.3.1 Encouraging the trainees to express themselves

Apart from facilitating the counselling trainees in the class, the counsellor educator also played a role to encourage the trainees to express themselves. Rania believed that the role of the counsellor educator was not only to share their knowledge through the lectures, but also to listen to the trainees' thoughts and feelings:

> My class is not just about teaching the trainees new things, but also encouraging them to be who they are. When you allow them to speak and express themselves, they slowly search themselves, the confidence starts to come out [CE-Rania, U1].

The willingness of the counsellor educator to give the counselling trainees opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings helped the counselling trainees to understand themselves. The counsellor educator modelled how to attend to the trainees effectively and build their confidence.

4.3.3.2 Classroom interaction

The group work courses integrated theory and practical elements for counselling trainees to come to understand the knowledge and develop their skills. As a counsellor educator, Sarah encouraged the trainees to interact with her and their friends in class. During her classes, the counselling trainees knew they needed to be prepared to talk and discuss. Sarah believed two-way communication was more effective in the teaching and learning process, as she stated:

> During the group work class, the trainees learn topics such as group dynamics and leadership styles. I encourage them to move more towards discussion. I use PowerPoint slides, provide them with reading materials, and bring them towards question and answer sessions. My preferred style is an interactive class rather than just one-way communication. When the trainees enter my class, they must be prepared to talk. I believe that one-way communication is not an effective way of conducting classes [CE-Sarah, U1].

Azmina also incorporated elements of discussion and interaction into her tutorials, using elements of group approaches in her tutorial sessions. The counselling trainees were divided into several groups for the tutorial sessions. The tutorial sessions were conducted for two hours per week over 14 weeks. Azmina shared her experiences handling the group tutorial sessions:

> I use group approaches in the tutorial sessions. I always encourage my trainees to share their thoughts and feelings during our discussions. When there is a good dynamic in the groups, the trainees will communicate well and are willing to share. Sometimes trainees cry during the sharing process. If the group dynamic was not there, it would be difficult for them to share in the group. They would communicate at a surface level [CE-Azmina, U3].

Azmina facilitated the tutorial sessions and made the counselling trainees feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings. The ongoing discussions and interactions made the group sessions become more dynamic and interesting. The dynamic process within the group made the trainees feel at ease to share their feelings. Azmina brought the level of discussions into more focus and made it more meaningful.

For Kamil, group discussions were part of the main activities for his group guidance class. In addition to lectures, Kamil was given a six-hour weekly slot for practical sessions. During these sessions, Kamil divided the counselling trainees into groups and gave them topics to discuss. The trainees were given the opportunity to present their topic to the class. Kamil shared how the group discussions were conducted:

> Group discussions are part of the activities that are implemented in the group guidance class. I give a few topics for the trainees to discuss or use the same topic for a few groups. Each group will select a group leader to present the topic to the class. There are activities that require trainees to search for information and they are given ample time before presenting it in the next class. Their friends evaluate their presentations and I will add comments and summarise the session. There are a variety of activities conducted during the

> practical sessions to achieve the objective of the course. The practical sessions are conducted over six hours per week [CE-Kamil, U2].

The counsellor educators used the classroom interaction to give the counselling trainees experience of following a variety of activities. Kamil encouraged the counselling trainees to give comments and feedback to their friends. As a counsellor educator, Kamil exposed his trainees to various activities that were suitable for the group guidance course.

As the counsellor educators emphasised group interaction, the group activities were part of teaching approaches that were often used. The counsellor educators divided the trainees into groups to practice their skills and having the sharing sessions. The counselling trainees further explained their experience in the group work class:

> We were divided into four groups starting from the first week to the last week of the class. The members will remain in the same group and followed activities facilitated by the counsellor educator [CT-Sze, U1].

> I like the counsellor educator style of teaching when she asked us to form a group in the class. She will model how the leader led the group works. She encourages us to share our own issues in the group. We can see how she links the issue and show other skills [CT-Farah, U1].

Mawar shared her experience handling various guidance activities conducted in the group guidance course. The activities conducted attracted the trainees' attention as she mentioned:

> The counsellor educator teaches the type of activity that can be done for group guidance activities. Every week he taught a new ways of handling group guidance. For example, in the form of forum, speeches and storytelling. The activities were exciting and interesting [CT-Mawar, U2].

The counselling trainees experienced conducting various types of group activities in the group guidance course. The counsellor educator exposed the counselling trainees to different scenarios for them to practice. In addition, the group counselling course also involved various activities and experiential learning. One counselling trainees noted the uniqueness about both group work courses:

> The group counselling and group guidance courses have their own uniqueness. The group guidance lecturer conducted a lot of practical activities in the class. Almost every class session, we will practice to handle group activities. We can see our friend's potential and strength in handling group activities. We also have the opportunity to give comments and feedback. The group counselling course consists both of lectures and practical sessions. I am more interested in the practical sessions and one of them was group simulation. We were divided into three groups and each of us will have the opportunities to be a group leader and group members. The counsellor educator teaches and shows us how to conduct the group, I like the way the counsellor educator guides us in the group simulation sessions [CT-Fatin, U2].

4.3.3.3 Using appropriate language

The use of language as a medium of instruction in Malaysian universities varies based on the policy and the field of studies at each institution. Some universities use the national language, Malay, as the medium of instruction for their undergraduate or postgraduate courses. However, there are some universities that use both Malay and English. Rania used both English and Malay, as she mentioned:

> Language cannot be a limitation for learning. I understand that to help a trainee they should be allowed to ask a question in their own language. If they do not have the channel, they will not express themselves. My lecture notes slides are in English and all the notes come from the textbook. Nevertheless, I try my best to translate into Malay and explain things to make them understand [CE-Rania, U1].

Rania exposed her counselling trainees to both Malay and English while teaching the group work courses. The notes were taken from English textbooks and

presented in the PowerPoint slides. At the same time, Rania explained the lectures in Malay and allowed the counselling trainees to ask questions in their preferred language. Rania believed that language should not be a limitation for counselling trainees to learn.

4.3.4 Cohesiveness

The relationship between the trainees and the counsellor educator in the group counselling classes was also mentioned by the trainees. The counsellor educator was very patient in giving explanations and guiding the trainees. She also motivated them to learn from their mistakes during the group counselling activities. The trainees felt that the counsellor educator understood them and showed empathy in the student-teacher relationship:

> She is very patient in giving us explanations in class. She will spend time listening to our problems in understanding the subject and then she explains things to us. Even if I make a mistake while conducting the group sessions, she will motivate me to learn from my mistakes [CT-Brendan, U1].

The counsellor educator also shared her excitement in seeing the trainees' growth during the group work course, she felt empowered in her teaching experience:

> It was new and I never got the chance to teach before. But after I started teaching, I kind of became addicted to it and in a way, I felt empowered. For one semester with your group of students, teaching them how to help other, you support them in helping themselves, and you see their growth. That makes you…mm..very beneficial, very empowering (CE-Rania, U1).

Rania believed the element of personal growth was important for her counselling trainees to experience. The trainees also showed that they were motivated to attend the group work classes because they found they learnt something new in

the classes. Even though there were given marks for class attendance this was not really a priority for them, as one trainee said:

> I come to the group counselling class not for the attendance mark, but because I want to learn something from the counsellor educator [CT-Karen, U1].

One trainee was surprised when he found he had never been absent from the group counselling course, as he mentioned:

> I checked the class attendance list after the twelfth week, and surprisingly, I was never absent from the group counselling classes. Normally, I will be absent from two classes in any course, and I come to the class for the sake of the attendance mark. It was so surprising for the group counselling course, as I was never absent from the classes [CT-Karen, U1].

Kamil realised in the teaching process of the course, there was a possibility of making mistakes in the teaching styles and method. He always improvised and thought of creative ways to ensure his trainees were happy in his classes. Sometimes he asked the senior lecturers for their opinions and advice. Kamil was also open to comments and suggestions from his trainees about his teaching methods:

> Sometimes the trainees write a letter to me and mentioned about the teaching method they prefer. They said that my teaching approach is friendly and there seems to be no gap between the counsellor educator and trainee. My trainees' feedback encouraged me to improve myself to maintain my style for future classes. However, some are critical and need improvement. Therefore, I take my trainees' opinions and implement them in my next semester's classes (CE-Kamil, U2).

The trainees feel connected with the counsellor educator through the feedback given to the counsellor educator. The trainees also enjoyed the teaching approaches used by the counsellor educators in the group counselling classes, as one trainee mentioned:

> I like the way the counsellor educator teaches us in group counselling classes. She always gave a positive stroke and reinforcement during the class sessions. Sometimes she gave us a biscuit in the class and makes us feel happy and being appreciated [CT-Sofea, U2].

Another counselling trainee, Farah mentioned about the friendliness of her counsellor educator with the counselling trainees. She stated:

> Sometime the trainees were afraid to communicate with their counsellor educator especially after the class session. However, our group work lecturer was easy to interact with either during the class or after the class sessions. She will entertain us and explain our questions and problems [CT-Farah, U1].

She found that it was easy to communicate with her counsellor educator. The attitudes of the counsellor educators attracted the counselling trainees' interest in the group work courses. It created a positive environment and support for the counselling trainees to acquire the group work knowledge and skills.

The counsellor educator also took the initiative to know more about the trainees and monitoring the trainees' personal development. Shahrom's experience of working as a counsellor in Student Affairs in his previous institution was one of the factors that motivated him to monitor his trainees' progress.

> I always monitor my trainee's personal development. That's why you can see a picture of my trainees in my room. Every semester, I will ask them to prepare their profile (consist of picture and their name). They need to prepare it on a mounting board. Even sometimes I look serious; I can see the trainees are comfortable with me. I believe the trainees need to resolve their own problems to help others in their life. They can share their issues in the group counselling sessions. In order to help future clients, they need to help themselves first (CE-Shahrom, U3).

Both of the group courses taught by Shahrom had lectures and practical elements. It took a lot of effort to plan, prepare and organise the courses. Shahrom said he never felt burdened teaching the courses as he found

satisfaction in teaching and helping trainees. These group work courses made him understood and feel close to his trainees. He remembered the quote by his previous employer, because of the presence of the student in the university, we are able to work here:

> If the student is not here, we will not be here. Therefore, we have to work for them. For example, the group counselling camp was extra work. It was conducted during the weekend and I need to stay with the students. My family understands the nature of my work and it does not create any problem for them. I still remember my previous experience attending the group counselling camp during my undergraduate studies. In order to educate a good counsellor, I think I need to put in extra effort (CE-Shahrom, U3).

The cohesiveness and bonding between counsellor educators and counselling trainees was beneficial in terms of teaching and learning, as both groups showed their motivation in teaching and motivation in learning.

4.3.5 Positive attitudes in teaching group work courses

In this section, the counsellor educators' attitudes and motivations to teach group work courses are discussed.

4.3.5.1 Motivation to enhance the group work courses

According to Sarah, she was given the responsibility to teach group work courses when she first reported for duty at the university. Sarah was motivated to enhance the courses as she mentioned:

> I was assigned to teach a few courses and it was such a coincidence that I got the group work courses. My first impression was that I did not see many practical elements being taught in the courses. We have two group work courses: one is about group dynamics and the other one is group leadership. What I observed was that both courses were taught theoretically and unfortunately at that time, there was no counselling room or other facilities. I felt that there was a need to make some because I felt that if we wanted them to be good at counselling, they had to practice. And that is why I started to include practical elements in my teaching approach (CE-Sarah, U1).

As a counsellor educator, there is a need to prepare and plan for courses. Kamil believed his previous work experience as a teacher made him open to learning new things, as he stated:

> I used to perform various tasks when I was a school teacher. As a teacher, I participated as a football coach, sports committee member and a club adviser. These experiences made me open to learning new things when I started work as a university lecturer. I listened to the senior educators' advice and combined it with the knowledge from my reading, what I had heard and seen, and feedback from the trainees. This information helps me to enhance my teaching experience, especially in the group guidance course [CE-Kamil, U2].

Kamil had experience of handling various tasks in his previous working environment, making him a more open-minded learner and exposing himself to learn new things. He used various resources in his surroundings to help him devise proper teaching plans. He sought advice from senior educators and was open to listening to the feedback from his counselling trainees. Rania also expressed her happiness at having the opportunity to teach the course:

> I feel very happy because I get the chance to teach undergraduate students, and I am thinking to use this opportunity, although it is only 14 weeks in each semester, but I want them to really learn, I want them to become competent (CE-Rania, U1).

Counsellor educators played active roles in group counselling courses as they conducted both lectures and practical sessions. Fatimah shared her thoughts and feelings about the teaching experience:

> I do not feel any trouble in teaching the group counselling course. When I enter my class, I can do something with the trainees and I like it. Throughout these group work trainings, I feel I have learnt a lot of new things. The trainees' weaknesses in this course will reflect on how I have taught them. Therefore, it is for me to think on what to do to improve myself to make sure the trainees understand what I am teaching [CE-Fatimah, U2].

Fatimah enjoyed interacting with her trainees in class. The learning process did not only involve the trainees, but also the counsellor educator. Fatimah believed the counselling trainees' weaknesses would reflect on her teaching style and method. She was motivated to improve her teaching to ensure the understanding of the trainees.

4.3.5.2 Creativity

Apart from preparing materials for teaching and learning purposes, the counsellor educators also prepared materials for their group counselling sessions. Sarah enjoyed preparing materials that made the group sessions more creative and enjoyable, as she mentioned:

> I love to search for materials or activities that can contribute to the creativity in my group work. I do not like to conduct the same activities in my sessions. For example, I will incorporate activities like drawing, discussion and inventing in my group session. The sessions must not be static, because the trainees might become bored and lose their focus. I want to do something that makes me and trainees enjoy. That is why I search for new ideas and alternatives [CE-Sarah, U1].

However, some of the counselling trainees were not really committed in their practicum session. Sarah shared her views on how the counselling trainees responded towards the experiential group counselling sessions:

> The trainees need to attend the lectures and practicum sessions at different times. Normally the trainees attend the practicum sessions as a course requirement, and some of them might not attend some of the sessions. They prefer to attend the lectures for examination purposes [CE-Sarah, U1].

In this situation, Sarah felt that the counselling trainees preferred to attend the lectures than the practicum sessions. They were more concerned with the knowledge taught in class to prepare for the examinations. They did not prioritise the practicum sessions and some of them did not attend some of the sessions. As

a counsellor educator, Sarah shared her creativity and initiative to ensure the counselling trainees attended the practicum sessions:

> As a counsellor educator, I believe the orientation phase in the first session must be interesting. The creativity in the first session will attract the trainees' attention. I will create an exciting atmosphere for the trainees to share about themselves in the first sessions. This will ensure the trainees come to the group sessions in the following weeks [CE-Sarah, U1].

Sarah's preparation and creativity were important to ensure the counselling trainees were focused and interested during the practicum sessions.

Rania also hoped that a variety of exposure in the group work classes would help the trainees to understand themselves. She initiated an assignment to promote trainees' growth as she mentioned:

> My assignments are not text based; they are more focused on the trainees' own growth, personal experience, integration of the theory with their experience. You can see whether they understand how to integrate theory with themselves. If you don't see this, it means that the integration is still limited. Hopefully training them to answer this type of question is like reflection for them (CE-Rania, U1).

Fatimah saw herself as an individual who liked to be involved in training and practical things. She preferred training courses that gave her the freedom and creativity to feel comfortable working in that manner. She saw that teaching group work courses gave her the utmost satisfaction:

> I do not experience any troubles in teaching the group counselling course. When I enter my class, I can do something with the trainees and like it. Throughout these group work trainings, I feel I have learnt a lot of new things. The trainees' weaknesses in this course will reflect on how I have taught them. Therefore, it is for me to think about what to do to improve myself to make sure the trainees understand what I am teaching. This is the satisfaction of teaching skills-based courses rather than theoretical classes. For the theoretical courses, usually we need to wait until the final exam or presentation to see the trainees' results. However, for the practical courses you can see the trainees' mistakes on the spot (CE-Fatimah, U2).

Azmina also believed the need to be creative in teaching to help the trainees better understand the topics they had been taught in class. Azmina shared her experience:

> I will prepare various activities for 14-week tutorial sessions. As a counsellor educator, I believe we need to be creative and use different techniques while conducting the tutorial sessions. Sometime I use dyads, expressive art and inventory assessment to develop the trainees' understanding about certain issues and topics. Normally there will be four tutorial groups and I will conduct similar activities for each group [CE-Azmina, U2].

During the tutorial sessions, Azmina would conduct activities related to the topics that had been taught in previous classes. The counselling trainees had the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings with their friends. The responsibility of conducting the lectures and tutorial sessions reflected the counsellor educators' motivation and initiative to deliver the course. Even though Azmina needed to prepare before conducting the tutorial sessions, she was happy to do so, as she pointed out:

> I am happy with my tutorial sessions and I do not mind that they require some effort. The motivation comes from myself and I love to understand my own trainees through the group sessions. As an educator, I believe the group process will touch the hearts of the trainees [CE-Azmina, U2].

Azmina believed the group process would help her to understand the counselling trainees. She was motivated to prepare the materials for group activities and to conduct the tutorial sessions.

4.3.5.3 Extra effort in managing group work courses

Group work courses consisted of lectures and practical elements. At his university, Shahrom included camping as one of the compulsory activities of the group counselling course. The group counselling camp was a practical

component and functioned as a way for the counselling trainees to be exposed to group sessions. Shahrom elaborated on the camping activities:

> We do a marathon session in our group counselling camp. There will be eight sessions throughout these three days and two nights of camp. The trainees need to cook on their own and the camping equipment is provided. They will arrange the cooking schedule, manage the transportation from the university to the campsite, and buy the materials for cooking. They need to manage the camp activities as part of training them about group dynamics and leadership skills. For group counselling sessions, it will be more about self-development. I get help from my friends who practice counselling at outside agencies. The objective is to provide the trainees with a new experience in group sessions [CE-Shahrom, U3].

This group counselling camp is considered as an extra effort from the counsellor educator to enhance their counselling trainees' experience and counselling skills. Shahrom has a strong commitment towards his role as a group work lecturer, as he stated:

> If the trainees aren't here, we will not be here. Therefore, we have to work for them. For example, the group counselling camp is extra work. It is conducted during the weekend and I need to stay with the trainees. My family understands the nature of my work, and it does not create any problems for them. I still remember my previous experience attending group counselling camp during my undergraduate studies. In order to educate a good counsellor, I think I do need to make extra efforts [CE-Shahrom, U3].

At the university, Shahrom was given two tutorial groups for his group counselling course. He found that the groups were quite big for him to monitor, therefore, on his own initiative, Shahrom divided the counselling trainees into three groups. Shahrom shared his experience:

> The trainees were having their counselling laboratory sessions during their tutorial time. I was given two tutorial classes for my group counselling course. I found that there were too many trainees in each group and was afraid that I could not monitor them well. Therefore, I rearranged the trainees into three groups. This was for the trainees' benefit. Based on the new arrangements, I have three counselling laboratory slots in one day. The first slot is at 8-10am, the next at 11-1pm and the last at 3-5pm. The trainees will have the opportunity to self-disclose in the group counselling process [CE-Shahrom, U3].

This action taken by Shahrom shows the counsellor educator's initiative and extra effort he was willing to make to ensure the counselling trainees will have good experiences and exposure to skills in the group counselling sessions.

4.3.5.4 Encouraging the trainees to learn

Some counsellor educators enjoyed teaching group work courses and found that they also learned alongside the counselling trainees. As well as the lectures, the counselling trainees were also given an assignment, which involved a lot of experiential learning. The counsellor educator encouraged the trainee to be responsible for their task. Azmina always asked her counselling trainees to be responsible for the assignment given, as she mentioned:

> The trainees need to present their assignment, share with their friends and sometimes do some homework. I will not check whether they do the homework or not because I believe they have their own responsibility. For example, the homework related with specific duty as a Muslim which is solat. It depends on whether the trainees are doing it or not [CE-Azmina, U3].

Azmina encouraged her counselling trainees to be responsible for their tasks and assignments. As adult learners, Azmina believed the counselling trainees could think for themselves, as she mentioned:

> The trainees are adult learners and they can make their own decisions. They also need to be responsible for their lecture attendance. The knowledge and skills are taught for the trainees, and I will not be responsible if they are not there to learn [CE-Azmina, U3].

Azmina emphasised the importance of the counselling trainees being responsible for various aspects of their learning experience. The counsellor educator will be there to assist, facilitate and teach but the counselling trainees are the ones who decide what they are going to do and how to prioritise in their courses. Other

than group work courses, the trainees were also required to attend other courses during the same semester.

Additionally, Fatimah was afraid that too many credit hours were taken during the semester, making the trainees less focussed on their group work assignments:

> Each semester the counselling trainees take up to 18 credit hours and a lot of assignments for each subject. I believe that they are serious in every class they register for. My priority is that trainees learn to be comfortable in holding the role of a leader in group work. The trainees also need to enjoy being a group member, experiencing and learning about the group process. That is what I emphasise when I teach undergraduates (CE-Fatimah, U2).

Fatimah emphasised to the trainees that they should learn how to become comfortable when handling group counselling sessions. Counselling trainees were also given opportunities to become members of experienced counsellor groups before they themselves became leaders. The experience as leaders and group members, and undergoing the group process were the most important aspect of Fatimah's teaching of undergraduate students.

4.3.5.5 Patience in teaching

The counselling trainees shared their views on counsellor educators' attitudes in teaching the courses. One of the characteristics elaborated by the trainee was patience in teaching. Brendan stated:

> She was very patience in giving us an explanation in the class. She will spend time listening to our problems in understanding the subjects and explains it to us. Even though I make a mistake during conducted the group sessions, she will motivate me to learn from the mistakes [CT-Brendan, U1].

He elaborated that the counsellor educator showed her patience in teaching the trainees. Angie also mentioned the attention given by the counsellor educator in class:

> I am comfortable with the counsellor educator and her teaching style. She shows the empathy and understands my problems. sI think she use the client-centred approach as she is concerned with others [CT-Angie, U1].

She felt comfortable with the counsellor educator's teaching approach. The counsellor educator showed her empathy in understanding the trainee's problem.

4.3.6 Positive attitudes towards learning group work courses

The counsellor educators employed a variety of techniques and teaching styles to ensure their counselling trainees got the best learning experience. However, the counselling trainees' acceptance of teaching may vary based on their interests, perceptions and views. This section examines the counsellor educators' views and perceptions regarding their counselling trainees' attitudes towards learning.

4.3.6.1 Willingness to face challenges

The counsellor educators used a variety of group activities to expose the counselling trainees to knowledge and skills related to group work. Kamil taught the group guidance course, which involved numerous laboratory sessions in addition to lectures each week. The counselling trainees were required to perform several activities aimed at enhancing their confidence and group process skills. Kamil shared the emotional aspect of counselling trainees' experiences in carrying out the activities:

> I believe the trainees should be exposed to different ideas and activities to become good counsellors. At the early stages of group activities, the trainees might feel embarrassed and shy. Based on the task given, they will need to carry out the activities with their friends. At the end of the group session, normally they feel happy carrying out the activities [CE-Kamil, U2].

Counselling trainees come from various backgrounds and have different personalities. At the early stages of the course, the counselling trainees might feel uncomfortable carrying out activities in front of their colleagues. They may feel embarrassed and shy presenting topics or handling a group in class. Kamil believed that the experience of handling a variety of activities would promote growth and change in counselling trainees' attitudes. The counselling trainees became more positive running the activities, and they were contented and happy by the end of the sessions.

4.3.6.2 Counselling trainees' responsibility and effort

The counselling trainees' characters and personalities vary when conducting activities with the counsellor educators. Group work lecturers played a role in helping the counselling trainees to have a better understanding of the work, particularly of the group work courses. However, the counselling trainees' performance and achievements in the courses are not solely dependent on the counsellor educators' effort, as Shahrom said:

> I believe that all the counsellor educators have done their best to give what they can give. By the way, how the counselling trainees absorb the knowledge and apply it may be different. Their performances are based on how they use and appreciate the knowledge [CE-Shahrom, U3].

Shahrom believed that the counsellor educators were responsible for their teaching, as group work involved a lot of experiential learning activities. He also considered counselling trainees' performance to depend on how the lecturers delivered the courses. Shahrom shared his own style of conducting the course:

> There are two group work courses at my university (U3). In the first semester, I show them how to conduct group sessions. The trainees observe, and in the next semester they handle their own group counselling. This approach exposes them to a variety of experiential learning approaches [CE-Shahrom, U3].

Shahrom believed that this approach would give the counselling trainees more opportunities for experiential learning. Universities are places for counselling trainees to gain experience; however, Shahrom stressed that counselling trainees also needed to use their own initiative to gain experience:

> During the second semester, the trainees experience almost twenty hours of group counselling sessions during their tutorial time. They also experience eight group counselling sessions during the camp. I believe I give them enough experiential learning experiences. However, we are not going to give them everything. They need to search for extra knowledge and experience related to group counselling [CE-Shahrom, U3].

Shahrom perceived that both the counsellor educators and counselling trainees needed to play their roles to ensure a good teaching and learning process occurred in the courses.

4.3.6.3 Initiative in handling group activities

In addition to attending group counselling courses as part of their undergraduate counselling programme, some counselling trainees had become involved in other experiences related to group activities. This was not compulsory for the counselling trainees and was based on their own interests. Shahrom shared his views on this situation:

> There are trainees who have the initiative to become involved with other programmes related to psycho-educational group work. They become involved with school programmes or those handled by other organisations. Some of the activities are connected with the university programme. There are also trainees who act as facilitators during the holidays. These kinds of activities are part of the group leadership context [CE-Shahrom, U3].

The counselling trainees' involvement in group work activities formed part of the group leadership context. They experienced communication with people outside their universities and handled programmes based on their objectives.

This was a part of experiential learning related to group activities. The counselling trainees were also involved with university programmes, as Shahrom stated:

> There are trainees who are involved as committee members in university programmes. In a way, it teaches them about group dynamics [CE-Shahrom, U3].

These activities were outside the universities' curricula and based on the counselling trainees' own initiative and interests. These kinds of activities gave them wider experience in psycho-educational groups, leadership skills and group dynamics.

4.3.6.4 Motivation to attend the group work class

Apart from enjoying the group work class, the counselling trainees also shared their motivation to attend classes. One of the counselling trainees said:

> I checked my class attendance list after the twelfth week, and surprisingly I was never absent for the group counselling classes. Normally, I will be absent from two classes from any course and coming to the class for the sake of the attendance mark. It was so surprisingly for the group counselling courses as I never absent the classes [CT-Karen, U1].

Karen shared her happiness and passion for attending the group counselling classes as she was never absent for her classes:

> I come to the group counselling class not for the attendance mark, but because I want to learn something from the counsellor educator [CT-Karen, U1].

In addition, Karen mentioned that the counsellor educators' teaching style made her look forward to attend her class:

> The counsellor educator was so interesting when conducting the class, and shares a lot of her counselling experience with us. The teaching was not based

> on her planning itself, she also takes care of our feelings and condition. For example, if she was showing a video and found the session was boring for us, she will stop the video and will start doing the activities in the class [CT-Karen, U1].

Counselling trainees found group counselling classes as well as the counsellor educator were interesting. They attended the class not just for the sake of attendance, but also to learn some skills.

As a counsellor educator, Shahrom also give positive feedback on the trainee's attitude in attending group work class. Shahrom was unsure what made his counselling trainees gave their full commitment to their group counselling practicum laboratory. However, certain marks were given for both the practicum sessions, as he mentioned:

> I am not sure whether it was truly support or because of the marks given to the group counselling laboratory and the group counselling camp. I evaluate both the practicum sessions on how the trainees conduct and run the sessions and how they respond, and I give feedback in the sessions. Maybe this was the reason for them to come, compared with the class in which no marks are given and I only take the attendance [CE-Shahrom, U3].

Azmina also perceived that the counselling trainees came to her class not just to achieve a good grade or for attendance purposes, but also because of their interests and concerns. Azmina elaborated:

> I can see that the trainees are dedicated to attending the lectures and tutorial classes. My classes are not solely lectures based on the topics. They include other activities like watching movies, discussions, group activities and presentations. The trainees are excited because there is a lot of interaction [CE-Azmina, U3].

4.3.6.5 Interest in the counselling program

The undergraduate counselling trainee had various backgrounds and different interests. Some counselling trainees needed to develop their interest in the field of counselling. Rachel shared her thoughts and feelings:

> I have a deep interest in this education and counselling program. The counselling skills can be applied to help and guide future trainees [CT-Rachel, U2].

Rachel believed the counselling skills were not only used to help clients, but also to guide and help her future trainees. Similarly, Hasnor was also interested in the counselling program as she stated:

> I developed my interest in counselling during my diploma degree as I have learned about basic counselling skills. Counselling was not only meant to help others but also ourselves. As a trainee, I learn about self-development throughout counselling studies [CT-Hasnor, U2].

Their background studies developed the counselling trainees' interest in the counselling field. The trainee also mentioned about her experience in self-development when undergoing her counselling studies. Latif also had an interest in counselling as he stated:

> The counselling skills teach us to interact with other people. The person who has the skills will be able to help other people. I used to listen to friends' problem and issues and that is why I like this program [CT-Latif, U3].

The counselling trainees love helping friends and colleagues, and this attitude contributed to his interest in this helping profession. He also found that counselling further developed his communication skills with others. Adni also shared her passion in counselling field:

> Although it has been three years in the counselling program, there is still a lot that has not been learned. I have a deep interest in counselling and wish to further until at postgraduate level [CT-Adni, U3].

She was adamant to continue her studies into the counselling field at a postgraduate level. She showed her interest to learn more about counselling skills and knowledge.

4.3.6.6 Interest in group work courses

In order to understand the counselling trainees' interest in group work courses, they were asked to share their favourite courses in their undergraduate counselling program. Some of them listed the group work courses as part of their preferable courses and some of them preferred other courses. One of the counselling trainees shared her views:

> I enjoyed the group guidance course because it was leisurely and interesting. The course stressed on training, while group counselling emphasises more towards clients' issues [CT-Laili, U2].

The enjoyment and excitement in the group guidance course attracted the counselling trainees' interests, as it was not mainly focussed on the client's problems. Besides that, the other trainee preferred the group counselling course as it concerned life and issues as Rachel mentioned:

> I really like the group counselling course because it shares about life. For me, the group guidance course was too general and we can learn it from the module and other training [CT-Rachel, U2].

The counselling trainees' preferences on the group guidance and group counselling courses were different according to their views, perceptions and experience of each of the courses. Besides the group work courses, the counselling trainees also took other compulsory courses in their undergraduate

counselling programs. Their preferences in the counselling courses were different as some of them mentioned:

> I like the Abnormal Psychology course because I can learn about human's psychology. Even though it was quite complicated, it was interesting course [CT-Winnie, U2].

> The Career Counselling course was one of my favourite subjects. The career counselling knowledge and skills can be applied to the school setting, as we will become future school counsellor [CT-Zaid, U2].

> Beside the Group Guidance course, I like the Testing and Assessment course. The assessments can be applied to the clients and at the same time to understand oneself [CT-Laili, U2].

The counselling trainees took variety of courses during their undergraduate counselling program, some of them preferred group work courses, whilst others preferred other courses.

4.4 PERSONAL QUALITIES IN RELATION TO TEACHING AND LEARNING GROUP WORK

This section responds to the third research question "RQ3: What are the personal qualities of counsellor educators and counselling trainees in relation to their participation in teaching and learning group work?" A number of themes emerged: (a) counsellor educator's prior experiences, (b) the counselling trainee's prior experiences, (c) the counsellor educator's personal qualities in relation to their involvement in teaching and training group work, and (d) the counselling trainee's personal qualities in relation to their involvement in group work training.

4.4.1 Counsellor educator's prior experience

Apart from focusing on the counsellor education curriculum, the Board of Counsellors (Malaysia) also provided guidelines for counsellor educators' qualifications to teach (Standards and Qualification of Counsellors Training, 2011). The requirements for counsellor educators are i) postgraduate level of counselling degree, ii) priority for those who had experience in counsellor education and iii) experience in counselling research. However, there was no specific requirement for counsellor educators to teach group work courses on the undergraduate counselling programme. This section explores counsellor educators' backgrounds that led them to teach group work courses in their universities. In this section, the counsellor educators shared their exposure to group work experiences that led them to teach group work courses at their universities.

4.4.1.1 Doctoral research related to group work

Kamil, one of the group work lecturers, conducted his doctoral research testing an educational module that was developed by the Education Department in Malaysia. The set of educational module modules were developed based on specific objectives and using group guidance activities. The module was conducted among school counselling trainees to impart particular knowledge and skills. Kamil sensed that his experience with this kind of research was one of the factors that caused him to be given the responsibility to teach the group guidance course, as he stated:

> Perhaps the Dean and my Head of Department see my expertise in module development. They said to me: why don't you be the expert in group guidance? That is how I started teaching the group guidance course, and yes, I am interested in this field (CE-Kamil, U2).

Kamil was given the responsibility to teach the group guidance course, which was one of the core subjects in the undergraduate counselling programme. In his doctoral research, Kamil applied the psycho-educational module with counselling trainees. He conducted experimental research using the group activities approach. The doctoral research experience gave Kamil a broad view and in-depth understanding of the area of group guidance. This experience led the counselling department to empower him to teach the group guidance course.

4.4.1.2 Working and training experience

Apart from experience in research related to group activities, one other counsellor educator had experience in group work during their working and training lives, which led them to teach group work courses. Rania admitted that the learning experience during her undergraduate degree gave her some knowledge of counselling techniques and theories, but not much exposure to skills. However, she felt that she had learned a lot of counselling skills through working and experience in workshops:

> I think my competency in leading a group session is very much based on work experience. Of course, I cannot deny my exposure to the technique and to group theory in class. However, the skills I learned a lot from trial and error. When I was working with NGOs, I ran a support group for rape survivors. It was quite tough and my counselling competencies were not there until I slowly explored some more counselling work. When I had the chance to do counselling sessions, my competency started developing. I also attended counselling to enhance my competencies. I am willing to spend money to attend workshops (CE-Rania, U1).

Rania shared her experience in conducting group work with her friend during her master's degree internship:

> While I was doing my internship during my master's degree, and at the same time working as a trainee counsellor, that's where I was exposed to group work with my friend. We actually did a lot of group work together, anger

> management groups, leadership groups, problem solving groups, etc. So, that really helped, we gave feedback to each other (CE-Rania, U1).

Rania found that her working experience gave her a better understanding to lead the group. She felt that she did not get much exposure to group counselling experiences in class, as she mentioned:

> Actually, a bit sad to say, I can't really remember that I learned much in my group counselling class. I think maybe I understood the form of group counselling, but we did not have the chance to experience what group counselling is all about (CE-Rania, U1).

As Rania developed most of her group skills during her work experience and through attending counselling workshops, Sarah found that she learned a lot about group skills during her postgraduate studies. Sarah attended a group work class during her master's counselling programme. She had therapeutic experience from her group counselling sessions in her group work class. Sarah explained:

> My previous group work lecturer was good; the therapeutic results from the group counselling sessions attracted my interest. During the classes, we experienced the group sessions conducted by the counsellor educator. I could see many issues arise and the benefits of group counselling for self-healing. From there, my interest in specialising in group counselling was rooted. I have adapted and applied my counsellor educator's teaching methods in my classes so that there is a more practical approach (CE-Sarah, U1).

Sarah viewed her group work lecturer as a role model for her to teach her courses. From her experience undergoing group counselling sessions with her counsellor educator, she could feel the therapeutic experience. Based on this experience, Sarah chose to include more practical elements in her classes.

Shahrom also found that his group counselling class during the undergraduate counselling programme gave him valuable experience to become a group work

lecturer. He believed that he was educated by a group counselling expert in Malaysia, as he stated:

> I believe that I had good group work training at the undergraduate level. I was taught by the group counselling expert in Malaysia. She guided and taught us in the group work courses (CE-Shahrom, U3).

Shahrom took the responsibility to teach group work courses because he believed that he was trained by a group work expert during his undergraduate and master's studies. He was confident in teaching his counselling trainees and felt prepared to teach the group work courses after being given the responsibility by the counselling department.

4.4.1.3 Mentoring by a senior group work lecturer

In addition to doctoral research, working and training experience, another aspect that led counsellor educators to become involved in teaching group work courses was replacing the senior group work lecturer. Fatimah pointed out that a trend at the university was to recruit tutors to replace senior counsellor educators who were about to end their teaching service. During her time as a tutor, Fatimah was mentored by the senior counsellor educator who was an expert in the group counselling field. Fatimah followed her classes and learned a lot from her style of conducting classes and groups:

> I learnt a lot from her about group work, and at the beginning, it was as if I was completely following her style. At this university, tutors are mostly employed to replace another senior lecturer. I took over her group counselling class at the undergraduate level after she quit from the university (CE-Fatimah, U2).

Fatimah started teach the undergraduate group counselling classes on her own to help the senior lecturer. From there, Fatimah started to develop her interest and built her own teaching style for group counselling courses.

4.4.2 Counselling trainee's prior experiences

The counselling trainees' admission to the undergraduate program in Public Higher Education in Malaysia is based on their qualifications during the matriculation programs, diplomas, higher certificate in Malaysian Education, working experience and other sources. The choices of programs are based on the student's interest and academic qualifications. Some of them have the prior experience that prepared them to be in counselling profession. In this section, the counselling trainees shared their background, the selection of counselling programs and their interest in the counselling program.

4.4.2.1 Experience during secondary school

The counselling trainees shared their interest and how they made choices into counselling program. One of them shared her experience:

> I am interested in counselling profession during my secondary school. One of the factors was the attraction to the school counsellor character who is cheerful and motivated person. The undergraduate counselling program was my first and second choice during the application to the university [CT-Farah, U1].

Farah admired her school counsellors and developed her interest to be involved in counselling profession since her secondary school. She applied the counselling program as her top choices during her university applications. The involvement in counselling club during the secondary school developed another trainee's interest in counselling field as she mentioned:

> I am so happy when I got chance to pursue my undergraduate studies in counselling. My interest in counselling started during my secondary school. At that time, I joined the counselling club. I believed in helping people and like the quotes "Allah will help to solve ten of our problems for every people we help [CT-Faiza, U3].

The trainee holds her religious values in helping other people. She believes that God would help us when we help others. In both situations, the experiences and involvement in counselling during the secondary schools sparked the trainee's interest in counselling. However, there is also a trainee who experienced unpleasant incident during the secondary school as he mentioned:

> I had some unpleasant experience with my school counsellor. He penalised the students, and seems his role was the same as the discipline teacher. I did not like it and hindered the counselling fields. I did not choose counselling programs but was offered them from the university [CT-Ismail, U3].

The struggle to develop an interest in counselling was not just because of the unpleasant experience and uninteresting program, but also the trainee's difficulties in dealing with people's emotions:

> Later on, I start to adjust and adapt in this program. It was hard for me to deal with people's emotions. However, I just proceeded to learn and deal with clients in counselling sessions. In the future, I hope to continue my studies in the education field [CT-Ismail, U3].

There were varieties of events that had happened during the secondary school years related to the trainees' interest in the field of counselling. There were events that had a positive impact on the counselling trainees' interest, but some events made the trainees feel less interested in the counselling program.

4.4.2.2 Motivation to choose a counselling program

The counselling trainees chose university programs based on their academic qualifications, interests and other various factors. However, admission to the programs was based on the university rules, procedures, and the terms and conditions. The counselling trainees shared their motivation to apply to university counselling courses:

> I am interested in the field of education and applied to the education program as my first, second and third choice. However, I was offered to enter the counselling program [CT-Inas, U3].

Inas did not apply for counselling program as her main choice, instead, she was offered a counselling program by the university. She tried to adapt to the counselling program, as she mentioned:

> I started to feel the sense of belonging in my counselling program during my third year of study. I loved counselling and believed the knowledge and skills learnt could be used for others and us as well. Counselling makes me understand myself and others [CT-Inas, U3].

The counselling trainee developed an interest in counselling after undergoing the courses for several years. The sense of belonging, knowledge and skills in counselling elevated her interest in the counselling program. Marsya also did not choose the counselling program when applying to university:

> I applied for Islamic studies but was offered the counselling program. In the early stages, I felt like withdrawing from the counselling program. I tried to change to other courses but was not accepted. I strive to develop my interest in counselling. Now, I've started to accept and become interested in counselling. It taught me to understand myself better [CT-Marsya, U3].

The trainee also tried to develop her interest in the counselling program. Hanis chose the counselling program as suggested by her brother's friend. However, during the initial stage, she encountered difficulties trying to adapt:

> My brother's friend told me that the undergraduate counselling program was very good and exciting. However, during the first year of studies, I found it difficult to adapt with the nature of counselling courses. I wanted to switch to another program and almost converted to nursing studies [CT-Hanis, U3].

Even though the trainee had positive perceptions on the program, she struggled to adapt to the counselling courses. The trainee further shared her experience:

> During my first year of studies, I hardly stayed and listened to the client during the counselling sessions. I was often reluctant to carry out the second and third sessions. However, now I feel able to adapt to this skills-oriented courses [CT-Hanis, U3].

4.4.3 Counsellor educators' personal qualities in relation to their involvement in teaching group work

The counsellor educator showed their unique attributes and characteristics in their interaction and communication with counselling trainees, clients and also teaching delivery. This section examines the counsellor educators' personal qualities as perceived by the counselling trainees and in relation to their teaching and practical experience.

4.4.3.1 Willingness to self-disclose

Experience in the counselling working environment gave Rania the opportunity to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the counselling fields. Based on this experience, she shared the positive and negative aspects of her work experience in counselling settings with her counselling trainees. Rania hoped that her story of her working experience would guide her counselling trainees, as she said:

> I have seen what happens in the real counselling field. I shared with my counselling trainees the limitations and challenges of being a counsellor. I do not want them to hit the walls that I have hit before. I told them, do not repeat the mistakes I have made. That is how I feel empowered, because I have shared whatever mistakes I have made [CE-Rania, U1].

Rania shared with the counselling trainees her positive and negative experiences to provide a real picture of the counselling field. Rania told her counselling trainees about the mistakes she had made so that her counselling trainees would

not repeat them. Rania shared real issues to guide counselling trainees to become good counsellors.

4.4.3.2 Genuineness and congruence

Her willingness to share her own experiences shows Rania's genuineness in communicating with her counselling trainees. Rania believed in the idea of the core conditions of an individual, developed by Carl Rogers, which led her to be honest with other people. It made Rania felt comfortable to share her real experiences with her counselling trainees:

> I know some of the counsellor educators might not feel comfortable because talking about your own weaknesses is sometimes challenging. However, I believe in Carl Rogers' ideas, which emphasise genuineness and congruence. You need to be who you are, before you can actually help your client. I think I also play that role in my class to carry that honesty. I am also a human and I do make mistakes [CE-Rania, U1].

The courage of the counsellor educators to share her perceived weaknesses enabled the counselling trainees to understand more about the real-life situation. Rania believed that the honesty of a counsellor educator was important when interacting with counselling trainees. As a counsellor educator, Rania was willing to share the mistakes that she had made as a counsellor.

4.4.3.3 Caring

Class attendance is also important as certain universities have regulations with regard to that particular issue. It is the counselling trainees' responsibility to come to class to acquire knowledge and skills. However, Rania showed her concerns and care for those who did not attend class, as she mentioned:

> For those who do not attend the class, I do not let them off easily. I will ask their friends to ask them to come to see me. Some of the trainees might be emotionally affected after revealing their issues in the group counselling class.

> I will talk to them but in some cases, they are not willing to be open and see the issue. Some of the cases are given more attention to get support and counselling for the trainees [CE-Rania, U1].

Rania emphasised the importance of discussion and sharing certain issues and problems in her class. She encouraged the counselling trainees to talk about their problems, as they would experience the healing process. However, for those who were seriously affected and were not coming to class as a result, Rania would make an attempt to discuss this further with them. She also proposed further support and help from other counsellors. Rania was genuinely concerned and cared about her counselling trainees' growth, issues and problems.

The characteristics of the counsellor educators also attracted the counselling trainees' attention. The characteristics of group work lecturer caught the attention of a trainee, Siew May, in this particular course as she mentioned:

> I'm impressed with my group work lecturer. She was caring and always conducted activities in the class. She will act as a leader and modelled the group work session [CT-Siew May, U1].

The caring attitude of the counsellor educator enabled the trainee to stay focussed in the class and the hands-on activities developed the counselling trainees' interest in the group counselling course. Brendan also shared his views:

> The counsellor educator's teaching styles attract my interest in this course. We were divided into a small group and she will demonstrate step by step on how to the handle group. She teaches and elaborates the process to run the group session [CT-Brendan, U1].

Siew May and Brendan valued the counsellor educator's style of teaching who demonstrated the stages in handling group sessions. The counselling trainees developed their understanding when the counsellor educator modelled the group

sessions and conducted group activities. The active involvement of the counsellor educator attracted the interest of the counselling trainees. Belinda added on the positive characteristic of the counsellor educator:

> At the early stages, I felt it difficult to handle the group sessions. However, the counsellor educator showed empathy and was passionate in teaching us. The way she teaches makes me feel comfortable and willing to learn more about group work [CT-Belinda, U1].

4.4.3.4 Assertiveness

The process of teaching and learning knowledge and counselling skills requires the counsellor educator to be serious and focused. Fatimah was very concerned that her counselling trainees were serious in understanding counselling knowledge and developing their counselling skills. The ability of the counselling trainees to use their knowledge in helping clients was important, as Fatimah said:

> Counselling is like science and art. What is given in the class is more of the science part that will only provide you with knowledge and theory. But the real art is when you try to make the client feel comfortable with you. I want my trainees to be serious in both knowledge and practice. The counselling trainees must be sincere with their clients. It is not that hard to be a counsellor, you just have to be there and be supportive and not be a researcher researching the client, collecting or gathering information. To teach that part, the art, is what I find difficult (CE-Fatimah, U2).

Fatimah's determination to ensure her counselling trainees gained knowledge and skills reflected her seriousness and passion for teaching. She wanted her counselling trainees to be serious and focused on how to apply knowledge and skills. Fatimah was also very firm with her counselling trainees and directly commented on their mistakes, as she shared in her reaction to her counselling trainees:

> At one time, I had already touched on one of the topics in class, and the trainees should have read about the topic before the next class. During the group simulation, I found that the trainee (leader) focused on one of her clients

> (friends) for more than ten minutes. I had discussed that particular issue in the previous class. I stopped the leader and directly commented that he should not focus on one person for more than ten minutes and let the client start rambling. I asked the trainees to do something when the clients kept rambling (CE-Fatimah, U2).

4.4.3.5 Adherence to ethics

Her work experience in the counselling field gave Rania exposure to several tools used for conducting counselling sessions. One of them was using OH card, created by Elohin Raman, as a tool in counselling sessions. Rania used this particular card while conducting group activities in her group counselling classes. Based on her networking with the card's publisher, she was appointed as the sole distributor for those particular cards in Malaysia. However, Rania did not allow her counselling trainees to buy the cards from her until they started their counselling internships, as she said:

> I am insistent in saying no to the trainees who want to purchase cards from me. I do not want to become a teacher and at the same time a salesperson. I refuse to sell them the cards until they are doing their internship. At that time, they might need some counselling tools to use. I do not want to take the opportunity to sell products while teaching. I also do not want to confuse the relationship. The trainees might misunderstand that I am taking the opportunity to sell the cards. I do not want that feeling [CE-Rania, U1].

The values that a counsellor educator holds is shown by their attitudes towards the counselling trainees. In this case, Rania showed her assertiveness by holding to a value that she believed. Rania believed that it was unethical for her to sell a product to her counselling trainees who were in her class in a particular semester. Rania used the cards to enhance the counselling trainees' understanding of handling group activities. This helped Rania to expose the counselling trainees to various approaches in dealing with clients. However, Rania held to her ethics and did not want to become a salesperson to her own counselling trainees. She

did not want to take the opportunity to profit from them. Rania allowed the counselling trainees to buy the cards only when they were going for their counselling internships for them to use with their future clients. This was a suitable time, as the internship was handled at the end of their semester.

4.4.3.6 Interest in training people

As well as the ethical values carried by the counsellor educators, their interest in training people was also discussed. Teaching group work courses involved training people throughout the experiential group activities and sessions. One of the aspects that attracted Fatimah's interest to teaching group work courses was the opportunity to train other people. She stated:

> It was my enthusiasm to train people. I love teaching courses that have a practical element. I am not the type of person who mainly teaches the theoretical part and I like to be creative. I am comfortable with courses that involve training people [CE-Fatimah, U2].

Group counselling courses involved practical elements to teach counselling trainees about the application of theory and counselling skills. As a counsellor educator, Fatimah enjoyed seeing the counselling trainees' growth after undergoing the group work courses. Holland's theory states that the desire to train other people forms a part of an educator's personality.

As a counselling trainee, Karen shared about the counsellor educator's flexibility in teaching. She stated:

> The counsellor educator was so interesting when conducting the class. She shares a lot of her counselling experience with us. The teaching was not based on her planning itself, she also takes care of our feelings and condition. For example, if she was showing a video and found the session was boring for us, she will stop the video and will start doing the activities in the class [CT-Karen, U1].

The counsellor educator was able to change the method of teaching pertaining to the counselling trainees' needs and conditions. Even though the counsellor educator had prepared the teaching materials, she did not continue using them. The counsellor educator changed her method and approaches accordingly.

4.4.3.7 Acceptance towards clients

In addition to their interaction with their own counselling trainees in class, a counsellor educator also plays a role as a counsellor. Some of the counsellor educators conducted counselling sessions with clients. Their acceptance towards their clients plays an important role in helping the counsellors to understand the clients' problems. Rania shared her clients' feedback on their experience attending her counselling sessions:

> One of the general comments from my clients is that they say the acceptance that I have for them is wonderful. I believe I have had that in me since I was very young. I perceive it as a gift from God. It was a gift to me, and I must use this gift well, and with this tiny gift I have I can share love and caring with the world [CE-Rania, U1].

This feedback from clients shows positive perceptions of Rania's attitude as a counsellor. Rania perceived the ability to accept other people as a gift from God in her life. She believed that her acceptance towards her clients would spread love to other people. This showed that she cared about others and was willing to help them.

4.4.3.8 Freedom in teaching

The group work lecturer plays a role as an educator and sometimes as a counsellor. As Rania shared her clients' views of her characteristics as a counsellor, Fatimah shared her views on her own values as a counsellor educator. Fatimah believed that higher education lecturers have their academic freedom in

performing their duties. Lecturers in universities have the authority to carry out their own courses, as Fatimah stated:

> I believe that one of the reasons for people to be higher education lecturers is the freedom we have in our profession. We are not bound to a single way to achieve our goals. We can use several means to achieve our goals as long as we do it in the proper way [CE-Fatimah, U2].

Fatimah viewed the freedom of teaching as one of the reasons for counsellor educators to work in universities. The freedom and flexibility of teaching help the counsellor educator be comfortable and creative in running their courses. Fatimah also stressed the importance of counsellor educators holding proper ethical values and conducting their courses in an appropriate way.

4.4.4 Counselling trainees' personal qualities in relation to their involvement in learning group work

This section examines the counselling trainees' personal qualities and characteristics in learning group work courses.

4.4.4.1 Self-disclosure and sharing

Their experience as group leaders enabled the counselling trainees to be aware of the importance of sharing and to self-disclose. Wawa reported:

> Group work was about sharing our story with the group members. I am the type of person who needs encouragement talking with others. I am trying to build the confidence to self-disclose with others. I believe a group leader needs to learn to self-disclose and allow ourselves to tell a story with group members [CT-Wawa, U2].

She tried to develop her confidence to communicate with others. She also realised the importance of self-disclosure in group work. The group work

experience developed the counselling trainees' new thinking and skills. Azmina also encourage the trainees to self-disclose:

> I use group approaches in the tutorial sessions. I always encourage my trainees to share their thoughts and feelings during our discussions. When there is a good dynamic in the groups, the trainees will communicate well and are willing to share. Sometimes trainees cry during the sharing process. If the group dynamic was not there, it would be difficult for them to share in the group. They would communicate at a surface level [CE-Azmina, U3].

As a trainee, Farah also appreciate the sharing session:

> I like the counsellor educator style of teaching when she asked us to form a group in the class. She will model how the leader led the group works. She encourages us to share our own issues in the group. We can see how she links the issue and show other skills [CT-Farah, U1].

The opportunities for trainees to share their issues in a facilitative environment gave them an experience to self-disclose their issues or difficulties.

4.4.4.2 Creativity in handling group work sessions

One of the important aspects highlighted by the counselling trainees was the element of creativity in preparing and handling group work sessions. As Aida mentioned:

> We need to be creative when conducting the group counselling sessions. I believe we need to do some research before pursuing with the sessions. For example, understanding the client's background and their personalities before starting the group work sessions. To be creative in the sessions, it was not enough to only listen to the client's issues and problems. We need to prepare activities suitable for our topic [CT-Aida, U3].

She stressed the importance of preparing group activities that were related to the clients' issues and topic. A counsellor has a responsibility to be prepared and be creative, not only passively listening to the client's issues and problems.

4.4.4.3 Initiative and being independent

Brendan shared his initiative attending the group counselling sessions as a client to gain more understanding and experience. He took the initiative to explore more about group work and skills:

> I voluntarily take the opportunity to be a client for a master counselling trainee. I join her group counselling session as a client. I gain the experience as a client and observing the leader conducted the group session [CT-Brendan, U1].

4.4.4.4 Enjoy handling group work sessions

The counselling trainees also mentioned about enjoying the group sessions and the sense of happiness while conducting group work. Salma commented:

> We need to have a positive mind set when conducting our group sessions. The clients' issues and problems were part of the things to think about. However, we need to be happy and it will make the session become smooth [CT-Salma, U3].

In addition, Aida also agreed and shared her thoughts:

> I agree with the need to enjoy the group sessions. Even though it was a tough job, we need to learn and help the clients. It was great when there was a small change in client's life from a series of sessions conducted [CT-Aida, U3].

Siti realised that handling group work sessions and dealing with various of issues and problems gave them new insights. They learned to set positive minds and be happy while handling the sessions. Enjoying and feeling happy will make the sessions smooth and the groups worked well. Siti shared her satisfaction in conducting group work:

> The satisfaction will come when we see the commitment and cooperation from our group members. Sometimes we laugh together and the excitement comes from the discussion within our group members [CT-Siti, U3].

The enjoyable interaction between leader and group members had a positive impact on the groups. The involvement and commitment from both leaders and members also brought good vibes to the group. Another counselling trainee, Winnie shared her enjoyment in her group work classes:

> I enjoy the group counselling assignments that consist of a practical element. The importance is getting the knowledge and experience, while the process of doing the assignments. Even though it was a tough job, stressful and tiring, it brings satisfaction at the end [CT-Winnie, U2].

The counselling trainee was satisfied after accomplishing the assignment given even though the process of going through the practical was quite tough. Similarly, another trainee mentioned:

> I like the assignment given by the group counselling lecturer. It started with meeting a registered counsellor and attending group counselling sessions with them. Next, we conducted our own group and wrote a self-reflection and a report. The third assignment was conducting and attending a simulation session during our group counselling class and writing a self-reflection after the simulation session. I like it, because I like to write a reflection. It makes me think about what I have learnt [CT-Rachel, U2].

In addition, the counselling trainee expressed her feeling of enjoying the group counselling assignment given by the counsellor educator. Each assignment involved interacting with others, either a counsellor, clients or friends.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the results of the analysis from the interviews and discussions of research findings with the counsellor educators and focus groups with counselling trainees. First, a thematic analysis was conducted of the experiential learning activities that took place in group work training from both the counsellor educators' and counselling trainees' perspectives. This was

followed by an analysis of therapeutic factors in group work and personal qualities of both counsellor educators and counselling trainees.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted to gather in-depth information about the experiences of counsellor educators and counselling trainees in group work training. This chapter presents the key findings of this study according to the themes related to the specific research questions, discussing them in relation to the literature. The implications of study findings with regard to existing group work training and counsellor education literature are also discussed.

5.1 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN GROUP WORK TRAINING

RQ1. What are the experiential learning activities involved in reflecting good practice in teaching and learning group work?

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, the counsellor education literature has regarded experiential learning as one of the key approaches in counsellor education, particularly in teaching group work, along with the person-centred approach. However, most of the previous research conducted focusing on both approaches have been conducted in the western context. Hence, there is a need to explore current practices of teaching group work, particularly in the context of Malaysia. The findings revealed the contribution of standard and qualification for counsellor training in Malaysia (Board of Counsellors, 2011) in designing the group work curriculum, as each university offered two group work courses for their undergraduate counselling curriculum as required by the standard. Despite the standard, the universities had the freedom to design their own group work courses as two universities offered two interrelated group work courses

focusing on theoretical aspects and the application of group counselling. Another university offered two different group work courses which were not interrelated and focused on group guidance and group counselling. The study results were in line with previous literature (Falco & Bauman, 2004; Guth & McDonnell, 2004) emphasising both didactic and experiential components in the group work training. The group work courses offered in the three universities also highlighted the development of group leaders' skills (Conyne & Bemak, 2004; Gillam, 2004). The findings show the empowerment of the counselling program in Malaysian universities to design their course content, which is consistent with group counsellor education in the west, as the curricula follow the professional standards (Akos, Goodnough, & Milsom, 2004; Hensley, 2002; Spargo et al., 2010).

This study also revealed that counsellor educators employed multiple experiential learning activities for group work courses such as modelling, group work simulation, group counselling camp, self-reflection journal, participating in group work as clients and experiential leadership. In particular, counsellor educators used experiential teaching activities as suggested by key author in group work (Corey *et al*., 2014; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005); based on Kolb's model, such experiential activities gave counselling trainees the opportunity to acquire specific knowledge and skills. In this study, modelling was one such experiential learning activity employed in the group work courses (Barlow, 2004; Berman, 1975; Cohen & DeLois, 2002; Riva & Korinek, 2004; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Riva and Corinek (2004) assert that 'a group course provides an avenue whereby instructors can demonstrate effective group leadership behaviour through a conscious use of modelling techniques and class members

can experience what is it like to be in a group and be a group member' (p. 56). In addition to modelling a leadership role, as a counsellor educator, Sarah implemented such sessions to involve trainees in group work practice. The counsellor educators' choice of experiential activities indicates their empathy of the learning needs of their trainees. Empathy is an essential element highlighted by Rogers in relation with counsellor-client or teacher-student relationships (Rogers, 2007). Indeed, empathy is also considered a personal quality required for a counsellor (BACP, 2015; Irving & Dickson, 2004; Pope & Kline, 1999).

Additionally, simulation sessions were found to be beneficial for trainees as they allowed them to receive direct feedback from counsellor educators. In comparison with modelling, which focuses more on the counsellor educator to model certain leadership skills or process, in simulation sessions, educators facilitate a group session, but the trainees also have the opportunity to conduct a group session either in the classroom or in a lab setting with their colleagues. In this study, Hasnor highlighted that the counsellor educators stress the do's and don'ts in conducting the group work sessions after the simulation session. Throughout the simulation activities, counsellor educators provided constructive feedback to the trainees. As a trainee, Hani appreciated the written feedback provided by her counsellor educators as they are well-versed about their weaknesses and strength. In a study by Marotta *et al.* (2000), the importance of feedback, either verbally or in writing, by the counsellor educators during the simulation sessions has been stressed, along with the do's and don'ts for trainees to consider. By giving feedback, the counsellor educators develop therapeutic relationships with the trainees and according to the person-centred approach, this type of experiential learning activity may promote a positive learning experience

for counselling trainees. Several studies have also indicated the benefits of simulation sessions in group work training (Bergsteiner et al., 2010; Downing et al., 2001; Romano & Sullivan, 2000). Romano and Sullivan (2000) stated that such group activity is a realistic training experience for group workers, but is not meant to replace an actual group experience. Simulated group counselling is used 'to develop group leadership skills by engaging trainees in an ongoing group experience and to help them achieve a better understanding of group dynamics and process' (Romano & Sullivan, 2000, p. 367). Such activities can be planned so that the trainees will be able to incorporate their knowledge, skills and experience into practice (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2001). This study supported previous research that simulation sessions provide trainees with the opportunity to experience a group process, observing the specific skills facilitated by educators. In addition, this interaction promotes the development of therapeutic relationships and feedback between educators and trainees.

In this study, the experiential activities used by the counsellor educators were not limited to the university setting only. Indeed, group counselling camps were often included in the group work course planning, whereby the trainees were exposed to a real group counselling session conducted by practitioners. Such activities gave the trainees the opportunity to undergo Kolb's cycle of learning, which is active experimentation (AE) as clients, and at the same time, observe the facilitator's leadership style. These findings also in line with studies that have implemented time-limited group for clients in a real setting, benefiting and supporting their personal development (Collins et al., 2012; Jennings, 2007; Robak et al., 2013). However, Jennings (2007) suggested that a leader modifies the technique used during the session 'in order to maximize therapeutic potential

and to properly assess and manage risk' (p. 105). As clients, the counselling trainees are provided with the opportunity to share any of their issues with the group leaders, so the group camp also gives them the chance to be a client and promote their self-growth (Downing *et al*., 2001; Robison, 2012). This study reveals the creativity of counsellor educators to incorporate group counselling camp in their curriculum. Their focus was not only to expose trainees to leadership techniques and skills, but also give them the opportunity to experience self-development throughout group work sessions.

Counsellor educators utilised a combination of teaching activities, such as writing a self-reflection journal in conjunction with various situations, for example, post simulation sessions or post group counselling camps. Throughout this process, trainees are encouraged to reflect on their learning experiences, like how Shahrom asked of his trainees of their opinion after being clients in group counselling sessions. Such a process enabled these trainees to engage in reflective observation (RO) as per Kolb's model. Moreover, journaling is a component of a student-centred approach, encouraging them to 'deeply reflect and tackle challenging questions associated with personal and professional growth' (Lepp *et al*., 1996, p. 57). It also allows counsellor educators to evaluate the learning outcome based on the trainee's experiences (Brown *et al*., 2011). Writing a reflective journal is a component part of the activities conducted in the counsellor education program (Corey, 2012; Griffith & Frieden, 2000; Jones *et al*., 2008; Miller, 2014; Russo, 2001). Trainees also found that writing a journal was beneficial in reflecting on the outcomes from specific activities. This finding indicates that the counsellor educators incorporated the journal reflection as part of the teaching and learning process for the trainees to become a group work

leader. The experience of trainee counsellor in writing reflective journals can help them to learn how to self-disclose through writing. The element of self-disclosure is important in counselling, as it indicates the clients trust their leader. In this situation, the counselling trainees learn to trust their educators and throughout the process, they will learn how to face a self-disclosure of real clients and how to create trust in their counselling relationships.

Counsellor educators also used participating group work sessions as clients in the group work curriculum, as it is believed that such an experience can enhance group work skills and understanding. The trainees found that the assignments were ordered appropriately, as they became a client first, only handling their own group sessions afterwards. Such experiential group activities gave the counselling trainees the opportunity for active experimentation (AE) as clients, and at the same time, to reflect on how the facilitators conducted the group work session. The experiential group is important for learning group skills (Barlow, 2004; Corey *et al*., 2014; Cox *et al*., 2003; Falco & Bauman, 2004; Trotzer, 2006; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005), as it allows experiencing skills in real life and understanding of the meaning of self-disclosure. Shumaker *et al*. (2011) endorsed the inclusion of self-disclosure in experiential training. The experience as clients is positively influential upon individual personal development (Kumari, 2011; Luke & Kiweewa, 2010; Malikiosi-Loizos, 2013). Besides preparing the trainees to experience the group process and observe leadership skills, it also gave them the opportunity to undergo personal therapy. Implementing such activities in higher education allows trainees to go through the necessary learning cycle (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). The experiential group as clients is an important element in counselling training, as trainees are required

to ‘participate as group members in a small group activity, approved by the program, for a minimum of 10 hours over the course of one academic term’ (CACREP, 2015, p. 12). However, regarding the Malaysian context, the Standards and Qualification of Counsellor Training (2011) have not recommended the number of hours that trainees should attend as clients. Despite not being stated in the standards, experiential group components were implemented by the counsellor educators in this study, showing their initiative to incorporate elements of personal therapy into the curriculum.

In the group work course, another assignment entailed the trainees to be a group leader and conduct their own sessions to gain experience, the students had the opportunity to run their own group work sessions to gain experience as a leader. The trainees voiced some of the challenges that they encountered to successfully complete such an assignment, in particular, managing the group work session. For this task, they were required to recruit their own clients and prepare the group session participation schedule for both leaders and group members. With regard to Kolb’s learning cycle, the challenges in managing group clients emphasises active experimentation (AE), which exposed the trainee to a real risk in becoming a group leader. The process of forming a group required the trainees to acquire the necessary skills to work within the system related with the future group members (Corey *et al*., 2014). They had to identify a suitable time for a group meeting (Masson et al., 2012) and this process involved negotiating with the institution, developing a group proposal, screening and selection of group members. In terms of counselling training, leading a group was found to be the most valuable aspect (Ohrt et al., 2014). This is supported by previous studies that emphasised the importance of experiential leadership in training to develop

trainees' competencies (Caplan, 2005; Ohrt *et al*., 2014). Experiential leadership was beneficial for trainees as they experienced the process of group management and as a leader.

Trainees also reported their anxiety of being recorded during group work sessions, for example, Wati was uncomfortable being recorded knowing that they would be evaluated by the counsellor educator. Moreover, Wawa and Laili were of the opinion that their responsibilities for other courses and university activities lessened their focus on the assignments. The teaching alliance between the counsellor educators is important to build the trainees' confidence. Jones *et al*. (2008) stated:

> In the case of clinical training, in which students need to be able to share their clinical work openly and to receive feedback not only about their technical skills, but also about their interpersonal skills, we believe that an essential aspect of that bond is a sense of trust and safety. Second, we included items related to ''focus''. In the case of mental health training, what seems important in this regard is that the instructor focuses on the development of the students' skills and knowledge. Thus, we included items in this area related to how the instructor structures the class and uses class time. The third factor was identification: we believe that the degree to which students identify with the instructor is an essential aspect of the task of teaching clinical skills. As the change process requires the student to be open to feedback about skill development and to develop self-awareness about interpersonal dynamics in relationships, we would argue that the student must view the instructor as someone whom she would want to model, a person with whom she can identify. Through this process, the student has the opportunity to internalize or model a way of being with clients as a result of participating in a teaching relationship with someone whom they view as a good role model (e.g., respectful, empathic, professional; appropriate boundaries (p. 225)

By being both leaders and clients in the experiential group, trainees are expected to become active learners and develop the competencies in leading a group (Stes, Gijbels, & Petegem, 2008). However, the strategies chosen by the group work lecturers may impact on them differently as some failed to complete the assignment appropriately. Therefore, trainee feedback is crucial so that

counsellor educators understand their needs and improve approaches being utilised. Written and verbal feedback (Shaw, Carey, & Mair, 2008) is an option lecturers can adopt to improve their courses (Arthur, 2009; Halcomb & Peters, 2009). The feedback should address specific questions raised for a particular course and be used to develop the curriculum further (Smith, 2012). Cleary, Happell, Lau and Mackey (2013) agree that constructive feedback is valuable in improving teaching. Thus, the trainee feedback that counsellor educators have received from this study will allow them to consider and evaluate the design of their group counselling classes.

Besides the positive contribution of experiential learning activities in group work training, the trainees also offered suggestions for the improvement of group work courses. According to Inas, continuous and ongoing group work practical sessions will allow trainees to practice until the final semester, ensuring they are competent in handling the sessions. Moreover, trainees are also expected to undergo practicum, which consists of both individual and group work sessions (Rahimi & Nor Shafrin, 2010). Therefore, this will also provide options for continuous practice opportunities, but currently practicum counselling programs between each university might be different. Hence, trainee feedback will also help educators in tailoring the programs to improve their group work curriculum, apart from considering the proper standards when designing the courses (Guth & McDonnell, 2004).

The exposure from group counselling sessions to a wide variety of clients is also another aspect that the trainees discussed. Both Nada and Aida suggested that group sessions should be conducted with clients from outside the university.

Hanan has also mentioned that they need to be exposed to clients of different cultures. However, dealing with such clients may be emotionally challenging for the trainees (Parker, Freytes, Kaufman, Woodruff, & Hord, 2004). Therefore, counsellor educators must plan for an appropriate practical session in other courses to fulfil these needs, while also considering the trainees' competencies and the ethical elements in dealing with specific clientele. As group work courses are basic group work training, educators may carefully supervise the sessions conducted by trainees. Guth and Mcdonnell (2004) reminded educators to design the course with adherence to proper ethical guidelines and other suitable professional standards. It is also advisable for them to allocate ample time for the trainees to run experiential activities, as per author's opinion.

Both counsellor educators and counselling trainees raided the issue of additional practical experience during group work. For example, Yati suggested that minor subjects are replaced with other counselling skills courses in order to prepare them with helping clients. Sarah also wants the addition of practical-related assignments in group work, and vouches for trainees' willingness to complete these types of task. These suggestions from both parties involved in group work are testament of the necessity of practical elements to enhance trainees' competencies in conducting group sessions. Killacky and Hulse-Killacky (2004) successfully implemented teaching GCS across the curriculum. Thus, this study has reinforced the need for counselling training to be supplemented by group approaches across the curriculum to enhance knowledge and skill-related group dynamics.

In order to resolve the client recruitment issue, the trainees suggested that their counsellor educators prepare and recruit clients for the group work practice at the beginning of the semester. These challenges encountered when recruiting clients for group work encouraging trainees to manage the counselling sessions to best of their abilities, serving as a learning curve for their eventual and actual group work practice. Additionally, they also requested for more emphasis on counselling skills in their third and final year of studies. Jasmin believed that their elective university courses should be replaced with counselling skills and practice instead, as the nature of the program demands ongoing and continuous practice.

In summary, this study revealed that the experiential learning activities employed in group work give counselling trainees the opportunity to undergo Kolb's learning cycle, particularly active experimentation (e.g., group counselling camp, participating group work as clients, and experiential leadership) and observe reflectively (e.g., self-reflection journal). The therapeutic relationships that developed between the counsellor educators and trainees showed that the core element of learning based on the person-centred approach existed.

5.2 THERAPEUTIC FACTORS IN GROUP WORK TRAINING

RQ2. What are the therapeutic factors involved in reflecting good practice in teaching and learning group work?

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, therapeutic forces are important to promote change among clients (Corey *et al*., 2014; Masson *et al*., 2012; Yalom & Leszcz,

2005). As many teaching activities (as reported in Section 5.1) require the counsellor educator to model a role as group leader, these findings will discuss the therapeutic forces identified from the teaching and learning experience. In this section, categories that constitute this theme were: (a) a facilitative approach in teaching group work; (b) respecting cultural differences and diversity; (c) development of socialising skills in group work training; (d) cohesiveness; (e) positive attitudes in teaching group work and (f) positive attitude towards learning group work.

5.2.1 A facilitative approach in teaching group work

The facilitative approach is one of the therapeutic factors found in teaching group work courses. In this study, counsellor educators facilitated group processes by employing an appropriate role in the courses. As a counsellor educator, Rania facilitated discussion by coaching and guidance, but trainees who are emotionally affected during sessions will be taken care of as they may need more counselling. For Azmina, trainees are also encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings so that they can experience self-disclosing processes prior to conducting their own group session. Self-disclosure is an important facet for counselling trainee to experience, as it will promote therapeutic changes (Corey *et al*., 2014; Shumaker *et al*., 2011). Furthermore, Sarah also fosters in-depth discussion during class sessions, so that trainees fully understand the topics and knowledge in hand. Meanwhile, Aisya found that as a trainee, facilitated discussion and group processes led by her counsellor educators generally enhanced her understanding of the use of counselling techniques. She also found these sessions beneficial for counselling skill learning processes. This was supported by Ismail and Salma, with Ismail sharing that hands-on activities also

helped him to understand specific counselling skills, while understanding the application motivated Salma to attend classes. Tudor *et al*. (2004) stated that 'Rogers does not ask what a therapist need to do to a client in order to facilitate change. He asks what qualities of relationships a therapist might usefully offer in order to foster a client's own capacity to grow' (p. 37). The counsellor educators also demonstrated a caring characteristic, which is considered as a personal quality of group leader (Corey *et al*., 2014; Rubel & Kline, 2008). This research indicates that a facilitative approach offers a positive force, as such an approach is helpful in ensuring trainees grasp the necessary group counselling skills and it also helps to creates a therapeutic relationship between counsellor educators and trainees.

5.2.2 Respecting cultural differences and diversity

The findings indicated that counsellor educators expose the trainees to show respect towards cultural differences in group sessions. As a counsellor educator, Sarah makes an effort to divide trainees into groups consisting of members from different cultural backgrounds to model dealing with such an environment throughout sessions. Successful facilitation of multicultural awareness will help counselling trainees to deal with different clients (Goodrich & Shin, 2013). When teaching group work classes, it is important to take into consideration cultural diversity as Malaysia is made up of multi-ethnicities from different backgrounds. During group work experiential sessions, the trainees should be given the opportunity to be in a group made up of different races, gender and background in order to experience the concept of 'culturally sensitive counselling practice' (Bezanson & James, 2007, p. 159). The trainees were also exposed to a spiritual element infused in group practice by counsellor educators,

which is was achieved by having Muslim trainees recite prayers, while those of other faiths pray accordingly. For example, Kamil recited prayers during the session to demonstrate expression of gratitude to Allah, non-Muslims were also encouraged to recite their prayers too. Furthermore, Aisya was also grateful for the openness that counsellor educators displayed when discussing religion-related issues. Mansor (2010) suggested that any counselling practice needs to full of understanding for Malaysian culture and traditions, stating that 'the culture of a country has a strong influence on the way people behave, thus, playing a significant role in developing the culture of an organisation' (p. 28-29). This indicates that the element of prayer is significant in a group work class, as its implementation may create a positive atmosphere. Leseho (2007) has highlighted the differences between Eastern and Western religions, reinforcing that the 'counsellor must be as aware of other traditions and practices as knowing one's own experience of the spiritual' (p. 447). Furthermore, by allowing prayer recital according to beliefs, trainees are taught to respect each other's school of thought. Tolliver and Tisdell (2006) are of the opinion that courses in higher education should include both affective dimension and spiritual components. This type of training will help the students to understand their own culture and learn to respect other cultures. Integrating spiritual activities in class should be carried out according to the trainees' personal values and beliefs. In addition, trainees were allowed to choose the appropriate language used during their sessions with clients. Such an opportunity was appreciated by Vivien, as it allowed her to converse with her clients in the Chinese language as they are not fluent in Malay and English. Waggoner (1984) stated that 'the key into client's sensory world is by employing language that reflects the predicates of the client's

sensory representational system' (p. 10). He also emphasized that 'vocabulary is the bridge between the sensory worlds of the client and the counsellor' (p. 10). Therefore, respecting cultural differences and diversity is a proven therapeutic element that counsellor educators create during group work classes. The approaches show the genuineness of counsellor educators in showing respect to counselling trainees (in terms of cultural, reciting prayers, language choices), such respect will also help counselling trainees to feel safe and accepted in group work classes.

5.3.3 Development of socialising skills in group work training

In this research, development of socialising skills among the trainees was also been exhibited, as they were encouraged to express their feelings and thoughts. According to Rania, listening to trainees and allowing them to express themselves will subsequently build their self-confidence. This is in line with Yalom, who stated that social skill development can be indirect depending on the nature of the group (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Sarah also encouraged her trainees to speak and interact with their peers, as they are aware that they are supposed to do so in her session. Azmina also incorporated the element of discussion and interaction, or group approaches in her tutorial classes. Additionally, Kamil also used group discussion as the main activity for his group guidance class. Meanwhile, Sze, Farah and Mawar were also very grateful for these activities initiated by their counsellor educators for them to grasp skill mastery. For them, these processes gave them the opportunity to develop their social skills, as they allowed them to interact, share their thoughts, and experience group work activities with other. Such experience may help the counselling trainees to form new behaviours as proposed by Erdman (2009). The

trainees also learn to listen and respect in a learning community (Knutson, 2001). Such interaction may occur when trainees are interested in listening to their classmate's responses or the counsellor educator's comments and feedback, or if they are interested in the topic being discussed (Knutson, 2001). Conversely, non-interest may be due to language difficulties, uninteresting topic, and the trainee's disinterest in other's responses. Trainees were also allowed to use both Malay and English to communicate to help develop social skills. Rania used both languages during the instruction process, as she believed that language should not limit learning. Allowing them to speak in their preferred language due to their different backgrounds also displays the counsellor educator's awareness of the literary diversity and trainee uniqueness; background and culture cannot be a limitation for learning (Cochran-Smith et al., 2008). A facilitation of discussion in an appropriate language indicates that the counsellor educators are aware of the need to understand trainee's backgrounds. The development of socialising skills creates a therapeutic force in group work courses, allowing trainees to interact with a positive manner, thus creating a therapeutic relationship among educators and trainees.

5.2.4 Cohesiveness

The findings also found that cohesiveness in group work created a therapeutic relationship among counsellor educators and counselling trainees. Yalom and Leszcz (2005) asserted that 'the need for belonging is innate in us all' (p. 56). Brendan experienced such a positive trainee-teacher relationship, as his counsellor educators always listened and motivated them to learn from their mistakes, expressing excitement in seeing their growth in group work courses. Additionally, Rania incorporated the element of personal growth in the tasks she

assigned to her trainees, incorporating trainee-educator bonds throughout the group course. Group cohesiveness involves the sense of belonging and acceptance in a group (Lindsay et al., 2006). Karen was surprised by her passion and commitment in attending group work classes, while Sofea was happy and appreciative of the positive reinforcement from her counsellor educators. Farah also considered that her counsellor educators were friendly during and after class sessions, which is what Kamil was striving to achieve. He always tries to be friendly and open to any negative or positive feedback from his trainees to improve his teaching skills. Utilising feedback in the teaching and learning process is also beneficial, exhibited by the counsellor educators' concern and responsibility in monitoring their trainee's progress. In order to do so, Shahrom familiarises himself with his trainees' profiles so as to monitor their progress better. This indicates that the openness in receiving feedback creates positive forces between counsellor educators and counselling trainees, thus creating cohesiveness. Cohesiveness and educator-trainee bonding are beneficial for both teaching and learning by displaying both parties' motivation in a respectful environment.

5.2.5 Positive attitudes in teaching group work courses

Counsellor educators' attitude is instrumental in attracting the trainees' interest in group work as it can create a positive and supportive environment for them in order to acquire the required knowledge and skills. Masson *et al.* (2012) have listed a group leader's attitude as a related therapeutic force due to its positive impact on group members. This study has found that a positive attitude in teaching group work requires the following elements: motivation to enhance the group work courses, creativity, extra effort in managing group work courses,

encouraging the trainees to learn and patience in teaching. Based on the findings below, such positive attitudes bring positive forces in group work courses.

The counsellor educators displayed their motivation in enhancing group work course. For example, Sarah incorporated some changes and improvement in the course by including more practical approaches in her teaching methods, while Kamil enhanced his teaching experience by combining knowledge and feedback from other counsellor educators and trainees together. Meanwhile, Rania expressed her happiness and motivation in teaching group work classes and making sure her teaching will benefit and produce competent trainees. Therefore, counsellor educators play active roles in group counselling courses as they conduct both the lectures and practical sessions. The group work lecturers consistently showed their enthusiasm and passion in teaching the course, which are components of excellent teaching according to Revell and Wainwright (2009). Buller (2013) also highlighted that a passion for teaching is one of the highest qualities of educators. With regard to the experiential learning context, the practical activities conducted by the educators not only show their inner motivation in teaching, but also give trainees opportunities to experience certain concepts in group work. Their motivation in ensuring the continuous enhancement of the courses through experiential learning activities shows that the educators are passionate about teaching.

Furthermore, creativity is an element that counsellor educators also incorporated in their teaching learning processes. Previous studies have indicated the increased use of creative and expressive approaches in counselling profession (Davis, 2008; Hoffman, 2008; Waliski, 2009). Sarah upholds the element in

handling group work sessions as it motivates her in the preparation of her teaching materials and she believes that creative approaches can attract her trainees' attention and keep them focused. She is happy to see them enjoying the sessions and prepares creative activities to encourage them to attend her practicum sessions. Similarly, Azmina incorporated dyads, expressive art, and inventory assessment to develop trainees' understanding of certain topics and issues. Subsequently, Rania expressed that such activities and assignments can promote trainees' growth. The creative approaches added a playful element into teaching (Davis, 2008), emphasising the process and interpersonal relationships with trainees (Hoffman, 2008), and help the trainees to deal with clients creatively (Waliski, 2009). Revell and Wainwright (2009) commented that in general, the favourite counsellor educators according to trainees are those 'who can bring a subject to life ' (p. 209). Smith (2011) also agrees that a positive trainee-tutor relationship enhances the enjoyment factor of a particular subject, as counselling necessitates engagement in various activities and is not just an academically based course. Counsellor educators who treat trainees with respect and demonstrate positive relationships will encourage them to work further (Hammer, 2006). Regarding the person-centred context, the presence of a therapeutic relationship is important (Mearns, 2003; Tudor *et al*., 2004), as such an experience will make clients feel secure (Rogers, 1951). Thus, this study showed that the element of creativity creates a positive force in teaching and learning, not only helping trainees to acquire specific knowledge and skills, but also creating a positive relationship between educators and trainees.

Another positive attitude highlighted in the findings was the extra effort in managing group work courses. This was exhibited by counsellor educators not

only focussed on teaching, but also by initiating group counselling camp to ensure trainees were exposed to different roles, group process and skills. Shahrom displayed his initiative and efforts to ensure his trainees had experience as clients and were exposed to various skills. The camp successfully exposed the trainees to self-development and self-growth, highlighting the counsellor educator's sense of responsibility. Lawson, Hazler and Kottler (2007) affirmed the importance of counsellors to maintain their own wellness, emphasising that 'in order to be an effective healer, they must first be aware of what keeps them well and what challenges their wellness' (p. 6). Lily Mastura (2001) was also an advocate for wellness philosophy incorporation into the counsellor education program. In terms of group work, Masson *et al.* (2012) highlighted that positive leadership attitude is vital in developing the appropriate group plan and creating interesting sessions. Therefore, the counsellor educators in this study contributed to a positive learning environment for the counselling trainees through their extra effort in managing group work and implementing outstanding experiential learning activities in their group work training.

This study also revealed that the counsellor educators encouraged their counselling trainees to learn and be responsible in their learning. Azmina emphasised the need for the trainees to be responsible for the courses taken, complete the tasks assigned, and be accountable for their own work. Similarly, Fatimah believes they should be comfortable in conducting groups, enjoy being a group member and experience the group processes to educate them regarding positive attitudes in both learning and practice. Homrich *et al.* (2014) proposed a set of standards for personal and professional conduct expected of clinical trainees, which is based on a broad survey of constructs acquired from

publications across the clinical profession. They asserted the importance of professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal behaviours of counselling trainees, encouraging counsellor educators to prompt their trainees to be responsible learners and promote positive attitudes. Furthermore, the trainees themselves found that the counsellor educators were thoughtful and patient when teaching group work courses. According to Brendan, his counsellor educator spent her time listening to them and motivating their learning attitudes. She was attentive to their problems and guided them to improve any weaknesses. Angie expressed that she felt understood and listened to by her counsellor educator. Regarding the counselling relationship context, clients require support, so counsellors must show 'great efforts and patience' (Lovén, 2003, p. 133). Such attitudes can create a therapeutic relationship with a trainee, whereby such alliance is important to ensure quality of learning (Hammer, 2006; Jones, Mirsalimi, Conroy, Lynn Horne-Moyer & Burrill, 2008; Ruhani, 2012; Smith, 2011; Triana, 2007). Thus, this study indicates that encouraging trainees to be responsible in their learning and be able to be patients in teaching, creates positive forces in the teaching and learning environment.

5.2.6 Positive attitudes towards learning group work courses

In this section, positive attitudes towards learning among counselling trainees are examined. This study found that a positive attitude in learning group work involves a willingness to face challenges, show responsibilities and effort, initiative in handling group activities, motivation to attend the group work class, and interest towards the counselling program and group work courses. Masson *et al*. (2012) have listed group members' attitude as one of the therapeutic forces that positively impacts a group.

This indicates that trainees should demonstrate their willingness to face challenges during the teaching and learning process. Counsellor educators may observe trainee attitudes and development over the course; Kamil found that trainees may be uncomfortable at the beginning, but later, handling activities are exciting for them. The teaching and learning atmosphere allows them the opportunities to develop their own confidence in learning. Corey *et al.* (2014) suggested that a group leader has courage, personal power and commitment to self. The trainees managed to overcome the challenges in the given tasks, thus showing the courage to complete the task. The findings also showed that trainees showed responsibility and effort in their own learning. Shahrom asserts that the trainee's academic performance is reliant on how much they appreciate the knowledge and skills that they are taught, as it is their responsibility to value and apply them. He expressed the need for these trainees to go the extra mile for knowledge and experience in group counselling. Corey *et al.* (2014) emphasised that the counsellor educators manage different roles, such as facilitator and supervisor. In this study, the counsellor prepared the teaching and learning process and the trainees were able to face the challenges and take responsibility. Throughout the learning process, the trainees were accountable for their own learning motives and goals.

Some trainees took the initiative to be involved in related programs, in order to enhance their competencies as leaders. According to Shahrom, there were trainees involve in experiential leadership activities outside classes, related to psycho-educational group work. These kinds of activities provide a wider experience in psycho-educational groups, leadership skills and group dynamics. Honkima *et al*. (2004) explained that trainees regulate their learning based on

the exposure of study orientations. The experiential learning activities in group work courses motivates them to develop their own learning, which is something counsellor educators should respect and challenge, as they apply the skills in practice (Hammer, 2006). This finding also indicates that there are various factors that contribute to the trainees' interests in counselling courses. As a trainee, Karen realised that she wanted to learn something from the counsellor educator and not just for attendance purposes. Shahrom also commented positively on trainees' attitude and attendance, especially for practicum laboratory, which motivated them to attend a group work class. Similarly, by carrying out various activities during her lectures, Azmina gained her trainees' attention and encouraged them to come to class despite it being a three-hour lecture. Such interactions made the teaching and learning sessions fruitful. The findings indicated that the motivation to attend class resulted from the passion for learning, feedback from the counsellor educator, and class enjoyment. Experiencing fun in training can increase participant's motivation (Lee & Yim, 2004), which is also influenced by the teacher-trainee relationship and the understanding of trainee involvement in academic activities (Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009). Counsellor educators generally demonstrate a positive working alliance with trainees, but they need to differentiate between educator-trainee and therapeutic counsellor-client relationships to minimise role conflicts.

5.3 PERSONAL QUALITIES IN RELATION TO TEACHING AND LEARNING GROUP WORK

RQ3. What are the personal qualities of counsellor educators and counselling trainees in relation to their participation in teaching and learning group work?

The categories that constitute this theme were: (a) counsellor educator's prior experience; (b) counselling trainee's prior experience; (c) counsellor educator's personal qualities in relation to their involvement in teaching group work; and (d) counselling trainee's personal qualities in relation to their involvement in learning group work.

5.3.1 Counsellor educators' prior experiences

Based on the findings, counsellor educators are familiar with various aspects related to the setting from their previous experience, like Kamil who was involved in group work research during his doctoral studies. Previous research indicated that effective counsellor educators will create a learning atmosphere that integrates practice and research (Patton, 2000). This is evidenced by Kamil, whose research experience has bestowed him with in-depth knowledge of the topic. Similarly, Rania's experience of leading a group when she worked as a counsellor helped her to model group sessions during class. Modelling is one of the practical components in teaching and learning approaches (Patton, 2000). Similarly, Sarah had also experienced undergoing group sessions as a client during her postgraduate studies. Both opportunities as a leader and client allow counsellor educators to understand group work knowledge and skills more deeply. Moreover, Fatimah had been mentored by a senior lecturer to teach group work courses, which helps the novice to develop their passion for the profession

(Santoro et al., 2012). According to Mijares, Baxley and Bond (2008), mentoring is ‘an interpersonal interaction between a seasoned mentor and a novice protégé, which includes supporting, guiding, teaching, encouraging, and role-modelling’ (p. 25). The process is helpful in modelling teaching strategies, and prior experience with group work will prepare the counsellor educators in teaching and learning group work courses. This research indicated that the counsellor educators possessed unique experience related with group work before their involvement in group work training. Having experienced being a teacher, being taught guidelines by senior lecturers, and receiving continuous feedback from trainees are all motivating factors for counsellor educators to teach group work courses. Willingness to receive comment and feedback on teaching will surely improve the courses, while guidance and feedback from senior colleagues is a sign of a successful mentoring relationship.

5.3.2 Counselling trainees’ prior experiences

This study has also highlighted the undergraduate counselling trainees’ backgrounds before enrolling in the counselling program. First-hand experience with counsellors during their secondary school days gave some trainees a taste of counselling prior to the course. This was reinforced by Farah and Faiza, who developed their interest in counselling in secondary school. Farah specifically mentioned that her counsellor was cheerful and motivated, which piqued her interest. Counselling trainees enter the program according to their academic qualifications, interest and university requirements. The study conducted by Spangler *et al.* (2014) indicated that students who had a prior experience related to the course were more comfortable with the learning process. The standard and qualification for counsellor training in Malaysia (Board of Counsellors, 2011)

has not outlined specific requirements for counselling trainee's admission, whereas the 2016 CACREP Standards require the academic unit to assess applicants based on their interpersonal relationship in one-to-one and group approaches, the suitable aptitude for postgraduate study and their career goals. Appropriate admission criteria for counselling programs will avoid potential problems of unsuitable candidates in the program. In the context of Malaysia, admission is based on university requirements, which may lead to unsuitable candidates being admitted, which will be challenging for the counsellor educators to develop them into competent counsellors. Hanis reported that she found it difficult to adapt to the courses. Brear *et al.* (2008) stated that counsellor educators may be able to identify unsuitable counselling trainees in their program. In Section F.6.b., the ACA Code of Ethics stated that 'through initial and ongoing evaluation, supervisors are aware of supervisee limitations that might impede performance' (ACA Code of Ethics, 2012, p. 13). Counsellor educators must be responsible for the trainee counsellors in their programs (Glance et al., 2012) and ethics require the educators to be responsible for trainees from their entry into the program itself.

5.3.3 Counsellor educators' personal qualities in relation to their involvement in teaching group work

This study indicated that the counsellor educators possesses various unique and positive qualities. In relation to counselling trainees, the counsellor educators were willing to self-disclose their working experiences as a counsellor to the students, genuineness and congruence, caring and assertiveness. In relation to their professional practice as an academician and practitioner, counsellor educators showed their commitment to adherence to ethics, interest in training

people, acceptance towards clients and freedom in teaching. The positive attitude towards students is an important attribute of a teacher (Tigelaar, Dolmans, Wolfhagen & Vleuten, 2004).

Their willingness to share positive and negative aspects of their experience displays the educators' genuineness when interacting with trainees. Caplan (2005) stressed the benefits of a leader's self-disclosure to encourage the group dynamic, stating that it 'is a powerful tool and can be a model for group members in building safety, for taking responsibility and promoting interaction' (p. 31). To communicate with trainees, the counsellor educators modelled according to Roger's core conditions (Irving & Dickson, 2006). Irving and Dickson (2004) asserted that 'the counsellor has to understand the client's world (cognitive), feel with the client (affective), and communicate this understanding and feeling to the client (behavioural)' (p. 215). This research emphasises that the willingness of counsellor educators to self-disclose their experiences created an environment of genuineness in dealing with counsellor trainees. In real group work sessions, the counsellor self-disclosure created trust and encouraged the members to share their issues further. Regarding the classroom context, the trainees experienced the impact of self-disclosure among group members, thus creating an awareness of the usefulness of the leader's self-disclosure in a real setting.

Another positive quality regarding the relationships with trainee found in this study was being caring. The educator not only focussed on teaching, but also cared about their trainees. The trainees were encouraged to share their problems for discussion. The ability of the educators to earn the students' trust created a positive relationship among educators and students. The counsellor educators'

ability to earn trust indicated a rapport, thus creating a positive environment that affects motivation and class learning (Chireshe, 2011). The importance of caring, especially for group leaders, has been highlighted in previous literature (Corey *et al*., 2014; Rubel & Kline, 2008). This finding indicates that educators involved in group work training acquire such a quality, which reflects the quality of the group leader. The trainees were able to experience being cared for in a teaching and learning experience.

Assertiveness is another quality found among counsellor educators. They emphasised the importance of trainees to be serious in learning and to be responsible for their skills and knowledge development. The educator ensured that the trainees focussed on the process of learning. Constructive feedback from the counsellor educators can help trainees to nurture their learning (Corey *et al*., 2014). The educators were determined to ensure that trainees took an active role in the process of learning, qualities which are important for leading group work.

Adhering to ethics when dealing with trainees is another positive quality identified in this study. Davenport (2004) suggested that counsellor educators continually improve ethical approaches in teaching to avoid trainee exploitation. Compliance towards professional ethics is also an important aspect in the counselling profession (Noriah et al., 2012) for both counsellors and counsellor educators. Ethical educators are role models for trainees and help to model them into becoming ethical counsellors themselves. Apart from being serious about the ethical aspects, counsellor educators also showed effective characteristics like being passionate when training others. Chireshe (2011) identified that effective lecturers are those who actively engage with the trainees. This study

has reinforced this notion, the counselling profession are bound by the ethics and standards, thus, promoting such characteristics during the teaching and learning process are in line with the demands of the counselling profession. The educator should not only model ethical behaviour, but also show their courage in teaching. Such characteristics promote an ethical and professional educator, thus may reflect a leader's role in a group work setting.

Besides teaching, counsellor educators also conduct counselling sessions with clients, whereby their acceptance and willingness to help is felt by the clients. Irving and Dickson (2006) have used the term 'unconditionality' for the counsellor's acceptance of clients. Based on Roger's humanistic approaches, when people receive acceptance they will grow towards self-actualisation (Lawson *et al*., 2007). Wiseman (1998) also asserted that client acceptance made them felt understood and provided a safe environment for exploration. These characteristics show how professional counsellor educators incorporated practice into their academic roles. The freedom in teaching is another characteristic possessed by counsellor educators. Tigelaar *et al.* (2004) found that the counsellor educator's capability to estimate their vision related to the subject matter permits the use of important values that play a role in the discipline among their competencies. To summarise, an effective counsellor educator's personal qualities can be divided into their relationship with trainees and their professional practice as an academician and practitioner. These qualities reflect the importance of such qualities as a group leader. The positive qualities shown to the trainees, educate them to show such respect to their future clients.

5.3.4 Counselling trainees' personal qualities in relation to their involvement in learning group work

Based on the findings, the trainees have shown positive characteristics in learning group work such as self-disclosure and sharing, creativity in handling group work session, initiative and being independent and enjoyment in handling group work sessions. The importance of qualities highlighted in previous research not only focus on professional behaviours, but also inter- and intrapersonal behaviours (Homrich *et al*., 2014). Compared with Lafrance and Gray (2004), which highlight the unsuitable qualities that the professional helper brings to the profession, this study focussed on the trainees' qualities in relation with the group work training experience.

The trainees realised the importance of self-disclosure in group work sessions for both leaders and members and building self-confidence in communicating with clients. The leader's or members' self-disclosure led to trust development amongst the group, which is beneficial as it emphasises experiential learning. Therefore, there is much time-sharing and disclosure of one's feelings. However, the counsellor educator needs to 'monitor and limit trainee disclosure in order to safeguard their well-being and the integrity of the learning environment' (Morrissette & Gadbois, 2006, p. 136). Robak *et al.* (2013) found that there is a correlation between group members' working alliance and their self-disclosure, the dynamic of the group work itself resulted in the group members being confident to self-disclose. Nevertheless, counsellor educators should also consider the ethical implications of trainees' personal disclosure in class activities (Morrissette & Gadbois, 2006). It has been proposed that the educators control which trainees are required to self-disclose in the classroom, as the

implications of sharing personal information during the activity varies among themselves. Therefore, to maintain their welfare, counsellor educators must facilitate the discussion and be understanding of their readiness to share their issues during the lab or class sessions. However, this experiential learning allows hands-on experiences for the trainees to understand and relate to how actual group work sessions occur, particularly involving self-disclosure among leaders or members.

As the group work leader, the trainees also showed responsibility for the preparation for the group session and creativity in conducting the sessions. Dollarhide, Gibson and Moss (2013) reported that each year counselling trainees articulated different levels of responsibility, leading to their professional identity development. The awareness of the clinical students to be responsible is one aspect of learning (Ruth-Sahd, 2011); their identities are developed alongside their responsibilities in handling a well-prepared group work session. The trainees also showed initiative in attending the group work session as clients, willingly volunteering to attend other group's sessions. Orlinsky, Schofield, Schroder and Kazantzis (2011) found that 'getting personal therapy' is rated as the third most influential factor in professional therapist development. There has been much debate whether personal therapy makes a better therapist (Daw & Joseph, 2007). In this study, personal therapy was conducted as part of the group counselling courses activities, with trainees being prepared to attend group work session as part of their continuous personal and professional development. The experience of personal therapy is the introductory stage towards positive changes in the personal development process (Kumari, 2011). The also enjoyed conducting group work sessions as leaders. Kivlighan (2010) argued that 'a

major goal in the supervision and training of novice group practitioners is to help these trainees to think and perform like expert group practitioners' (p. 175). Trainees' motivation to be group leaders has shown positive responses in learning group work courses. The trainees' responsibility of preparing for the group session, creativity in handling the sessions and initiative in attending the group work as clients shows positive qualities preparing them to become a professional group leader. They are not dependent on the knowledge sharing during the class, but actively involved in actual group work sessions either as a leader or group member.

5.4 THE INTERACTION OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES, PERSONAL QUALITIES AND THERAPEUTIC FACTORS DURING THE TEACHING AND LEARNING GROUP WORK

RQ4. In what ways do the interaction of experiential learning activities, personal qualities and therapeutic factors in group work training promote the teaching and learning process?

In this section, I will highlight the interaction of experiential learning activities, therapeutic factors and personal qualities in the process of teaching and learning group work. The findings revealed that the process of teaching and learning group work can be understood through the following categories: experiential learning, therapeutic factors and personal qualities. The interconnections between the experiential learning activities, therapeutic factors and personal qualities are illustrated in Figure 5.1. The figure explains that the experiential learning, therapeutic factors and personal qualities contribute to the process of

teaching and learning group work. However, the findings did not clearly indicate the direction of interaction among these three components.

As illustrated in Figure 5.1, all the categories that contribute to the process of teaching and learning group work were interrelated to each other. In the previous section, I discussed experiential learning activities such as modelling, group work simulation, group counselling camp, self-reflection journal, participating group work as clients and experiential leadership that the counsellor educators used to educate their counselling trainees of learning group work concepts and skills. Such experiential activities promote therapeutic factors in teaching and learning. For example, an experiential activity such as modelling promotes an empathic teacher-student relationship. The feedback given by educators during a simulation session also develops a therapeutic relationship between educators and their trainees. Such relationships facilitate trainee growth, as Rogers asserted 'the degree to which I can create relationships, which facilitate the growth of others as separate persons, is a measure of the growth I have achieved in myself (Rogers, 1961 p. 56). However, as Rogers also emphasised the uniqueness of the individual, the educators and trainees may undergo a difference experience during that particular experiential activity, thus promoting a different therapeutic factor.

I have also discussed the element of therapeutic factors and personal qualities as part of the process and elements of teaching group work. The therapeutic factors involve a facilitative approach in teaching group work, respecting cultural differences and diversity, development of socialising skills in group work training, cohesiveness, positive attitudes in teaching group work and positive

attitude towards learning group work. With regard to the teaching learning context, such forces promote a positive learning experience among counselling trainees. For example, in respecting cultural differences and diversity, the counsellor educator shows respect to the counselling trainee throughout experiential activities, thus promoting a safe environment and acceptance in group work classes. The importance of the quality of the relationship to facilitate change has been highlighted by Rogers (Tudor *et al.*, 2004). In summary, the therapeutic factors in teaching and learning group work indicate that a counsellor educator possesses a personal quality, thus promoting a positive learning experience for counselling trainees.

The counsellor educators also possessed personal qualities that were interrelated with their experience in teaching the group work courses. The design of the experiential learning activities used indicated the personal qualities acquired by the counsellor educators, such as willingness to self-disclose, genuineness and congruence, caring, assertiveness, adherence to ethics, interest in training people, acceptance towards clients and freedom in teaching. For example, the educators were not only focussed on teaching, but also cared about their trainees and encouraged them to discuss their issues and problems during sharing sessions. The counsellor educators earned the trainees' trust, encouraging them to self-disclose, thus promoting their learning and self-development. Regarding the person-centred approach, Rogers emphasised the qualities of relationships to foster a client's growth (Tudor *et al*., 2004). Campbell and Christopher (2012) also highlighted that positive therapy outcomes are related to the quality of the therapeutic relationship as well as the personal characteristics of counsellors. Thus, in a teaching and learning context, the therapeutic relationship promotes

positive growth among counselling trainees. This study indicates that trainees possess personal qualities, such as self-disclosure and sharing, creativity in handling group work sessions, taking the initiative and being independent as well as enjoying conducting group work sessions, all of which will prepare them to become a group leader. Such qualities are associated with their experience of experiential learning activities.

In summary, experiential learning activities as well as therapeutic factors in group work courses have greatly contributed to the counsellor educators' and trainees' experiences, thereby promoting their growth. Nevertheless, these factors do not facilitate the process of teaching and learning independently, rather should be implemented collectively in the teaching and learning process. The three elements were interrelated in the process of understanding the experiences of both educators and trainees that promote best practice in group work training. The uniqueness of the approach used by counsellor educators in teaching and learning activities reflected the unique therapeutic elements that contributed to the process of teaching and learning. Such positive forces also are driven by the unique personal qualities of counsellor educator, contributing to the uniqueness of the counselling trainees' personalities. However, this particular study did not aim to identify whether the changes occur before or after the group work training. In some respects, these key concepts of experiential learning, therapeutic factors and personal qualities, could be interpreted as key learning processes that counsellor educators need to be consider during group work training.

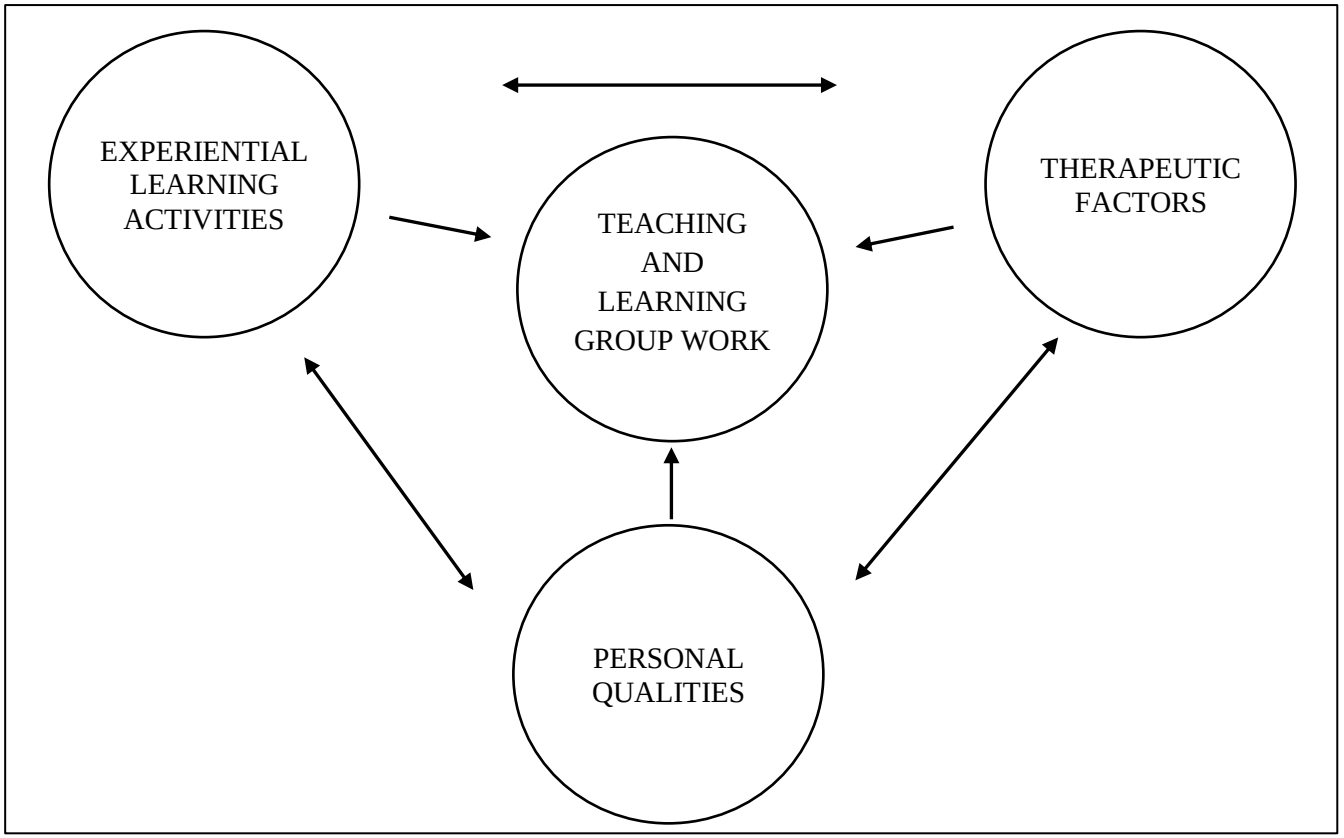

Figure 5.1: The interaction of experiential learning activities, personal qualities and therapeutic factors during the teaching and learning group work.

5.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on understanding the interactions between experiential learning activities, therapeutic factors and personal qualities that contribute to the process of teaching and learning group work.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions from this study in four main sections. Section 6.1 summarises the main contributions of the study to counsellor education literature, while Section 6.2 presents the limitations that emerged during the research. Next, Section 6.3 highlights the implications for group work training in counsellor education, proposing potential areas for future research and practice. The final section ends with a personal reflection to conclude this journey.

6.1 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The primary aim of this study was to explore the experiences of counselling trainees and counsellor educators during teaching and learning group work courses in an undergraduate counselling program. A qualitative case study was utilised to explore the meaning of the participants' experiences, from their individual point of view and context. The person-centred approach was used to guide the understanding of the experiences of both parties, consisting of their experiences (in teaching and learning) and perception in the setting. The primary data sources were six focus group interviews with counselling trainees and interviews with six counsellor educators from three public universities. This chapter summarises the findings from this study in relation to the research questions: 1) What are the experiential learning activities involved in reflecting good practice in teaching and learning group work courses?; 2) What are the therapeutic factors involved in reflecting good practice in teaching and learning

group work courses?; 3) What are the personal qualities of counsellor educators and counselling trainees in relation to their participation in teaching and learning group work courses?; and 4) In what ways do the interaction of experiential learning activities, personal qualities and therapeutic factors in group work training promote the teaching and learning process?

This study reaffirms the notion that experiential learning is an essential approach in counsellor education curriculum, particularly in group work training. In Chapter Five, an in-depth discussion dissected the experiential learning activities in group work courses, challenges of experiential leadership, advantages of group work assignments, and improvement experiential activities. This study differs from previous research, exploring issues in group work training from the dimension of undergraduate counselling practice. Based on Kolb's model, students were involved in the cycle of experiential learning: abstract conceptualisation (discussion), active experimentation (modelling and simulation), concrete experience (personal group as client and leadership), and reflective observation (reflection journal). Such experiential activities also promoted therapeutic factors in teaching and learning. The experiential activities conducted by the counsellor educators also indicate the uniqueness of their personal qualities in relation to teaching and learning group work.

Previously, numerous studies highlighted the contribution of therapeutic factors in group work to promote change among clients. However, this study added new knowledge by looking at the element of therapeutic factors in group work training. Each element has been discussed in Chapter Five: facilitative approach

in teaching group work, respecting cultural differences and diversity, development of socialising skills in group work courses, cohesiveness, positive attitude in teaching group work courses, and positive attitude towards learning group work. The first element of therapeutic factor is a facilitative approach in teaching group work, which occurs during classes, tutorials and modelling sessions. Throughout the process, students are encouraged to voice their thoughts and feelings, enhancing development as they learn to self-disclose. The second therapeutic factor is respecting cultural differences and diversity. The counsellor educators' awareness of respecting cultural differences is evidence of their determination to train counsellors who are open-minded and more empathic. Such experience dealing with different backgrounds will also help counselling trainees to learn and modify new thinking and behaviour in order to increase a cultural conscience. The next therapeutic factor is the development of socialising skills among counselling trainees, with encouragement from counsellor educator for interaction and discussion portraying a group dynamic session with clients. The trainees learn to handle exciting group activities that promote interaction, while use of an appropriate language enhanced their socialising skills. Cohesion between counselling trainees and counsellor educators is the fourth therapeutic factor in this study, evidenced by the initiation of a positive relationship by the educator. This exhibits their friendliness and care in dealing with trainees, which, when coupled with trainee attendance and commitment, will prove the positive bonds. Consequently, counselling trainees are also motivated to learn. The fourth and fifth therapeutic factors are related with positive attitude towards teaching and learning group work courses. The

findings showed that counsellor educators possessed the motivation and creativity to enhance their courses, and put extra effort into managing them, thereby encouraging the trainees to learn and be patient in teaching. Meanwhile, positive attitudes among trainees included the willingness to face challenges, trainee's responsibility and effort, initiative in handling group activities and motivation to attend the group work class. The findings showed that therapeutic factors are correlated with positive attitudes towards teaching and learning group work courses, creating positive forces throughout the process and subsequently, promoting change.

This study identified the personal qualities necessary for both counsellor educators and trainees to have in terms of teaching and learning group work. The three elements contributing towards selection as a counsellor educator are: professional experience in conducting group work session, experience in group work research, and experience of being mentored by a group work lecturer. Generally, trainees experience counselling-related matters during secondary school, generating their interest in applying to a counselling program. The findings indicated that counsellor educators possess various positive personal qualities, such as willingness to self-disclose, genuineness and congruence, caring, assertiveness, adherence to ethics, interest in training people, acceptance towards clients, and freedom in teaching. These personal qualities can be categorised according to either their relationship with counselling trainees, or practice as an academician or practitioner. In terms of their relationship with trainees, the counsellor educator shows willingness to self-disclose, being genuine and congruence, caring and assertive. These qualities create a positive

working alliance between the counsellor educators and students (Jones *et al*., 2008; Schapira, 2000; Triana, 2007). Furthermore, the counsellor educators also exhibit a positive attitude in the context of professional practice, such as adherence to ethics, interest in training, acceptance towards clients and freedom in teaching. Yalom and Leszcz (2005) have reaffirmed the significance for counsellor educators to model professional values and ethics. The personal qualities of trainees found in relation of their involvement in group work training included self-disclosure and sharing, creativity in handling the session, motivation to attend group work and enjoyment in handling group work sessions.

The uniqueness of the findings is the interaction of experiential learning activities, therapeutic factors and personal qualities in the process of teaching and learning group work as discussed in Section 5.4. These three elements were found to contribute to the process of teaching and learning group work. A counsellor educator should ensure that the element of therapeutic factors occurs during their teaching and learning process, particularly when conducting experiential learning activities. Besides focusing on therapeutic factors in group work itself, the educators should identify the therapeutic factors in teaching and learning as they create a positive force to the learning experience of the counselling trainees. The personal qualities of a group leader are also important to develop a competent group leader. The development of personal qualities of trainees needs to be considered during the teaching and learning process, as the trainees observe the educators, the personal qualities of educators may reflect the quality of a group leader. However, the findings did not clearly indicate the

direction of the interaction between experiential learning activities, therapeutic factors and personal qualities in the process of teaching and learning group work.

Thus, this study has contributed to the body of knowledge, suggesting an area for potential future research to explore the contribution of experiential learning activities, therapeutic factors and personal qualities of counsellor educators and trainees in teaching and learning group work.

6.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The findings of this research show the significance of understanding the experiential learning activities employed by counsellor educators in group work training. The counsellor educators have the freedom to design and plan their group work curriculum based on counselling standards and literature related with group work, which may provide a guide for them in implementing the group work courses. The findings revealed that group work courses may be portrayed as a group work process, whereby a counsellor educator acts as a leader during the teaching and learning process. However, the counsellor educators need to aware of the boundaries between conducting a group process with client and students. The teaching and learning process are focussed on the development of leadership skills, but the therapeutic factors in teaching and learning group work provide a positive learning environment for counselling trainees. Such elements should be incorporated into teaching and learning group work courses as they are beneficial for trainees in order for them to positively change into becoming an effective group leader.

In addition, it was also evident that respecting culture differences and diversity contribute to the therapeutic factors in teaching and learning. It is important to consider the cultural conscience during the teaching and learning process as Malaysia consists of multiple ethnicities from various backgrounds. As the trainees will conduct their own group work sessions in the future, it is important for the educators to model an appropriate role in dealing with people from different backgrounds. In addition, educators also incorporated reciting a prayer in their teaching and learning, but at the same time, showed respect to the trainees' background. They also gave the trainees the opportunity to pray according to their religion. The educators also allowed language choices among trainees in the experiential learning activities, which portrayed a significant counselling relationship. As a leader, the freedom for group members to communicate based on their own preferred language is important in building such a therapeutic relationship. Such respect will help counselling trainees to feel safe and accepted in group work classes.

The personal qualities of both counsellor educators and trainees play a significant role in teaching and learning group work courses. The key authors of group work (Corey *et al*., 2014; Masson *et al*., 2012) emphasise the qualities of a group leader and such qualities are also important among educators and trainees. The educators involved in group work training need to identify qualities that may contribute to the therapeutic forces in teaching and learning, promoting a conducive learning environment. Besides teaching the students appropriate qualities of a group leader, counsellor educators need to possess the qualities required for educators. In conclusion, the findings from this study indicate that

counsellor educators need to consider the interaction of experiential learning activities, therapeutic factors and personal qualities to promote the teaching and learning process in group work training.

6.2 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

In this study, the main aim was to understand the teaching and learning experiences in group work courses of counsellor educators and counselling trainees in Malaysian universities. In term of the methodological limitations, the findings of this study are bound only by the shared experiences of the participants involved in this study, therefore, they should not be interpreted as representative of the group work training process in other counselling programs.

In this study, my epistemological stance befits the interpretivist position, therefore, my own understanding and definition of group work courses will have influenced how I approached the participants' and the interpretation of the data. However, as I have elaborated in Section 1.5, the triangulation methods in this study helped to reduce researcher bias. Another limitation is the collection of information from interviews with counsellor educators and focus groups with the trainees only. Other methods of data collection, such as observation of teaching and learning sessions, and the use of reflective journals and diaries may help the process of data triangulation. Due to time and financial constraints, additional data collection methods were not performed. Nonetheless, I acknowledge the potential amount of additional data that such data collection methods may have provided. Furthermore, the applicability of these findings is limited to the profile of the participants involved. Since specific demographic,

educational, and professional background information was not collected as part of this study, the description provided of the sample of participants is limited, which limits the transferability of the data to some extent.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study provided valuable information and knowledge on experiential teaching and learning elements in group work courses. Ogunfowora and Drapeau (2008) reinforced the significance of counselling programs that emphasise more empirical approaches in order to improve the quality of the training. Therefore, this study should be replicated to include more counsellor educators and trainees from a broader range of institutions. Future research could also involve an in-depth investigation of trainees' personal views, counsellor educators' reflections, and observation of experiential learning activities. Other data collection methods, including observation of teaching and learning process, survey, and analysing a learning reflection from trainees as well as reflections of counsellor educators, could be employed.

This study has explored the perspectives of both counsellor educators and trainees to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the group work curriculum implementation. In future work, the investigation could include the practitioner's view on group work leader's preparation for the profession, with additional in-field input as they deal with clients directly. The combination of different views, perspectives and experiences may lead to an improved group work teaching and learning framework in the future.

Parallel to online learning development in higher education institutions, any future work could also incorporate an element of online learning in group work courses to help develop the leadership skills of counselling trainees. The usage of internet among students and the trend in online communication may affect the teaching and learning process, so, in addition to face-to-face learning, future studies could incorporate online learning in teaching group work. The therapeutic factors for such online experiential activities may contribute to current literature in counsellor education. This could be explored with the use of online learning applications, such as Blended Learning, Malaysian Open Online Course (MOOC), and Flipped Learning.

6.4 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

My experience in teaching group work courses and involvement in the process of obtaining approval from the Board of Counsellors (Malaysia) for UNIMAS counselling program accreditation inspired my research interest in the field of group work training. I started preparing the approval document in 2002, and The Malaysian Standards and Qualification of Counsellor Training was published in 2003. It has been a great journey throughout the research process of group work course development in Malaysian universities.

This research necessitated one-to-one interviews with counsellor educators and focus groups with counselling trainees from three universities. I gained ample data by approaching and learning of the participants' experiences and opinions directly, however, the efforts to interview in three different universities in West Malaysia was challenging as I am located in East Malaysia. The preparation for

this research was highly structured, as in-depth planning was necessary to make appointments with participants, arrange flight schedules, and book accommodation, transportation and venues for the interview sessions. Nonetheless, my fiery desire to conduct this qualitative research has generated fruitful outcomes.

Conducting field interview and focus group sessions allowed me to contribute to counsellor education practice and research. During the process of recruiting potential participants from the universities, I was aware that the counsellor educators were my colleagues as counsellor educators in Malaysian public universities. I showed them the utmost respect when communicating, and highlighted the significance of the study to the field in Malaysia. Their acceptance and cooperation in sharing their experiences and opinions was very much appreciated, which further enhanced the feeling of connectedness and led to energetic and therapeutic interview sessions.

The palpable energy was also felt during the focus groups with the undergraduate counselling trainees. Despite it being our first encounter, the trust and honesty was apparent and steadily built throughout as they shared their thoughts and feelings. Therefore, I have emphasised the importance of their voices in order to improve and enhance teaching strategies, particularly in group work courses. Their input will definitely contribute to the understanding of their needs and in constructing appropriate and suitable teaching and learning styles in the profession.

As a counsellor educator with group work leadership skills, I am aware of my role as a researcher in the focus group discussions, which is a value-added experience. The aspect of confidentiality was emphasised to create a safe and trusting environment, with extra attention being paid to the group dynamics and encouragement to share. The trainees also respected members of the group and allowed their fellow peers to communicate freely. I always reminded myself to focus the discussions in line with the purpose of the study as a researcher.

Finally, it was most gratifying to be able to contribute to the approaches and outcomes in the group work training literature. In the future, I would like to expand this research by investigating a more micro instructional method in teaching group work courses.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter to the participants (counsellor educators)

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM MALAYSIA CAMPUS

TAJUK KAJIAN: PREPARING COUNSELLORS/ PSYCHOTHERAPIST FOR GROUP WORK PRACTICE

PENYELIDIK : SALMAH BT MOHAMAD YUSOFF
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Assalamualaikum/ Salam Sejahtera,

YBhg Prof/Dr./Tuan/Puan,

Saya dengan segala hormatnya ingin menjemput Prof/Dr./Tuan/Puan untuk terlibat sebagai partisipan dalam penyelidikan yang sedang saya jalankan bagi program Ijazah Doktor Falsafah dari The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus.

Untuk pengetahuan Prof/Dr./Tuan/Puan tajuk kajian saya ialah "*Preparing Counsellors/ Psychotherapist for Group Work Practice".* Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka pandangan, pengalaman dan sikap para pelajar dan pensyarah kaunseling tentang proses pembelajaran dan pengajaran kursus Kelompok dalam Program Kaunseling. Hasil kajian ini diharapkan dapat menambah pengetahuan dan maklumat dalam bidang pendidikan kaunselor, khasnya tentang proses pembelajaran dan pengajaran kursus Kelompok dalam konteks Malaysia.

Sesi temubual ini akan memberi peluang kepada Prof/Dr./Tuan/Puan untuk berkongsi pengalaman tentang proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran kursus Kelompok yang pernah Prof/Dr./Tuan/Puan jalankan di universiti. Saya juga memohon kebenaran untuk merakam sesi temubual ini menggunakan perakam audio bertujuan untuk catatan dan memudahkan proses analisis data. Identiti Prof/Dr./Tuan/Puan akan dirahsiakan dan hasil temubual akan digunakan untuk tujuan penyelidikan ini sahaja.

Penyertaan di dalam kajian ini adalah secara sukarela dan Prof/Dr./Tuan/Puan boleh menarik diri bila-bila masa dalam sesi ini. Sekiranya Prof/Dr./Tuan/Puan ingin mendapat maklumat lanjut tentang kajian ini Prof/Dr./Tuan/Puan boleh menghubungi saya ataupun penyelia saya seperti emel di atas. Saya memohon untuk Prof/Dr./Tuan/Puan menandatangani persetujuan termaklum (*inform consent*) di bawah sebagai tanda bersetuju untuk terlibat dalam kajian ini.

Moga penyertaan Prof/Dr./Tuan/Puan ini akan membantu meningkatkan kualiti pendidikan kaunselor di Malaysia, khasnya bagi proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran kursus Kelompok.

Sekian, terima kasih.

(Salmah Mohamad Yusoff)
Pelajar PhD
School of Education
The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus
Jalan Broga
43500 Semenyih , Selangor Darul Ehsan
Tel: 6013-811 0605

Appendix B : Letter to the participants (counselling trainees)

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM MALAYSIA CAMPUS

TAJUK KAJIAN: PREPARING COUNSELLORS/ PSYCHOTHERAPIST FOR GROUP WORK PRACTICE

PENYELIDIK : SALMAH BT MOHAMAD YUSOFF
ksdx8smy@nottingham.edu.my,
salmahmy@yahoo.co.uk
PENYELIA : DR. GARY WINSHIP, Associate Professor
Gary.Winship@nottingham.ac.uk
www.winship.info

Assalamualaikum/ Salam Sejahtera,

Pelajar-pelajar yang dihormati,

Saya dengan segala hormatnya ingin menjemput saudara/i untuk terlibat sebagai partisipan dalam penyelidikan yang sedang saya jalankan bagi program Ijazah Doktor Falsafah dari The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus.

Untuk pengetahuan saudara/i tajuk kajian saya ialah "*Preparing Counsellors/ Psychotherapist for Group Work Practice".* Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneroka pandangan, pengalaman dan sikap para pelajar dan pensyarah kaunseling tentang proses pembelajaran dan pengajaran kursus Kelompok dalam Program Kaunseling. Hasil kajian ini diharapkan dapat menambah pengetahuan dan maklumat dalam bidang pendidikan kaunselor, khasnya tentang proses pembelajaran dan pengajaran kursus Kelompok dalam konteks Malaysia.

Sesi temubual kumpulan fokus ini akan memberi peluang kepada saudara/i untuk berkongsi pengalaman tentang proses pembelajaran kursus Kelompok yang pernah saudara/i ikuti di universiti. Sesi ini berjalan dalam suasana saling menghormati dan setiap individu mempunyai peluang untuk menyatakan pandangan dan pengalamannya. Saya juga memohon kebenaran untuk merakam sesi temubual ini menggunakan perakam audio bertujuan untuk catatan dan memudahkan proses analisis data. Identiti saudara/i akan dirahsiakan dan hasil temubual akan digunakan untuk tujuan penyelidikan ini sahaja.

Penyertaan di dalam kajian ini adalah secara sukarela dan saudara/i boleh menarik diri bila-bila masa dalam sesi ini. Sekiranya saudara/i ingin mendapat maklumat lanjut tentang kajian ini saudara/i boleh menghubungi saya ataupun penyelia saya seperti emel di atas. Saya memohon untuk saudara/i menandatangani persetujuan termaklum (*inform consent*) di bawah sebagai tanda bersetuju untuk terlibat dalam kajian ini.

Moga penyertaan saudara/i ini akan membantu meningkatkan kualiti pendidikan kaunselor di Malaysia, khasnya bagi proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran kursus Kelompok.

Sekian, terima kasih.

(Salmah Mohamad Yusoff)
Pelajar PhD
School of Education
The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus
Jalan Broga
43500 Semenyih , Selangor Darul Ehsan
Tel: 6013-811 0605

Appendix C : Approval letter from research ethics committee

School of Education – Research Ethics Approval Form

The University of Nottingham

Name	Salmah Mohamad Yusoff
Main Supervisor	Gary Winship
Course of Study	PhD
Title of Research Project:	Preparing counsellors and psychotherapist for group work practice
Is this a resubmission?	No

Date statement of research ethics received by PGR Office: 23.07.10

Research Ethics Coordinator Comments:

On the whole, I am content to approve this application. I have two points to make: (1) Confidentiality of on-line questionnaire. I assume that it is difficult to ensure full confidentiality in this, and (if I am correct) it would be appropriate to state this clearly in the guidance and consent forms for the on-line aspects. (2) What will happen to the data when you have completed the research? Will is be stored in some way – if so, how will you ensure it is stored confidentially and securely? Or will it be destroyed – if so, you should make clear that it will be confidentially destroyed.

Outcome:

Approved [✓] Revise and Resubmit [ ]

Signed: Name: Professor John Holford (Research Ethics Coordinator) Date: 28th July 2010

Appendix D: Approval letter from MOHE

KEMENTERIAN PENGAJIAN TINGGI MALAYSIA
BAHAGIAN PERANCANGAN DAN PENYELIDIKAN
ARAS 3, BLOK E3, KOMPLEKS E,
PUSAT PENTADBIRAN KERAJAAN PERSEKUTUAN 62505 PUTRAJAYA
TEL : 03-8883 5384 FAX : 03-8889 3471 WEB : http://www.mohe.gov.my

Ruj. Kami : KPT.R.620 – 1/1/1 Jld.16(25)
Tarikh : 24 Januari 2011

Pn. Salmah binti Mohamad Yusoff
60, Jalan Akalifa
Taman Sejoli
93050 Kuching
Sarawak.
(Tel: 013-811 0605)

Tuan/Puan,

Kebenaran Untuk Menjalankan Kajian Di IPT / Jabatan / Bahagian di bawah Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia

Dengan segala hormatnya saya diarah merujuk perkara tersebut di atas.

2. Sukacita dimaklumkan bahawa permohonan tuan/puan untuk menjalankan kajian bertajuk :

"*Preparing Counsellors / Psychotherapist For Group Work Practice*" diluluskan.

3. Kelulusan ini adalah berdasarkan kepada cadangan penyelidikan dan instrumen kajian yang tuan/puan kemukakan ke Bahagian ini. **Kebenaran bagi menggunakan sampel kajian perlu diperoleh daripada Naib Canselor / Rektor / Presiden / Ketua Eksekutif / Pengarah / Dekan Fakulti di IPTA / IPTS / Politeknik / Kolej Komuniti / Agensi / Jabatan / Bahagian yang berkenaan.**

4. Sila kemukakan ke Bahagian ini senaskhah laporan akhir kajian setelah selesai kelak. Adalah dimaklumkan, tuan/puan hendaklah mendapat **kebenaran terlebih dahulu** daripada Bahagian ini sekiranya sebahagian atau sepenuhnya dapatan kajian tersebut hendak dibentangkan di mana-mana forum atau seminar atau untuk diumumkan kepada media massa.

1

Sekian untuk makluman dan tindakan tuan/puan selanjutnya. Terima kasih.

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menurut perintah,

(CHUAH BEE LENG)
Bahagian Perancangan & Penyelidikan
b.p. Ketua Setiausaha
Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia.

2

Appendix E: Interview schedule for counsellor educators

"Preparing Counsellors/ Psychotherapist for Group Work Practice

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Lecturer's Views, Experiences and Attitudes on Teaching Group Work Course/s

Date	
Time	
Venue	
Participant	

Dear Dr./ Sir/ Mdm,

Thank you for participating in this research. This research is looking at the lecturer's views, experiences and attitudes towards teaching Group Work Courses in undergraduate counselling program. Your contribution in this session is important to enhance the understanding and adding the knowledge about the development of counsellor education, particularly in Malaysian context. Your identity as a participant will be anonymous and the data will be use only for the research purposes.

Part I : Academic Background and General Information About the Group Work Courses

A. Can you tell me about your academic degree backgrounds?
   - Undergraduate Level
   - Postgraduate Level
   - Others
B. Where do you get you counselling/ psychotherapy training?
C. What are the name of Group Work Courses did you teach?
D. How long have you been teaching this course/s?
E. How many students do you have in this class?
F. What are the other courses did you teach?

Part II: Teaching Experiences in Group Work Courses

A. What is the nature of the courses (more theoretical or practical base)? Can you tell me more about this?
B. What are the contact hours for this course/s (teaching hours)? Do you think the contact hours are reasonable? Please elaborate about this.
C. Can you tell me how did you organize/plan this course?
D. Do you use any specific approach/ theory in teaching this course/s?
E. What are the teaching strategies did you use in the class?
F. Did you use any teaching aids during the class? Did you prepare lecture notes/ handouts/ journal etc?
G. Can you tell me about experiential learning activities in the class?
H. How did you conduct/ manage the practicum for the students?
I. What are the unique/special activities in your group work class?

J. Do you have any specific text book/ references during teaching this course?
K. What are the language did you use in this course (lecture/class, demonstration, practicum, notes)?
L. How did you prepare your notes?
M. How about the assignment? What kind of assignment did you think most benefit your students? Why?
N. What kind/ type of client did you students meet during group work practicum/ training? Do you think the clients are suitable with the students? Are the sessions prepare the students face the real situation in group work setting?
O. How about preparation for the students to be a multicultural competence in handling group work? How do you incorporate the the multicultural element in your teaching?
P. Did you use any element of technology (IT/Internet/online session/etc) in your teaching? Please elaborate about this?
Q. How may lecturers/ tutor involve in these courses?
R. Did you teach any other courses that related to group work?
S. What are the constraints/ difficulties/ challenges in teaching group work courses? challenges in teaching group work
T. Is there anything that you would have liked to have been different during your teaching experience?. In other words, how could your teaching can be improved to prepare the students for working in group therapy?
U. What do you think the most important element need to be included in group work courses?
V. How do you see your relationship with your students (is there any element of counsellor-client relationship/ what kind of boundary did you set?) Can you elaborate more about this?
W. Is there anything new that you think you have develop for this course/s?
X. Can you tell me about your group work laboratory?
Y. What are the different teaching group work courses in undergraduate level compare with postgraduate level? (If you're teaching both level)

Part III: Student Attitude Towards Group Work Courses

A. How do you find the students attitude/ interest in this group work courses?
B. What do you think any other factors that contribute to the development of leadership skills among your students? (Any activities organize by the students/ departments/ university?)
C. How do you find your student responses to the assignment/activities given?
D. What are the most favorite assignment/activities?
E. What are the element in your teaching that help the student most to be a group leader?
F. How was the student's participation in the class/activities?
G. Do you think the students are focus on their learning or grade?
H. What makes the students be a competent group leader?

Part IV: Lecturer Attitude Towards the Group Work Courses

A. What makes you teach this course/s?
B. How do you find teaching this group work course/s?
C. Do you like/ enjoy/ satisfy teaching this course/s?
D. What motivates you to teach this course/s?
E. How do you manage to get update with the development of knowledge in group work?
F. Have you attend any seminars/ training related to this course?
G. Did you handle any group counselling/ therapy?

H. If you're giving the opportunity to teach next semester, are you going to teach this course? Why? Why not?
I. Do you have any training on teaching, pedagogy etc?

Part V: Evaluation and Assessment in Group Work Courses

A. Can you tell me about the evaluation and assessment of this course?
B. How did you evaluate the students' achievement in this course?
C. How can you improve the grading system?
D. Do you think the grade associate with a good leader?
E. How far do you think the group work courses prepare the students to be a group leader?

Part VI: Lecturers Views on Boards of Counsellors Curriculum Standard

A. What is your opinion regarding the Board of Counsellors roles in counselling curriculum particularly for group work courses.
B. Do you think the group work curriculum need to be controlled/ accredited by the Board of Counsellors or not? Please elaborate.
C. How do you find the Curriculum Standards provided by Board of Counsellors?
D. Did your counselling courses accredited by Board of Counsellors?
E. What are your suggestions to the Board of Counsellors for teaching group work development in Malaysia?

Thank you for participating in this research.

Appendix F : Researcher's guide for focus group interviews

"Preparing Counsellors/ Psychotherapist for Group Work Practice"

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Student's Views, Experiences and Attitudes Towards Group Work Course/s

Date	
Time	
Venue	
Group	

Dear Students,
Thank you for participating in this research. I am invited all of you to participate in my research "Preparing Counsellors/ Psychotherapist for Group Work Practice". This research is looking at student's views, experiences and attitudes towards Group Work Courses in undergraduate counselling program. As you know, group work is one of the core subjects in Undergraduate Counselling Program in Malaysian Universities. I hope all of you will enjoy sharing your opinions, perceptions and experiences about your group training. Your participation in this focus group interview will contribute to the improvement of the group counselling training in Malaysia. In this conversation, there is no right and wrong answer. Your opinions might be difference from others and we encourage you to speak base on your point of view. Every one of you will get the opportunity to speak and share with groups. Your identity as a participant will be anonymous and the data will be use only for the research purposes.

Part I: Opening Questions

1. Let's start by introduce yourself (name, semester, favorite subject in counselling program)
2. What do you think about the topic of our discussion today?

Part II: Experiences in Group Work Courses

1. What is your group work courses name?
2. Is group counselling course/s your favorite subject?
   If yes, please elaborate:
   If no, please explain:
3. What is the nature of your class (more theoretical or experiential?)
4. How many contact hours of this course/s? Do you think the contact hours are reasonable? Please elaborate about this.
5. What is/are the element/component/ activities in group work courses that you find interesting? Can you elaborate more about this?
6. What makes this course different?
7. How do you find the learning experience to be a group leader in this course?
8. What are the most valuable experiences in group work courses? Learning experiences that help you the most? Can you elaborate more about this?
9. What are the different of theory and practicum class?
10. What is the most/ least helpful activity in this class? Can you elaborate more about this?
11. What is the most/least helpful assignment in your class? What kinds of assignment you think build your competencies as group leader? Can you elaborate more about this?

12. What kind/ type of client did you meet during group work practicum/ training? Do you think your client will help you to face the real situation in group work setting?
13. What other experiences in your counselling programs (outside group counselling courses) that contribute to the effectiveness/competencies of you group counselling skills /what are the other factors that enhance your skills as a leader?
14. How far your group counselling courses prepared you as a group leader?
15. How your learning experiences are helps you in term of practices?
16. What are the challenges did you face in group counselling courses?
17. What are your understandings of multicultural competencies in group counselling? Have you been train to be a multicultural competence group leader? Can you elaborate your experience?
18. Do you have any experiences using technology (IT/online sessions/ internet) in group counselling courses? Can you elaborate more about this?
19. How would you describe an effective group counselling lab? Do you think your laboratory helps you to in this group work learning experience?
20. What are your opinions about the grading system/evaluation in group counselling courses?
21. Do you think you're focusing on learning or good grade in this course/s?
22. Is there anything else you would you have liked to learn from this course?

Part III: Views on Lecturers Teaching Strategies

1. What makes your group counselling lecturer interesting?
2. What kind of teaching methods use by the lecturer you thought most helpful in group work course/s.
3. How do you see your relationship with your lecturer? (is there any element of counsellor-client relationship)? Can you elaborate more about this?
4. Do you think group work lecturer need to have a certain identity or personality? If yes, what kind of personality do you think he/she should posses?
5. What are the elements that you think needed to be included in his/ her teaching strategies?

Part IV: End Questions

1. How do you think your experience of this course/learning activity could have been improved?
2. Is there anything else you would like to add about any of the issues we've already discussed, that you feel you've not had a chance to say?
3. Is there anything anyone would like to add about any issue we've not really covered which you feel reflects an important aspect of your learning experience for this course?
4. What other experiences that contributes to your growth/ development to be a group leader.

Thank you for participating in this research.

Appendix G: Consent form for interviewing participants

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project title	**:**	PREPARING COUNSELLORS/ PSYCHOTHERAPIST FOR GROUP WORK PRACTICE
Researcher's name	**:**	SALMAH MOHAMAD YUSOFF
Supervisor's name	**:**	ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR Dr. GARY WINSHIP

1. I have been informed of the nature of this research project.
2. I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified, unless I otherwise request to be named.
3. I understand that data will be stored in a locked safe of which no one else will have access other than the researcher, supervisor and examiners.
4. I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research.
5. I agree to participate in this research.

Signed ……
(Research participant)

Print name ……..……

Date …….....

Researcher:
Salmah Mohamad Yusoff
School of Education
The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus
ksdx8smy@nottingham.edu.my

Appendix H: Extract of interview transcript with Rania

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your academic degree backgrounds?

Rania: Actually in counselling field consider my ten years already, after finish my degree in counselling, I went to join a woman group, it's quite a famous woman group in KL, basically two major famous in KL. It was great opportunity working in woman group, because I handle many2 serious cases such as rape cases, domestic violence, child abuse, sexual harassment.... While I was doing my internship during my master's degree, and at the same time working as a student counsellor, that's where I was exposed to group work with my friend. We actually did a lot of group work together, anger management groups, leadership groups, problem solving groups, etcetera. So that really helped, we gave feedback to each other.

Interviewer: Your competencies in group work skills not only from training in the university but also from the their field experience.

Rania: I think my competency in leading a group session is very much based on work experience. Of course, I cannot deny my exposure to the technique and to group theory in class. However, the skill I learned a lot from trial and error. When I was working with NGOs, I ran a support group for rape survivors. It was quite tough and my counselling competencies were not there until I slowly explored some more counselling work. When I had the chance to do counselling sessions, my competency started developing. I also attended counselling to enhance my competencies. I am willing to spend money to attend workshops.

Interviewer: How do you find teaching group work courses?.

Rania: I feel very happy because I get the chance to teach undergraduate students, and I am thinking to use this opportunity, although it is only 14 weeks in each semester, but I want them to really learn, I want them to become competent.

Interviewer: What are the language did you use in this course (lecture/class, demonstration, practicum, notes)?

Rania: Language cannot be a limitation for learning. I believe that to help the student they must be allowed to ask questions in their own language. If they don't have the channel, they will not express themselves. I use PowerPoint slides in English, all the English comes from the textbook, but I try my best to translate into Malay to help them understand

Interviewer: How do you see the student attitude for example the class attendance?

Rania: I can't deny, every batch of students we have some students like that, just come in for the sake of attendance, I can't help, I cannot control, because this student they might have they own struggle, but thing that make you on is you have around at least 50-60 of them who really want to learn, as I remember recent Chinese New Year, I feel very touch of them, because Chinese New Year one week were off, and Monday is my class, so a lot of them Chinese, only 5 of them Chinese was very few of them. They told me they can't come back, because some stay in Sabah Sarawak, they can't come back because the ticket are very expensive. So they say sorry to me, so later why not now, we ask the class to be delay. So they discuss with the class if they don't mind wait until they come back later hahahhaa, and we have the class on Wednesday, and they say yes. So, I am very touch with that may be I Malaysia theme is there. So you can see this group of student don't want to miss classes, though they supposedly, they can miss one class no big deal. But they don't want to miss any classes. They talk to their friend and all of their friend willing to help and support. And

that make me very touch with what happened. You feel mmmm...they really want to learn something from your class, you know. So, that's why I feel very grateful.

Interviewer: How about the assignment?

Rania: My assignments are not text based; they are more focused on the students' own growth, personal experience, integration of the theory with their experience. You can see whether they understand how to integrate theory with themselves. If you don't see this, it means that the integration is still limited. Hopefully training them to answer this type of question is like reflection for them.

Interviewer: How do you interact with students?

Rania: My class is not just about teaching them a new thing, but also a class to encourage them to be who they are. Because when you allowed them to speak and express themselves, they slowly search themselves, the confidence start come out, because I guess that also related with my own experience. I was a low self esteem girl during my first year degree. Keep quiet and not ask question, a lot of bully and upset. When come to second year somehow someone transformation, I left my group which I close where bully took place. I become alone myself. Later other group member join me I become my own group. I build up confidence myself, I start question, understanding, my knowledge & confidence increase. When I ask myself I wish that my lecturer willing to help, just to stop a while, say, how are you, what's your perspective for this thing. Just initiate and give opportunity to speak.

Interviewer: How do you find teaching and doing counselling?

Rania: I find a balance in teaching and counselling, when I do fully counselling I find I could not imbalance. I feel I break down easily, so now I will go into teaching and doing minor counselling work, it need to come together. Because teaching give me more empower so I find balance, I am not going into fully therapist, because I realise from my past experience 10 years I cannot find a balance, it really affected emotionally me. When I do coaching and guidance in my class, I feel I can share, teach how them can become a better therapist. That it give a lot of meaningful and positive with give back to you.

Appendix I: Extract of focus group interview transcript with U1

Interviewer: What is your Group Work courses name?

Student: There are two group work courses in our counselling programme. The first one is the group dynamic course, which places more emphasis on the theoretical aspects of group counselling. I prefer the second course, which is group counselling, and which gives us experience with clients [CT-Brendan, U1].

Interviewer: Is group counselling course/s your favorite subject?

Student: I am more interested in the Group Counselling course where the group dynamic, phases and client growth during the group process can be seen. The group members support each other and receive support from various perspectives during the group counselling sessions. Meanwhile, the individual counselling sessions are about one-to-one communication between the counsellor and the client [CT-Brendan, U1].

Yes, because of the influence from the lecturer. It was difficult to handle 4 to 5 clients. However, I felt comfortable because the lecturer was very passion in teaching us. [CT-Belinda, U1]

Interviewer: What makes your group counselling lecturer interesting?

Student: I am impressed by my group work lecturer. She is caring and always conducts activities in the class. She acts as a leader and models the group work session [CT-Siew May, U1].

The lecturer is so interesting when conducting the class. She shares a lot of her counselling experience with us. The teaching is not based on her planning alone, she also takes care of our feelings and conditions. For example, if she shows us a video and finds that the session is boring for us, she will stop the video and start doing activities in class [CT-Karen, U1].

She is very patience in giving us explanations in class. She will spend time listening to our problems in understanding the subject and then she explains things to us. Even if I make a mistake while conducting the group sessions, she will motivate me to learn from my mistakes [CT-Brendan, U1].

I am comfortable with the lecturer and her teaching style. She shows empathy and understands my problems. I think she uses the client-centered approach as she is concerned with others [CT-Angie, U1].

Interviewer: How do you think your experience of this course/learning activity could have been improved?

Student: I think the practical elements in the group counselling courses are less than in the individual counselling course. We are exposed to individual counselling sessions from the second semester of our studies. However, for the group counselling courses, we only practice during the course that is taught in that particular semester [CT-Brendan, U1].

I agree with my friend that we need to include more practical elements of group counselling during our studies. I was not confident when I went to start my group

counselling session. I believed I would become more confident after doing more sessions. It is not enough for us to practice the sessions only in one semester. Looking at the percentages, there is a 50-50 likelihood that I will conduct group counselling sessions in the future [CT-Siew May, U1].

Interviewer: Can you share about the assignment given for this course?

Student: One of the assignments is handling group counseling. We need to run at least five group session and normally the group members are university students. [CT-Brendan, U1]

The assignment was practical because we need to become a group members/ clients before running our own group. I learn to be a leader from the experience as client. [CT-Angie, U1]

Interviewer: What other experiences that contributes to your growth/ development to be a group leader?

Student: I join university activities that related to counselling, for examples conducting guidance activities for the secondary school. [Siew Mei, UM]
I have experience handling camping activities for secondary school students. The students were divided into small group and I become a leader for one of the group. I experience conducting ice breaking and learnt about the group dynamic. [CT-Brendan, U1]