

THE TREND OF RESEARCH PROJECT AMONG GRADUATES OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMME

Aslina Ahmad¹
Norsimaa Ahmad²
Pau Kee³
Wan Marzuki Wan Jaafar⁴

^{1,2,3}Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia;

⁴ Universiti Putra Malaysia

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Abstract: *The aim of this research is to obtain the database of the final year projects conducted by undergraduates of Bachelor of Education specializing in Guidance and Counselling in Malaysia. The research surveyed the graduates effort in utilizing the research design, target group, variables, implications and their suggestion for future research. The focused search for the data was conducted on counselling graduates in one education university library in Malaysia. The findings showed that the initial query search resulted in 63 final year projects. The most preferable research design is quantitative research, while the target group mostly involved is school students. The data also showed that the variables mostly chosen is variables related to academic aspects. Implications from the data were focused on counsellor and the suggestions given were mostly on school students. Thus, the findings in this research are useful for future research in guidance and counselling.*

Keywords: *Trend of final year project, guidance and counselling graduates, research design, sample, variables.*

Introduction

Guidance and counselling has been introduced in Malaysia for nearly 30 years. The first setting where guidance is seen significance and important is at school followed by other settings such as higher institutions, government agencies such as The Welfare Department, Religious Department, Rehabilitation Centres and also private sectors (Suradi, 2004). The importance of school counsellors and the critical need was acknowledged by the Malaysian Ministry of Education thus decided to appoint full time school counselors (Norah, Saleh & Abu Yazid, 2012).

The Counselling Society in Malaysia then, formerly known as The Malaysian Counsellor Association (PERKAMA) was established in 1982. In 2011, as it has grown tremendously, the association has been spreading their network with international organisation and was named as PERKAMA International Association. The main purpose of this association is to create a common professional foundation for counsellors or related helping professionals in Malaysia, in terms of professional orientation and networking.

Due to the complexity of social ills and the urge need to have trained and qualified personnel to curb these problems, the Counsellors Act was enacted in 1988. A formal board namely Board of Counsellors, a statutory body is placed under the Ministry of Women, Family and Society Development. The board was established to ensure professionalism and high standards among counsellors. The Act provides important aspects regarding the registration and practice of counsellors in Malaysia with the implementation, it is mandatory for all practising counsellors to be registered with the Board under the Counsellors Act 1998 [Act 580]. The Board is expected to oversee and regulate counselling services in Malaysia as counsellors exist in schools, universities, public services, drug rehabilitation centres, prison, religious and health centres, corporation and community. It can be seen here that the function of the board is to diversify the supervision of counselling services, assess the need for counselling services in Malaysia, regulate the counsellor's training and determine the type and level of counselling to be held in Malaysia. The Board of Counsellors also offers recommendations to the government in relation to helping professions as well as issues pertaining to the society.

Malaysian counselling practice is subjected to the Council for Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programme (CACREP) guidelines (Azizah & Siti Salina, 2015). To ensure that counselling graduates meet the requirements of the Malaysian Counsellor Board's licensing, students must meet the requirements. There are 11 components that need to be fulfilled in training counselors in Malaysia. Among them are Group Work, Career Development, Human Development, Helping Relationship, Professional Identity, Multicultural, Testing and Measurement, Research and Program Evaluation, Practicum, Internship and courses related to main area.

Counselling graduates for the undergraduate education counseling programmes are also asked to carry out a final year project pertaining any issues regarding counselling in Malaysia. According to Fariza Khalid (2016) many researchers, especially in the field of education conduct research involving teachers and students either in primary, secondary or even teachers training teacher institutions and colleges, thus is more focused on academic aspects. Future researchers need a guideline of what have been investigated in the past five years and what are the suggestions and implications of the study to really contribute to the counselling profession as well as to the country. As such, the objectives of this study is to survey university students' effort in depth, in choosing the research design, the target group, variables, implication and suggestions.

Methodology

This is a study focusing on the final year project among graduates of guidance and counselling students. The data collected only covers at one the main library of one education university in Malaysia. It covers only final year projects of undergraduate counselling programmes offered at an education university. The final projects involved were projects that were stacked at the university library from 2012 to 2016. Only projects written in Malay language were selected. Percentage and frequency was utilized to analyse the data.

Results and Discussion

The initial query search resulted in more than 100 final year projects. However, only final year projects of counselling graduates of year 2012 were found in the library. The search resulted only in 63 final year projects. Table 1 shows that a number of 52 (82.5%) projects were written by female graduates while 11 (17.5%) were produced by male graduates. Data shows that there are more female graduates than male graduates. The finding is similar to the data reported from the previous research that stated educational field especially teachers are mostly occupied with female candidates. Teaching professional are stated to be mostly occupied with female teachers compared to the male teachers. One of the report stated that there are reduction of numbers for male teachers.

Table 1: Analysis of Trend of Research Projects Among Counselling Graduates

Aspects	Items	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Gender.	Male	11	82.5
	Female	52	17.5
Research design	Quantitative	55	87.3
	Qualitative	8	12.7
Target group	Secondary school students	58	92.1
	Others (counselors, university students, educators)	5	7.9
Variables	Academic-related	22	19.8
	Self	22	19.8
	Stress	16	14.5
	Behaviour	12	10.8
	Career	11	9.9
Implications	Others (family, attitude, module validation)	28	25.2
	School counselors	22	34.9
	Ministry	15	23.8
	Schools	15	23.8
	Family	11	17.5
Suggestions	School students	39	39
	Research design	15	15
	Selection of variables	15	15
	Location of study	11	11
	Others	20	20

Based on the Table 1, the findings also shows that the research design frequently used is the quantitative study (55 or 87.3%) compared to the qualitative study (8 or 12.7%). This is parallel to the previous research that stated there are more quantitative research as qualitative research only emerge recently when researchers intends explore more detailed about a process or description of an issue. In terms of research design, according to Ngu, Norlidah, Saedah, Husaina, Dorothy and Zaharah (2014), most researchers utilized the quantitative design in Malaysia.

The most dominant target group in the research project is the secondary school students (58 or 92.1 %) compared to other target groups such as counselors, university students, and educators

(5 or 7.9%). As school students are the most potential clients for these future school counselors, the interest of investigating this group is high. The result is aligned to a study carried out by Fariza Khalid (2016) who claimed that many researchers conduct research with people related to their field.

It is found that the research projects included more than one variables. The most dominant variables in the research projects chosen by graduates in 2012 were academic-related (22 or 19.8%), and self (22 or 19.8%), compared to stress (16 or 14 %), behavior (12 or 10.8%) and career (11 or 9.9%). Other variables included family, attitude, and module validation (28 or 25.2%). As the undergraduates who were involved in this study is education students, according to Azizi, Halimah and Mohamad Hasan (2011), Fatimah Ali (2007), and Norhasyimah Ahmad (2005), most research in education were focused on academic aspects.

Most of the research reports stated that the implications of their study pertaining to the theory and also actions taken by the school counsellors (22 or 34.9%), Ministry of Education (15 or 23.8%), schools (15 or 23.8%), and family (11 or 17.5%). These reports were conducted by graduates of Guidance and Counselling program who were much connected to schools and students who likely to be discussing implications on school counsellors.

Suggestions in the research projects were written and there are research projects that concentrate on more than one target group. Most of the suggestions given are for the school students (39 or 39%), research design (15 or 15%), variables selected (15 or 15%), location of the study (11 or 11%) and others (20 or 20%). This data was align with results given in other research results including Azizi, Halimah and Mohamad Hasan (2011), Fatimah Ali (2007), and Norhasyimah Ahmad (2005).

Conclusions

This study was conducted to examine the trend of the final year projects conducted among graduates of the Bachelor of Education (Guidance and Counseling) in one education university in Malaysia. The findings showed that that focus of the final year projects produced by graduates in Counselling were utilizing quantitative research design, with target group who were school students, on academic aspects. And the implication school counsellors while the suggestion made were mostly for school students. It is hoped that this study can be a guide to future researchers in conducting research pertaining to counselling field. Hence, researchers who will conduct research in the future will be able to improve the counseling services and to fulfill the needs of students nowadays thus are able to explore in depth on any related variables, target group and location that has not been discovered thoroughly.

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