

Challenges and Coping Strategies on Spiritual Integrating in Counseling Session among Experienced and Novice Counsellors During Covid-19 Pandemic Outbreak

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Abstract

This study surveyed experienced and novice counsellors' perceptions of the spiritual element and examined its application, particularly in addressing mental health issues. The study is qualitative and employs a case study methodology. Four registered counsellors with more than ten years of experience participated in the study, as did four novice counsellors with less than three years of experience. For data collection, researchers rely on semi-structured interview techniques to achieve data saturation. Following that, the study findings were analyzed manually using a thematic method that began with open coding, progressed through category coding, and culminated in developing themes. The study's findings concluded that all participants agreed and frequently incorporated spiritual elements into counselling sessions, either directly or indirectly. Additionally, the researchers discovered that more experienced counsellors were more adapt at incorporating spiritual elements into their sessions than novice counsellors. This study aims to raise awareness about the efficacy of spiritual aspects in counselling sessions. Additionally, this study will provide an insight into the direction in which to improve the quality of counsellors to increase their credibility, which will help reduce mental health problems.

Keywords: spiritual elements; mental health; counsellor, pandemik Covid-19, outbreak.

1. Introduction

Integrating spiritual elements into counselling sessions can help clients navigate mental literacy, particularly when it comes to mental health issues. According to Casey (2009) and King et al. (2013), incorporating spiritual aspects in cases of mental illness is extensively used for more effective therapy. When mental health problems are seen to be exacerbated, and

the WHO anticipates a 15% increase in mental health problems by 2020, the scenario of using spiritual aspects in counselling sessions is deemed relevant (WHO 2001). The Covid-19 pandemic, according to Malaysian Health Minister Dr Seri Adham Baba, has resulted in a surge in major mental health issues (Roslan 2021).

2. Significance of the Study

Furthermore, nearly half a million people in the country, including 424,000 youngsters, are reported to be suffering from stress or depression (NHMS 2019). However, according to Malaysian health statistics, 5.5 million teenagers, or one in every five young people, would experience depression (Norhafzan, 2018). In 2021, mental illness is anticipated to be Malaysians' second most serious health problem, after heart disease (Mohd Nizam Mohamad Yatim 2020). Malaysians have also suffered as a result of the Movement Control Order's implementation. They are at risk of mental illness, social deterioration, incest, domestic violence, and other problems (Rafidah Mat Ruzki & Mohd Nasaruddin 2019; Rafidah Mat Ruzki and Irwan Shafrizan Ismail Parzi 2021; Mohd Nizam Mohamad Yatim 2020; Fadli 2021). The incidence of this Covid-19 pandemic causes a variety of mental health symptoms and societal issues (Aziz et al. 2020). As a result, the counsellor's responsibility in resolving this developing mental disorder is to incorporate the spiritual element into the counselling session (Casey 2009; King et al. 2013; Abdul Aziz et al. 2020; Ahmad & Noor 2018; Deraman et al. 2018; Manaf 1995).

Counsellors, on the other hand, are less likely to use spiritual aspects. This predicament develops due to counsellors' worry and lack of courage, mainly when dealing with clients of other religions (Hunt 2019; King & Koenig 2009; Omar 2018; Pargament 2013). This scenario could be caused by religious and spiritual factors, which are difficult to explain because of their complexity (Jodi et al. 2014; King & Koenig 2009; Pargament 2013). Furthermore, movement constraints due to the implementation of PKP have made it difficult for them to conduct face-to-face counseling sessions as usual. The implementation of counseling sessions through social media also presents challenges in providing understanding to clients in the application of spiritual elements, especially among novice counselors. This challenge occurs because they are less experienced in conducting counseling sessions and do not have a solid foundation and perhaps what they are doing is of a consultative and coaching nature (Bakar 2020).

3. Review of Related Studies

The term "spiritual" refers to a type of spiritual character found in human instincts (Deraman et al. 2018; Sipon & Hussin 2012). Spirituality enables people to a deeper understanding of themselves and religion, therefore it becomes the main protagonist in the human soul. Spirituality, on the other hand, according to the western perspective, is more about an individual's expression outside of religious beliefs and environment (West, 2011). Following that, society defines religion as the divine action of an individual. Religion is a person's feeling, action, and experience of something sacred, manifested ethically, ritually, or physically (James 2004; Mahjabeen Ahmad & Khan 2016; Richards, Bartz, & O'Grady 2009; Richards, Bartz, & O'Grady 2009). According to Oman (2013), there have been secular movements in the West whose ideas are solely spiritual, separating faiths. Religion, they believe, is at the basis of the

archaic mind since its adherents are forced to follow what the religion has brainwashed, such as Christianity and Islam (Hunt 2019). Nonetheless, based on the definitions, there is a clear distinction in the roles of religion and spirituality.

A counsellor's main task is to help and guide clients to become mentally literate, and able to be more rational (Omar 2018). A counsellor plays a role in reducing mental health problems by integrating spiritual elements in a counselling session. For experienced counsellors, they are clear with the use of this element in the sessions they conduct. This situation is in contrast to novice counsellors who have the anxiety to do so (Hunt, 2019). The differences that exist between these two generations of counsellors may be due to the specific criteria available to experienced counsellors and novice counsellors. In this study, experienced counsellor is a counsellor who is experienced in building therapeutic and developmental relationships with clients (Goldfried 2001; Hill et al. 2007; Orlinsky et al. 2001; Schwing et al. 2011; Skovholt & Rønnestad 1995). Whereas novice counsellors are those who are not fully proficient yet in the importance of therapeutic relationships which are emphasized through teaching about the skills that shape therapeutic relationships, such as attention, empathy and urgency (Hill 2020).

As a result, a proper investigation into the perspectives of spiritual aspects in counselling sessions is required. Although several researchers have looked at it (Aziz et al. 2020; Eздianie & Tajudin 2019; Omar 2018; Woodhouse & Hogan 2020), few have looked into counsellors' perceptions and obstacles in incorporating it into sessions. Furthermore, some scholars have discussed spiritual factors in counselling sessions (Utz 2012; Wolf & Stevens 2001); however, the study is too old and does not reflect current reality. Hunt (2019) addresses novice counsellors' perceptions of integrating spiritual components in counselling sessions, although this study focuses solely on novice counsellors. As a result, both experienced and novice counsellors' perspectives in introducing spiritual elements into counselling sessions will be included in this study.

4.Objectives of the Study

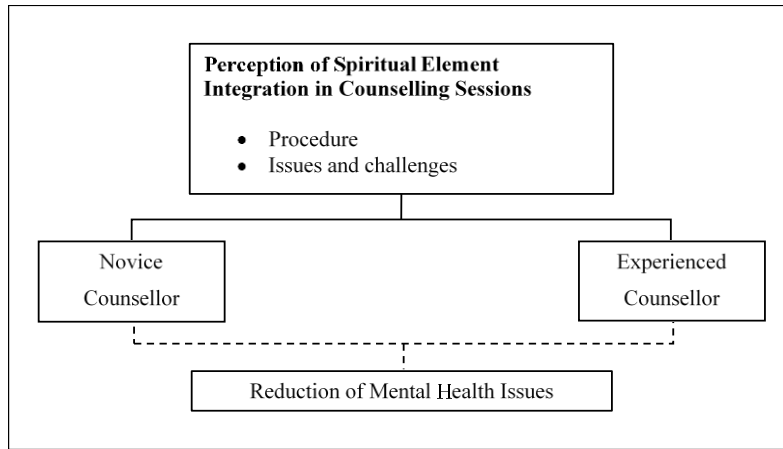
- The purpose of this essay is to address the question, "What are a novice and experienced counsellors' perspectives on the integration of spiritual components in the session?" This study aims to accomplish three specific objectives:
- Explore the challenges experienced by counsellors in integrating spiritual elements in counselling sessions.
- Explore methods used by counsellors in integrating spiritual elements in counselling sessions.
- Analyze perceptual differences between experienced and novice counsellors in integrating spiritual elements in counselling sessions.

6. Theoretical Concept

Human nature requires a spiritual component. As a result, any strategy implemented to help clients understand the concept of life should include both psychological and spiritual knowledge. This study is aimed to raise awareness about the importance of spiritual aspects in counselling sessions. Researchers also anticipate that this study will provide an overview of

how to improve the quality of counsellors so that they are more credible, which will assist in reducing mental health problems. The conceptual framework is in Figure 1.

Figure.1 Theoretical Concept



7. Population and Sample

As this is a preliminary study, only eight participants were chosen to participate: four beginner counsellors and four experienced counsellors. Those who have been in the counselling profession for less than a year and have used the spiritual aspect in counselling sessions meet novice counsellors' qualifications. They're also called novice counsellors because they're still in school and haven't yet earned their certification. Three females and one male, all between the ages of 27 and 28, participated in the study as novice counsellors. Experienced counsellors are selected based on their ability to serve for more than ten years and absorb spiritual components during counselling sessions. They were also made up of three males and a female, all of whom were between 35 and 45. They are also classified as experienced counsellors because they have counselling degrees and are qualified to supervise novice counsellors. Three of them work for the government, while one works for a private company. The researcher selected the participants in this study because each had substantial expertise dealing with clients from various backgrounds and cultures and experience integrating spiritual components into therapy sessions while serving as a counsellor. The study participants' profiles are shown in Table 1

Table.1. Participant Profile

| Code | Age | Title | Experience | Organisation |
|------|-----|------------------------|------------|----------------------|
| KN1 | 28 | Novice counsellor | 4 months | Secondary School |
| KN2 | 27 | Novice counsellor | 4 months | University |
| KN3 | 27 | Novice counsellor | 4 months | University |
| KN4 | 28 | Novice counsellor | 1 years | University |
| KP1 | 36 | Experienced counsellor | 10 years | University |
| KP2 | 40 | Experienced counsellor | 13 years | University |
| KP3 | 45 | Experienced counsellor | 20 years | Ministry |
| KP4 | 42 | Experienced counsellor | 11 years | Community Department |

6.1. Research Process

The researcher contacted participants and scheduled an interview with them once they were identified. The duration of the interviews was between 30 and 45 minutes. Given that each study participant worked in a different sector, the study participants chose the venue of the interviews. Besides, the researcher had created a set of interview guidelines examined and agreed upon by the supervisor before commencing the interview process. To gather the needed information and answer all of the research questions, this collection of protocols contains interview questions depending on the researcher's objectives. The interview began with an explanation of the study's goal and objectives. The researcher then discussed the concept of informed consent and asked for permission to record the interview session using voice recordings. The recording technique contains essential information about the study's focus that is not publicized. The interviews focused on experienced and novice counsellors' perspectives on spiritual concerns and their experiences addressing situations involving mental health utilizing a spiritual approach. The interview was recorded on a cell phone using a voice recorder program.

6.2. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The researcher used a staged thematic analysis to analyze the data. The researcher recopied the recorded interviews in words or verbatim data, which was done manually. The researcher then reread the entire verbatim transcript several times to acquire a sense of the study participants' experiences with religious and spiritual themes in counselling sessions for mental health issues. The coding process is the next step. The process is done in two phases; open coding and category coding being the first two. The first stage is open coding, which involves organizing all of the words and sentences from the interview session into a meaningful theme for the researcher. At this stage, it is permissible to utilize new terms from the researcher or to maintain the sentences used by the participants to provide a better understanding of the study. The researcher analyses open codes with the same items classified under the same category to determine the study's theme in the next phase, category coding. The researcher will analyze all categories under one name to develop a theme for the study. Finally, the themes that exist in this study are generated by using thematic analysis conducted in stages.

To answer the research questions on the perceptions of experienced and novice counsellors on the application of spiritual aspects in counselling sessions involving mental health issues, five key themes were discovered in this study. Two of the theme's outcomes are aimed at experienced counsellors: i) the integration of spiritual elements into therapy sessions is a challenge, and ii) incorporating spiritual elements into counselling sessions. When it comes to novice counsellors, two themes emerge: iii) integration of spiritual elements causes worry for novice counsellors, and iv) spiritual elements are integrated in counselling sessions. The combined perceptions of experienced and novice counsellors integrating spiritual elements in counselling sessions during the Covid-19 pandemic season result in one theme, namely v) spiritual elements practice offers meaning to life during the Covid-19 pandemic. The following is the general discussion:

Challenges faced by experienced counsellors while integrating spiritual elements into counselling sessions

The findings summarize the participants' perceptions and perspectives on the experience before and after incorporating the spiritual element in the counselling session. Most study participants attempted to incorporate the spiritual aspect into counselling sessions because they believed that the spiritual element's strength was effective therapy. However, determining the client's direction and approach that genuinely touched the psyche without involving religion was challenging for the counsellor.

"...the major difficulty for me is knowledge; if a counsellor does not have expertise in this area, he should not attempt it because of his impact on the client and the profession as a whole. That is the ethical issue that we must address." [KP1/T1/B100-102]

"... for me, the issue of ethics does not emerge because we utilise open and closed questions; instead, we will use texts that include the stories of companions who lost their lives to follow the given lessons; nonetheless, this issue poses a challenge; with different religions..." [KP2/T1/B96-99]

"...it's tough for us to explain to a client who lacks beliefs in Allah..." [KP3/T1/B112-113]

"...I employ the concept of spirituality in counselling sessions, but the issue comes when we try to help clients understand it..." They must understand the notion of psychiatry can be applied to any individual, including atheists... [KP4/T1/B120-123]

"...The challenge is on the counsellor himself... most counsellors are afraid to use the spiritual element because it will touch the sensitivity. Still, the fact is that if the counsellor can direct or bring the spiritual element will have a greater impact on the client's soul, regardless of religion or atheism..." [KP4/T1/B159-162]

Methods used by experienced counsellors while integrating spiritual elements into counselling sessions

The findings show that most participants employ spiritual components in a variety of situations, not just spiritual ones. On the other side, the spiritual element is incorporated into nearly all counselling sessions. This situation is deemed appropriate because the participants are more daring and willing to using this element in the sessions due to their maturity and experience. For example, some of the participants who recite zikr at the start of the session, but only if the client feels comfortable with it. In addition, participants are assigned to boost the client's inner strength by exercising specific remembrances to offer the client peace of mind. Even though this technique focuses solely on spiritual issues, participants still believe that the spiritual aspect is the lifeblood of the serenity that creates human identity. This assertion is vital to the results acquired, such as prayer. Participants also led sessions by emphasising religious features and ideals to their clients.

"...if the client is a Muslim, we will emphasise prayers and the Muslim way of life in the counselling session because we want clients to be intelligent and aware that only the soul close to the Creator can give them peace..." [KP1/T1/B58-62]

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“...suppose our client is Muslim and appears to be too fibrous or stuck. In that case, I like to practise the concept of the 3S, namely prayer, self-awareness or self-reflection, and surrender, application of this divine principle to give more impact to the client's soul and a way for them to return to nature...” [KP1/T1/B145-149]

“...I am not a judge if I look at the client's situation because it is difficult to apply a spiritual approach, especially if the client is a free-thinking type, but I must consider my readiness and the client's. However, I always include this spiritual approach because it is so easy to wink at the heart...” [KP1/T1/B196-199]

“...this spiritual element is very relevant to me in the counselling approach; I use it a lot because I believe in existential theory. In this approach, it is easier for me to bring clients who are more intelligent and willing to change their search for identity...” [KP1/T1/B198-201]

Challenges faced by novice counsellors while integrating spiritual elements into counselling sessions

The perceptions of novice counsellors in this study refer to the views, feelings, or perceptions of trainee counsellors either before or after incorporating the spiritual elements in a counselling session. Because of their lack of experience and capacity to master theory, novice counsellors often hesitant to integrate spiritual themes in therapy sessions. This situation makes novice counsellors wonder if the application of spiritual aspects will go beyond counselling ethics because this idea necessitates skill and professionalism in session conduct. If they include a spiritual element throughout the inquiry, they are also concerned about their acceptance because they may judge the client.

“...I'm afraid to use this spiritual element in the session because it violates counselling ethics, in my opinion...” [KN11/T1/B142-143]

“...I'm afraid the client believes that this counselling session is merely for patience...” [KN1/T1/B119-120]

“...we must also be cautious because spirituality can be judgmental at times...” [KN2/T1/B66-67]

“...we can't keep including spiritual elements in counselling sessions; we need to understand how the client is feeling...” [KN3/T1/B33-34]

“...that is the approach I take; it is not incorrect, but it will make the client uncomfortable...” [KN3/T1/B41-42]

“I'm afraid we've crossed the line, that we've become Ustaz rather than counsellors, and that counsellor cannot advise...” [KN4/T1/B184-185]

“...implying that this is a test for him may cause the client to pass judgement on the counsellor...” [KN4/T1/B146-147]

Methods used by novice counsellors while integrating spiritual elements into counselling sessions

The spiritual element was only incorporated, according to the participants, when spiritual-related issues occurred. Depending on the client's comfort level, they will begin the session with a reading. The counsellor advises the client to relax by performing ablutions. At the same time, the counsellor gives the client chores related to religious activities, such as prayer. Counsellors also keep the session under control by highlighting religious principles to the client.

“...even when we are angry, we take ablution, so there are elements like that I apply...”[KN1/T1/B71-72]

“...relevant because al-Fatihah is an opening, and we open something with good things because bismillah also means Allah's name ...”[KN2/T1/B47-48]

“... if the client is willing to begin the session with recitation, we can attempt to start with al-Fatihah...”[KN2/T1/B42-44]

“...we assign him a task, what is the meaning of the prayer ...”[KN2/T1/B75]

“...we can include the spiritual element once he has awakened the spiritual. ...”[KN3/T1/B39]

“...how do we control the session from the start to include Islamic elements such as patience, calm, and things from our religion...”[KN4/T1/B172-173]

Spiritual elements practice offers meaning to life during the Covid-19 pandemic

Participants' perceptions of spiritual components during the Covid-19 epidemic were used to create a theme centred on deep significance in understanding the context of life. Due to the obstacles faced during the Covid-19 pandemic, study participants confronted a range of issues, and clients lost orientation. The concerns raised by the client arose from a lack of spiritual practice, giving rise to an awareness of the concept of religion-based existence.

“...this spiritual component allows me to explore myself and understand the meaning of life. Self-exploration transforms me into a human being capable of accepting both my flaws and my strengths. In becoming a more grateful servant, this phase is the key to developing intimacy with the Almighty Creator...”[KP1/T2/B13-16]

“...spiritual elements are viewed as one of the best alternatives for counsellors to use with clients because the injection of a spiritual nature is like an antidote that can bring clients to be calmer in wisely handling emotions under the guidance of counsellors...”[KP1/T2/B26-29]

“...this situation can also provide relief and self-resilience because the client is aware and can be more intelligent. Not all conditions formed on the limited human nature; instead, some tests are out of control and must be faced with an open heart and closer scrutiny to develop a complete identity with the Creator...” [KP1/T2/B40-43]

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“...when I face a problem, feel sad, focus on my feelings, and suddenly feel empty, I will remember God, pray, pray, and read al-Fatihah. It happened during the Covid-19 pandemic when I was alone at home, but it also happened elsewhere...” [KP2/T2/B7-10]

“...Alhamdulillah, it was during this MCO that I was able to perform tahajjud consistently, read the Quran every day, and I always prayed that Allah would protect me from slander, human envy, and even the devil...” [KP2/T2/B13-15]

“...indeed, I, my husband, and my children practise congregational prayers every dawn and dusk. And practise the spiritual element itself in life. Every prayer after dawn, there is a recitation of hadith virtues of charity, which is the spiritual element that I do to improve the spirituality of myself and my family...” [KP4/T2/B13-16]

“...like me, even before MCO, there were open Quran recitation classes and monthly lectures at mosques and musallahs, but during this MCO, I only open Quran classes and online lectures while also practising religious classes with children...” [KP3/T2/B13-16]

“...I did apply spiritual practises to the children during this MCO because people are not tired, so there are times when I surprise people with tahajjud...” [KP3/T2/B23-24]

“...a lot of istighfar, fear of fear of the cause of past or present sins that make the soul weak, lacking in spirit, despair, then consistently read the Quran for at least an hour a day, to think less about work...” [KN2/T2/B8-11]

“...I will tell the stories of the prophets and the righteous who faced greater adversity and still maintained their fighting spirit. There is renewed strength to move on with life and pending tasks...” [KN2/T2/B15-18]

“...always recheck and do self-reflection before going to bed. In Islam, it is taught to forgive others and to be open-minded about what has happened, just as counselling accepting and always reflecting on what has happened, always giving affirmation words to oneself to strengthen oneself...” [KN4/T2/B6-9]

“...whatever happens in this world, Allah is with us all; you are not alone; we can complain to Allah Taala, and I have told the client that he is not alone...” [KN1/T2/B8-10]

“...although I rarely employ the spiritual element in counselling, depending on the client's situation, I will improve on what I convey...” [KN1/T2/B19-20]

“Yes, we must practise the spiritual element in ourselves, because unexpectedly, we must first turn to our nature, back to basics, where we will be closer to Allah, and only in that way will we be able to alleviate the emptiness. It means Allah wants us to stop and reconnect with Him by reciting zikr, reciting Quran and its meaning, healing verses such as the heart, head, body, relieving tension...” [KN3/T2/B6-10]

7. Discussion and Recommendations

According to the study's findings, experienced counsellors frequently incorporate spiritual elements into counselling sessions. It has become standard practice for experienced counsellors, who claim that instilling spiritual aspects can have a more profound effect on the client's psyche. This opinion is consistent with Baqutayan's (2011) findings, which indicate that counselling methods that incorporate Islamic elements through prayer therapy or remembrance can help clients achieve a state of calm and alleviate anxiety. The spiritual dimension is also seen as critical to experienced counsellors' effectiveness in conducting counselling sessions, as most participants acknowledged that psychiatric concepts are more applicable and practical to clients, particularly those struggling with self-identity issues. This process enables the development and exploration of counselling sessions intending to assist clients in comprehending the conflicts they are experiencing. According to Aziz et al. (2020) and Rasjid Skinner (2018), the spiritual element has gained western recognition due to their work with clients, particularly those who have mental health problems. This is because the strength of the human soul is contingent upon their comprehension of life meaning and self-awareness of their Creator. Additionally, novice counsellors use techniques such as beginning a therapy session with prayer recitation. However, this technique is dependent on the client's degree of comfort. Suppose the client seems comfortable with a religious approach, such as reciting prayers and specific surah before beginning a session. In that case, it is ideal for the Muslim counsellor to include these aspects. On the other side, if the client is uneasy, the novice counsellor will do the procedure without awareness. A counsellor may pray silently for the client's well-being and recovery (Ahmad et al., 2019; Anderson & Worthen, 1997; Tan, 1996); Ahmad & Amat, 2019. While religious counsellors are not required to utilise spiritual aspects in their work, they must be attentive to and respectful of their clients' religious concerns and provide a comfortable environment while addressing spiritual and religious matters (Ahmad & Amat, 2019). Nonetheless, studies indicate that novice counsellors are less adept at incorporating spiritual aspects into therapy sessions. According to the findings of interviews with novice counsellors, clients have provided unfavorable feedback due to their discomfort. The results of this research corroborate those of Hunt (2019) and Swinton (2016). He found that trainee counsellors were slightly hesitant about expressing their views during training to fear eliciting unfavorable impressions from others. According to (Zinovyeva et al., 2019), the primary challenges encountered by novice counsellors are their first year of service as counsellors, their lack of expertise in practice and action after exploration, and the absence of supervisors. The study's results demonstrate unequivocally that experienced counsellors are more competent at incorporating spiritual components than novice counsellors. Counsellors with experience know what to do when confronted with a variety of problems and clients. They are professional counsellors who possess three primary characteristics: (1) a person who evaluates himself as a professional in developing a self-image, comprehends and is knowledgeable about the profession, (2) confidence in emotions and evaluation of the profession, as well as the ability to maintain credibility as a counsellor, and (3) a person who builds and improves their level of satisfaction as a professional and client (Zinovyeva et al., 2019). These characteristics are lacking in inexperienced counsellors. Novice counsellors have a more significant stake in the work or profession they are in since they have just joined the organisation or employment and are not yet socially compatible with the job. Still, they must also adhere to the career's

professional standards (Caspersen, 2013). Despite their lack of abilities, researchers discovered that novice counsellors work diligently, think creatively, and often approach issues from a new viewpoint. If provided with sufficient training and opportunity, they can effectively incorporate the spiritual aspect into therapy sessions. The first step for novice counsellors is to acquire and master a theory; this is to guide them in determining the direction of such counselling sessions (Burwell-Pender, 2009; Fall et al., 2017; Roose et al., 2013). The second step is to harmonies the spiritual elements with the theory employed. The participants' primary emphasis during Covid-19 was likewise on spiritual components in counselling sessions; spiritual aspects also resulted in an intense spirituality among the participants. Spiritual activities such as reciting the Quran, zikr, common prayers, and munajat, as defined by Islam, are steps toward resolving mental health issues (Aziz et al., 2020; Noor, 2018). As a result, experienced counsellors make effective use of the spiritual aspect due to its efficacy and a good influence on the client after a therapy session. However, novice counsellors are observed to utilise this spiritual aspect less often in therapy sessions due to a lack of expertise. This research educates novice counsellors on how to include spiritual aspects into therapy sessions. Spiritual values practice has the potential to not only get the client closer to God but also to alleviate mental tension and help the client overcome depression amid this Covid-19 epidemic. According to Imam al-Ghazali's and psycho-spiritual philosophy, the spirit and the body are distinct entities, but the body's character is determined by the soul, as the soul determines human nature and conduct (Abdul Aziz et al., 2020; Al-Ghazali, 2000; Muhammad, 1988). Thus, the counsellor's role is to integrate spiritual elements with western counselling philosophy.

8. Conclusion

Although Malaysia is affected by the Covid-19 infection, it is not an obstacle for counselors to conduct counseling sessions virtually or through social media which has not yet been recognized by the Malaysian Board of Counselors. Implementing counseling sessions virtually and not neglecting the basic elements of counseling, counselors are able to provide psychosocial services well. This study has demonstrated to novice counsellors that the use of spiritual elements is intrinsically linked to Islam. Western counselling theories do not preclude Muslim counsellors from using a spiritual approach in counselling sessions and may even be justified if handled professionally by a certified counsellor. It is evident because religion leads human beings to self-perfection, transforming them into more compassionate individuals accountable to themselves and their communities. Thus, whether the client is Muslim or not, there is no reason why a counselling practitioner cannot apply spiritual or religious elements fundamentally to the client to build inner strength, particularly those related to psychiatry. While some Western theories oppose using a spiritual approach as a substitute in therapy sessions, it shows that this approach emphasizes religious understanding and incorporates elements of complete soul harmony, such as self-reflection, that can bring peace to the human soul. Consequently, the spiritual approach can be the lynchpin of success for experienced counsellors when conducting counselling sessions, as the counsellor's expertise and experience can help clients grasp a more meaningful concept of life. Additionally, this approach does not limit itself to a single religion; instead, its concept is inclusive in assisting human beings regardless of their background, culture, or religion. In line with this Covid-19 pandemic, incorporating spiritual elements into counselling sessions can assist clients in coping with emotional stress and mental health issues; furthermore, practicing these spiritual elements can

provide counsellors and clients with spiritual strength. Thus, the findings of this study demonstrate that the spiritual element should be incorporated into counselling sessions that are conducted properly. Advanced research in the form of interventions, such as module development and innovation, can educate counsellors about the proper use of spiritual elements in counselling sessions.

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