



THE EXPERIENCES OF REGULATING EMOTIONS AMONG TRAINEE
COUNSELLORS IN UTAR

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the in-depth experiences of emotion regulation among trainee counsellors in Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR). The primary research objective is to examine the emotional challenges faced by trainee counsellors and the strategies they employ to regulate their emotions throughout their training. A qualitative phenomenological design was used to gain a deeper understanding of participants' lived experiences. The study involved six trainee counsellors aged 21 to 27, selected through purposive sampling. All participants were from UTAR Kampar Campus and currently under the training program. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using a validated interview protocol and analysed thematically. Participants described their emotional regulation journey as a balance between personal growth and emotional struggle, shaped by self-doubt, emotional fatigue, and client-related stress. Despite these difficulties, participants reported gaining resilience through strategies such as mindfulness, seeking supervision, creative self-care, and reflective practice. The findings reveal that emotional regulation is a dynamic and developmental process influenced by both internal and contextual factors. The study provides practical implications for counselling education by recommending the integration of structured emotional support and ER training into the curriculum. These insights may contribute to the emotional well-being and long-term professional growth of future counsellors.

Keywords: experience, emotion regulation, trainee counsellors

Subject area: BF511-593 Affection. Feeling. Emotion

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

Emotion regulation (ER) is the ability to manage and modify emotional responses to meet situational demands and achieve personal goals. It involves internal and external processes to initiate, increase, maintain, or suppress emotions based on the context (Gross, 1998). Regulated emotion keeps individuals within an optimal window of tolerance, allowing for adaptive functioning (Greenberg, 2021; Siegel, 1999). Effective ER includes strategies such as reappraisal, mindfulness, and acceptance, which reduce emotional distress. An inability to regulate emotions can lead to maladaptive coping strategies (Brereton & McGlinchey, 2019). Maladaptive strategies like suppression and rumination deplete cognitive resources, perpetuate negative emotions, and hinder effective functioning (Gross, 1998). ER is essential for maintaining mental health, and difficulties in regulating emotions are linked to adverse outcomes such as burnout, anxiety, and depression (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Grandey & Gabriel, 2015).

The significance of ER is particularly pronounced in the field of mental health, where professionals often encounter emotionally intense situations. A meta-analysis of 62 studies found that 40% of mental health professionals experience burnout, highlighting the demanding nature of the field (O'Connor et al., 2018). Earlier reviews identified burnout rates ranging from 21% to 67% in this group (Morse et al., 2012). Trainee counsellors are particularly vulnerable, with studies indicating that nearly 50% experience moderate to severe depressive symptoms during their practicum or internship (Ying et al., 2024). Besides, within Ying et al. (2024)'s study, 46.2% of trainee counsellors were found to be grappling with moderate to severe depressive symptoms. Additionally, 94.29% of trainee counsellors report high levels of emotional exhaustion (Bagodi, 2023). These figures reflect the heightened

emotional demands faced by both novice and experienced practitioners, reinforcing the importance of effective ER strategies to safeguard well-being and professional competence.

Navigating these demands requires counsellors to regulate their own emotions while addressing the emotional needs of clients, a dual challenge that directly influences therapeutic outcomes. Effective ER enables counsellors to build strong therapeutic alliances, maintain professional boundaries, and foster resilience (Ruiz-Aranda et al., 2021). Conversely, poor ER, manifested through suppression or unregulated stress not only affects counsellors' well-being but also compromises their ability to provide quality care. This is particularly evident among school counsellors, who juggle teaching and counselling responsibilities and rely on robust ER skills to avoid emotional exhaustion (Prikhidko & Swank, 2018). Therefore, equipping counsellors with comprehensive ER strategies is essential for sustaining both personal well-being and professional performance.

Trainee counsellors employ various strategies to navigate emotional challenges, with many adopting adaptive approaches like mindfulness, social support, and exercise to enhance emotional resilience (Aren & Pisal, 2022). Problem-focused strategies, such as proactive planning and engagement, have been shown to lower stress and improve coping outcomes (Subhi et al., 2021; Munusamy & Assim, 2019). Verbal emotional expression during sessions, self-reflection, and feedback-seeking from supervisors also facilitate emotional processing and balance (Prikhidko et al., 2020). These practices underscore the potential for trainee counsellors to develop effective ER skills that promote well-being and professional growth. These strategies contribute to a more balanced and effective approach to managing emotional demands.

However, not all ER experiences are positive. Maladaptive strategies such as suppression, avoidance, and overworking remain prevalent, often exacerbating emotional

exhaustion and hindering professional performance (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). Challenges like feelings of incompetence (FOI) further contribute to heightened anxiety, self-doubt, and therapy disruptions if left unaddressed (Thériault & Gazzola, 2006). These maladaptive patterns are linked to premature therapy termination, alliance ruptures, and professional withdrawal (Brady et al., 1996; Streat, 1993). Addressing these issues is critical for preventing long-term consequences and fostering sustainable practices in the counselling profession.

Despite the growing recognition of ER's importance, research exploring the lived experiences of trainee counsellors remains limited. Most studies focus narrowly on specific strategies, such as mindfulness or cognitive reappraisal, without capturing the broader spectrum of ER processes or contextual challenges faced by trainee counsellor (Lenz et al., 2012; Bahrami et al., 2012). This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the challenges trainee counsellors encounter and the adaptive and maladaptive strategies they employ. By exploring their lived experiences, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of ER processes among trainee counsellors. The findings can inform targeted training programs and interventions designed to enhance their resilience, competence, and professional sustainability, ultimately improving the quality of care they deliver and the long-term viability of the counselling profession.

1.2 Definition of terms

1.2.1 Experience

Experience in this context denotes the personal, emotional, and professional interactions that trainee counsellors undergo while managing their emotions during their practice. It captures both the challenges and coping mechanisms employed in response to their emotional demands (Thériault & Gazzola, 2006).

1.2.2 Emotion regulation

In this study, emotion regulation refers to the processes and strategies used by trainee counsellors to monitor, evaluate, and modify their emotional responses during counselling practice. This includes adaptive strategies like mindfulness and problem-focused coping, as well as maladaptive strategies such as suppression or avoidance (Gross, 1998; Prikhidko et al., 2020).

1.2.3 Trainee counsellors

Trainee counsellors refer to the students who are currently studying the program of Guidance and Counselling to become registered licensed counsellors.

1.3 Research objectives

The study's main objective is to explore the in-depth experiences of UTAR trainee counsellors in regulating their emotions. Besides, this study aims to explore the challenges faced by UTAR trainee counsellors and the strategies they used in regulating their emotions.

1.4 Research question

What are the experiences of regulating emotions among UTAR trainee counsellors?

1.5 Problem statement

Counselling students face significant emotional and personal challenges that directly test their capacity for robust emotion regulation (ER) skills, which are essential for maintaining both their well-being and professional effectiveness. The intense demands of academic and practicum responsibilities often result in elevated stress, poor self-care habits, and increased physical health risks (Bradley et al., 2013; Mayorga et al., 2015). Trainee counsellors frequently experience anxiety stemming from performance concerns, the counselling process, and client interactions, which heightens the demand for effective ER strategies to manage these pressures (Barbee et al., 2003; Özteke-Kozan, 2018; Cormier &

Hackney, 2015). For counselling students with a lower baseline of mental health, these challenges further elevate the risk of depression, anxiety, and early signs of burnout (Smith et al., 2008).

Balancing the dual responsibilities of academic obligations and counselling practice often requires advanced ER skills to manage stress and maintain cognitive and emotional focus. Without effective ER, trainee counsellors may resort to maladaptive strategies such as suppression or rumination, which deplete cognitive resources, perpetuate emotional exhaustion, and hinder their ability to engage meaningfully with clients (Gross, 1998). This emotional labour, compounded by the empathetic and caring roles they are required to fulfil, necessitates the suppression of negative emotions and the maintenance of controlled emotional displays. When inadequately managed, such emotional demands can lead to burnout, characterized by chronic emotional depletion, reduced job performance, and higher incidences of mental health challenges (Jang & Kim, 2020; Moreno-Jiménez et al., 2022).

The counselling profession itself is highly susceptible to issues such as burnout, empathy fatigue, and emotional exhaustion. These challenges, frequently experienced by both trainee and professional counsellors, are exacerbated by the emotional labour of working with diverse populations, where the need to sustain empathy and care often conflicts with self-care efforts (Cummins et al., 2007; Mardani et al., 2023). Poor ER not only affects counsellors' well-being but also impairs their ability to establish therapeutic alliances, maintain professional competence, and deliver quality care (Nasir, 2011; Hashim & Amnah, 2005).

The development of robust ER skills is critical for trainee counsellors to navigate these challenges successfully. These skills support immediate coping mechanisms, enhance personal resilience, and safeguard long-term professional growth. By understanding the unique ER demands faced by trainee counsellors, it is possible to design targeted

interventions that enhance their ability to manage emotional challenges, ensuring their well-being and the sustainability of the counselling profession (Smith et al., 2007; Coaston, 2017; Mullen & Crowe, 2017; Kim & Lambie, 2018).

1.6 Significance of study

This study aims to address the critical challenges faced by trainee counsellors by exploring their in-depth experiences with emotion regulation (ER). Emotional labour and emotional exhaustion, including managing empathetic client interactions and performance anxiety, has been identified as a primary contributor to burnout and poor mental health among trainee counsellors (Bradley et al., 2013; Barbee et al., 2003). By exploring trainee counsellors' experiences with emotion regulation (ER), this study seeks to better understand how adaptive ER strategies can help mitigate these challenges. Such insights can directly develop interventions to better support trainee counsellors in managing the emotional demands of their work, thereby addressing a core concern highlighted in the problem statement (Moreno-Jiménez et al., 2022; Mardani et al., 2023).

Understanding the role of ER is essential to improving both the personal well-being and professional effectiveness of trainee counsellors. The findings of this study will illuminate the specific challenges and contexts that require robust ER skills, such as handling client disclosures, managing performance anxiety, and balancing professional and academic responsibilities. By identifying effective ER strategies employed by trainee counsellors, such as mindfulness and reappraisal (Gross, 1998), the study can guide training programs to incorporate these approaches into their curricular, fostering resilience and reducing the risk of burnout and compassion fatigue.

Moreover, this research addresses gaps in the existing literature by capturing the lived experiences of trainee counsellors. Previous studies have largely focused on isolated

strategies or professional counsellors (Lenz et al., 2012; Bahrami et al., 2012), leaving a need to understand the comprehensive ER processes of trainees. By doing so, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of how ER functions in the formative stages of a counsellor's career. Such knowledge is essential for designing evidence-based training modules and interventions tailored to the unique challenges faced by trainee counsellors.

Finally, this study has broader implications for the sustainability of the counselling profession. Enhanced ER skills among trainee counsellors not only improve their capacity to cope with emotional labour but also ensure the delivery of high-quality care to clients. By equipping future counsellors with the tools to manage emotional demands effectively, the profession can reduce turnover rates, improve job satisfaction, and maintain a resilient and competent workforce. This can support trainee counsellors in their journey toward becoming effective and empathetic professionals.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature focusing on key issues relevant to the study of emotion regulation (ER) in trainee counsellors. It aims to critically assess and synthesize existing research, identifying trends, gaps, and key findings that inform the present study. By reviewing and critiquing applicable literature, this chapter outlines the key theories underpinning this research, clarifying their relevance and application to the exploration of ER in the context of trainee counsellors.

2.1 Definition of emotion regulation

Emotion regulation (ER) is a vital adaptive ability that significantly impacts both physical and mental health, as well as overall functioning and quality of life (Kozubal et al., 2023). It involves various processes, both conscious and unconscious, aimed at managing emotional experiences. According to Kok (2020), these processes include monitoring, evaluating, and modulating emotions, which can affect their intensity, form, duration, and the associated physiological states and behaviours.

ER is commonly understood as the effort to influence emotions within ourselves or others, with a focus on situationally bound emotional states that are typically positive or negative, and time-limited (McRae & Gross, 2020). As Springstein and English (2024) explain, ER typically works toward achieving specific emotional goals over a shorter time frame, distinguishing it from broader coping mechanisms that help individuals adjust to long-term challenges, such as life transitions or personal losses. They also emphasize that success in ER is measured by the extent to which emotional regulation goals are met, in contrast to maladaptive regulation or dysregulation.

In line with these perspectives, Guy-Evans (2023) highlights that ER encompasses a range of strategies used to manage emotional responses in adaptive ways. Techniques such as cognitive reappraisal and mindfulness allow individuals to adjust the intensity and duration of their emotions, without necessarily eliminating or controlling them. Rather than suppressing or eliminating emotions, ER involves regulating the emotional experience itself, providing individuals with the ability to navigate difficult emotional states more effectively.

Among the various definitions of emotion regulation (ER), McRae and Gross's (2020) situational and goal-oriented framework is the most relevant for understanding trainee counsellors' experiences, as it focuses on the immediate regulation of emotional states during interactions. This practical perspective is especially important for trainee counsellors, who often need to manage their emotions dynamically in the face of client challenges. While Kozubal et al. (2023) describe ER in general terms as a process of managing emotional experiences consciously and unconsciously, this lacks the specificity needed for examining the real-time demands of counselling. Further, Springstein and English's (2024) focus on more long-term coping mechanisms, while insightful, diverges from the short-term, goal-directed nature of emotional regulation in professional settings. The inclusion of adaptive strategies like mindfulness and cognitive reappraisal in Guy-Evans's (2023) definition aligns with McRae and Gross's framework, emphasizing actionable techniques crucial for emotional resilience, which in turn enabling emotion regulation. By synthesizing these perspectives, McRae and Gross's definition stands out as both comprehensive and applicable, guiding an exploration into how trainee counsellors achieve their emotional goals while managing situational pressures. This synthesis underlines the importance of examining ER as a situational, skill-based process, critical in grasping and improving the experiences of trainee counsellors.

2.2 Importance of emotion regulation in trainee counsellors

Emotion regulation (ER) plays a vital role in ensuring the well-being and professional effectiveness of counsellors. Counsellors who effectively regulate their emotions are less likely to experience burnout, a common risk in the emotionally demanding counselling profession (Gutierrez & Mullen, 2016). This ability is particularly critical as counsellors' work requires accurately recognizing and managing their own emotions while simultaneously addressing the emotional needs of their clients. By fostering emotional regulation, counsellors reduce internal conflicts and cultivate trusting and effective therapeutic relationships with their clients (Ruiz-Aranda et al., 2021).

For school counsellors who juggle dual roles as teachers and counsellors, emotional regulation is essential in managing emotional labour and preventing burnout. The ability to regulate and manage emotions becomes crucial in balancing these competing responsibilities and sustaining their emotional well-being (Prikhidko & Swank, 2018). Similarly, trainee counsellors must develop robust ER skills to manage the complex and emotional demands of their roles, ensuring they can adequately support their clients' well-being while maintaining their own.

Emotional intelligence (EI) appears to be a significant factor influencing an individual's capacity for ER. EI has been shown to account for variability in ER abilities (Mikolajczak et al., 2008), and research suggests it directly enhances ER skills (Gao & Yang, 2023). As a result, EI is a key component of counsellor training programs, emphasizing the development of self-awareness, emotional control, and interpersonal communication skills. These elements contribute to positive self-care practices and effective therapeutic engagement, critical for both trainee and practicing counsellors. Developing EI allows counsellors to better handle challenges that arise in building relationships with clients and throughout the intervention process. EI element predicts counselling self-efficacy, which in

turn, equips counsellors with the adaptability and proficiency required for professional success (Nasir et al., 2023; Dagang et al., 2020).

Emotion regulation (ER) is an essential skill for trainee counsellors, directly influencing both their professional competence and personal well-being. As trainees encounter emotionally charged situations in the early stages of their careers, they must manage their own emotional responses while providing effective therapeutic support to clients. Research highlights that poor ER is linked to higher risks of burnout, which can significantly affect both mental health and professional efficacy (Gutierrez & Mullen, 2016). In particular, trainee counsellors are more vulnerable to these risks due to their relative inexperience, with studies indicating that a large proportion experience significant depressive symptoms during their internships (Ying et al., 2024). ER is not just beneficial but critical for maintaining empathy and preventing emotional overload, enabling counsellors to form strong, trusting client relationships, a key to positive therapeutic outcomes (Ruiz-Aranda et al., 2021). Furthermore, emotional intelligence (EI), which is closely connected to ER, further enhances these abilities by fostering self-awareness and emotional regulation, vital for managing the emotional stresses inherent in the counselling profession (Mikolajczak et al., 2008; Gao & Yang, 2023). Trainees with higher ER and EI skills demonstrate lower burnout levels, higher self-efficacy, and better-quality client interactions, which are essential for long-term success in counselling practice (Prikhidko & Swank, 2018). Consequently, developing ER is not only important for personal well-being but also for ensuring that trainees are equipped to thrive in the emotionally demanding environment of counselling, preparing them for future professional challenges.

While the importance of ER in safeguarding the well-being and effectiveness of trainee counsellors is widely recognized, there remains a notable gap in research on how trainee counsellors specifically experience and develop these skills during their training.

Given the high emotional demands placed on trainees, and the challenges they face in managing their own emotions while learning to navigate the emotional needs of their clients, understanding their lived experiences is critical. My research seeks to fill this gap by examining the challenges trainee counsellors encounter in regulating their emotions and the strategies they adopt to cope with these demands. This study will provide valuable insights into how ER can be integrated more effectively into counselling curricular, ensuring that future counsellors are better prepared to manage their emotional well-being while offering high-quality support to their clients.

2.3 Emotional challenges faced by trainee counsellors

Trainee counsellors face a unique set of emotional challenges as they transition from academic learning to practical application in the field. According to Nasir et al. (2023), these challenges include performance anxiety, a sense of being under constant observation by supervisors and professional gatekeepers and struggles with maintaining emotional boundaries. Trainees often lack a stable professional identity and feel less competent in case conceptualization, leading to pressure and self-doubt. Furthermore, the dynamics of supervision and the expectations from mentors can sometimes contribute to a heightened sense of inadequacy and stress. This precarious emotional landscape, shaped by their developmental stage, highlights the distinct pressures faced by trainees compared to more experienced counsellors.

While there is limited research specifically addressing trainee counsellors, studies focusing on professional counsellors offer a useful reference point. For instance, Lee et al. (2022) explored the emotional struggles of Malaysian professional counsellors, identifying countertransference, emotional overwhelm, and difficulties maintaining personal-professional boundaries as key challenges. Similarly, Mohamed et al. (2020) documented how heavy workloads, role conflicts, and dealing with emotionally taxing cases contribute to counsellors'

emotional strain. Although these findings pertain to experienced counsellors, they underscore the universal nature of emotional challenges in the profession. Such challenges are likely to manifest in trainee counsellors as they navigate the demanding expectations of their training programs, further emphasizing the need to understand their experiences in greater depth.

Further, as Mohamed et al. (2020) highlighted, role conflicts and unrealistic job expectations also exacerbate emotional difficulties for counsellors. While their findings primarily focused on counselling and guidance teachers, parallels can be drawn to trainee counsellors, who often juggle multiple roles, from managing client sessions to academic responsibilities. This dual burden creates significant emotional strain, underscoring the complexity of their experience.

The limited focus on trainee counsellors in existing research creates a critical gap that warrants attention. While Nasir et al. (2023) provides valuable insights, it is evident that most studies prioritize the challenges faced by professional counsellors. This lack of dedicated research into trainees is problematic, as the formative years of practice are crucial for developing emotional resilience and professional competence. My study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the emotional challenges specific to trainee counsellors. By doing so, it not only addresses an understudied area but also seeks to inform preventative strategies, enabling trainees to better manage these challenges and transition into their professional roles with greater confidence and emotional stability. Understanding these issues early in a counsellor's career is vital for preventing long-term burnout and ensuring the well-being of the counselling workforce.

2.3.1 Causes of emotional challenges among trainee counsellors

The emotional challenges faced by trainee counsellors stem from a variety of causes that are deeply rooted in their unique professional and developmental context. Nasir et al.

(2023) highlights that trainee counsellors often experience performance anxiety due to the pressure of being constantly evaluated by supervisors and professional gatekeepers. This pressure creates a heightened sense of vulnerability, especially as trainees attempt to navigate the complexities of counselling while building their professional identity. Their limited experience in conceptualizing cases and handling emotional interactions also contributes to feelings of inadequacy, which can exacerbate emotional stress.

In contrast, studies focusing on professional counsellors, such as Mohamed et al. (2020) and Lee et al. (2022), provide additional insights that are applicable to understanding the challenges faced by trainees. For example, Mohamed et al. (2020) identify external pressures such as heavy workloads, role conflicts, and inadequate resources as significant stressors for professional counsellors. These factors, while more pronounced in experienced professionals, are relevant to trainees who may feel overwhelmed by the dual demands of academic and practicum requirements. Similarly, Lee et al. (2022) emphasizes the emotional toll of managing intense client emotions and countertransference, which trainee counsellors may also struggle to navigate due to their nascent skills in emotional boundary-setting.

The causes of emotional challenges for both professional and trainee counsellors often overlap, albeit in varying degrees. For instance, professional counsellors face role conflicts due to their expanded responsibilities, while trainees might experience a similar strain when juggling the dual roles of student and emerging practitioner. Trainees may also encounter cultural and ethical dilemmas, similar to their professional counterparts, but often lack the practical experience to resolve these conflicts effectively. These issues, compounded by limited access to peer support or structured supervision as reported by Lee et al. (2022), can intensify emotional distress for trainees.

While existing studies provide valuable insights into the pressures faced by professional counsellors, the absence of focused research on trainees represents a critical gap in the literature. This study aims to bridge that gap by examining the specific causes of emotional challenges for trainees, providing a framework for early intervention and equipping future counsellors with the resources to mitigate these issues. By understanding the origins of emotional stress in the training phase, counselling programs can better prepare trainees to face the demands of their profession, reducing the likelihood of long-term burnout and emotional exhaustion in the future.

2.4 Strategies used by trainee counsellors in regulating emotions

Recent studies on trainee counsellors in Malaysia primarily focus on self-care practices and coping strategies, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, as these often reflect how emotions are expressed and regulated. For instance, Abdullah et al. (2024) investigated coping strategies employed by 106 final-year trainee counsellors from the University Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) during their internships amid the pandemic. Their findings revealed that the majority of participants adopted positive reinterpretation strategies, which involve reframing challenging situations to emphasize empowerment rather than helplessness. This approach shifted their perspective from reacting to responding constructively. However, avoidance strategies, such as self-distraction and expressing negative emotions, were also frequently utilized, highlighting a tendency towards less adaptive coping mechanisms in some cases.

Subhi et al. (2021) explored the relationships among coping strategies, resilience, and stress levels among 151 final-year counselling students from Malaysian universities. Their quantitative survey identified three primary coping strategies: problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance strategies. Notably, the study found that greater reliance on avoidance

strategies was associated with increased stress levels, underscoring the importance of promoting more adaptive emotion regulation approaches among trainee counsellors.

A qualitative study by Aren and Pissal (2022) examined self-care practices from a coping perspective among trainee counsellors at a Sarawak university. Findings indicated that social self-care, such as seeking emotional support from family and friends, played a significant role in helping trainee counsellors manage stress and achieve emotional well-being. Participants also reported engaging in physical self-care practices, including exercise, relaxation, and allocating “me” time, as effective ways to process and express emotions. These practices, often framed as deliberate strategies for managing distress, highlight the interconnectedness of self-care and emotion regulation.

The strategies employed by trainee counsellors to regulate their emotions reflect a diverse range of approaches, as highlighted in recent studies in Malaysia, yet underscore a significant need for promoting more adaptive regulation techniques. Abdullah et al. (2024) found that final-year trainee counsellors predominantly employed positive reinterpretation strategies, such as reframing challenging situations to focus on empowerment rather than helplessness. This strategy reflects a constructive response to emotional demands, yet the frequent use of avoidance strategies, including self-distraction and expressing negative emotions, signals a gap in emotional regulation that may contribute to stress and burnout. Similarly, Subhi et al. (2021) identified a strong reliance on avoidance strategies among trainee counsellors, which was linked to heightened stress levels. This finding points to the importance of fostering more proactive and emotion-focused regulation strategies, rather than relying on maladaptive avoidance. Furthermore, Aren and Pissal (2022) highlighted the role of social self-care and physical self-care practices, such as exercise and relaxation, in managing emotional well-being. These practices, while beneficial, also suggest that trainee

counsellors may rely on external support and activities to buffer emotional stress, which may not always address the core of emotional regulation in the therapeutic context.

Overall, these studies indicate that while trainee counsellors do employ various strategies to manage their emotions, the predominance of avoidance and external coping mechanisms calls for further emphasis on cultivating more adaptive emotion regulation skills within training programs. These insights underscore the need to explore and refine how trainee counsellors develop and utilize emotion regulation strategies during their training, and the potential impact of these strategies on their professional well-being and effectiveness.

2.5 Research gap

The literature on emotion regulation (ER) and its importance for counsellors, particularly trainee counsellors, reveals several significant research gaps that underscore the need for further exploration.

While studies such as Gutierrez and Mullen (2016) and Ruiz-Aranda et al. (2021) highlight the importance of ER in preventing burnout and fostering effective client relationships, these insights largely pertain to professional counsellors rather than trainees. Similarly, the findings of Nasir et al. (2023) and Dagang et al. (2020) demonstrate how EI enhances ER and counselling self-efficacy, which are vital for successful practice. However, the process by which trainee counsellors develop these skills during the formative stages of their training is insufficiently addressed. Given that trainees often encounter unique stressors such as performance anxiety, supervision-related pressure, and the dual demands of academic and practicum responsibilities, there is a pressing need to explore how ER evolves under these conditions. Existing research lacks a comprehensive understanding of how these stressors influence ER skill development and how training programs can be designed to proactively support trainees in building resilience and emotional competence. By addressing

these gaps, this study aims to deepen insights into the specific developmental needs of trainee counsellors and inform strategies to enhance their emotional regulation capacity, ultimately safeguarding their mental health and professional growth.

The challenges faced by trainee counsellors, as discussed by Nasir et al. (2023), including performance anxiety and struggles with emotional boundaries, are unique and distinct from those experienced by professional counsellors. However, most existing studies, such as those by Lee et al. (2022) and Mohamed et al. (2020), focus on the emotional challenges of experienced professionals. While parallels can be drawn, the lack of dedicated research on trainee counsellors neglects the nuanced developmental and contextual factors influencing their emotional experiences. This oversight is problematic, as the early stages of training are critical for building resilience and professional identity, making it essential to understand the specific emotional challenges faced by this group.

In terms of strategies for regulating emotions, studies like Abdullah et al. (2024) and Subhi et al. (2021) highlight a reliance on avoidance-based coping mechanisms among Malaysian trainee counsellors, which are often linked to increased stress levels. While these findings indicate the need for promoting more adaptive ER strategies, the research does not delve deeply into how these strategies can be effectively taught and integrated into counselling training programs. Additionally, Aren and Pissal (2022) emphasize self-care practices such as social and physical self-care, yet the focus on external coping mechanisms leaves a gap in understanding how internal, skill-based ER strategies like mindfulness and cognitive reappraisal can be cultivated during training.

Identifying these gaps underscores a significant limitation in existing research: the lack of attention to the lived experiences and developmental trajectories of trainee counsellors as they navigate emotion regulation (ER). Most studies focus on professional counsellors or

general ER frameworks, overlooking the unique challenges and learning processes specific to trainee counsellors. This highlights an urgent need to delve into the nuanced experiences of trainees to better address the challenges they face and understand how they develop and refine ER strategies. This study aims to contribute meaningfully to the counselling field, offering insights that support the design of training programs to foster emotional resilience and equip trainee counsellors with essential skills for sustained professional success and personal well-being.

2.6 Theory

2.6.1 Dialectical Behaviour Therapy

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), developed by Marsha Linehan in the late 1980s, was initially designed to treat individuals with borderline personality disorder (BPD) and chronic suicidal tendencies. It has since expanded to address a range of emotional dysregulation disorders (Linehan, 1993a, b). Rooted in cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), DBT integrates a variety of cognitive and behavioural techniques specifically aimed at enhancing emotional regulation (ER). The therapy's structured skills training consists of four core modules: mindfulness, emotional regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance, each addressing unique aspects of emotional experience.

Mindfulness is at the heart of DBT and underpins all its interventions. It teaches individuals to observe and experience their emotions and thoughts nonjudgmentally, creating an "observer perspective" that facilitates emotional awareness. This approach helps individuals detach from their emotions, viewing them as transient states rather than part of their identity, promoting emotional regulation (McMain et al., 2001). Through mindfulness, clients learn to acknowledge emotions rather than react impulsively, providing a foundation

for emotional balance and the ability to respond thoughtfully in emotionally charged situations (Linehan, 2015).

The emotional regulation module in DBT further strengthens emotional control by providing psychoeducation about emotions and offering practical tools for managing them. Techniques like problem-solving, reality-checking, and engaging in opposite actions counteract maladaptive emotional responses, promoting healthier ways of interacting with emotions (Fassbinder et al., 2016). By empowering individuals to recognize emotions as temporary and manageable, DBT helps them make intentional choices in how to respond to emotional experiences, reducing emotional vulnerability.

In addition to mindfulness and emotional regulation, DBT incorporates various cognitive and behavioural strategies to improve emotional resilience. These include relaxation exercises and techniques to address cognitive distortions, such as reframing negative thought patterns. By promoting cognitive flexibility, DBT enables individuals to respond to emotional triggers more effectively, fostering emotional stability even in challenging situations (Mousavi et al., 2022). Distress tolerance techniques, which are central to DBT, further help individuals manage high emotional intensity without resorting to harmful behaviours, providing immediate coping mechanisms for emotional crises (Linehan, 2015).

Understanding and accurately naming emotions is a critical part of DBT. It involves identifying primary and secondary emotions, which helps clients gain deeper insight into their emotional states and the factors influencing them. This awareness of emotions enables individuals to intervene constructively, reducing impulsive reactions and promoting adaptive responses to emotional challenges (Linehan, 2015). Additionally, DBT encourages clients to assess whether their emotional reactions are proportionate to the situation. If not, clients are

taught to adopt alternative actions to adjust their emotional responses, fostering healthier emotional habits (Linehan, 2015).

Finally, DBT incorporates the ABC PLEASE framework, which encourages individuals to reduce emotional vulnerability by focusing on their physical well-being, including adequate sleep, nutrition, and exercise. This holistic approach ensures that emotional regulation is supported by a strong foundation of physical health, further enhancing individuals' ability to manage emotions (Linehan, 2015). DBT also provides strategies for managing intense emotions, discouraging emotional suppression, which often exacerbates distress. Instead, clients are encouraged to practice mindfulness of their current emotional state, helping them gain control over overwhelming emotions and navigate emotional arousal effectively (Linehan, 2015).

In short, DBT's structured approach combining mindfulness, cognitive-behavioural techniques, and emotional awareness provides individuals with the tools to manage emotional dysregulation. By equipping individuals with the skills to navigate emotional challenges effectively, DBT offers a comprehensive framework for improving emotional regulation and resilience across a variety of contexts. This approach is particularly valuable in supporting individuals with emotional dysregulation, helping them achieve greater emotional balance and stability (Linehan, 2015).

2.6.2 How DBT enhance emotion regulation

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) has consistently demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing emotional regulation across various populations, including individuals with anxiety, depression, emotional dysregulation, and relational difficulties. By integrating cognitive-behavioural techniques with mindfulness practices, DBT addresses the diverse emotional needs of its participants (Gasol et al., 2022). Quantitative studies such as those by

Afshari and Hasani (2020) and Mousavi et al. (2022) emphasize DBT's measurable outcomes, including significant reductions in emotional reactivity, pathological worry, and depressive symptoms, affirming its value for anxiety and depression treatment. Uitto (2020) and Heath (2021) further validate DBT's long-term benefits, highlighting sustained emotional improvements across various clinical contexts, while Rady et al. (2021) underscore its role in fostering emotional understanding and enhancing relational dynamics among couples.

On the other hand, qualitative studies provide a more profound exploration of the experiential processes through which DBT fosters emotional regulation. Larson et al. (2023) highlighted how DBT helped participants develop a shared emotional language and practice self-validation, allowing them to accept their emotions and transition to greater calmness and control. Artana and Pohan (2020) demonstrated how mindfulness and emotional journaling enabled participants to replace maladaptive coping mechanisms like self-harm with constructive strategies, fostering emotional stability. Similarly, Pardo et al. (2020) illustrated the use of mindfulness and distress tolerance techniques to develop a "wise mind," helping participants manage intense emotions constructively. Cleary et al. (2023) emphasized how DBT's focus on relational dynamics in family settings facilitated shared emotional understanding, enhanced adaptability in managing challenges, and strengthened interpersonal functioning.

The theoretical framework of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) provides an insightful lens for understanding the experience of trainee counsellors in regulating their emotions by dissecting the complexities of emotional processes and contextual influences. DBT's emphasis on mindfulness and emotional awareness sheds light on how trainee counsellors become conscious of their emotional patterns, offering insight into how they perceive, experience, and respond to emotional triggers within professional settings. The structured components of DBT, such as distress tolerance and cognitive-behavioural

techniques, provide a framework to analyse how trainees navigate high-stress situations, endure conflicting emotions, and manage vulnerabilities, such as performance anxiety or the emotional impact of client interactions. Furthermore, DBT's dual focus on acceptance and change aligns with the developmental challenges faced by trainee counsellors, including reconciling self-awareness with professional identity formation, allowing for a deeper exploration of their emotional regulation journey. By incorporating relational dynamics and interpersonal effectiveness, DBT also aids in understanding how external influences, such as supervisory relationships and client dynamics, shape trainee counsellors' emotional regulation experiences. In short, by framing these processes within DBT's systematic approach to emotions, this framework enables a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of how trainee counsellors experience, adapt to, and grow in their emotional regulation journey, highlighting the factors that both hinder and facilitate their development.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the study. It consists of research design, sampling procedure, location of study, research instrument and data analysis. As to fulfil the research objectives, the researcher understood the experience of regulating emotions among UTAR trainee counsellors. Therefore, interviews were arranged after the selection of 6 participants.

3.1 Research design

To address the research question, this study adopted a phenomenological approach to explore the experience of regulating emotions among trainee counsellors at UTAR. Phenomenology, as a qualitative research strategy, focuses on understanding and describing the essence of lived experiences of individuals concerning a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). It aims to uncover the shared meaning of experiences among multiple individuals, providing insights into how these experiences are perceived and interpreted (Badil et al., 2023). Specifically, phenomenological research seeks to explore real-life events and understand how individuals make sense of these occurrences (Delve, 2022). Through this approach, the study generated a universal understanding of trainee counsellors' emotional regulation experiences, incorporating data from interviews, observations, and other relevant documentation. This methodology is particularly valuable when examining subjective experiences, emotions, and meanings attached to specific life events, enabling researchers to uncover both shared themes and individual variations (Prime, 2024).

A qualitative research framework guided the study, focusing on investigating the meanings individuals or groups assign to a social or human phenomenon. The research process involved the formulation of research questions, the collection of non-numerical data

such as text or audio recordings in the participants' natural settings, inductive data analysis to derive broader themes, and an evaluation of the significance of the findings. This method allows for the exploration of complex ideas, opinions, or experiences, generating rich insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Bhandari, 2020). The qualitative design incorporated several data collection methods, including in-depth, face-to-face interviews with open-ended questions, which will enable participants to share detailed experiences and provide a nuanced understanding of the topic. The study considered focus groups and observation as supplementary techniques to further explore participant behaviours and actions (Hoover, 2021).

By employing a qualitative, phenomenological research design, this study facilitated the identification and exploration of the lived experiences of emotion regulation among trainee counsellors at UTAR. The methodology involved engaging with six participants through physical interviews, where they provided in-depth responses to open-ended questions. This approach enabled the researcher to interact closely with the participants, fostering a deeper understanding of their perspectives and experiences in regulating emotions during their training. Conducting the research physically ensured a more interactive and detailed data collection process, allowing for richer insights into the phenomenon under study.

3.2 Sampling procedures

3.2.1 Rationale sampling method

This study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method, to identify participants. Purposive sampling involves selecting individuals who possess specific characteristics or qualities essential to the research's objectives (Thomas, 2022). It allows researchers to effectively narrow the participant pool by focusing on those who are most

relevant to the study. According to Oliver (2015), this technique requires the researcher to deliberately choose participants based on criteria such as expertise, willingness, or ability to contribute meaningfully to the research.

The primary purpose of purposive sampling is to target participants who can provide rich, relevant information about the research topic. This approach is particularly beneficial in qualitative studies as it allows for greater flexibility in planning and implementing a unique sampling strategy tailored to the study's needs (Thomas, 2022). Additionally, it facilitated the collection of in-depth data by enabling the researcher to select participants who are best suited to address the research questions. By doing so, the results are directly applicable to the research context, as the information gathered is highly specific and relevant.

For this study, six participants were chosen to share their experiences of emotion regulation as trainee counsellors. This technique was selected because it ensures that the participants' insights align with the research focus, providing detailed and meaningful data that the researcher can analyse and interpret within the context of the study.

3.2.2 Sample size

To gain a deeper understanding of trainee counsellors' experiences of regulating emotions, this study involved interviews with six participants. In qualitative research, sample sizes are often smaller because the focus is on exploring the meaning behind a particular issue, process, or interaction rather than generalizing results (Vasileiou et al., 2018; Dworkin, 2012). According to Morse (1995), phenomenological research typically relies on a small number of participants, usually between six and ten, to ensure the collection of rich, detailed data. Similarly, Creswell (2013) suggests that phenomenological studies can include anywhere from five to twenty-five participants to adequately capture the essence of shared experiences. Omona (2013) emphasizes that a minimum of six participants is sufficient for

qualitative research when the aim is to understand the core of an experience, as it allows for identifying and interpreting similarities across participants' accounts.

Additionally, determining the sample size is crucial for planning research proposals, budgeting, and resource allocation. Budiu (2021) supports this by demonstrating that qualitative studies involving six participants can uncover 85% of interface-related issues, underscoring the effectiveness of smaller samples in providing meaningful insights. Based on these considerations, six trainee counsellors were interviewed in this study to ensure that the data collected is both comprehensive and manageable.

Furthermore, the sample size was informed by the principle of data saturation, a key concept in qualitative research. As noted by Fusch et al. (2018), data saturation plays a central role in determining whether a study's objectives have been met. Hennink and Kaiser (2022) similarly stress that the validity of qualitative findings depends largely on the adequacy of data to answer the research questions. Saturation occurs when no new themes, insights, or significant information emerge from additional data collection, indicating that further interviews are unlikely to enhance the richness of the findings (Mwita, 2022). Mwita (2022) highlights that reaching saturation not only supports the credibility and trustworthiness of the study but also optimizes the research process by avoiding redundancy. In this study, saturation was reached by the sixth interview, as participants consistently expressed overlapping experiences and recurring themes related to emotional regulation. This indicated that the data were sufficiently rich and aligned with the study's research objectives, thereby supporting the adequacy of the selected sample size.

3.2.3 Recruitment process

In the initial phase of the recruitment process, potential participants were identified and contacted through personalized direct messages sent via WhatsApp. Prior to reaching out,

each prospective participant was carefully screened to ensure a preliminary match with the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria. This first screening involved reviewing relevant characteristics such as demographic details and prior experiences that aligned with the study's objectives.

Following the initial contact, a physical meeting was arranged to conduct a second round of screening. This in-person interaction allowed for a more thorough verification of eligibility and served as an opportunity to establish rapport, address any questions, and clearly communicate the expectations of participation. Only those who fulfilled the necessary criteria and confirmed their interest were invited to proceed with the interview stage.

To further support participation, a reminder was sent via direct message one day prior to each scheduled interview. This proactive approach ensured that participants were well-prepared and fully aware of the details and expectations related to the study. Maintaining this level of communication played a crucial role in sustaining participant engagement, reducing the risk of dropouts or no-shows, and reinforcing their sense of responsibility and commitment to the research process. Ultimately, this contributed to the smooth execution and reliability of the data collection phase.

3.2.4 Procedures for ethical clearance and approval

This study adhered strictly to the university's ethical clearance procedures, which required formal approval from relevant authorities prior to the commencement of data collection. Ethical approval was obtained upon the completion of Project Paper I.

After completing the required documentation, the researcher returned the form to the supervisor, Dr. Komathi a/p Lokithasan, who compiled and submitted the materials to the Head of the Department of Counselling and Psychology at the Faculty of Arts and Social Science (FAS), Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR). The department head reviewed and

endorsed the application, and the signed ethical clearance form was returned to the researcher via the supervisor, signifying approval to proceed.

3.3 Data Collected

3.3.1 Interview

The research study, “The Experiences of Regulating Emotions Among Trainee Counsellors in UTAR”, primarily employed one-to-one semi-structured interviews as the main method of data collection. These interviews were conducted physically in a private and comfortable setting to facilitate open and genuine dialogue. The face-to-face format allowed for deeper engagement and encouraged participants to reflect meaningfully on their personal experiences with emotional regulation during their counselling training.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews provided a balance between structure and flexibility. A set of guiding open-ended questions was used to steer the conversation while allowing space for participants to elaborate on aspects they found personally significant. This format enabled the researcher to probe further into emerging themes while maintaining the natural flow of conversation.

All interviews were audio recorded with the explicit consent of participants. These recordings served as the primary source for data transcription and analysis. Transcribing the interviews allowed for an accurate, detailed, and thorough examination of the participants’ narratives, ensuring the integrity of the data and enhancing the depth of the study’s findings.

3.3.2 Field notes

In addition to audio-recorded interviews, field notes were utilized as a supplementary method of data collection to capture non-verbal and contextual information during the interview sessions. These observations played a valuable role in enriching the understanding of participants’ emotional experiences and responses beyond what was explicitly stated.

The field notes included detailed observations of facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, and the level of engagement with interview questions. These elements provided insight into participants' emotional states, levels of comfort, and openness during the interviews. For instance, hesitation, shifts in posture, prolonged pauses, or changes in vocal tone were noted as possible indicators of emotional difficulty or reflection.

By documenting these subtle cues, the field notes offered important context for interpreting participants' verbal responses more holistically. They also served as a means to capture spontaneous, unspoken reactions that might not be evident in the audio recordings alone.

These observational data were recorded immediately after each interview to preserve accuracy and minimize recall bias. While not analysed as standalone data, the field notes were used to complement the transcribed interviews during the analysis phase, adding depth and nuance to the overall interpretation of the findings.

3.3.3 Relevance of collected data with research objectives

The data collected through semi-structured interviews and field notes is closely aligned with the overarching research objectives of the study, which aims to explore the lived experiences of emotional regulation among trainee counsellors in UTAR.

The semi-structured interviews allowed participants to openly reflect on their personal journeys, challenges, and coping strategies related to regulating emotions within academic and practicum settings. These in-depth narratives provided rich, qualitative insights that directly address the core objective of understanding how trainee counsellors perceive, experience, and manage emotional regulation during their training.

Additionally, field notes captured non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language. These elements added depth to the interpretation of verbal

responses. These observations offered contextual information that enhanced the understanding of participants' emotional expressions, engagement, and internal responses, further reinforcing the alignment between collected data and research aims.

Together, these data sources contribute meaningfully to fulfilling the research objectives by offering a comprehensive view of the emotional regulation processes experienced by trainee counsellors, thus supporting a nuanced and authentic exploration of the phenomenon.

3.4 Validity of data collection method

Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research and is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Trustworthiness in this study was established through systematic procedures aimed at ensuring that the interpretations reflect the true experiences of trainee counsellors navigating emotion regulation in the counselling context. In line with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework, the study addressed four key criteria of **trustworthiness**: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Several strategies were employed to uphold the integrity of the data collection process, including triangulation, member checking, peer scrutiny, rich description, and expert validation of the interview protocol.

To promote **credibility**, data triangulation was implemented through the use of both interview transcripts and field notes. This approach allowed the researcher to identify recurring themes and patterns that consistently appeared across different forms of data, reinforcing the trustworthiness of the findings. As noted by Creswell and Miller (2000), triangulating various data sources strengthens confidence in the accuracy of qualitative interpretations. In addition, member checking was incorporated to further enhance credibility.

For instance, clarifications were sought from several participants regarding specific responses in their transcripts to ensure their intended meanings were accurately captured. This validation process helped maintain fidelity to participants' lived experiences of emotion regulation in training.

Transferability was supported through the use of thick, rich descriptions of the research setting, participant backgrounds, and contextual factors related to the trainee counsellors' experiences. These detailed accounts allow readers to determine whether the findings may be applicable to other training settings or populations of counselling students (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In line with Creswell's (2014) suggestion, such descriptions enable readers to immerse themselves in the study context, fostering a sense of shared experience and allowing them to make informed judgments about the relevance of the findings to their own environments.

To ensure **dependability**, peer scrutiny was employed during the data collection and early analysis phases. A fellow researcher reviewed selected transcripts, field notes, and emerging codes to provide constructive feedback and ensure consistency in interpretation. This practice aligns with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) notion of peer debriefing, which supports internal coherence and strengthens methodological transparency. The feedback process helped confirm that interpretations were grounded in data and not unduly shaped by personal assumptions, contributing to the overall stability and replicability of the study procedures.

Confirmability was addressed through maintaining an audit trail documenting each stage of the research process, including decision-making, coding rationale, and reflective notes. This ensured transparency and allowed external reviewers to assess the neutrality and integrity of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The study's findings were continuously

cross-referenced with participant quotes and field notes to ensure that interpretations were data-driven rather than influenced by researcher bias. Member checking and peer scrutiny further supported this process by confirming that the conclusions remained aligned with the participants' own narratives.

Finally, **expert validation** of the semi-structured interview protocol was conducted before data collection began. The protocol was reviewed by two experienced counselling educators to evaluate its clarity, appropriateness, and relevance to the study's aim. Their feedback was incorporated to refine question phrasing and ensure that the prompts would effectively elicit rich, meaningful accounts of emotion regulation experiences. This step contributed to the overall rigour of the data collection process and ensured the alignment of the research instruments with the study's theoretical framework and objectives.

3.5 Data collection procedures

3.5.1 Demographic characteristics of participants

This research primarily focused on trainee counsellors to explore their experiences of regulating emotions during their training. The participants were selected from individuals aged 19 to 28 years old. This age range was chosen because it encompasses the typical demographic of trainee counsellors who are pursuing their education or practical training in counselling. In the researcher's view, participants within this age group are more likely to provide relevant and insightful information about their emotional regulation experiences, as they are actively engaged in developing the skills required for professional counselling.

Moreover, individuals aged 19 to 28 years old are at a developmental stage where they are refining their professional identity and coping mechanisms, making them particularly suited for this study's focus on emotional regulation. Participants in this age range are also more likely to share their experiences openly, as they may have a clearer understanding of

their emotional challenges and the strategies they employ to manage these challenges. Additionally, this group often navigates complex dynamics such as supervision, academic responsibilities, and client interactions, providing rich data for understanding the lived experiences of regulating emotions in the context of trainee counselling.

The researcher believed that focusing on trainee counsellors within this age group will yield valuable insights into how they navigate the emotional demands of their training and develop emotional resilience. By capturing their experiences, this study aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of the emotional regulation processes that are crucial for their professional development and future success as counsellors.

3.5.2 Location of study

This study was conducted physically, with face-to-face interviews held with the selected participants. This approach allowed the researcher to gather comprehensive information without interruptions or inconveniences, such as network issues. The interviews took place at the UTAR Community Counselling Centre (UCCC), ensuring confidentiality for both the participants and the researcher. The study focused on participants residing in Kampar, Perak, as the researcher is currently based in the same location, making the logistics of conducting interviews more practical and efficient. This research topic was chosen out of the researcher's strong interest in understanding the diverse experiences of emotion regulation, aiming to gain valuable perspectives and insights into how trainee counsellors manage their emotions. The primary goal of this study was to explore the in-depth experiences of UTAR trainee counsellors in regulating their emotions.

3.5.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The qualities that potential subjects must possess in order to be included in the study are known as inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for this study outline the characteristics

that participants must possess to ensure relevance to the research objectives. Participants must be trainee counsellors aged 19 to 28 years, as this age range typically aligns with individuals pursuing counselling education or practical training. This criterion ensured that participants are in the developmental stage of acquiring professional counselling skills, making them suitable to share insights into their experiences of regulating emotions. Another inclusion criterion is that participants must currently be undergoing their counselling training or practical internship in Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR). This ensures that they are actively engaged in situations requiring emotional regulation, providing firsthand, relevant experiences for the study. Additionally, participants must reside in Kampar, Perak, to facilitate face-to-face interviews, ensuring convenience and cost-efficiency for the researcher while maintaining the study's logistical feasibility.

The exclusion criteria specify the characteristics that disqualify potential participants from the study to maintain its focus and relevance. Individuals who are already registered counsellors are excluded, as the study aims to explore the experiences of trainee counsellors who are still undergoing practical training or education in counselling. This ensures the data aligns with the developmental and experiential challenges specific to trainee counsellors. Additionally, individuals who are not enrolled in counselling training programs, such as those from unrelated fields, are excluded as they cannot provide relevant insights into emotion regulation within the context of counselling. People outside the age range of 19 to 28 are also excluded, as they may not represent the typical trainee counsellor demographic, particularly in terms of academic and professional development. Furthermore, individuals residing outside Kampar, Perak, are excluded to ensure that all interviews are conducted face-to-face, adhering to the study's proposed methodology and maintaining logistical feasibility. These exclusion criteria are designed to focus the research on the specific experiences of trainee counsellors, ensuring the collection of relevant and meaningful data.

3.5.4 Procedures of obtaining consent

A consent form served not only to obtain participants' permission but also to establish an agreement outlining the mutual obligations and responsibilities between the researcher and the participants throughout the study. The researcher prepared a written consent document containing all necessary information, which will be presented to potential participants as part of the consent process. The consent form includes essential elements such as the participant's name, signature, and date, along with detailed information about the study, including the title, purpose, research procedure, participant rights, potential risks and benefits, and contact details for further inquiries.

The researcher explained the informed consent process thoroughly, assuring participants of the confidentiality of their identities and the privacy of their data. Once participants fully understand the details of the study and agree to participate, they were asked to sign the informed consent form. Only after the participants have provided their written consent will the researcher proceed with the interview sessions. This process ensures transparency, ethical compliance, and the participants' willingness to engage in the study.

3.5.5 Description of data collection procedures

In this study, the data collection procedure involved conducting face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with six selected trainee counsellors. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants. The consent process included providing participants with a written consent form that details the purpose of the study, the procedure, participants' rights, potential risks and benefits, and assurances of confidentiality. The researcher explained the consent form thoroughly, addressing any questions or concerns raised by participants. Once participants understand and agree to the terms, they signed the form, allowing the researcher to proceed with the interviews.

The researcher utilized the Dolbeare-Schuman Seidman In-Depth Phenomenological Interview Model to guide the data collection. This three-stage model is designed to delve deeply into participants' lived experiences. In the first stage, participants described the context of their experiences in regulating emotions, providing a foundation for understanding their narratives. The second stage focused on reconstructing specific details and instances of their emotional regulation experiences, exploring how these moments occurred within their practical training as counsellors. In the third stage, participants reflected on the personal meaning and impact of these experiences, offering insights into how regulating emotions influences their personal and professional development.

The interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes to 60 minutes and were conducted in a confidential setting at the UTAR Community Counselling Centre (UCCC) to ensure privacy and encourage open communication. With participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim for data analysis. Field notes were maintained to capture contextual details and observations that may enrich the analysis. This thorough and ethically grounded procedure enabled a comprehensive exploration of trainee counsellors' experiences in regulating emotions.

3.5.6 Interview questions

To explore the experiences of regulating emotions among trainee counsellors in UTAR, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed using the Dolbeare-Schuman Seidman In-Depth Phenomenological Interview Model as a guiding framework. This three-stage model is specifically designed to elicit detailed, reflective accounts of lived experience. In the first stage, participants were asked to describe the broader context of their emotional experiences during their counselling training. The second stage focused on reconstructing specific situations where emotional regulation was necessary, whether in response to client interactions, supervision, or academic pressures. In the third stage, participants reflected on

the meaning and impact of these experiences, offering insight into how emotion regulation has influenced their personal and professional growth.

The interview protocol comprised ten main questions, each supported by three to four probing sub-questions. The main questions were open-ended, allowing participants to express their experiences in their own words, while the probing questions were a mix of open- and close-ended questions, used strategically to seek clarification or expand on specific responses. This structure ensured flexibility while maintaining consistency across interviews. It also allowed the researcher to explore the emotional challenges participants encountered, the strategies they used to regulate those emotions, and the contextual factors that shaped their responses, such as the influence of supervision, academic demands, and client work.

The questions were developed based on an extensive review of relevant literature on emotion regulation within counselling and trainee development. This process helped the researcher design questions that were clear, relevant, and aligned with the study's objectives. Anticipated participant responses were also considered during the development process, enabling the researcher to shape questions that could prompt both reflection and specificity. The inclusion of probing questions supported deeper exploration and allowed for richer, more nuanced data to emerge. This approach ultimately aligned with the study's goal of capturing the complex and evolving nature of emotion regulation within the lived experiences of trainee counsellors.

3.6 Reflexivity in the data collection process

To enhance the reliability and trustworthiness of this study, reflexivity was employed as a key strategy to minimise the influence of researcher bias and subjectivity. In qualitative research, reflexivity refers to the process of ongoing self-awareness and critical reflection, where researchers examine how their own perspectives, values, and assumptions may shape

the research process and outcomes (Jamieson et al., 2023). This practice is widely recognised as a hallmark of high-quality and robust qualitative inquiry (Lazard & McAvoy, 2020), especially in studies involving complex, emotionally nuanced experiences such as those related to emotional regulation among trainee counsellors.

Throughout the data collection process, the researcher maintained a reflective journal to document evolving thoughts, emotional responses, and potential biases. This journal served as a tool for critically examining the researcher's positionality, helping to ensure that personal assumptions did not overshadow participants' narratives. By regularly reviewing these reflections, the researcher was able to adjust interview techniques in real time, ensuring that questions remained neutral and open-ended, and that participants' voices were prioritised.

Reflexivity also played a role in shaping an ethically sensitive interview environment. Given the personal and emotional nature of the topic, the researcher approached each conversation with empathy and awareness, encouraging open dialogue while maintaining professional boundaries. Furthermore, member checking was used during the data clarification process, where participants were invited to verify and comment on interpretations of their statements. This helped to ensure that the data accurately reflected their intended meaning, thereby enhancing the credibility and confirmability of the findings.

Overall, ongoing reflexivity contributed to a more transparent and ethically grounded data collection process. It supported the researcher in managing potential biases and reinforced the integrity of the study, ultimately helping to ensure that the lived experiences of trainee counsellors were represented in an authentic and meaningful way.

3.7 Data analysis method

The researcher used thematic analysis to examine the data collected from all participants to address the research question, which focuses on identifying the experiences of

trainee counsellors at UTAR. Thematic analysis, as a qualitative data analysis technique, involves systematically reviewing a data set, such as transcripts from in-depth interviews or focus groups, and identifying patterns of meaning to generate themes (Finlay, 2021). This method will be particularly suitable for analysing the data gathered from semi-structured interviews, as it allows for the precise transcription of verbal interactions. Each interview will be transcribed into written form to facilitate the analysis process. Using thematic analysis enables the researcher to critically evaluate what participants expressed, how they conveyed their experiences, and why they articulated their perspectives in a specific way.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the evidence gathered and prepared from the data-collection process in an extremely series of breakdowns that allow the reader to recognize the relationships between participants' experiences, developing a series of positions to look at the evidence from different and various angles. Reviewing the research questions created to direct and inform this study is the first section of this chapter. Understanding the many viewpoints, experiences, and insights that were expressed with regard to the interviewing process and main research topics is essential. The interviews were conducted face to face at UTAR Community Counselling Centre (UCCC). The interviews took around 50 minutes to 1 hour to be completed. The interviews were audio recorded with the participant's consent.

Participants	Daisy	Lily	Orchid	Peony	Jasmine	Violet
Age	22	24	24	22	22	22
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female
Race	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
Educational level	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree
Year of study	Year 3	Year 3	Year 4	Year 2	Year 3	Year 3

Table 1: Demographic of the Participants

Research Objectives	Themes	Subthemes
To explore the in-depth experiences of UTAR trainee counsellors in regulating their emotions		
(i) Journey	Theme 1: Positive and Negative Journey	Subtheme 1.1: Emotional Struggles and Challenges Subtheme 1.2: Personal and Professional Growth Subtheme 1.3: Changing Perception of Counselling
(ii) Emotional Demands	Theme 2: Emotional Experiences	Subtheme 2.1: Emotional Fatigue and Sustained Presence Subtheme 2.2: Mild or No Emotional Overwhelm Subtheme 2.3: Reciprocal Emotional Experience
(iii) Definition of Emotion Regulation	Theme 3: Balancing Personal and Professional Emotions	Subtheme 3.1: Professional Objectivity and Boundaries Subtheme 3.2: Emotional Awareness and Self-Regulation Subtheme 3.3: Emotional Engagement and Presence

(iv) Importance of Emotion Regulation	Theme 4: Professionalism and Personal Well-Being	Subtheme 4.1: Professional Effectiveness Subtheme 4.2: Managing Stress and Decision-Making Subtheme 4.3: Maintaining Personal-Professional Boundaries
To explore the challenges faced by UTAR trainee counsellors in regulating their emotions		
(v) Emotional Challenges	Theme 5: Emotional Challenges	Subtheme 5.1: Emotional Fatigue and Burnout Subtheme 5.2: Self-Doubt and Perceived Incompetence Subtheme 5.3: Client-Induced Emotional Reactions
To explore strategies used by UTAR trainee counsellors in regulating their emotions		

(vi) Strategies and Techniques	Theme 6: Emotion Regulation Strategies	Subtheme 6.1: Grounding and Relaxation Techniques Subtheme 6.2: Cognitive and Emotional Processing Subtheme 6.3: Physical Strategies Subtheme 6.4: Self-Care Activities
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Table 2: Table of Themes and Subthemes

4.1 Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Positive and Negative Journey

Trainee counsellors reflected on both challenges and growth in their counselling journey. Some faced emotional struggles that tested their resilience, while others noted a shift in perception about what counselling truly involves. These experiences also contributed to personal and professional development that will support their future careers.

Subtheme 1.1: Emotional Struggles and Challenges

Three out of six participants described facing emotional struggles and challenges during their training. These difficulties emerged in various forms, including self-doubt, feeling overwhelmed by academic demands, and the emotional toll of handling difficult client cases. These experiences highlight the demanding nature of counselling training, where trainees must navigate both their own emotional responses and the complexities of working with clients.

“There have been moments of self-doubt and emotional struggles, especially when facing situations where I felt incompetent or unsure on how to help my clients effectively.”

(Extract 1, Daisy)

Daisy expressed feelings of self-doubt and emotional strain, particularly when encountering situations that made her question her ability to support clients. This uncertainty can be a common experience in training, where developing professional confidence takes time.

“There are some overwhelming challenges I can say, when dealing with the assignment because we have a lot of assignment need to do...”

(Extract 1, Lily)

Lily highlighted the academic pressures of training, describing the overwhelming workload as a major challenge. The counselling training process involves extensive coursework alongside practical sessions, which can create stress and emotional exhaustion for trainees.

“The challenging part may be dealing with difficult client cases.”

(Extract 1, Orchid)

Orchid identified handling complex client cases as a key challenge, acknowledging the emotional weight of working with clients facing serious issues. This finding suggests that real-world counselling situations introduce another layer of emotional complexity.

Despite these challenges, some trainee counsellors recognized that overcoming emotional struggles was an integral part of their professional growth. They learned to navigate self-doubt and stress while developing resilience and coping strategies to sustain their future practice.

Subtheme 1.2: Personal and Professional Growth

Four out of six participants reflected on their counselling training as a journey of growth, emphasizing the valuable learning experiences they gained despite facing challenges. Some viewed both positive and difficult moments as opportunities for self-improvement, resilience-building, and professional development. This perspective highlights the transformative nature of training, where struggles are not just obstacles but essential parts of becoming a competent counsellor.

I think my journey as a trainee counsellor has been a valuable learning experience...despite these difficulties, I think I'm still on my way to become a professional counsellor and I see each experience, whether positive or challenging, as an opportunity for growth.

(Extract 2, Daisy)

Daisy's reflection demonstrates a shift in perspective, she reframes challenges not as setbacks, but as valuable learning opportunities. This growth mindset is crucial in the counselling profession, where practitioners continually refine their skills through experience.

"...there are even benefits to it... the benefits may be learning a lot through the process."

(Extract 2, Orchid)

Orchid's statement reinforces the idea that challenges in training ultimately lead to learning and skill development. Rather than perceiving difficulties as obstacles, she recognizes them as essential stepping stones in her professional journey.

"I think it has been an inspiring journey for me, it has let me learn a lot of things that I have never learnt before."

(Extract 1, Peony)

Peony's experience highlights the excitement and fulfilment that can accompany personal and professional growth. This perspective underscores how training is not solely about overcoming struggles but also about gaining new knowledge and insights.

"Overall, it has been rewarding, and I have learnt a lot through this journey."

(Extract 1, Jasmine)

Jasmine described her training as a rewarding process, emphasizing the personal and professional growth she has experienced along the way.

Through these reflections, it is evident that while challenges were present, they played a fundamental role in shaping trainees into more competent and self-aware counsellors.

Subtheme 1.3: Changing Perception of Counselling

One participant shared how her understanding of counselling evolved throughout their training. Initially, she held a simplified view of the profession, but through hands-on experiences, she gained a deeper appreciation for its complexities. This shift in perception reflects how training provides a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of what it means to be a counsellor.

“At first, I thought that counselling was mainly about talking to people and helping them navigate their problems. However, throughout my training I’ve come to realize that it is far more complex and meaningful than I had imagined.”

(Extract 1, Violet)

Violet initially believed that counselling was primarily about conversation and guidance. However, as she progressed in her training, she recognized the depth of the profession. This finding suggests that real-world training plays a crucial role in dispelling misconceptions and deepening trainees’ understanding of the profession.

Theme 2: Emotional Experiences

Throughout their training, participants encountered varying emotional demands, ranging from fatigue and sustained emotional presence to milder experiences of emotional management. While some found the emotional aspects of counselling overwhelming, others perceived them as manageable. Additionally, one participant highlighted the reciprocal nature of emotional experiences, where both counsellors and clients contribute to an emotionally enriching interaction.

Subtheme 2.1: Emotional Fatigue and Sustained Presence

Three out of six participants expressed experiencing emotional fatigue during their training. They described the challenges of maintaining emotional presence during sessions, especially when faced with packed schedules or emotionally demanding interactions. Some highlighted the difficulty of sustaining their energy and composure while managing personal emotions, client needs, and external stressors.

“Besides self-doubt and unsure... because I haven't encountered any particularly serious issues from my clients that requires very intense emotional involvement. However, I do some time face a very packed schedules, especially like when sessions begin right after my classes.

So, during that time, I felt quite exhausted as I need to sustain my emotional presence throughout the sessions and especially the sessions will last about 1 hour and above. Yeah, so this can be very challenging and it's also something that I need to navigate in my if I continue my training.”

(Extract 3, Daisy)

Daisy noted that while she had not encountered highly intense cases, the combination of back-to-back sessions and academic workload left her feeling exhausted. Her experience highlights how fatigue is not solely linked to client difficulties but also to the broader demands of balancing training and coursework.

“I would think that the emotional demands of my training are quite high and sometimes overwhelming because dealing with clients requires a lot of emotional effort and that are actually mostly our jobs. We need to understand the client's worldview and show them our understanding, give them our emotional support and... everything is about emotional things. So, we need to put a lot of emotional efforts when dealing with a client. This is something that we cannot escape. So, when it comes to a counselling session which lasting for around one to

two hours, or maybe even more, and you need to keep being emotionally there for a long period of time, and for me it may be overwhelming.”

(Extract 2, Lily)

Lily emphasized the significant emotional demands of counselling, highlighting the challenge of maintaining emotional engagement throughout long sessions. Unlike casual conversations, counsellors must sustain deep attentiveness, empathy, and emotional regulation for extended periods, making fatigue an unavoidable challenge.

“I could say it's very high. Because in order to make a good session, that requires you to control your emotions like stabilize your emotions and not like, OK, if you see a client like you don't like or values doesn't match. If I just follow through the emotions, then there will have biases to the session.”

(Extract 3, Orchid)

Orchid described the emotional demands of counselling as high, emphasizing that maintaining emotional stability throughout sessions is crucial. She noted that managing personal biases requires continuous emotional regulation, adding to the mental effort needed during sessions.

These responses suggest that emotional exhaustion in training can result from a combination of sustained emotional presence, managing multiple responsibilities, and ensuring personal reactions do not interfere with professional engagement.

Subtheme 2.2: Mild or No Emotional Overwhelm

Two out of six participants reported experiencing minimal emotional overwhelm during their training. While they acknowledged the potential for stress, they did not find the emotional demands of counselling to be significantly taxing at this stage. Their responses

suggest that their current caseload and experiences have been manageable, allowing them to navigate their training without excessive emotional strain.

“I think for me...for now is still okay. I’m not really stressful or overwhelmed with that. But you know, as a GC student. Most of our deadlines and presentations are packed in the end of the semester.”

(Extract 2, Peony)

Peony noted that she has not felt overwhelmed so far, though she anticipates greater challenges as deadlines and presentations accumulate later in the semester. This highlights how emotional overwhelm in training may fluctuate based on external workload rather than client interactions alone.

“Actually, it's quite low. Mm hmm, at least for now. I've not encountered any sessions make me feel like I can't handle, or I must have some place to vent out or express the feelings after I've done my session.”

(Extract 2, Jasmine)

Jasmine similarly described the emotional demands as low, stating that no sessions have left her feeling drained or in need of emotional release. This suggests that her caseload, personal resilience, or coping strategies may have helped her maintain emotional balance during training.

These reflections indicate that while some trainee counsellors struggle with emotional fatigue, others experience their training as manageable, demonstrating the varying impact of counselling's emotional demands on individuals.

Subtheme 2.3: Reciprocal Emotional Experience

One participant highlighted the reciprocal nature of emotional experiences in counselling, emphasizing that emotional support is not one-sided but also benefits the counsellor.

“The emotional demands of my training have been both challenging and rewarding because counselling requires having empathy, patience and the ability to manage my own emotions while supporting my client. So surprisingly, it’s not just me helping others, I also will receive some emotional support and encouragement from those around me. This process has taught me that counselling is a two-way interaction when both the counsellor and my colleague and also the client can let me experience personal growth and emotional value.”

(Extract 2, Violet)

Violet’s reflection shifts the perspective from emotional strain to emotional reciprocity. Rather than viewing counselling as emotionally draining, she perceives it as a mutual exchange that fosters personal growth. This highlights a less frequently discussed aspect of counselling training—how trainees themselves can benefit emotionally from their work.

Theme 3: Balancing Personal and Professional Emotions

Participants defined emotion regulation in the context of their counselling training, highlighting how they manage their emotions to maintain professionalism and provide effective client support. While some viewed it as setting emotional boundaries to remain objective, others emphasized the importance of emotional awareness and self-regulation to ensure their feelings do not interfere with sessions. Additionally, one participant recognized the role of emotional engagement in staying present and connected with clients.

Subtheme 3.1: Professional Objectivity and Boundaries

Two out of six participants defined emotion regulation as the ability to maintain professional objectivity and set boundaries between their personal emotions and their role as a counsellor. They emphasized the importance of ensuring that personal feelings do not interfere with client interactions, allowing them to provide unbiased and ethical support.

“In the context of my counselling training, regulating emotions like means maintaining control over my emotional responses so they don't influence my judgments on directions with my clients, and it may involve like setting aside my personal feelings or thoughts to provide clients with unbiased services.”

(Extract 4, Daisy)

Daisy described emotion regulation as maintaining control over her emotional responses to prevent them from influencing her professional judgment. She explained that this involves setting aside personal thoughts and emotions to offer objective support to clients.

“Regulating emotions means make sure you provide at least like professional or services for the clients, yes, which means serving and maintaining a professionalism while serving a client.”

(Extract 3, Jasmine)

Jasmine highlighted the necessity of upholding professionalism when working with clients. She saw emotion regulation as a key component in delivering effective counselling services while maintaining a composed and professional demeanour.

Subtheme 3.2: Emotional Awareness and Self-Regulation

Four out of six participants described emotion regulation as a process of being aware of their emotions and managing them effectively to maintain emotional balance in their counselling

practice. They emphasized the importance of understanding their own feelings and ensuring these emotions do not interfere with their ability to support clients.

“Regulating emotions...I think it's a process to effectively manage our response to an emotional experience. Mm hmm, it can help us to manage our own emotions, to maintain a balance and respond appropriately to the challenges.”

(Extract 3, Lily)

Lily defined emotion regulation as the ability to manage emotional responses appropriately in challenging situations. He viewed it as a crucial skill that helps maintain emotional stability and respond effectively to difficult circumstances.

“For me, it's like being aware of your emotions. You have to understand why you feel that way. Mm hmm and by making sure like they don't interfere with what you're doing. That is the most important part in the session, yeah.”

(Extract 4, Orchid)

Orchid highlighted the role of self-awareness in regulating emotions, explaining that understanding why certain emotions arise is essential in preventing them from interfering with the counselling process.

“From my own opinion, I think regulating emotions is so-called way to help a person. It's like overwhelmed by the emotions and they just cannot like going to the next step rationally.

Due to their emotions. So, regulating emotions is we give them is like... also we give ourselves some ways, some solutions to regulate the emotions so that we can is like going to next step rationally.”

(Extract 3, Peony)

Peony described emotion regulation as a way to navigate overwhelming emotions and regain a rational perspective. She described it as a strategy for both counsellors and clients to manage emotions and move forward constructively.

“To me, regulating emotions in counselling means like maintaining the balance in emotional so it involved being aware of my own emotional, so I need to manage them effectively and ensuring that they do not disturb with my ability to provide objective and professional support to my client.”

(Extract 3, Violet)

Violet viewed emotion regulation as the ability to balance emotions while providing counselling support. She emphasized the need to be aware of personal emotions and manage them effectively to ensure objectivity in sessions

Subtheme 3.3: Emotional Engagement and Presence

Beyond maintaining objectivity and self-regulation, one participant emphasized the importance of staying emotionally engaged and present during counselling sessions. The participant highlighted how emotion regulation not only involves managing personal feelings but also ensuring a meaningful connection with clients.

“It also allows me to stay present and engage with client.”

(Extract 4, Violet)

Violet expressed that effective emotion regulation allows her to remain fully present and engaged with her clients. She recognized that emotional presence is essential in providing genuine support, ensuring that clients feel heard and understood.

Theme 4: Professionalism and Personal Well-Being

Participants perceive the role of emotion regulation in maintaining professionalism while safeguarding their well-being. They emphasize its importance in enhancing professional effectiveness, managing stress and decision-making, and maintaining personal-professional boundaries to prevent emotional spillover between their counselling practice and personal life.

Subtheme 4.1: Professional Effectiveness

Five out of six participants viewed emotion regulation as essential for maintaining professionalism, ensuring ethical and unbiased counselling, and preventing burnout. They described how emotional balance allows them to remain objective, avoid countertransference, and provide consistent support to clients.

“In my professional life, I think regulating emotions means like being aware of my emotional state. So, like managing my reactions and maintain a balance perspective, especially during counselling sessions like emotional regulation is quite...is very crucial I think because it allows me to provide non-judgmental view and without letting my personal feelings interfere client’s perspective and the whole counselling session. So, it can let my clients feel more supported.”

(Extract 5, Daisy)

Daisy emphasized that being aware of her emotional state allows her to manage reactions effectively, ensuring that her personal feelings do not interfere with sessions. This helps clients feel more supported.

“For me, emotional regulation is an important skill in both my professional and personal life. As a trainee counsellor, if you are unable to manage and respond to the emotional experience

in an appropriate way, it may create harm and put both counsellor and client in crisis. As mentioned, just now being a counsellor is requiring high emotional demands, which highlighting the importance of regulating your emotions to provide a professional service to clients.”

(Extract 4, Lily)

Lily highlighted that emotion regulation is a crucial skill in both professional and personal contexts. He noted that failing to regulate emotions could create harm and put both counsellor and client in crisis.

“OK, so in professional... Yeah, I think we usually meet to clients like they are emotionally overwhelmed... so that's really important for regulating emotions, not only for counsellor and also client. For professional... as a counsellor, I think it is really important because we cannot be affected by the emotion. We have to stay calm, stay stable in sessions.”

(Extract 4, Peony)

Peony explained that since clients often experience emotional overwhelm, counsellors must regulate their emotions to remain calm and stable during sessions.

“For me, it can prevent countertransference, like it’s preventing me...towards the client. And second, is to prevent me from like getting burnout.”

(Extract 4, Jasmine)

Jasmine sees emotion regulation as a means of preventing countertransference and reducing the risk of burnout, which are key risks in emotionally demanding professions like counselling.

“As a trainee counsellor, it has helped me to remain composed and empathetic without letting client’s emotion affect me in the session.”

(Extract 5, Violet)

Violet emphasized that emotional regulation allows her to balance composure and empathy, ensuring she remains supportive while maintaining professional boundaries.

Subtheme 4.2: Managing Stress and Decision-Making

Three out of six participants acknowledged that emotion regulation is equally important in personal life, as it allows them to handle stress and make better decisions.

“So, in my personal life, I think regulation of emotions is also equally important as my professional life because it allows me to handle stress, especially during group works. So, regulating emotions can help me to carry out effective communications with my teammates and maintain a healthy relationship so it can avoid me to feel overwhelmed.”

(Extract 6, Daisy)

Daisy pointed out that regulating emotions helps her manage stress in group work, maintain effective communication, and foster healthy relationships, preventing emotional overwhelm.

“On the other hand, in personal life, it is also important to regulate our emotions as we need to be aware that a lot of unexpected events happen in this world, learning how to effectively regulate our emotions can help us to deal with the unexpected events that may trigger us so that we can able to manage and respond it in a better way. For me, a stable emotion can help us to have a clearer mindset, which is very important, especially in decision making. So, we will not make a choice or decision that we will feel regret after that.”

(Extract 5, Lily)

Lily explained that unexpected events are inevitable, and regulating emotions allows him to respond to challenges more effectively. He emphasized that emotional stability allows individuals to maintain a clear mindset and make thoughtful decisions.

“It is very important for you to be able to manage your stress.”

(Extract 5, Orchid)

Orchid simply stated that stress management is a key reason why emotion regulation is essential.

Subtheme 4.3: Maintaining Personal-Professional Boundaries

Two out of six participants also emphasized the importance of emotion regulation in preventing professional experiences from negatively impacting their personal lives.

“Also... to make sure the emotions that I encountered in the session does not affect my personal life.”

(Extract 5, Jasmine)

Jasmine pointed out that regulating emotions helps her separate work-related emotions from her personal life, preventing distress from carrying over.

“So, it ensures that I do not carry the emotions of my client or their struggles into my personal life. In my personal life, I am able to regulate my emotions, and it can allow me to maintain my healthy mental state, without being over influenced by the distress or negative emotions in my professional life.”

(Extract 6, Violet)

Violet explained that emotion regulation allows her to protect her well-being by maintaining a healthy mental boundary between her professional and personal experiences.

Theme 5: Emotional Challenges

Participants described experiencing emotional challenges such as emotional fatigue and burnout, self-doubt and perceived incompetence, and client-induced emotional reactions.

These challenges often stemmed from demands of training, workload, and emotionally intense client interactions, affecting their well-being and professional confidence.

Subtheme 5.1: Emotional Fatigue and Burnout

Four out of six participants expressed feeling physically and mentally drained due to the high emotional demands of counselling sessions, academic workload, and the intensity of client stories.

“I have struggled to regulate my emotion during training, like particularly when after packed schedules... after the packed schedules, I have the sessions right after the classes. And I often feel like mentally exhausted not only physically exhausted. I really want to stay alone to regulate my emotions alone but yeah, I cannot because I need to carry on the sessions, and it became more difficult when client shared a lot of emotional intense stories, and I struggled to find a suitable interventions or questions to help them. So, in those moments, I would feel stress and experience a sense of incompetence which also impact my emotional engagements with the client.”

(Extract 7, Daisy)

Daisy struggled with emotional exhaustion, especially when transitioning from packed class schedules to emotionally intense sessions. She felt mentally drained, which impacted her ability to engage with clients effectively.

“For me, maintaining emotional resilience was very challenging. The cumulative effect of listening to clients sharing difficult experiences sometimes led me to the feelings of exhaustion or burnout because we have too many clients to deal with. they bring up with different issues. So, this is too much...So I will feel exhaustion and burnt out. Moreover, I'm a very responsive counsellor, so I show a lot of my attending skills to my client, to let the client

feel motivated to share and this even makes me feel more exhausted that I will nod in my head and then show my empathy feelings to him or her to my client.”

(Extract 6, Lily)

“We have a lot of courses, and we need to learn a lot, so there are a lot of assignments we need to do in a course. So, when in that particular moment I feel overwhelmed.”

(Extract 7, Lily)

Lily found maintaining emotional resilience challenging due to the cumulative emotional toll of working with multiple clients. His highly responsive counselling style, which required extensive attending skills, further contributed to exhaustion and burnout. Besides, the academic workload and demands have made her feel overwhelmed.

“Like in the end of the semester, every deadline, every presentation and also preparing for final exams is like many things waiting for me to do it and rush it. So, at that time, I’m just really stressful and all I will rush at the last minute...this makes me feel extremely overwhelmed.”

(Extract 5, Peony)

Peony felt overwhelmed by academic deadlines, final exams, and multiple presentations, describing the end of the semester as particularly stressful.

“You finish a two-to-three-hour sessions like group session. Then you feel so tired, cause after listening to clients’ problem for three hours. But still, you come back home then you should write the report then maybe next day you have morning class. So, I need to regulate all those emotions after I step out of the counselling room to make sure that I still can handle my next day or still has the energy to write the report.”

(Extract 6, Jasmine)

Jasmine shared that after conducting long group counselling sessions, she would feel emotionally and physically drained, especially the need to write session reports and prepare for the next day afterwards.

Subtheme 5.2: Self-Doubt and Perceived Incompetence

Five out of six participants struggled with feelings of self-doubt, questioning their abilities as trainee counsellors and worrying about their effectiveness in supporting clients.

“I think the main emotion challenge I have faced during my training is when sometimes I feel very incompetent and struggle to effectively help a client. So, at the moment I would feel like...uncertain about the right interventions or question to ask, and sometimes I will also doubt on my abilities...which quite affect my confidence and emotions.”

(Extract 8, Daisy)

Daisy experienced uncertainty when she felt unable to help a client effectively, leading to a lack of confidence in her interventions and overall abilities.

“Another challenge was dealing with self-doubt. There were moments when I questioned my competence and whether I was truly helping my clients. For instance, after session where a client become visibly upset, I worried if I had said something wrong or I could have handled the situation better. I keep questioning myself: Am I capable to become a counsellor? And this makes me feel more anxious and upset.”

(Extract 8, Lily)

Lily described moments of self-doubt, particularly after a session where a client became visibly upset. He questioned whether he had said something wrong or if he could have handled the session better.

“Self-doubt...whenever you try to apply some techniques or like the early on sessions because like you're not sure if you're able to support the client or not. So, you question everything that you are doing.”

(Extract 6, Orchid)

Orchid noted that she constantly questioned whether she was supporting clients correctly, making her doubt her techniques and approach.

“My emotional challenges are not because of client’s emotions. Most of the time is my ability. I keep wondering my ability to help my clients. Did I provide my best or pay effort to the sessions for the clients?”

(Extract 7, Jasmine)

Jasmine explained that her self-doubt was not triggered by clients’ emotions but rather by her own perceived competence. She frequently wondered whether she had given her best effort in sessions.

“I will be afraid that I can’t do well in the session. During these times, I will feel unsure about my approach or question whether I follow the right step and whether I was truly making a difference for my client.”

(Extract 7, Violet)

“There were times in my counselling session when I feel unsure and lack of confidence. I will sometimes doubt my intervention for the client and wonder if I’m guiding my client in the right direction.”

(Extract 8, Violet)

Violet worried about whether she was conducting sessions correctly and whether she was truly making a difference for her clients. She sometimes doubted the effectiveness of her interventions.

Subtheme 5.3: Client-Induced Emotional Reactions

Five out of six participants faced emotional challenges when clients' experiences reminded them of their own personal struggles or when they encountered difficult client behaviours.

"...when the client shared an experience that highly related with my personal life events, that is... I perceive as very unpleasant. So, it was challenging for me to separate my emotions from the situation, but I knew it was crucial to remain objective and not project my feelings to the client. But there's a very dilemma situation...I can say...yeah."

(Extract 9, Daisy)

"I immediately felt sad and angry. It's like I re-experiencing the situations again. So, at the same time, I also felt very anxious because I was worried that my emotional reactions might become visible and affect the professionalism and supportive environment I wanted to maintain to the client."

(Extract 10, Daisy)

Daisy struggled to separate her emotions from the session when a client shared an experience that closely resembled an unpleasant event in her own life. She felt conflicted about maintaining objectivity.

"Since the client, I can say... has a little bit uncooperative. In that moment, the feeling of overwhelm and frustrated have driven me to act impatient."

(Extract 9, Lily)

Lily found it frustrating when a client was uncooperative, making him feel overwhelmed and impatient.

“Most probably is when client share something that is very traumatized. Mm hmm, but that traumatic experience is related to you. Mm hmm. So, there is a strong emotion going on, but you have to still like, remember, like, OK, you're in the session, so you need to remain professional. But then in your heart, it's like you're trying to help that person. You know, you want to take away the pain and all, but you can't.”

(Extract 7, Orchid)

Orchid described how difficult it was to stay professional when a client's traumatic experience resonated with her own, creating a strong emotional response.

“I used SFBT to my clients. I was using the scaling question to ask the client on her thoughts on the improvement from the beginning of the session until now. Then I remember at that time, my client only rate like one to two points of improvement. I feel like a bit frustrated at the moment. Like I think any problems that happen during the session...?”

(Extract 8, Jasmine)

Jasmine shared a moment of frustration when using Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) and a client rated their progress lower than expected, making her question whether something had gone wrong in the session.

“When a client shared her fear of riding e-bike in the session. She had an accident of riding the e-bike, so at that moment I recall my own past experience of an e-bike accident. At that moment, I suddenly had a deep relation to her fear, however I knew that as a counsellor, my role was to focus on her emotions rather than my own. So, I had to regulate my feelings and

provide her with a safe place to express her fear without letting my personal experience take over my emotions.”

(Extract 9, Violet)

“One time during my session, I was using the empty chair technique. My client chose to close her eyes when speaking to the ‘empty chair’. When she was doing so, I deeply connected with what she was saying, so her words felt as if she was directed at me and I unexpectedly found myself becoming emotional at that moment.”

(Extract 10, Violet)

“I can’t really describe my emotions at that moment, but I was having a deep emotional connection to the client’s experience, and it somehow triggered the emotions in me. At that time, she was sharing some of her experiences with her friend, and I was facing a similar situation in my personal life at that time. I felt sad and deep empathy towards my client, that made me tear up in the session.”

(Extract 11, Violet)

Violet recalled two instances where client experiences triggered deep emotions. One involved a client’s fear of riding an e-bike, which reminded her of her own accident. Another occurred when she used the empty chair technique and unexpectedly connected emotionally with the client’s words, leading her to tear up during the session.

Theme 6: Emotion Regulation Strategies

Participants used various strategies to regulate their emotions to help them manage stress, self-doubt, and emotional exhaustion, enabling them to stay composed in sessions. Participants described four key approaches: grounding and relaxation techniques, cognitive and emotional processing, physical strategies, and self-care activities.

Subtheme 6.1: Grounding and Relaxation Techniques

Five out of six participants used grounding techniques and relaxation strategies, such as deep breathing and mindfulness, to regulate emotions before or during counselling sessions.

“It is actually from one of my lecture classes, that this mindfulness and deep breathing is one of the strategies for help the clients calm down. So I thought I’d try this I found that it’s quite useful for me and I also try it outside the counselling setting, like when I’m very nervous on my exam, so I keep practicing deep breathing so that it lead me to be automatically used in the counselling settings...when I felt similar nervous or anxiety or cannot be fully mindful in the in the counselling sessions.”

(Extract 11, Daisy)

Daisy applied deep breathing techniques she had learned in lectures and found them effective in both counselling settings and personal situations, such as feelings of anxious during exams.

“A deep breath before counselling session is helpful for me to be prepared and ready, so I will have a clearer mindset when conducting the counselling sessions.”

(Extract 10, Lily)

Lily practiced deep breathing before sessions to clear his mind and prepare mentally.

“It’s mostly DBT...I learnt them through the sessions with the clinical psychologist. I mostly use the STOP skills whenever I feel like the emotions are coming, it helps me gain back my five senses, like also using the grounding technique.”

(Extract 8, Orchid)

Orchid used Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) strategies, particularly the STOP skill and grounding techniques, to regain emotional control.

“If really on the spot, I will use some strategies, I think it's really just common for like taking the deep breathing... it's like list out five things that I can see.”

(Extract 6, Peony)

“Maybe my heartbeat will be fast and very nervous too then I will take deep breaths. I will take about like not only one time, maybe like three to four times for me to calm down like myself, yeah.”

(Extract 7, Peony)

Peony employed the “5-4-3-2-1” grounding technique, focusing on five things she could see, to manage emotional distress. She also practiced deep breathing multiple times to calm herself.

“I controlled my breathing, allow myself to regain the composure and continue guiding the session without letting my emotions interfere.”

(Extract 12, Violet)

Violet used controlled breathing to regain composure during sessions, preventing emotional interference with her work.

Subtheme 6.2: Cognitive and Emotional Processing

Two out of six participants relied on cognitive strategies to regulate emotions by reappraising thoughts or allowing emotions to be fully experienced.

“So actually, I also notice strategies that is very useful to me, which is give myself a self-affirmation to manage emotions.”

(Extract 11, Lily)

Lily found self-affirmations helpful in managing his emotions.

“For me, the way I manage my emotions is like fully experience the emotions, let them come and go. It’s just a way being reinforced from ACT or DBT.”

(Extract 9, Jasmine)

Jasmine practiced emotional acceptance, allowing emotions to come and go as part of her learning from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and DBT.

Subtheme 6.3: Physical Strategies

Engaging in physical activities helped one of the participants manage emotions and reduce stress.

“I will do exercise such as walking and jogging to manage my emotions and also listening to music made me feel relaxed.”

(Extract 12, Lily)

Lily used walking and jogging to regulate her emotions and found that listening to music also helped her relax.

Subtheme 6.4: Self-Care Activities

Creative and personal hobbies played a role in emotional regulation for one of the participants by providing a calming outlet.

“I like doing oil painting, like the painting with numbers. At first, I bought the small sized ones. When I paint the picture following the numbers, I really enjoyed the moment and when I’m doing this, I won’t let anything distract me. I will have a calm down moment. For me, my

emotions come very quickly. When I feel sad, I really feel it deeply and when I feel happy, I will be extremely happy. This activity helps me to balance that, without feeling extreme emotions.”

(Extract 13, Violet)

Violet enjoyed oil painting by numbers, which helped her stay focused and balanced her emotions. She described experiencing emotions intensely and found that painting provided a stabilizing effect.

4.2 Conclusion

This chapter explored the in-depth experiences of UTAR trainee counsellors in regulating their emotions, focusing on the challenges they faced and the strategies they employed. Through thematic analysis, six key themes emerged: (i) Positive and Negative Journey, (ii) Emotional Experiences, (iii) Balancing Personal and Professional Emotions, (iv) Professionalism and Personal Well-Being, (v) Emotional Challenges and (vi) Emotion Regulation Strategies.

The findings revealed that trainee counsellors encountered various emotional difficulties, including emotional fatigue, self-doubt, and competence-related concerns, which influenced their ability to manage their emotions effectively. Despite these challenges, they adopted multiple regulation strategies, such as grounding techniques, cognitive processing, physical activities, and self-care, to navigate their emotional experiences. These findings provide valuable insights into the emotional complexities of trainee counsellors, highlighting the need for continuous emotional support and skill development in counselling training programs. The next chapter will further discuss these findings in relation to existing literature and their implications for counselling education and practice.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses themes with the past research literature on understanding the experiences of regulating emotions among trainee counsellors. Moreover, this chapter also consist of limitations of study, implications of study, recommendation of study and conclusion towards this research.

5.1 Theme 1 Positive and Negative Journey

This discussion synthesises the findings related to how trainee counsellors in Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) describe their emotional journey throughout their training. The findings reveal that the emotional journey of trainee counsellors is marked by a dynamic interplay between personal struggles and developmental milestones. This aligns with the study's objective of exploring the in-depth experiences of trainee counsellors in regulating their emotions, particularly in light of the emotional demands of their training. Trainees described both emotionally taxing moments and rewarding personal growth, suggesting that emotional regulation is not just a skill to be mastered, but a lived experience that shapes their identity and competence as future counsellors.

A significant portion of participants encountered emotional challenges during training, such as self-doubt, academic pressure, and difficulties in managing emotionally intense client cases. These struggles echo findings from previous literature, where the early stages of counsellor development are often characterized by uncertainty, performance anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy (Barbee et al., 2003; Özteke-Kozan, 2018; Cormier & Hackney, 2015). For instance, Daisy and Lily both shared that they experienced emotional strain, with Daisy highlighting her struggle with self-doubt in client interactions, while Lily identifying academic workload as a major stressor. Similarly, Orchid noted the emotional complexity of

working with difficult client cases, which is an aspect that points to the emotional labour embedded in therapeutic work. These experiences underscore the dual pressures that trainee counsellors face, balancing internal insecurities alongside external demands. As noted by Jang and Kim (2020) and Moreno-Jiménez et al. (2022), when emotional demands are inadequately managed, they may lead to burnout, characterized by chronic exhaustion, diminished effectiveness, and psychological strain. The participants' reflections reinforce the idea that emotion regulation is essential not only within sessions but also in sustaining long-term engagement in the profession.

Despite these difficulties, many participants also highlighted growth and resilience as a key takeaway throughout their training journey. Rather than viewing emotionally difficult experiences as setbacks, participants such as Daisy, Orchid, Peony, and Jasmine described them as valuable learning moments that contributed to their development. Daisy, for example, reframed her struggles as opportunities for growth, while Jasmine reflected on her training as a rewarding and transformative experience. These accounts illustrate that growth emerged not merely from overcoming hardship, but from the process of engaging with those experiences thoughtfully. This aligns with Aprilia et al. (2024), who suggest that professional development among trainee counsellors is supported by a willingness to reflect on emotionally significant experiences, leading to increased awareness, insight, and growth. These reflections suggest that navigating emotional difficulties can be transformative and enhance one's capacity for effectiveness as a counsellor.

While most reflections centred on emotional struggles and growth, Violet's narrative revealed a shift in how she perceived the counselling profession. Initially viewing counselling as merely conversational, she came to appreciate its emotional and relational complexity through real-world experience. This mirrors Ewe and Ng's (2022) observation that professional identity development extends beyond textbook learning; rather, it is shaped

through experiential, personal engagement that often challenges trainees' initial perceptions and fosters a deeper, more integrated understanding of the profession's demands and values. Her evolving perception highlights the value of real-world exposure in forming a grounded and realistic counselling identity.

In sum, this theme captures the dual nature of the counselling journey, one that is often emotionally strenuous yet deeply enriching. The emotional ups and downs described by participants reflect the inevitable tension between growth and discomfort that defines much of counsellor development. Importantly, the ability to recognize these struggles and grow from them appears to be a marker of emotional maturity and a positive trajectory toward professional resilience.

5.2 Theme 2 Emotional Experiences

While this study centres on the lived experiences of trainee counsellors in regulating their emotions, it is equally important to first understand the emotional demands they have encountered. Participants shared diverse emotional experiences, ranging from fatigue and the pressure to sustain emotional presence, to milder emotional responses and even moments of emotional reciprocity. These varying levels of emotional demands provide essential context for understanding how and why emotion regulation becomes a necessary part of their professional development.

Several participants, including Daisy, Lily, and Orchid, described feeling emotionally drained throughout their training, attributing this to the need to sustain emotional presence in sessions while managing academic workload and emotionally intense client interactions. For instance, Daisy shared that she often felt mentally exhausted after long days of classes followed immediately by counselling sessions. Similarly, Lily and Orchid highlighted the ongoing effort required to stay composed and empathetic during lengthy sessions. These

findings reflect the dual responsibilities trainee counsellors face: balancing academic demands with the emotional labour of counselling, which can lead to the depletion of emotional resources. According to Peng and Li (2023), emotional exhaustion is a core contributor to burnout and results from prolonged emotional engagement without adequate recovery or support. Within the context of counsellor training, this exhaustion arises when emotional demands accumulate across multiple domains, intensifying overall strain.

Orchid's experience further underscores the internal regulation required to uphold professionalism. She emphasized the importance of managing personal biases, maintain emotional stability and continuous regulation to avoid allowing her own emotions to interfere with client care. This aligns with Brillon et al. (2025), who assert that delivering ethical and compassionate care requires mental health professionals to remain calm, open-minded, and emotionally regulated even in the face of stress. This ongoing internal effort, while essential, adds to the emotional load trainee counsellors must bear and contributes to the broader emotional demands of their role.

In contrast, Peony and Jasmine reported experiencing only mild emotional demands during their training. Their responses suggest that manageable caseloads, emotional preparedness, and the use of effective coping strategies may act as buffers against emotional overload. Peony noted that she was not currently overwhelmed but anticipated potential stress toward the end of the semester, while Jasmine shared that her sessions thus far had been emotionally manageable. These findings align with Jie et al. (2021), who found that individuals with higher levels of resilience are less susceptible to burnout. Resilience, often cultivated through consistent self-care and emotional regulation, acts as a protective factor that helps trainee counsellors navigate emotional tension. Aren and Pissal (2022) further support this view, emphasizing that self-care practices play a crucial role in helping counsellors manage stress and maintain emotional well-being. From a coping perspective,

engaging in regular self-care allows trainee counsellors to maintain emotional balance, preventing stress accumulation. This variability in emotional experiences among participants underscores the importance of contextual and individual factors such as workload intensity, resilience, and emotional regulation in shaping how emotional demands are perceived and managed during training.

Of particular interest is Violet's perspective, which introduces a nuanced understanding of counselling's emotional nature. Violet reframed her emotional experiences not merely as challenges but as opportunities for mutual enrichment. She described counselling as a "two-way interaction," emphasizing that emotional connections with clients also contributed to her own personal growth. This perspective shifts the focus from emotional strain to emotional reciprocity, where both the client and counsellor benefit from a meaningful therapeutic bond. Violet's account resonates with Palumbo et al. (2024), who suggest that empathy functions not only as a tool for client care but also as a protective factor for counsellors' well-being. By fostering self-awareness and emotional insight, empathy allows counsellors to remain attuned to their own internal experiences while engaging deeply with others. Palumbo and colleagues (2024) observed that empathetic engagement enables practitioners to "check in with themselves," ensuring emotional processing and preventing cumulative emotional fatigue. In this context, Violet's experience underscores the emotionally rewarding potential of therapeutic relationships. Rather than simply regulating or suppressing emotions, Violet demonstrated how counsellors can draw strength, clarity, and personal insight from their interactions with clients.

In sum, this theme illustrates how emotional experiences in counselling training exist along a continuum. While some participants struggle with the intensity of sustained presence, others report more balanced experiences, and one identifies emotional reciprocity as a meaningful part of their growth. These findings underscore the need for training programs to

consider the diverse emotional realities of trainees and provide tailored support that fosters both emotional resilience and growth.

5.3 Theme 3 Balancing Personal and Professional Emotions

While this study centres on the lived experiences of trainee counsellors in regulating their emotions, it is equally important to explore how they understand and define this process within the context of their counselling practice. Emotion regulation is not a one-size-fits-all concept; rather, it is shaped by how individuals navigate the professional expectations of counselling while managing their personal emotional states. The findings suggest that participants approached emotion regulation as a key mechanism to uphold professionalism, ensure ethical client care, and maintain therapeutic effectiveness.

Several participants' conceptualizations of emotion regulation revealed its significance as a foundational skill in their counselling development. Rather than viewing it as a singular coping mechanism, they described it as an ongoing process of managing emotional responses to maintain professionalism and client focus. For instance, Daisy and Jasmine emphasized remaining composed and objective, highlighting the importance of separating personal emotions from their roles as counsellors. Their reflections implied the importance of internal regulation to prevent personal feelings from interfering with professional judgment. This aligns with Palumbo et al. (2024), who noted that counsellors often navigate emotionally intense situations by regulating their emotional engagement, thereby creating a sustainable therapeutic presence. Similarly, Humphrey (2021) emphasized that professionalism acts as a display rule, shaping how emotions are managed and expressed in professional settings. In counselling, this means trainee counsellors are expected to regulate their emotions to maintain therapeutic boundaries and professionalism, so that clients feel supported.

While some participants highlighted the importance of setting boundaries between personal and professional emotions, others emphasized emotional awareness and self-regulation as key elements of emotion regulation. Lily, Orchid, Peony, and Violet described it as an internal process of recognizing, understanding, and actively regulating emotional responses to remain grounded during sessions. For instance, Orchid stressed the importance of noticing emotions, so they do not interfere with client work, while Peony viewed emotion regulation as a way to regain rational thinking when overwhelmed. These responses suggest a developing capacity to monitor and control one's emotional responses in ways that support therapeutic goals. Kok (2020) explains that emotion regulation involves monitoring and evaluating emotional states, which rely heavily on self-awareness. Awasthi and Mastracci (2021) similarly highlight that self-awareness forms the foundation for developing emotion regulation abilities, particularly in emotionally demanding professions. Hadi and Gharaibeh (2023) further note that being attuned to one's emotional state enables individuals to regulate emotions, influence behaviours, stay focused, and pursue professional goals more effectively. Within the counselling context, these trainee counsellors' definitions of emotion regulation reflect a growing understanding of it as a self-aware and intentional process, which enables them to remain composed, prioritize client needs, and uphold their professional identity even amidst emotional challenges.

Violet offered a unique perspective by emphasizing its role in fostering emotional engagement and presence during sessions. She described emotion regulation as a means of staying genuinely connected with her clients. Violet's view reflects a more relational dimension of emotion regulation, where emotions are managed in service of building therapeutic rapport. In this context, emotion regulation becomes not only a protective mechanism but also a facilitative skill that deepens the counselling process. Heinonen and Nissen-Lie (2020) support this perspective, noting that therapists who understand and

regulate their emotions are better able to maintain productive therapeutic relationships. In the context of this study, Violet's view shows that emotion regulation is not only about control but also about sustaining focus and engagement in a way that benefits both counsellor and client.

In sum, participants' definitions of emotion regulation reflect a multifaceted understanding shaped by their lived experiences as trainee counsellors. For some, regulation meant drawing clear boundaries between personal and professional emotions to uphold ethical standards and objectivity. Others emphasized emotional awareness and internal regulation to remain calm, rational, and effective during sessions. Violet's contribution added a relational layer, framing regulation as a way to stay emotionally present and connected with clients. Collectively, these perspectives highlight that emotion regulation is not a one-size-fits-all process, but a dynamic skill that supports both professional functioning and therapeutic engagement. As trainee counsellors continue to develop their identities, their evolving definitions of emotion regulation signal a growing emotional maturity that is foundational to competent and compassionate practice.

5.4 Theme 4 Professionalism and Personal Well-being

This theme draws attention to how participants perceive the role of emotion regulation not only in supporting their professional functioning but also in safeguarding their well-being. The findings reveal that trainee counsellors view emotion regulation as a core skill that enables them to remain effective in their professional role while also protecting their emotional and mental health. Participants expressed that the ability to regulate emotions contributes to professional composure, ethical client care, and personal stability, which highlights the dual importance of emotional control in both work and life contexts.

A majority of participants emphasized that emotion regulation is central to maintaining professional effectiveness during their training. For instance, Daisy and Peony highlighted that being emotionally balanced enabled them to stay composed and objective, while Jasmine mentioned that regulating emotions helped her avoid countertransference and burnout. These reflections suggest that emotional regulation supports the ability to offer consistent, ethical, and non-judgmental support to clients. Although direct literature on emotion regulation and professional effectiveness is limited, emotional intelligence (EI) research offers important parallels. Gao and Yang (2023) demonstrated that emotional intelligence directly enhances emotion regulation skills, which are critical for professional functioning. In the context of counselling, counsellors with high EI are more adept at establishing trust, regulating personal reactions, and creating a supportive therapeutic environment (Odaci et al., 2017; Pearson, 2017). By managing their own emotions effectively, they project stability and predictability, which reinforces professional credibility. This aligns with participants' perspectives, where emotion regulation is not just about internal control but also about preserving the professional standards and expectations within therapeutic settings.

Beyond the counselling room, participants also recognized that emotion regulation plays an equally important role in managing personal stress and decision-making. Daisy and Lily explained that regulating emotions allows them to maintain composure during group work and navigate unexpected events with a clearer mindset, while Orchid highlighted its value for overall stress management. These responses reveal that emotion regulation provides trainees with the psychological tools needed to respond adaptively in both personal and professional contexts. As Yunus and Chaudhary (2023) assert, effective emotion regulation strategies can mitigate the negative effects of stress on mental and physical well-being. Moreover, Morawetz et al. (2019) found that improved emotion regulation is associated with

better decision-making, a point particularly relevant to Lily's comment that emotional stability allows for more thoughtful and less regretful choices. Together, these findings illustrate how emotional regulation not only supports professional effectiveness but also enhances daily functioning, equipping trainee counsellors to cope with stress in a constructive and intentional manner.

Lastly, participants such as Jasmine and Violet emphasized the importance of emotion regulation in maintaining boundaries between professional and personal life. They explained that regulating emotions helps ensure that emotional burdens from counselling sessions do not spill over into their private lives. Maintaining this boundary is essential for mental health and long-term sustainability in emotionally demanding professions. This insight resonates with Ruiz-Aranda et al. (2021), who noted that effective emotion regulation fosters professional resilience and boundary maintenance. High emotional intelligence further supports this process, as Lang (2024) observed that therapists with stronger EI are better able to set and maintain professional boundaries, ensuring a therapeutic environment that is ethical, supportive, and free from emotional entanglement. In the context of training, this skill allows counsellors to preserve their personal well-being without compromising the care and attention given to their clients.

In summary, this theme illustrates how trainee counsellors perceive emotion regulation as a crucial mechanism for maintaining both professionalism and personal well-being. Participants acknowledged that emotion regulation supports them in delivering ethical, empathetic, and balanced client care, while also helping them manage stress, make sound decisions, and avoid emotional spillover into their personal lives. These dual roles of emotion regulation reinforce its significance as a foundational skill for counsellor development and ensures counsellors can support others without neglecting their own emotional health.

5.5 Theme 5 Emotional Challenges

Throughout the counselling training journey, emotional challenges surfaced as a central experience shared by many participants. They described moments of exhaustion, self-doubt, and emotional vulnerability during sessions. These challenges were often triggered by the demands of juggling academic workloads, responding to emotionally intense client stories, and managing personal reactions within the counselling space. Far from being isolated experiences, these emotional difficulties appeared to be recurring and deeply felt, influencing how participants approached their client work and their own self-perception as developing counsellors. Such emotionally taxing experiences not only disrupted their well-being but also revealed the importance of building emotional resilience and regulation skills as core components of their professional development. Understanding these struggles provides the necessary context to appreciate not only the role of emotion regulation in their development but also the resilience required to navigate such demanding experiences.

Many participants described experiencing emotional fatigue and burnout as a result of managing both academic demands and emotionally intensive client work. Daisy, Lily, Peony, and Jasmine recounted how back-to-back sessions, coursework deadlines, and the emotional weight of clients' narratives led to mental exhaustion and depleted emotional energy. For instance, Daisy highlighted how conducting counselling sessions immediately after classes left her mentally drained, especially when handling emotionally heavy disclosures. Similarly, Lily noted that her empathic and highly attentive counselling style, though helpful for client engagement, contributed to emotional depletion over time. These findings reflect the cumulative nature of emotional strain in training, where demands span across both academic and clinical responsibilities. This aligns with Aren & Pissal (2022), who stated that undergraduate students, including trainee counsellors are vulnerable to stress such as heavy academic responsibilities and overloaded schedules. Trainee counsellors are also students in

university, therefore conducting counselling sessions while being a student at the same time may often be stressful. Besides, Mohamed et al. (2020) documented how heavy workloads, role conflicts, and emotionally taxing client cases contribute to counsellors' emotional strain. Although Mohamed et al. (2020)'s research focused on experienced counsellors, the parallels with trainee counsellors are striking. Trainee counsellors, despite having less exposure to long-term caseloads, still encounter intense emotional demands as they navigate the pressures of performing well academically while simultaneously managing complex client issues. These emotionally taxing experiences appear to be an intrinsic part of the counselling journey, affecting not only the trainees' energy levels but also their overall engagement in the training process.

Self-doubt emerged as a prominent emotional challenge among trainee counsellors, with five out of six participants describing episodes where they questioned their ability to guide clients effectively. These doubts often surfaced after emotionally charged sessions or moments when participants felt unsure about their interventions. For example, Daisy expressed uncertainty when struggling to formulate appropriate responses during sessions, while Lily reflected on her anxiety after seeing a client become visibly upset, prompting her to wonder whether she had said something wrong. Violet and Jasmine also shared recurring concerns about whether their approaches truly made a difference, and Orchid questioned the adequacy of her skills when applying techniques in early sessions. These experiences reflect the emotional weight that comes with being in training where counsellors are expected to navigate complex client concerns while simultaneously developing their own skills and confidence. According to Nasir et al. (2023), trainee counsellors often lack a stable professional identity and feel less competent in case conceptualization, which can contribute to heightened pressure and self-doubt. In this light, the findings from the present study

highlight how such uncertainty is not only common but also deeply intertwined with the developmental stage of professional identity formation.

Another layer of emotional challenge reported by participants involved intense emotional reactions triggered by clients' stories, behaviours, or personal similarities. Majority of the participants described moments when clients' narratives reminded them of their own life experiences or stirred strong emotions during the session. These experiences closely resemble what has been described in literature as vicarious trauma or re-traumatization, where emotional responses that arise when one's unresolved experiences are activated through empathic engagement with others' distress. In a study conducted by Ali et al. (2023), 70% of trainee counsellors reported experiencing vicarious trauma at a moderate level, underscoring how emotional strain is already present during the early stages of counsellor training. Brown et al. (2022) and Parker et al. (2022) further assert that counselling trainees are particularly vulnerable to such experiences due to past trauma exposure, the emotionally intensive nature of clinical training, and the pressure to adopt a professional role while still in development. Similarly, Davies et al. (2021) emphasized that counselling work is not only emotionally intense but can also require counsellors to simultaneously manage their own mental health needs. For example, participants like Daisy and Violet reflected on how emotionally charged client disclosures mirrored their own unresolved issues, making it difficult to maintain professional objectivity. These findings highlight the emotional vulnerability of trainee counsellors when their personal histories intersect with clients' stories. Therefore, it becomes critical for trainee counsellors to develop emotional self-awareness and regulation strategies to help identify personal triggers, protect their well-being, and respond ethically and effectively within the therapeutic space.

In conclusion, the emotional challenges faced by trainee counsellors in this study reflect the intense psychological demands that accompany counselling training. Participants

described a range of difficulties, including emotional fatigue, self-doubt, and emotionally triggering client encounters, all of which influenced their sense of competence and emotional well-being. These challenges are not uncommon during the developmental stage of becoming a counsellor, but their cumulative impact highlights the need for appropriate support mechanisms. Without adequate regulation and reflection, such experiences may hinder professional growth. Therefore, it is essential for training programs to incorporate emotional regulation training, reflective practices, and supportive supervision to help trainee counsellors navigate these challenges constructively. By doing so, trainee counsellors can build the resilience and self-awareness needed to thrive in the emotionally demanding work of counselling.

5.6 Theme 6 Emotion Regulation Strategies

Participants employed a range of strategies to manage emotional challenges during their counselling training. These strategies helped them navigate moments of stress, self-doubt, and emotional exhaustion, enabling them to remain composed and effective in their professional roles. Four main approaches were observed: grounding and relaxation techniques, cognitive and emotional processing, physical strategies, and self-care activities. These findings reflect the participants' proactive stance in regulating their emotions, often relying on self-initiated methods. This aligns with Aren and Pisal (2022), who observed that trainee counsellors are generally capable of addressing emotional distress independently, without necessarily seeking external assistance.

A widely used technique among participants was mindfulness and grounding, such as deep breathing and sensory-based exercises. Daisy, Lily, Peony, and Violet all relied on deep breathing to calm their nerves and centre themselves before or during sessions. Orchid specifically mentioned using DBT's STOP skills, a grounding strategy that helped her regain focus and emotional control. These practices are consistent with the findings of Paul et al.

(2024), who noted that mindfulness, including breathing exercises, is an effective method for enhancing coping strategies in counsellors-in-training. Choo et al. (2024) found that trainee counsellors who regularly practised mindfulness felt calmer and more prepared to manage anxiety. Furthermore, Choo et al. (2024) emphasized that mindfulness practices support trainee counsellors in gaining greater self-awareness, developing counselling competencies, and adopting a more accepting and conscious relationship with their emotional experiences.

A few participants also practised cognitive and emotional processing. Lily used self-affirmation to manage negative thoughts, while Jasmine adopted a more acceptance-based approach by allowing emotions to come and go without resistance, a technique she linked to her training in ACT and DBT. These strategies are supported by Larson et al. (2023), who highlighted that developing emotional language and practising self-validation can support emotional regulation and foster a sense of calm and control.

In addition to internal strategies, some participants used physical activity and creative hobbies to regulate emotions. Lily engaged in walking and jogging, while Violet found emotional balance through oil painting. Aren and Pisal (2022) noted that physical self-care practices such as exercise and relaxation allow trainee counsellors to cope more effectively during overwhelming periods. Similarly, Gökalp (2022) reported that school counsellors who engaged in hobbies such as art experienced notable improvements in mental well-being. These findings suggest that such practices not only offer emotional relief but also help counsellors sustain their mental and emotional energy.

In conclusion, the strategies adopted by participants reflect a diverse and adaptive approach to emotion regulation. Many of their techniques align with the principles of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, which emphasizes mindfulness, emotional awareness, and reducing emotional vulnerability through attention to physical well-being. Practices such as

deep breathing, grounding techniques, self-validation, and personal self-care reflect DBT's focus on helping individuals identify, understand, and tolerate their emotions in constructive ways. These findings underscore the importance of emotion regulation in enabling trainee counsellors to remain composed, present, and supportive, thereby reinforcing their readiness to meet the emotional demands of the profession.

5.7 Discussion of research question

The research question of the present study is "What are the experiences of regulating emotions among UTAR trainee counsellors?" Findings from the study revealed that the emotional regulation experiences of trainee counsellors are deeply shaped by the emotional demands and challenges encountered throughout their training journey. Participants described facing significant emotional struggles, including emotional fatigue, self-doubt, and emotionally triggering client interactions, which often led to mental exhaustion and compromised confidence. These challenges stemmed from juggling academic responsibilities alongside emotionally intense counselling sessions, as well as the personal nature of some client disclosures that resonated with participants' own life experiences.

Despite these difficulties, participants also shared how their training fostered personal and professional growth. Emotion regulation was commonly defined not just as a way to manage distress but as an integral skill for maintaining professionalism, providing ethical and unbiased support, and safeguarding personal well-being. Some participants highlighted the need to set emotional boundaries, while others emphasized self-awareness and staying emotionally present with clients. These different perspectives suggest that emotion regulation is not a one-size-fits-all approach but a fluid and evolving process shaped by context and personal insight.

In response to emotional challenges, participants employed a variety of strategies such as mindfulness, grounding techniques, self-affirmation, emotional processing, physical activity, and creative self-care. These methods helped them stay composed during sessions, regulate their internal states, and recover from emotional strain. The findings suggest that while participants often regulated emotions independently, they demonstrated an increasing awareness of their emotional needs and the importance of balancing empathy with emotional stability.

In short, the experiences of emotion regulation among UTAR trainee counsellors are complex and multifaceted. While the emotional demands of training pose significant challenges, these experiences also serve as important opportunities for growth, self-awareness, and skill development. The capacity to regulate emotions is not only essential for effective counselling practice but also for sustaining mental and emotional well-being in the long term.

5.8 Theoretical implications

The findings of this study contribute meaningfully to the theoretical framework of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) by offering real-world applications of its principles within the context of trainee counsellors' emotional regulation experiences. While DBT was originally developed to treat individuals with emotional dysregulation, the lived experiences of these trainee counsellors illustrate the broader relevance of DBT's components, particularly mindfulness, emotional awareness, cognitive restructuring, and distress tolerance, are equally vital for emotional resilience and professional development.

Firstly, participants consistently described the use of mindfulness and grounding techniques, such as deep breathing and focusing exercises, to prepare for or manage emotional intensity during counselling sessions. This reflects the DBT emphasis on

mindfulness as a means to build present-moment awareness and reduce emotional reactivity (Linehan, 2015; McMain et al., 2001). Participants' ability to observe emotions non-judgmentally while remaining engaged with clients supports DBT's concept of developing an "observer perspective" that allows individuals to separate emotions from impulsive actions. These findings affirm the relevance of mindfulness not only for clinical populations but also for developing professional composure among future counsellors.

Secondly, the use of cognitive and emotional processing strategies, such as self-affirmation, emotion naming, and acceptance, aligns closely with DBT's emotional regulation and distress tolerance modules. Participants like Jasmine and Lily illustrated how naming emotions or allowing them to pass enabled them to regain rational thinking, which echoes DBT's aim to reduce emotional vulnerability through understanding, labelling, and accepting emotional states (Linehan, 2015; Fassbinder et al., 2016). Moreover, the participants' narratives nuance DBT's dual focus on acceptance and change by revealing the tension between acknowledging personal emotional struggles and maintaining professional therapeutic roles. This finding suggests that in the context of training, emotional regulation serves not only as a coping strategy but also as a professional and ethical responsibility.

In addition, the study extends the application of DBT by emphasizing the role of physical and behavioural self-care strategies in sustaining emotional regulation during professional development. Participants reported that activities such as exercise, creative hobbies, and relaxation techniques were crucial to maintaining emotional balance. These practices are consistent with DBT's ABC PLEASE framework, which underscores the importance of attending to physical well-being in order to support emotional stability (Linehan, 2015). For instance, Violet's engagement in painting and Lily's commitment to jogging illustrate how physical self-care activities contributed significantly to their emotional

endurance. This finding reinforces DBT's holistic perspective that emotional regulation is supported by maintaining physical health.

Furthermore, the findings reflect DBT's relevance in addressing the occupational hazards faced by trainee counsellors, including emotional exhaustion, vicarious trauma, and emotional over-identification with clients. Participants described experiences of emotional fatigue and self-doubt, which underline the need for robust emotional regulation skills. DBT provides a structured approach to coping with these challenges by promoting cognitive flexibility, regulating emotional impulses, and developing resilience without encouraging emotional suppression (Mousavi et al., 2022; Linehan, 2015). The study highlights how understanding and validating one's own emotional reactions, even when triggered by clients' disclosures, is essential for maintaining emotional health and professional effectiveness.

Lastly, the study expands DBT's relational focus by demonstrating that emotion regulation among trainee counsellors is deeply intertwined with interpersonal dynamics, such as relationships with clients and supervisors. Some participants, like Violet, highlighted that maintaining emotional engagement was critical to building trust and presence with clients. This finding reflects DBT's principle that emotional validation within relationships can strengthen therapeutic effectiveness while preserving the counsellor's own emotional regulation.

In conclusion, this study enhances the theoretical understanding of DBT by illustrating how its core components manifest within the developmental journey of trainee counsellors. The findings extend DBT's application from clinical treatment contexts to professional training environments, demonstrating that mindfulness, emotional awareness, distress tolerance, and behavioural strategies are not only critical for personal emotional stability but also fundamental for professional identity formation, ethical practice, and

relational effectiveness. By framing the experiences of trainee counsellors within DBT's systematic approach to emotional regulation, the study provides a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of how individuals in training adapt to, manage, and grow through emotional challenges.

5.8 Practical implications

The findings of this study hold important implications for the enhancement of the Guidance and Counselling program at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), particularly in supporting the emotional development and well-being of trainee counsellors. As emotion regulation emerged as a central theme across participants' experiences, it is vital for the program to address emotional demands systematically and proactively.

Firstly, the emotional challenges reported, ranging from emotional exhaustion and burnout to self-doubt and client-induced emotional reactions point to the need for stronger emotional support structures. The program could consider implementing more consistent and accessible supervision opportunities where students can reflect on their emotional experiences in a safe, nonjudgmental environment. This would allow for real-time feedback, emotional processing, and personalized guidance from experienced counsellors or lecturers.

Secondly, participants emphasized the importance of experiential learning in fostering emotion regulation skills. Trainee counsellors expressed the need for more role-play sessions, mock counselling practices, and exposure to emotionally intense case scenarios under close supervision. These opportunities would help students identify their emotional triggers, gain familiarity with real-life counselling demands, and apply emotion regulation strategies in practice, not just theory.

In addition, participants called for greater inclusion of therapeutic frameworks that emphasize emotional regulation, particularly Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). These approaches offer structured, practical tools such as mindfulness, distress tolerance, and emotional acceptance, which trainees found especially helpful. Expanding these models in the curriculum, either through dedicated courses or integrated learning in existing modules, could enrich trainees' therapeutic skillsets and promote deeper emotional resilience.

Participants also highlighted the need for long-term workshops or discussions that emphasize self-care and the importance of mental health. These could serve as consistent reminders that counsellors must also prioritize their emotional well-being to effectively support others. Regular check-ins, group reflections, or peer-led mental health dialogues may help normalize emotional vulnerability and promote collective growth.

Moreover, creative approaches, such as art-based or experiential techniques taught in courses like Creative Approaches in Counselling, were found to be helpful in regulating emotions and fostering emotional insight. The program could further develop and emphasize these modules to offer diverse avenues for students to explore and manage their emotional experiences in ways that align with their personal styles.

Finally, these findings suggest that emotion regulation should not be treated as an isolated skill, but as a core developmental goal woven into the entirety of the training journey. By building a culture that values emotional awareness, reflective practice, and psychological safety, UTAR's Guidance and Counselling program can better equip its students not only to manage their own emotional experiences but to model and support these capacities in future clients.

5.9 Limitations of the study

This study was conducted exclusively within the context of trainee counsellors at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), which may limit the transferability of the findings

to other training programs or institutions. The experiences shared by participants were influenced by UTAR's specific counselling curriculum, institutional culture, and available support systems. As such, the emotional regulation experiences, challenges, and strategies explored may not reflect those of trainee counsellors in different educational, cultural, or institutional settings.

Additionally, the data relied solely on participants' self-reported reflections during interviews. Although the study encouraged openness and confidentiality, the potential for social desirability bias or selective recall may have influenced how participants presented their emotional experiences. As the focus was on lived experiences, interpretations may also be shaped by participants' current emotional states or retrospective sense-making.

Nonetheless, the study provides meaningful insights into the complex emotional landscape of counselling trainees and contributes to the growing body of research on emotional regulation in counsellor education. These findings may guide future studies that examine similar experiences across varied contexts to deepen understanding and improve support systems for trainee counsellors.

5.10 Recommendations for future research

Building on the findings and scope of the present study, future research may consider expanding the context beyond a single institution. Including trainee counsellors from multiple universities, both public and private, could offer a broader and more diverse understanding of emotion regulation experiences in different training environments. Comparative studies may reveal how institutional cultures, curriculum design, and supervision structures shape emotional regulation differently.

Additionally, while this study focused on subjective lived experiences, future studies could adopt a mixed-methods approach that incorporates psychological assessments or

emotion regulation inventories. This would allow researchers to explore potential correlations between perceived emotional competence and measurable emotion regulation skills.

It is also recommended that future research examines the longitudinal development of emotion regulation across the span of a counsellor's training. Tracking changes from different training phases could provide deeper insight into how emotion regulation evolves with experience and increased exposure to real client work.

Lastly, future research could explore how more intensive and sustained exposure to therapeutic approaches such as Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) affects trainee counsellors' emotion regulation skills over time. Although these approaches are currently included in the curriculum, participants in this study expressed a desire for deeper engagement through workshops, experiential learning, and more applied practice beyond a single semester. Future studies may assess the outcomes of implementing such enriched training formats. For example, by evaluating changes in emotional self-awareness, regulation capacity, or resilience among trainee counsellors across different training stages.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Qualitative Evaluation Rubric

**UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING**

UAPC3093 Project Paper II

Qualitative Research Project Evaluation Form

TURNITIN: *‘In assessing this work you are agreeing that it has been submitted to the University-recognised originality checking service which is Turnitin. The report generated by Turnitin is used as evidence to show that the students’ final report contains the similarity level below 20%.’*

Project Title: THE EXPERIENCES OF REGULATING EMOTIONS AMONG TRAINEE COUNSELLORS IN UTAR	
Supervisor: KOMATHI A/P LOKITHASAN	
Student's Name: ASHLYN LEE WEN XIN	Student's ID 22AAB02891

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please score each descriptor based on the scale provided below:

1. Please award 0 mark for no attempt.
2. For criteria 7:
Please retrieve the marks from “**Oral Presentation Evaluation Form**”.

1. ABSTRACT (5%)	Max Score	Score
a. State the main research questions and research objectives.	5%	
b. Describe the methodology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research design • Type of participants • Sample size • Location of study • Interview protocol 	5%	
c. Describe the characteristics of participants.	5%	
d. Highlight the significant findings of the study.	5%	
e. Conclusions, Implications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical implication of the knowledge generated from the study 	5%	
<i>Sum</i>	25%	/25%
Subtotal (Sum/5)	5%	/5%
Remark:		
2. METHODOLOGY (25%)	Max Score	Score
a. Research design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationale for selected design 	5%	
b. Sampling procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationale sampling method and sample size • Describe the recruitment process • Procedures for ethical clearance and approval 	5%	
c. Type of data collected <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the forms of data collected • Describe other data sources • Relevance of the collected data with the research objectives 	5%	
d. Validity of the data collection method (e.g., rigor) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the validity of the data is established 		
e. Clear explanation of data collection procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion and exclusion criteria • Procedures of obtaining consent • Description of data collection procedures • Describe questions asked in data collection, content and form of questions (e.g, open vs closed ended etc) 	5%	
f. Describe the management or use of the reflexivity in the data-collection process	5%	
Subtotal	25%	/25%
Remark:		
3. RESULTS (20%)	Max Score	Score
a. Appropriate data analysis for research objective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe in detail the process of analysis (e.g coding, thematic analysis) 	10%	
b. Thematic Analysis	10%	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe research findings (themes, categories), the meaning and understanding derived from data analysisDemonstrate the analytic process of reaching findings (e.g. Interview responses, observations, field notes, etc.)Findings presented should include information to support the research objectives.		
Subtotal	20%	/20%
Remark:		
4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION (20%)	Max Score	Score
a. Constructive discussion of findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discuss the research findings and understanding from the results	5%	
b. Implication of the study: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Theoretical implication for future research.Practical implication for programs and policies.Reflect on any alternative explanation of the findings	5%	
c. Relevant limitations of the study.	5%	
d. Recommendations for future research.	5%	
Subtotal	20%	/20%
Remark:		
5. LANGUAGE AND ORGANIZATION (5%)	Max Score	Score
a. Language proficiency	3%	
b. Content organization	1%	
c. Complete documentation (e.g., action plan, originality report)	1%	
Subtotal	5%	/5%
Remark:		
6. APA STYLE AND REFERENCING (5%)	Max Score	Score
a. 7 th Edition APA Style	5%	/5%
Remark:		
*ORAL PRESENTATION (20%)	Score	
Subtotal		
	/20%	
Remark:		
PENALTY	Max Score	Score
Maximum of 10 marks for LATE SUBMISSION (within 24 hours), or POOR CONSULTATION ATTENDANCE with supervisor.	10%	

*Late submission after 24 hours will not be graded		
**FINAL MARK/TOTAL		
	/100%	

*****Overall Comments:**

Signature: _____

Date:

Notes:

1. **Subtotal:** The sum of scores for each assessment criterion
2. **FINAL MARK/TOTAL:** The summation of all subtotal score
3. Plagiarism is **NOT ACCEPTABLE**. Parameters of originality required and limits approved by UTAR are as follows:
 - (i) **Overall similarity index is 20% or below**, and
 - (ii) **Matching of individual sources listed must be less than 3%** each, and
 - (iii) Matching texts in continuous block must **not exceed 8 words**

Note: Parameters (i) – (ii) shall exclude quotes, references and text matches which are less than 8 words.

Any works violate the above originality requirements will NOT be accepted. Students have to redo the report and meet the requirements in **SEVEN (7)** days.

*The marks of “Oral Presentation” are to be retrieved from “**Oral Presentation Evaluation Form**”.

**It is compulsory for the supervisor/examiner to give the overall comments for the research projects with A- and above or F grading.

Appendix B: Turnitin Originality Report

Ashlyn Lee_2202891_Abstract, Chapter 3, 4, 5

ORIGINALITY REPORT

4%	3%	1%	1%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	eprints.utar.edu.my Internet Source	<1%
2	ia902805.us.archive.org Internet Source	<1%
3	jurnal.iicet.org Internet Source	<1%
4	Submitted to University of Perpetual Help Las Pinas System Dalta Student Paper	<1%
5	open.uct.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
6	scholarworks.waldenu.edu Internet Source	<1%
7	Submitted to Republic of the Maldives Student Paper	<1%
8	www.coursehero.com Internet Source	<1%
9	Rabindra Kumar Pradhan, Updesh Kumar. "Emotion, Well-Being, and Resilience - Theoretical Perspectives and Practical Applications", Apple Academic Press, 2021 Publication	<1%
10	ojsijpes.com	

Appendix C: Supervisor's Comments on Originality Report

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman			
Form Title : Supervisor's Comments on Originality Report Generated by Turnitin for Submission of Final Year Project Report (for Undergraduate Programmes)			
Form Number: FM-IAD-005	Rev No.: 0	Effective Date: 01/10/2013	Page No.: 1 of 1



FACULTY OF _____

Full Name(s) of Candidate(s)	
ID Number(s)	
Programme / Course	
Title of Final Year Project	

Similarity	Supervisor's Comments (Compulsory if parameters of originality exceeds the limits approved by UTAR)
Overall similarity index: _____ % Similarity by source Internet Sources: _____ % Publications: _____ % Student Papers: _____ %	
Number of individual sources listed of more than 3% similarity: _____	
Parameters of originality required and limits approved by UTAR are as follows: (i) Overall similarity index is 20% and below, and (ii) Matching of individual sources listed must be less than 3% each, and (iii) Matching texts in continuous block must not exceed 8 words <i>Note: Parameters (i) – (ii) shall exclude quotes, bibliography and text matches which are less than 8 words.</i>	

Note Supervisor/Candidate(s) is/are required to provide softcopy of full set of the originality report to Faculty/Institute

Based on the above results, I hereby declare that I am satisfied with the originality of the Final Year Project Report submitted by my student(s) as named above.

Signature of Supervisor

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Co-Supervisor

Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Ethical Approval for Research Project



UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN DU012(A)
Wholly owned by UTAR Education Foundation Co. No. 578227-M

Re: U/SERC/78-449/2025

14 February 2025

Dr Lee Wan Ying
Head, Department of Psychology and Counselling
Faculty of Arts and Social Science
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman
Jalan Universiti, Bandar Baru Barat
31900 Kampar, Perak.

Dear Dr Lee,

Ethical Approval For Research Project/Protocol

We refer to the application for ethical approval for your students' research project from Bachelor of Social Science (Honours) Guidance and Counselling programme enrolled in course UAPC3083. We are pleased to inform you that the application has been approved under Expedited Review.

The details of the research projects are as follows:

No	Research Title	Student's Name	Supervisor's Name	Approval Validity
1.	The Experiences of Regulating Emotions Among Trainee Counsellors in UTAR	Ashlyn Lee Wen Xin	Dr Komathi a/p Lokithasan	14 February 2025 – 13 February 2026
2.	Healing Experiences of Sexual Abuse Survivors Among Adults in Malaysia	Pavithra a/p Annadurai		

The conduct of this research is subject to the following:

- (1) The participants' informed consent be obtained prior to the commencement of the research;
- (2) Confidentiality of participants' personal data must be maintained; and
- (3) Compliance with procedures set out in related policies of UTAR such as the UTAR Research Ethics and Code of Conduct, Code of Practice for Research Involving Humans and other related policies/guidelines.
- (4) Written consent be obtained from the institution(s)/company(ies) in which the physical or/and online survey will be carried out, prior to the commencement of the research.

Kampar Campus : Jalan Universiti, Bandar Barat, 31900 Kampar, Perak Darul Ridzuan, Malaysia
Tel: (605) 468 8888 Fax: (605) 466 1313
Sungai Long Campus : Jalan Sungai Long, Bandar Sungai Long, Cheras, 43000 Kajang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
Tel: (603) 9086 0288 Fax: (603) 9019 8868
Website: www.utar.edu.my



Appendix E: Action Plan

Action Plan of UAPC3093 Project Paper II

Supervisee ASHLYN LEE WEN XIN

Supervisor KOMATHI A/P LOKITHASAN

Task Description	Date	Supervisee's Signature	Supervisor's Signature	Supervisor's Remarks	Next Appointment Date/Time
Methodology Submit Chapter 3: Methodology Amend Chapter 3: Methodology	26/4/25				
Results & Findings Submit Chapter 4: Results Amend Chapter 4: Results	29/3/25				
Discussion & Conclusion Submit Chapter 5: Discussion Amend Chapter 5: Discussion	23/4/25				
Abstract	26/4/25				
Turnitin Submission	28/4/25			Generate similarity rate from Turnitin.com	
Amendment					
Submission of final draft				Submission of hardcopy and documents	

Oral Presentation				
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- Notes:
1. Deadline for submission cannot be changed, mark deduction is as per faculty standard.
 2. Supervisees are to take the active role to make appointments with their supervisors.
 3. Both supervisors and supervisees should keep a copy of this action plan.
 4. This Action Plan should be attached as an appendix in Project Paper 2.

Appendix F: Interview Protocol

1. Can you describe your overall journey and experiences as a trainee counsellor?
 - a) What motivated you to pursue counselling as a career?
 - b) How would you describe the emotional demands of your training so far?
2. What does “regulating emotions” mean to you in the context of your counselling training?
 - a) How do you perceive the importance of emotional regulation in your professional and personal life?
 - b) Can you share instances where you felt regulating your emotions was particularly critical?
3. What specific emotional challenges have you faced during your training as a counsellor?
 - a) Have you ever felt overwhelmed, frustrated, or unsure of how to handle your emotions in a counselling session?
 - b) How have feedback from supervisor, academic requirements, or client interactions influenced these challenges?
4. Can you describe a moment during your training when you needed to regulate your emotions?
 - a) What happened in that situation, and what emotions were you experiencing at the time?
 - b) What was the outcome, and how did you feel afterwards?
 - c) How did your emotion influence your actions or decisions in that moment?
5. Have you ever struggled to regulate your emotions during training?
 - a) What made it difficult for you to manage your emotions at that moment?
 - b) What would you do differently if you faced a similar situation again?
6. How do you balance managing your own emotions while staying focused on your clients during sessions?
 - a) Do you feel this balance has become easier or more challenging as you progress in your training?
 - b) How do you think this balance impacts your ability to build trust with clients?
7. What strategies or techniques did you use to manage your emotions during that situation?

- a) Were these strategies effective, and how did you decide to use them?
 - b) Did your training or supervision equip you with tools or guidance to manage your emotions?
 - c) What methods were helpful?
8. What have you learned about yourself through the process of regulating emotions as a trainee counsellor?
- a) How has this affected your personal and professional growth?
 - b) Are there any strengths or weaknesses you've identified in your ability to manage emotions?
9. How do you think your experiences with emotional regulation during training will shape your future as a professional counsellor?
- a) What role do you think emotional regulation will play in your long-term success as a counsellor?
 - b) Are there any aspects of emotional regulation you hope to improve upon in the future?
 - c) How do you improve?
 - d) Do you have any resources or support that would help you through this journey?
10. What advice or guidance would you give to other trainee counsellors to help them manage their emotions during training?
- a) Based on your experiences, what lessons or strategies from your own experiences do you think would be helpful for others?
 - b) What do you think the training programs should focus on to help trainee counsellors in handling emotional challenges in this profession better?

Appendix G: Expertise Review of Interview Protocol

Interview Questions Validation Sheet

Name of Researcher : Ashlyn Lee Wen Xin
 Degree Enrolled : Bachelor of Social Science (Hons) Guidance and Counselling
 Research Title : The Experiences of Regulating Emotions among Trainee Counsellors in UTAR
 Purpose: : To validate the relevance, clarity, and effectiveness of the interview protocol in addressing the research objectives.

Instructions for Reviewers:

Please evaluate each interview question based on the criteria outlined below. Indicate your assessment by ticking the appropriate box and provide comments or suggestions for improvement. Your feedback is essential to ensure the validity, clarity, and depth of the interview protocol.

Rating System:

Evaluate each criterion using the following scoring system.

- 4 – Excellent: The criterion is fully met, and no improvements are necessary.
- 3 – Good: The criterion is met but could benefit from minor improvements.
- 2 – Acceptable: The criterion is partially met but requires significant revisions.
- 1 – Needs Improvement: The criterion is not met and requires major modifications.

Total Score Range:

- 35 – 40: Very Satisfactory
- 25 - 34: Satisfactory
- 15 - 24: Fair
- 14 or below: Needs Re-Validation

Items		4	3	2	1
A.	Construction of Questions				
	1. Questions are short and easily understood by the participants.		√		
	2. Questions are appropriate to the topic.	√			
	3. Questions allow storytelling or narration of experiences.		√		
B.	Accuracy/ Thoroughness of Questions				
	4. Questions are open-ended, allowing participants to elaborate on their responses.	√			
	5. Questions are positively stated to encourage thoughtful responses.	√			

	6. Follow-up questions are included to gain additional depth or clarity.		√		
	7. Questions are arranged logically, prioritizing information-based questions over opinion-based.	√			
	8. Questions are clear, precise, and use simple language for easy comprehension.		√		
	9. The entire interview can be completed within the allocated timeframe of 60 minutes to 90 minutes.	√			
	10. The total number of main questions does not exceed ten.	√			

Additional Comments and Suggestions

Please provide any overall feedback or recommendations to improve the interview protocol:

-
1. Questions is well-structed and addressing the objectives.
 2. Some words were too technical or abstract (eg: perceive it important)
 3. Lack of follow up which can encourage more in-depth discussion (can add on when you in interview, since this is a semi-structure interview)
-
-
-

Name of Evaluator: Lee Wei Rong

Degree of Evaluator: Master degree

Date Evaluated: 8/1/2025

Signature of Evaluator:

Interview Questions Validation Sheet

Name of Researcher : Ashlyn Lee Wen Xin
Degree Enrolled : Bachelor of Social Science (Hons) Guidance and Counselling
Research Title : The Experiences of Regulating Emotions among Trainee Counsellors in UTAR
Purpose: : To validate the relevance, clarity, and effectiveness of the interview protocol in addressing the research objectives.

Instructions for Reviewers:

Please evaluate each interview question based on the criteria outlined below. Indicate your assessment by ticking the appropriate box and provide comments or suggestions for improvement. Your feedback is essential to ensure the validity, clarity, and depth of the interview protocol.

Rating System:

Evaluate each criterion using the following scoring system.

- 4 – Excellent: The criterion is fully met, and no improvements are necessary.
- 3 – Good: The criterion is met but could benefit from minor improvements.
- 2 – Acceptable: The criterion is partially met but requires significant revisions.
- 1 – Needs Improvement: The criterion is not met and requires major modifications.

Total Score Range:

- 35 – 40: Very Satisfactory
- 25 - 34: Satisfactory
- 15 - 24: Fair
- 14 or below: Needs Re-Validation

Items		4	3	2	1
A.	Construction of Questions				
	11. Questions are short and easily understood by the participants.	4			
	12. Questions are appropriate to the topic.	4			
	13. Questions allow storytelling or narration of experiences.	4			
B.	Accuracy/ Thoroughness of Questions				
	14. Questions are open-ended, allowing participants to elaborate on their responses.		3		
	15. Questions are positively stated to encourage thoughtful responses.		3		
	16. Follow-up questions are included to gain additional depth or clarity.	4			

	17. Questions are arranged logically, prioritizing information-based questions over opinion-based.	4			
	18. Questions are clear, precise, and use simple language for easy comprehension.	4			
	19. The entire interview can be completed within the allocated timeframe of 60 minutes to 90 minutes.		3		
	20. The total number of main questions does not exceed ten.	4			

Additional Comments and Suggestions

Please provide any overall feedback or recommendations to improve the interview protocol:

Name of Evaluator: NUR SHAKILA IBHARIM

Date Evaluated: 8.1.2025

Signature of Evaluator: _____

Appendix H: Informed Consent



UAPC 3093 Project Paper II

Informed Consent

Title of the study

The experiences of regulating emotions among trainee counsellors in UTAR.

Purpose of Research

This research aims to explore the experiences of trainee counsellors in regulating their emotions. The primary objective of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of how trainee counsellors perceive, manage, and navigate emotional challenges during their training period.

Procedure of the study

This study will begin after the consent. You'll be required to participate in a one-time in-person interview. It will take approximately 90 minutes. The interviewer will request your consent to record the interview at the beginning of the interview session.

Participant Rights, Risks and Benefits

The data was collected and protected under Personal Data Protection Act 2010 ("PDPA") in Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman. This research will not put you at any risk. However, the questions you will be asked may bring up uncomfortable topics or painful memories. You have the right to decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time if you feel uncomfortable with the interview questions, even after your interview is completed. Any notes concerning your interview will be deleted or destroyed upon your request, and it will not be included in the final report.

Your name, the names of any other person, place, or organization you mention in the interview will be kept private and confidential. It will not be mentioned in the final report. The report may use your direct quotes and event scenarios. However, any identifiers from your words will be erased.

The findings of this study may provide valuable insights into the emotional regulation experiences of trainee counsellors. By enhancing understanding in this area, the research may inform the development of training programs, promote emotional resilience, and support the mental well-being of trainee counsellors in their professional journey.

Contacts

If you have any questions about your participation in this research study, feel free to email the interviewer at ashlynlee2003@1utar.my or supervisor at komathil@utar.edu.my.

Acknowledgement of notice

I agree to the record the interview. I am aware that the purpose of this recording is to assure information accuracy. I have the right to stop the recording whenever I choose. I am aware that the audiotapes will be kept in the strictest secrecy. I am also aware that the study report will not include my name or any other personal information.

I disagree to have the interview.

Signature

(

)

Date

Appendix I: Sample of Transcript

Participant Code: Daisy

Date: 17 Feb 2025

Time: 12:00pm – 12:53pm (53 minutes 7 seconds)

No.	Role	Transcript
1	Interviewer	<p>Hi, good afternoon. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. My name is Ashlyn, and I am conducting this study as part of my research on the experience of regulating emotions among UTAR trainee counsellors.</p> <p>Before we begin, I just want to clarify that while this interview is primarily in English, if at any point you find it difficult to express certain words or phrases, you are welcome to use any language you are comfortable with. I understand English, Chinese, and Malay, so feel free to switch between them if needed</p> <p>Here is an informed consent, I will go through it with you briefly. First of all, the purpose of this research aims to explore how trainee counsellors perceive, manage and navigate emotional challenges during their training.</p> <p>The interview will be one-time, in-person and will take approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview session will be semi-structured, meaning I will have prepared questions but may also ask follow-ups for clarification.</p>
2	Interviewee	Okay.
3	Interviewer	<p>All your responses will remain confidential and used for research purposes only. Your name, personal details, and any identifiable information will not appear in the final report. You can refuse to answer any question if you feel uncomfortable. You can stop or withdraw from the study at any time, even after the interview. If you wish, any recorded data can be deleted upon request.</p> <p>If you have any questions about your participation in this research study, feel free to email me or my supervisor. Here is my email address and here is my supervisor's email address.</p> <p>You can read through the informed consent. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.</p>
4	Interviewee	Okay.
5	Interviewer	But if no, you can just sign here.
6	Interviewee	(interviewee signs informed consent and hands to interviewer)
7	Interviewer	Okay so before we proceed, I would like to confirm again, do you consent to this interview being recorded for accuracy purposes?
8	Interviewee	Yeah sure.
9	Interviewer	Okay so let's begin with the first question. Can you describe your overall journey and experiences as a trainee counsellor?
10	Interviewee	I think my journey as a trainee counsellor has been a valuable learning experience, filled with challenges that almost knock me down sometimes, but there have been moments of self-doubt and emotional struggles, especially when facing situations where I felt incompetent

		or unsure on how to help my clients effectively. And despite these difficulties, I think I'm still on my way to become a professional counsellor and I see each experience, whether positive or challenging, as an opportunity for growth.
11	Interviewer	Wow that's great to hear. So, what actually motivated you to pursue counselling as a career or your course of study at the very beginning?
12	Interviewee	Because I have always been someone who is naturally empathetic and a good listener, based on my friends. However, I often felt helpless when people share their problems with me because I didn't know how to effectively help them with skills and some strategies. So, this motivate me to pursue counselling because I wanted to learn the necessary skills and knowledge to provide meaningful support to those who is in need.
13	Interviewer	Mm, interesting. I think you have mentioned about the emotional demands when it comes to facing clients who have issues that you feel like you cannot help, that's particularly where your emotional demands in your training so far. So, what are some other emotional demands in your training that you have faced?
14	Interviewee	Besides self-doubt and unsure... because I haven't encountered any particularly serious issues from my clients that requires very intense emotional involvement. However, I do some time face a very packed schedules, especially like when sessions begin right after my classes. So, during that time, I felt quite exhausted as I need to sustain my emotional presence throughout the sessions and especially the sessions will last about 1 hour and above. Yeah, so this can be very challenging and it's also something that I need to navigate in my if I continue my training.
15	Interviewer	Yeah, true. Having long hours of classes and then having to conduct your sessions and then to stay focused...it can be a really difficult thing to push through, but how are you managing so far?
16	Interviewee	For right now, I think is before the sessions I need to clear all my mind like to be mindful in the sessions and fully focus on clients rather than like, think about something out of the counselling sessions.
17	Interviewer	Okay, so moving on to our second question... What does regulating emotions mean to you in the context of counselling?
18	Interviewee	In the context of my counselling training, regulating emotions like means maintaining control over my emotional responses so they don't influence my judgments on directions with my clients, and it may involve like setting aside my personal feelings or thoughts to provide clients with unbiased services.
19	Interviewer	Well, that's a very detailed definition from you...okay...how do you perceive the importance of emotional regulation in your professional life as trainee counsellor and your personal life?
20	Interviewee	In my professional life, I think regulating emotions means like being aware of my emotional state. So, like managing my reactions and maintain a balance perspective, especially during counselling sessions like emotional regulation is quite...is very crucial I think because it allows me to provide non-judgmental view and without letting my personal feelings interfere client's perspective and the whole counselling session. So, it can let my clients feel more supported.

21	Interviewer	Mm...okay.
22	Interviewee	So, in my personal life, I think regulation of emotions is also equally important as my professional life because it allows me to handle stress, especially during group works. So, regulating emotions can help me to carry out effective communications with my teammates and maintain a healthy relationship so it can avoid me to feel overwhelmed.
23	Interviewer	That's a very good perspective... Can you share some of the instances like any examples where you felt regulating your emotions was particularly critical?
24	Interviewee	I think one example that I can share where regulating my emotion is very critical was when the client share an experience that highly related with my personal life events, that is... I perceive as very unpleasant. So, it was challenging for me to separate my emotions from the situation, but I knew it was crucial to remain objective and not project my feelings to the client. But there's a very dilemma situation...I can say...yeah.
25	Interviewer	So how did you deal with the situation at that time?
26	Interviewee	At that time, I just keep reminding myself to be very professional and ethical towards the client and respect the counselling session. So, at that time I was able to quickly switch off my personal thoughts and just focus on the client's narrative.
27	Interviewer	I think you have shown strong determination towards maintaining a professionalism towards your client and that's a really good thing to hear...okay...so moving on to the third question, what specific emotional challenges have you faced during your training as a trainee counsellor? Besides what you have shared just now...?
28	Interviewee	Besides just now where I am like highly related with the client's sharing and narrative, I think the main emotion challenge I have faced during my training is when sometimes I feel very incompetent and struggle to effectively help a client. So, at the moment I would feel like...uncertain about the right interventions or question to ask, and sometimes I will also doubt on my abilities...which quite affect my confidence and emotions.
29	Interviewer	I see... You feel overwhelmed when you can't help a client...you feel like you can't fully support your client and sometimes it knocks down your confidence in handling the client's issue.
30	Interviewee	Yes...
31	Interviewer	What did you do to manage this situation?
32	Interviewee	I think it's similar with what I mentioned just now, I just throw away all the self-doubt and uncertainty and I just bring it out to the discussion to my clients like...we find the suitable interventions together and the points that the clients want to focus together. I think bring out the discussion is quite important with the client because if I just keep on self-doubt then actually, I didn't know what clients think about it.
33	Interviewer	True, I think what I heard from you is more on how you self-regulate your emotions. Have you ever tried to seek for external support?
34	Interviewee	Yes, I think for supervision sessions and peer support is the way I seek external support. I ask my peers any methods they use in their sessions

		if they face the similar situations with me, then yeah, I can use the similar strategies when I face similar situations.
35	Interviewer	Hmm, so how have feedback from your peers or your lecturers have help you with handling these challenges?
36	Interviewee	I think feedback from supervisors and peers has both helpful and challenging for me. On one hand, constructive criticisms help me to growth and improve my counselling skills. However, receiving feedback on areas of weaknesses sometimes make me question about my abilities, so it's very important to regulate my emotions to avoid letting self-doubt and overwhelm myself and instead use the feedback as a learning opportunity.
37	Interviewer	Alright...the next question is can you describe a moment during your training where you needed to regulate your emotions? For this question, I believe that you have a given a few examples just now and then you also mentioned about feeling helpless when you can't help your clients and... feeling a bit overwhelmed as well. Can you give a more detailed...maybe one situation that happened and what emotions were you experiencing that time...?
38	Interviewee	I think I can elaborate on the situations when the clients share something personal experience that is highly related with me and that time the like I immediately felt sad and angry. It's like I re-experiencing the situations again. So, at the same time, I also felt very anxious because I was worried that my emotional reactions might become visible and affect the professionalism and supportive environment I wanted to maintain to the client.
39	Interviewer	Mm hmm...sad and angry, I see. Therefore, what was the outcome and how did you feel afterwards?
40	Interviewee	By consciously regulating my emotions, like taking deep breath and being mindful by focusing more and only focus on the clients, I was able to maintain my emotions and thoughts throughout the sessions and avoid the influence of my personal feeling. So, after the session, I felt relieved and somehow self-blaming that...like I felt very relieved because I can still manage my professionalism but self-blaming because I think this situation is very unethical as a trainee counsellor. So, I would say that it's quite disappointed for myself and I hope that this situation will not happen again...and it brings out the importance of regulating my emotions during the sessions.
41	Interviewer	I think you mentioned about re-experiencing those situations or experiences that are very similar with yourself. So, after ending this case or ending your sessions with the client, did you manage to regulate that part where you re-experienced those emotions?
42	Interviewee	I think because this consider has unfinished business for me. So I just keep reminding myself that I know this is the event that will trigger my emotions, and I started to learn more strategies on regulating my emotions during the sessions if I face similar situations again.
43	Interviewer	From what I heard from you, I believe that your self-regulating skills is very strong and yeah, I really admire that. However, seeking external support from peers and your supervisors is extremely important as well.

44	Interviewee	Mm hmm...
45	Interviewer	Do you think your emotions influence your actions or decisions at that time?
46	Interviewee	Initially I think consider yes because the intense emotional reactions make me dive into my personal experience, leading me to provide suggestions and strategies then I will like... judge the client behaviours. So, after that I realized that I was being influenced by my own emotions and...which was unethical. By recognizing this, I made a conscious decision to stay more present and conscious on the client's narrative. So, at that time I can still fully being balanced and like I keep...continue raising my awareness.
47	Interviewer	Oh...you realize you were giving suggestions from your point of view because you were in that situation before. This makes you feel more conscious that you have to stay professional and that you have to regulate your emotions.
48	Interviewee	Yeah...
49	Interviewer	Okay...that's good. Moving on to our next question, have you ever struggled to regulate your emotions during training?
50	Interviewee	Yes, I have struggled to regulate my emotion during training, like particularly when after packed schedules... after the packed schedules, I have the sessions right after the classes. And I often feel like mentally exhausted not only physically exhausted. I really want to stay alone to regulate my emotions alone but yeah, I cannot because I need to carry on the sessions, and it became more difficult when client shared a lot of emotional intense stories, and I struggled to find a suitable interventions or questions to help them. So, in those moments, I would feel stress and experience a sense of incompetence which also impact my emotional engagements with the client.
51	Interviewer	So, in this case, what would you do differently if you face similar situations again...since you are still a student...normally with packed schedules?
52	Interviewee	If I face a similar issue again, I think I would practice some techniques such as deep breathing or just focusing on my senses and being present in the situation so that I can separate my personal emotions and feelings from the clients' narratives, reinforcing my role as a counsellor.
53	Interviewer	Wow that's great...Have you ever tried out these techniques before?
54	Interviewee	I only tried before the sessions, like... I use mindfulness strategies to let my mind be like just don't think about anything troubling me or anything that I face very difficult or anything. I just fully focus on the clients. I think it's quite useful for me, but I think still need to practice more.
55	Interviewer	Okay okay...it is great that you have some idea on...uhm...how you manage to carry on the sessions, despite the packed schedule you have. My next question is, how do you balance managing your emotions while staying focused on your clients during sessions? I think you mentioned about self-regulating a lot and using deep breathing or mindfulness technique before the session. But what about specifically and particularly during the sessions?

56	Interviewee	I think throughout the sessions I will consciously remind myself to be professional and because I usually utilize the positive self-statements, I will keep telling myself that you need to be professional and... you can just sleep, or you can rest right after this session. So... just hold on to the session so that the sessions didn't interfere my emotional state attending to the client's narrative.
57	Interviewer	Wow...that's a lot of self-regulating and self-motivating that keeps you going, that's great to hear... Listed in the intake form that you're currently a Year 3 student so I believe that you have handled multiple cases, do you feel that as your training progresses from Year 1 to Year 3, this balance has become easier or more challenging for you?
58	Interviewee	I can say it becomes slightly easier as I progress in my training because I have gained more awareness and understanding of my emotional triggers and the state of myself in the counselling sessions. So with more practice, I have learned to manage my emotion more effectively during sessions, like trying out different strategies for regulating my emotions like... But I can say it is still challenging in some emotionally intense cases or when I relate personally to the client's experience. So, I think in such moments I have to make a conscious effort to stay present and professional.
59	Interviewer	Mm...What is the biggest difference you see in yourself, comparing from Year 1?
60	Interviewee	I can say that the biggest difference is...because Year 1 I still like don't know anything so I can truly feel that until Year 3 I can quite focus on... the increased focus on myself to the clients and become more mindful to the clients' narratives and have learned many skills or techniques in helping the clients effectively.
61	Interviewer	I can see that this balance has become easier for you, and you have mentioned that you are starting to stay more focused on your clients as you progress from year one to year three. But there are some situations, especially emotionally intense situations or having clients that have very similar experiences with you...that is where you constantly remind yourself that you have to be conscious of your emotions and seek external support from your peers or supervisors. That's great to hear...
62	Interviewee	Mmhmm...yeah.
63	Interviewer	How do you think this balance focused on your clients impact your ability to build trust with clients?
64	Interviewee	I think it's very important...it's very crucial for counsellors to maintain the balance to avoid the like...one of the points...the biggest point I think is to avoid the interfere of your personal feelings to the client's narrative, like something that you experience yourself might not be effective for the clients... so to avoid harm to the client. So, it must be focused 100% and fully focused to the client's narrative and bring out the discussions on whether this... It's like you can share your experience to the clients that the strategy that you have used to cope with the similar situations, but it might not be suitable for the clients. So, must bring out the discussions to the client and maybe might build the trust to the clients like because you have faced the situation, so the clients might feel that you are the one who understands them.

65	Interviewer	Okay okay so... You've mentioned that several techniques or strategies such as mindfulness, breathing and so on that you have used to manage your emotions. What are the like strategies or techniques that you have also used, or you're willing to try?
66	Interviewee	Based on suggestions from my peers or other trainee counsellors, I think I would like to focus more on the grounding technique. I have never fully tried it before. I just heard from my peers that grounding technique is quite useful for them like... become more focused on your six senses the sessions. So, I would like to utilize it fully and become more fully engaged and mindful.
67	Interviewer	Okay...yeah, I think you have also stated the effectiveness of strategies such as mindfulness and deep breathing just now. How did you come with these strategies? Naturally or...it comes from other people as well?
68	Interviewee	It is actually from one of my lecture classes, that this mindfulness and deep breathing is one of the strategies for help the clients calm down. So I thought I'd try this I found that it's quite useful for me and I also try it outside the counselling setting, like when I'm very nervous on my exam, so I keep practicing deep breathing so that it lead me to be automatically used in the counselling settings...when I felt similar nervous or anxiety or cannot be fully mindful in the in the counselling sessions.
69	Interviewer	Okay... You've mentioned that you have learned mindfulness or like deep breathing techniques, strategies from your lecture classes. Besides that, did your training or supervision equip you with any tools or guidance to manage your emotions?
70	Interviewee	Yeah, I think my training helped me to gain experience and a better understanding of what actually triggers my emotions and how to maintain a professional stance when faced with similar situations and this awareness has make it make me easier to anticipate and manage my emotional reactions to during sessions...and also the supervision sessions I found it very very very useful and helpful for me as I learn various techniques such as deep and deep breathing from my lecturer class, and that can help me stay present and emotionally balanced. I think supervision session provide me a very safe space to reflect on my emotional experience and receive the constructive feedback on how to handle them better in the future.
71	Interviewer	Can you share with me like any specific examples where during your training or your supervision sessions that they have provided you some tools that have helped you to manage your emotions?
72	Interviewee	I think the most I think useful tool is my supervisor just tell me to be more professional like because...uh, you are a trainee counsellor, and the first point for being a trainee counsellor is do not harm your clients. So, at that time, I think this is quite a reminder for me from my supervisors... so that I can keep reminding myself to be very professional and as a qualified counsellor.
73	Interviewer	Besides reminding you to remain professional or stay professional to your client, did they provide you any specific guidance on how to maintain this professionalism?

74	Interviewee	The first is they asked me to...they teach me to like the self-statements like keep saying to yourself in your heart, in your thoughts, just like you want to be professional. And they also share their own experience when they were still trainee counsellors...then how they handle it? For the deep breathing thing, they also told me different tips and tricks like uh, the tempo of the deep breathings and the strategies that they found in useful for themselves... they also share with me.
75	Interviewer	So have you tried like all the strategies and tools your supervisor or lecturer has provided?
76	Interviewee	Uh...no haha... because they just told me, and they just asked me to find the most suitable strategies for myself.
77	Interviewer	What is the most helpful for you, among all the methods you have tried?
78	Interviewee	Deep breathing is quite helpful but the most is...positive self-statements because deep breathing is like very weird if you do it in front of your clients, right? Like you suddenly just like this, your client might feel like maybe they say something wrong or anything that will make them more anxious to come into the session. So, by using the positive self-statement, at least they didn't aware on what you are doing yourself.
79	Interviewer	Yeah, I think you've used a lot of positive self-statements, like in encouraging yourself to maintain your professionalism and to push through the sessions. You mentioned about not feeling confident when it comes to difficulty handling some of the cases. There must be some of the unhelpful thoughts inside where you feel like you're competent enough, from what you've mentioned that just now. So, positive self-statements and unhelpful thoughts...how did you replace these unhelpful thoughts with positive self-statements?
80	Interviewee	I think throughout the session when I found out that I have the unhappy thoughts that I think I am not competent enough to provide helps to the client. Then maybe if some very serious cases I will just bring out the discussions to the clients that...say that I'm just a trainee counsellor and these areas might not be my competence areas. So, I can still assist you in some areas but might refer them to someone who is very professional, more professional than me, and I can still assist in some of the areas that I still confident with. So, if the client remains that she or he don't want to being referred, then I will just bring other discussions on...any things that you want to try? Or anything that I can still assist the clients. I think bring out the discussion is very important.
81	Interviewer	Being very open, vulnerable and honest with your client on your capabilities makes you feel more secure, maybe?
82	Interviewee	Yeah yeah...
83	Interviewer	That's great. How did your client(s) respond to this?
84	Interviewee	I think quite a number of my clients still can understand and know about my situation because I have mentioned when I begin the sessions that I'm just a trainee counsellor, so the areas that I am competent with is still limited. I think they still quite understand my situation and they also can engage with me in the discussions. So I think they still understand... high level of understanding.

85	Interviewer	That's great, how did their response make you feel?
86	Interviewee	Well, I feel very glad and very sorry to them also because they want to be in the counselling session is because they want to help themselves, but I cannot assist them fully. But in the way that I feel that because they can understand me and it also let me have the motivation to improve my skills.
87	Interviewer	Okay...great to hear. I missed out on a question that I wanted to ask you just now, do you use deep breathing before your session or during the session?
88	Interviewee	Deep breathing is during the session...might use deep breathing before the session but I think more useful way is during the session.
89	Interviewer	How do you do it during the session?
90	Interviewee	When the client say some things or when I felt overwhelmed then I will just silently do the deep breathing.
91	Interviewer	That's great, so without letting your client know...
92	Interviewee	In one situation, I felt really overwhelmed in my emotions and I felt that it's very exhausted. So, I just honestly tell the clients that can we pause like... can our session just pause like 5 minutes or 3 minutes? Then you can go through the toilet or anything. Then can I have a rest like this... then the client also very understands me. The client said sure.
93	Interviewer	Hmm yeah that's a pretty good approach as well. Okay... I've learned a lot from your responses... And yeah, I think there are lots of great approaches, but your approach was very well. So, what have you learned about yourself through the process of regulating emotions as a trainee counsellor?
94	Interviewee	I think through the process of regulating my emotions as a trainee counsellor, I have learned that I'm more sensitive to emotional triggers that I initially thought. However, I also discovered my resilience and abilities to adapt by using the effective coping strategies that I mentioned just now and also, I found out the reflective journaling is also quite useful as it also the strategies for regulating my emotions. Recently I want to practice... I also realized that my emotional regulation is still ongoing learning process, that requires more self-awareness and consistent practice.
95	Interviewer	Mm yeah...are there any strengths or weaknesses you have identified in your ability to manage your emotions?
96	Interviewee	One of my strengths, I think is my self-awareness...which this self-awareness allows me to quickly identify my emotional triggers and knowing myself that my emotion is being influenced by the client's narrative and sharings, so at that time I will quickly response with appropriate copying strategies for myself. I think I'm also good at reflecting on my experience to help me learn and grow faster.
97	Interviewer	What about the weaknesses?
98	Interviewee	Some weaknesses, I think is the sensitive to emotional triggers that it quite challenging for me to stay balanced during the emotional intense sessions like...because I'm also found out that I will be difficult to regulate myself in like place or situations that I the environments that I unfamiliar with. Because I used to regulate my emotions alone in my hostels or in my bedroom. So, if come to the sessions when other

		people are just like staring at me, then I will feel very nervous to regulate my emotions right in front of them.
99	Interviewer	How do you think your strengths can help improve your weaknesses...in this situation?
100	Interviewee	For my strength I think is the self-awareness...
101	Interviewer	Yeah, so how do you think your self-awareness can help you deal better with your weaknesses?
102	Interviewee	I think right after I aware myself to have like... intense emotions. Then I will quickly shift to the coping strategies that I use to practice recently or the use the suitable strategies to regulate my emotions.
103	Interviewer	Okay... great to hear. Moving on to the next question, how do you think your experiences with emotional regulation during your training will shape your future as a professional counsellor?
104	Interviewee	I think my experience with emotional regulation during training have taught me the importance of maintaining emotional balance to provide an effective and empathetic support to the clients. So, the challenge that I have faced have shown the importance of continuous self-improvement is very important and also the self-awareness. So, I will be more aware of my emotional triggers and the needs for ongoing learning to enhance my even skills or the strategies in emotional regulation in the future.
105	Interviewer	Okay...what role do you think emotional regulation can play in your long-term success as a counsellor?
106	Interviewee	I think it will play a very important role in my long term success because it will enable me to remain presence and focus on my clients and giving a unbiased suggestions and regardless of the emotional intensity of their experience, so it will also help me to maintain a professional stance and ensuring that my personal feelings do not interfere with the clients therapeutic process, and the most important thing is emotional regulation will support my well-being and prevent burnout. I think this is the most important thing that I want to achieve in my professional life...to sustain my passion and effectiveness in this field.
107	Interviewer	Yeah, as counsellors are in the mental health profession that we will certainly deal with a lot of cases and there comes situations where we have to deal with very emotionally intense situations that might lead us to burnout. So...are there any aspects of emotional regulation you hope to improve upon in the future?
108	Interviewee	I think I would like to improve my ability to regulate my emotions in real time, like in the... on the spot...in the counselling session because as I mentioned just now, the breathing techniques and pausing the session, they are actually not useful in every counselling sessions and maybe pausing the sessions maybe some client think it's OK, but other client will feel that pausing a session is unprofessional thing to them. And I also mentioned just now that I will feel tired and don't know how to regulate my emotions in an unfamiliar environment. So, I think that I want to be more consistent in maintaining my emotional balance throughout the entire session regardless the external stresses.
109	Interviewer	How can you improve on that?

110	Interviewee	I believe that practice makes perfect. Yeah. So, I would like to gain more practical experience to consolidate my emotional regulation methods that I used to think is very suitable for me. And by working with varieties of clients and facing difference emotional challenges, I think I can better understand my emotional triggers and learn how to manage my emotions more effectively.
111	Interviewer	Since you're still a Year 3 student, I believe you have a lot of chances to practice.
112	Interviewee	Yeah.
113	Interviewer	Do you have like any resources or support that will help you through this journey?
114	Interviewee	Before that we have discussed about the supervision sessions. I think it's extremely valuable lessons for me as they provide a safe space for me to reflect myself and they can provide me the constructive reflections and their own experience and... peer support I think is very helpful too because as sharing experience with my fellow trainee counselors and my friends allowed me to learn different emotional regulations and I will feel less isolated and less alone in the challenges that I face. I'll think that I'm not alone in facing the emotional intense in the sessions...like maybe everyone facing... like just trying to bring up the discussions and learn from each other. And additionally, I would also want to try the observation sessions like in my give me the opportunity to learn by watching experienced counselors or my lecturers manage their emotions in real times. So, I'm also interested in attending workshops that focus on emotional regulations or any people who share their experience also from real time on how they regulate themselves and some useful techniques that they use to further enhance my skills and knowledge in this area.
115	Interviewer	OK. Do you have any access to these resources such as like workshops or maybe observations like you mentioned just now?
116	Interviewee	I think for observation session is accessible because quite a number of the lecturer will do their counselling sessions in UTAR UCC. So maybe I can find and register some observation sessions that is suitable for me and maybe I can schedule the observation sessions based on my timetable.
117	Interviewer	Hmm okay okay... last question is what advice or guidance would you give to other trainee counsellors help them manage their emotions during their training from your personal experience?
118	Interviewee	I would say that I'm still on my way in learning how to regulate my emotion effectively, but I would advise other trainee counselors to 1st prioritize self-awareness and self-care first, because if you can't even take good care of yourself, then how can you help others that need help? So yeah, it's essential to understand your emotional triggers based on your self-awareness and learn how to manage them to maintain the emotional balance during the sessions.
119	Interviewer	Okay, so you're currently enrolled in the GC course, what do you think this course should focus on to help trainee counsellors in handling emotional challenges in this profession better or prepare them for these emotional challenges in the future as professional counsellors?

120	Interviewee	I think for the courses, or some subject can be more practical, like providing the role play sessions with different scenarios that can trigger intense emotion but in a controlled way... So, this will allow the trainee counselors to experience and practice emotion regulation in a control and supportive environments that we can learn together and learn that actually they have many situations that can trigger your emotions and so by facing the challenging situations during the trainings or the subjects, then all the trainee counselors... I believe they can better understand their emotional triggers and learn some effective coping strategies in the class or with the peers. So, like prepare before the real situations come...at least you prepare, and you know your suitable coping strategies.
121	Interviewer	So, you're suggesting a practical exposure to your own emotional triggers during the training, but in a controlled way with the supervision from your lecturers and supervisors.
122	Interviewee	Yes.
123	Interviewer	Okay...great, I think this comes to the end of our interview today. I have gained valuable insights and input from your responses today, thanks for that. Before we end this interview, do you have any questions for me or for this research study?
124	Interviewee	I think...can I learn from you any coping strategies that you use when you face some emotional intense situations in the counselling sessions?
125	Interviewer	I, personally, as a trainee counsellor as well...I think I pretty much use the same strategies as you... like positive self-statements and pausing the session but sometimes it does not work...I understand that I actually will be honest with the client. I will tell that client that is too much information, and I feel like we can continue it the next session. But the first time I do this I feel like I did not convey the message properly to the client, so it made the client feel like I was rushing to end the session and...it felt bad. After some practice, I feel like pausing the session is the most ideal strategy. Yeah, very similar with yours...
126	Interviewee	So other than the client, you can actually practice well in other situations with other clients?
127	Interviewer	But so far, I did not meet really emotionally intense situations. I have clients who cry in the session but for me, personally I don't feel triggered...so far no. Yeah, so this makes me curious of others' experiences, which leads to my research study.
128	Interviewee	Okay I also learned from you too. That's all for my questions.
129	Interviewer	Okay thank you so much.
130	Interviewee	Welcome.

Appendix J: Sample of Field Notes**Field Notes**

Date: 17 Feb 2025 Time: 12:00pm – 12:53pm (53 minutes 7 seconds) Location: UCCC Participant ID/Code: Daisy		
	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
Facial expressions (e.g., smiling, furrowing brows, avoiding eye contact)	Maintained a warm smile throughout the conversation.	The smile suggests comfort and confidence.
Body language (e.g., hand movements, posture shifts)	Frequently nodded, sat in a relaxed posture, and oriented their body toward the interviewer.	Their open posture and nodding suggest attentiveness, agreement, and engagement.
Tone of voice (e.g., calm, hesitant, enthusiastic)	Spoke in an enthusiastic and expressive manner.	Their enthusiasm suggests interest, confidence, or emotional investment in the topic.
Engagement with questions	Actively participated, responded thoughtfully, and showed interest in the discussion.	Their active participation suggests the topic is relevant and meaningful to them.
Additional Notes		

Appendix K: Oral Presentation Rubric

UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELING

INDIVIDUAL ORAL PRESENTATION EVALUATION FORM (FACE TO FACE/VIRTUAL PLATFORM)

UAPC3093 PROJECT PAPER II

Student's Name	ID	*Total (40%)	**Final score (20%)
ASHLYN LEE WEN XIN	2202891		

**Final Score: () / 40 marks ÷ 2 = () / 20 marks

***to be converted into 20%**

Date: _____

Time: _____

SCORE TRAITS	SCORE	EXCELLENT 4	GOOD 3	AVERAGE 2	LACKING 1
POSTER PRESENTATION PREPARATION					
Organisation		Title/author of paper clearly displayed. Concise presentation of introduction, review of literature, methodology, findings and conclusions.	Shows title/author. Adequately presents introduction, review of literature, methodology, findings and conclusions.	Shows title/author. Presents main ideas of introduction, review of literature, methodology, findings and conclusions.	Title/author are missing. Insufficient coverage of main points of introduction, review of literature, methodology, findings and conclusions.
Competency		Student demonstrates competent knowledge of the subject by explaining the subject with details. Able to answer questions posted by the audience/examiners fluently with confidence.	Student is able to provide sufficient information to enable audience to understand main ideas. Able to answer questions posted by the audience/examiners with noticeable interval.	Student is able to provide basic information with vague and disjointed ideas. Student tried to answer the questions posted by the audience/examiner using common-sense rather than evidence-based answer.	Student is unable convey the information fluently to the audience/examiner. Student is not able to answer the questions posted by the audience/examiner.

Visual Presentation		Visually appealing poster with appropriate colours, organization, and font sizes enhance readability. Strategically positioned graphics and text.	Overall visually appealing. Organisation of content enhances readability. Appropriate font size enhances readability. Content arrangement easily understood. Graphics enhances text.	Visual appeal is adequate. Colours and layout somewhat cluttered. Font size affects readability. Confusing content arrangement. Graphics help to highlight some content.	Visuals lack appeal. Colours and layout cluttered. Hinders readability. Inconsistent font sizes and content arrangement Mismatch of graphics and text.
Mechanics		The slides are flawless with no misspelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors. Provide essential sources and citations using 7 th edition APA style.	2 – 3 misspelling, punctuation and/ or grammatical errors in the slides. Provided excessive and cluttered sources and citations.	4 misspelling, punctuation and/ or grammatical errors detected in the slides. Inconsistent citation styles detected.	Slides are riddled with multiple spelling, punctuation and/ or grammatical errors. Does not cite sources.
SCORE TRAITS	SCORE	EXCELLENT 4	GOOD 3	AVERAGE 2	LACKING 1
VERBAL SKILLS					
Enthusiasm		Demonstrates a strong, positive feeling about topic during entire presentation.	Occasionally shows positive feelings about topic.	Shows little positive feelings toward topic presented.	Shows absolutely no interest in topic presented.
Delivery		Uses a clear voice and speaks at a good pace so audience can hear presentation. Does not read off slides.	Presenter's voice is clear. The pace is a little slow or fast at times. Audience can hear presentation.	Presenter's voice is low. The pace is much too rapid/slow. Audience has difficulty hearing presentation.	Presenter mumbles or talks very fast and speaks too softly for audience to hear and understand.
Language		Excellent and competent use of subject-related vocabulary and correct pronunciation.	Presentation shows competent use of subject-related vocabulary and correct pronunciation.	Some parts of lapse into colloquialism with inappropriate vocabulary and pronunciation.	Mostly inappropriate vocabulary and pronunciation.
NON-VERBAL SKILLS					
Eye Contact		Student maintains eye contact with audience, seldom returning to notes.	Student maintains eye contact most of the time but frequently returns to notes.	Student occasionally uses eye contact, but still reads most of report.	Student reads all of report with no eye contact.
Body Language & Facial Expression		Movements seem fluid. Displays relaxed, self-confident nature about self, with no-mistakes.	Made movements or gestures that enhance articulation. Makes minor mistakes, displays little or no tension.	Rigid movement or descriptive gestures. Displays mild tension; has trouble recovering from mistakes.	No movement or descriptive gestures. Tension and nervousness are obvious; has trouble recovering from

		Appropriate facial expression without a zoned-out or confused expression.	Occasionally demonstrate either a zoned-out or confused expression during presentation.	Occasionally demonstrate both zoned-out or confused expressions during presentation.	mistakes. Consistently zoned-out or displays confused expression during presentation.
Timing		Within 10 to 15 minutes of allotted time.	Within 17 minutes of allotted time OR too short (<10 minutes).	Within 20 minutes of allotted time OR too short (<5 minutes).	Too long (>20 minutes) or too short (<3 minutes).
*TOTAL					

Comments:

Evaluated by:

(NAME OF EVALUATOR: _____)

Department of Psychology and Counseling
Faculty of Arts and Social Science
UTAR Perak Campus

