SOCIAL SUPPORT, SELF-ESTEEM, AND HAPPINESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE COUNSELING STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

ENG SU YIN @ VIVIAN LIM DE SILVA

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
2023

SOCIAL SUPPORT, SELF-ESTEEM AND HAPPINESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE COUNSELING STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

ENG SU YIN @ VIVIAN LIM DE SILVA

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PSYCHOLOGY

FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
2023

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS TESIS

JUDUL : **SOCIAL SUPPORT, SELF –ESTEEM AND HAPPINESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE COUNSELLING STUDENT IN MALAYSIA**

IJAZAH : **SARJANA PSIKOLOGI**

BIDANG : **PSIKOLOGI**

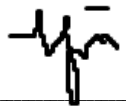
Saya **ENG SU YIN @ VIVIAN**, Sesi **2019-2023**, mengaku membenarkan tesis Sarjana ini disimpan di Perpustakaan Universiti Malaysia Sabah dengan syarat-syarat kegunaan seperti berikut:-

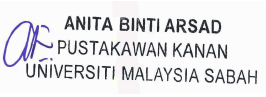
1. Tesis ini adalah hak milik Universiti Malaysia Sabah
2. Perpustakaan Universiti Malaysia Sabah dibenarkan membuat salinan untuk tujuan pengajian sahaja.
3. Perpustakaan dibenarkan membuat salinan tesis ini sebagai bahan pertukaran antara institusi pengajian tinggi.
4. Sila tandakan (/):

☐	SULIT	(Mengandungi maklumat yang berdarjah keselamatan atau kepentingan Malaysia seperti yang termaktub di dalam AKTA RAHSIA 1972)
☐	TERHAD	(Mengandungi maklumat TERHAD yang telah ditentukan oleh organisasi/badan di mana penyelidikan dijalankan)
/	TIDAK TERHAD	

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

Disahkan Oleh,





ENG SU YIN @ VIVIAN
MP1921237T

(Tandatangan Pustakawan)

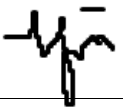
Tarikh : 15 September 2023

(Dr. GUEN TEIK EE)
Penyelia Utama

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material in this thesis is my own except for quotations, equations, summaries, and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

10 August 2023



Eng Su Yin @ Vivian
MP1921237T

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

CERTIFICATION

NAME : **ENG SU YIN @ VIVIAN**

MATRIC NO. : **MP1921237T**

TITTLE : **SOCIAL SUPPORT, SELF –ESTEEM AND HAPPINESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE COUNSELLING STUDENT IN MALAYSIA**

DEGREE : **MASTER OF PSYCHOLOGY**

FIELD : **PSYCHOLOGY**

VIVA DATE : **10 AUGUST 2023**

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

CERTIFIED BY.

Signature

1. MAIN SUPERVISOR
Dr. Guan Teik Ee

2. CO - SUPERVISOR
Prof. Dr. Murnizam Hj. Halik

PROF. MADYA DR. MUHAMMAD IDRIS
BIN BULLARE @ BAHARI
Deputy Dean (Research and Innovation)
Faculty of Psychology and Education
Universiti Malaysia Sabah

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I must convey my appreciation to Dr. Guan Teik Ee for guiding me in this thesis. Thanks for her time and effort spent in guiding me from the beginning till the last part of this thesis.

Besides, I wish to thank my examiner PM Dr. Muhammad Idris Bin Bullare@ Hj. Bahari and Dr. Mazni Mustapha for suggestions to improve in this thesis. Without them, it would be impossible for me to complete my thesis in the given time frame.

Thanks, every one of you again, for the support, effort, and contribution given to me throughout completion of this thesis.

Eng Su Yin @ Vivian Lim Silva
10 August 2023

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the relationship between social support, self-esteem, and happiness among undergraduate counseling students in Malaysia. A quantitative survey was conducted using random sampling on 299 undergraduates from a public university in Malaysia. The results of the study showed that social support on average score is high, as well as the self-esteem level among counseling students in Malaysia and happiness score is high. Pearson correlation analyses revealed significant positive relationships between social support and happiness and between self-esteem and happiness. There was also a significant positive correlation between social support and self-esteem. The study further examined the mediating role of self-esteem between social support and happiness using regression analysis, and the results showed that self-esteem mediated the influence of social support on happiness. Understanding the dynamics of these variables can provide valuable information to body knowledge, educators, cousnelor and policymakers to support and nurture the well-being of undergraduate counselling students in Malaysia.

Key Word: Happiness, Social Support, Self-esteem & Counseling Student.

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

ABSTRAK

SOKONGAN SOSIAL, HARGA DIRI, DAN KEBAHAGIAAN DI KALANGAN PELAJAR KAUNSELING IJAZAH DI MALAYSIA

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara sokongan sosial, harga diri dan kebahagiaan dalam kalangan pelajar kaunseling ijazah rendah di Malaysia. Satu kajian kuantitatif telah dijalankan dengan menggunakan pensampelan rawak terhadap 299 orang pelajar ijazah rendah kaunseling dari sebuah universiti awam di Malaysia. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa skor purata sokongan sosial adalah tinggi, begitu juga dengan tahap harga diri dalam kalangan pelajar kaunseling di Malaysia dan skor kebahagiaan juga tinggi. Analisis korelasi Pearson menunjukkan hubungan positif yang signifikan antara sokongan sosial dan kebahagiaan dan antara harga diri dan kebahagiaan. Terdapat juga korelasi positif yang signifikan antara sokongan sosial dan harga diri. Kajian ini turut mengkaji peranan pengantara harga diri antara sokongan sosial dan kebahagiaan menggunakan analisis regresi, dan keputusan menunjukkan bahawa harga diri menjadi pengantara dalam mempengaruhi hubungan antara sokongan sosial dan kebahagiaan. Akhir sekali, kajian ini membincangkan had-had dan cadangan-cadangan yang perlu diambil kira. Memahami dinamika pemboleh ubah ini boleh memberikan maklumat berharga kepada badan ilmu pengetahuan, pendidik, kaunselor, dan pembuat dasar untuk menyokong dan membantu pembangunan kesejahteraan pelajar-pelajar kaunseling di Malaysia.

Kata Kunci : Kebahagiaan, Sokongan Sosial, Harga Diri & Pelajar Kaunselling

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

LIST OF CONTENTS

		Page
TITLE		i
DECLARATION		ii
CERTIFICATION		iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT		vi
ABSTRACT		v
ABSTRAK		vi
LIST OF CONTENTS		vii
LIST OF TABLES		xi
LIST OF FIGURES		xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS		xiv
LIST OF APPENDICES		xv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION		
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Background of the Study	2
	1.2.1 Counselling students	4
	1.2.2 Pandemic	7
	1.2.3 Movement Control in Malaysia	8
	1.2.4 Happiness in Malaysia	10
	1.2.5 Social Support of Counselor Student	13
	1.2.6 The Role of Self-Esteem	14
	1.2.7 Self-esteem as Mediator	16
1.3	Problem Statement	18
1.4	Objectives of the Study	25
1.5	Research Objective and Questions	26
1.6	Hypotheses of Study	27
1.7	Significance of the Study	27

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

1.8 Operational Definition 29

1.9 Summary 32

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction 33

2.2 Theoretical Approach 33

2.2.1 Theory Of Relational Regulation 34

2.2.2 Theory Of Self-Esteem 35

2.2.3 Theory Of Objective List 36

2.2.4 Theory of subjective well-being - Tripartite model 37

2.2.5 Theory Of Sociometer Theory

2.3 Relationship Between Social Support, Self-Esteem And Happiness 37

39

2.3.1 Social Supports

44

2.3.2 Self-Esteem

50

2.3.3 Happiness

2.4 Summary 53

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction 55

3.2 Research Design 56

3.3 Population of Study and Sampling 57

3.4 Instrument 61

3.4.1 MSPSS 63

3.4.2 RSES 64

3.4.3 OHQ 65

3.5 Data Analysis Procedure 66

3.5.1 Step 1 –Descriptive 66

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

3.5.2 Step 2-Pearson analysis 66
3.5.3 Step 3-Multiple Regressions Analysis + Sobel Test 67
3.6 Normality test 69
3.7 Reliability and Validity 70
3.8 Summary 75

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction 77
4.2 Descriptive 77
4.2.1 Social support 77
4.2.2 Self-esteem 80
4.2.3 Happiness 81
4.3 Pearson Correlation Analysis 82
4.3.1 Hypothesis 1 83
4.3.2 Hypothesis 2 84
4.3.3 Hypothesis 3 85
4.4 Multiple Regression Model 86
4.4.1 H4: Self-esteem as a mediator 87
4.5 Overall Results 89
4.6 Summary 91

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction 92
5.2 Conclusions for Research Questions One 92
5.3 Implications 98
5.3.1 Implication for Practical 98
5.3.2 Implication for Social 99
5.3.3 Implication for Theoretical 99
5.4 Limitations of the Study 100

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

5.5 Summary 103

BIBLIOGRAPHY 104

APPENDICES 129

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

LIST OF TABLES

			Page
Table: 1.1	:	Difference Aspect of Past Studies Toward Counselling Students.	20
Table: 1.2	:	Studies On Happiness by Using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Argyle and Hills (2002).	22
Table 3.1	:	Totals Public Universities with Bachelor of Counselling In Malaysia Register With Accreditation MQA In Malaysia	55
Table 3.2	:	Totals Of Population	58
Table 3.3	:	Stratification Of Sampling And Sample Size	59
Table 3.4	:	Demographic Summary	60
Table 3.5	:	Instrument Anchor Points	61
Table 3.6	:	Value Of Items	62
Table 3.7	:	Relationship Interpretation Based on Cohen (1988)	67
Table: 3.8	:	P-Values from The Sobel Test By Baron And Kenny (1986)	69
Table 3.9	:	Skewness And Kurtosis for All Variables On Actual Study	70
Table 3.10	:	Pilot Study Reliability Test Result	71
Table 3.11	:	Actual Study Reliability Test Result	71
Table 3.12	:	Item-Total Statistics for Social Support	72
Table 3.13	:	Item-Total Statistics for Self-Esteem	73
Table 3.14	:	Item-Total Statistics for Happiness	74
Table 3.15	:	Summary For Data Analyses	74
Table 4.1	:	Mean For Social Support Among Counseling Students In Malaysia	78
Table 4.2	:	Mean Of Three Forms Of Social Support (Family, Friends And Significant Other)	78
Table 4.3	:	Perceived Social Support Based on Percentage	78
Table 4.4	:	Table Of Mean for Self-Esteem Among Counselling Students In Malaysia	80
Table 4.5	:	Table Of Self-Esteem Distribution by Percentage	80
Table 4.6	:	Mean For Happiness Among Counseling Students in Malaysia	81

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

Table 4.7	:	Happiness Distribution by Percentage	82
Table 4.8	:	Table Of Correlations Between Social Support and Happiness.	84
Table 4.9	:	Table Of Correlations Between Self-Esteem and Happiness.	85
Table 4.10	:	Table Of Correlations Between Social Support and Self-Esteem	86
Table 4.11	:	Table Of Total Effect Significance Based on Baron and Kenny (1986)	87
Table 4.12	:	Inclusion Of a Mediator of Self-Esteem	88
Table 4.13	:	The Strength of The Relationship Between the Models (The Goodness Of Fit).	89
Table 4.14	:	Summary For Overall Results	89

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

LIST OF FIGURES

			Page
Figure 1.1	:	Malaysia: Happiness index from 2015-2020	10
Figure 1.2	:	Comparing happiness index from 2015-2020	11
Figure 2.1	:	Conceptual Framework	65
Figure 3.1	:	Look for b1 significant between X and Y	67
Figure 3.2	:	Look for b2 significant between X to affect M.	67
Figure 3.3	:	Look for b4 non-significant or smaller than before.	68

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MCO	-	Movement Control Order
WHR	-	Community of Inquiry
OHQ	-	The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire
UM	-	University Malaysia
UMT	-	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
UNIMAS	-	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
USIM	-	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia
UPM	-	Universiti Putra Malaysia
UMS	-	Universiti Malaysia Sabah
UUM	-	Universiti Utara Malaysia
RSES	-	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
MSPSS	-	The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived SocialSupport
NTP	-	National Transformation Plan

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

LIST OF APPENDIX

			Page
Appendix A	:	Questionnaire: Community of Inquiry Instrument	129

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this research is on the challenges faced by Malaysian undergraduate counseling students during their studies, which can have negative effects on their happiness levels, and ultimately hinder their ability to perform well as professionals and experience positive emotions. With the current pandemic, happiness has become increasingly important, and students who have strong social support are better equipped to maintain their happiness levels.

To establish a strong link between social support and happiness, some studies suggest that self-esteem can serve as a mediating variable, either as an independent or dependent variable. However, previous research has not adequately explored the role of self-esteem in facilitating the relationship between social support and happiness. This could be due to a lack of emphasis on happiness in previous studies, which have instead focused on other areas, such as well-being.

1.2 Background of the Study

The Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted on our daily lives. Since 2020, countries have implemented extensive precautions such as social distancing, extensive hygiene protocols, and wearing masks to curb the spread of the virus. These safety measures include implementation of national lockdowns; closure of non-essential workplaces and schools, as well as prohibition of social events has greatly disrupted our routines and lives. Numerous studies have provided substantial

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

evidence supporting the numerous benefits of having a strong support network. These benefits include enhanced coping skills, increased overall well-being, and a higher likelihood of leading a longer and healthier life. Additionally, research has consistently shown that social support plays a crucial role in reducing anxiety and depression, even during challenging times such as a pandemic. This is primarily attributed to the fact that a robust social network can often provide significant stress relief and emotional support.

Resources are inadequate during pandemic; social support serves as a motivator during those trying times. Social support is closely relevant to happiness. The presence of social support enriches one's quality of life and acts as a protective factor against negative life circumstances. Social support is defined as social means that allow individuals to feel supported and listened in relationships (Cronkite & Moos, 1995) and is related to happiness (Cohen & Underwood, 2000). During the transition to university, significant changes take place in terms of students' social networks, involving the establishment of new connections and the formation of intimate relationships with new individuals. Due to the students' far away from home, their historical ties with their parents and siblings, and their financial dependence, experiences of the social support they obtain from their families also shift during this time. Due to the students' being far away from home, the interaction with the friends and family, and financial dependence also shift during this time. Therefore, we aimed to ascertain the varying degrees of social support among students at Malaysian universities.

Numerous studies in positive psychology consistently demonstrate that self-esteem is a powerful predictor of various outcomes. such as Simsek (2013), Zhao et al. (2013), Kong, Zhao and You (2012) and Gelbal, Duyan Sevin and Erbay (2010). Research has revealed a strong correlation between low self-esteem and decreased levels of happiness among individuals. (Brown et al., 2016), resulting in lesser motivation in seeking and maintaining social relationships. Moreover, a substantial body of research suggests that individuals with high levels of self-esteem tend to exhibit greater optimism and experience increased levels of happiness. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem are associated with a range of personal and societal issues (Makikangas, Kinnunen, & Feldt, 2004; Symister & Friend, 2003). The

significance of self-esteem extends beyond individual expectations, serving as a fundamental psychological factor influencing various positive behaviors and outcomes. As Branden (1969) emphasized, self-esteem has a profound impact on all aspects of life, underscoring the need for a strong sense of self-esteem among undergraduate university students and beyond, as it emerges as a societal concern.This is also further supported by Leary and Baumeister (2000) that most social problems can be attributed to students' subjective well-being and strongly overlaps with self-esteem. Therefore, the present study to determine the degree of self-esteem among students at Malaysian universities.

Based on Diener (2000), psychological well-being is most important to human and it consists of two important facets, the extent of experiencing positive emotions and feelings of happiness in the present moment. When assessing subjective well-being, factors such as life satisfaction and the equilibrium between positive and negative emotions are taken into consideration (Diener, 2000). Research has suggested several reasons that affect individuals' choices to be happy even in difficult times such as pandamic Covid-19. A growing body of scientific evidence has displayed that happiness affects one's immune system. To illustrate, a study conducted by Carnegie Mellon University (2006) for infection rhinovirus (that causes the common cold) revealed that individuals who are happier and exhibited more positive emotions were less likely to get infected. Hence, while taking care of our physical health during this pandemic, it is crucial that we do not neglect our emotional well-being by being optimistic and happy even during this tough time. The terms "happiness" and "subjective well-being" focus on individuals' overall personal feelings about their life in the present and almost similar features, but in this study researcher will focus on the level happiness among students at Malaysian universities.

For counselling students, because of the nature of the studies, students need to go through practicum and internship processes. Students who lack social support and self-esteem may have doubts regarding their capabilities for success, which can hinder their willingness to actively participate in learning and take necessary academic risks for growth (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). In such cases, providing counseling becomes crucial to address these concerns and encourage their academic development. Counselling student happiness is an important topic to

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

research because of the implications for both counselling students and their clients. Happiness has been linked to performance, as well as improved relationships and a longer life; happy people are more productive and are less likely to experience negative emotion (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). This study aims to examine the varying levels of perceived social support among students and its impact on their self-esteem tendencies. Additionally, it investigates the influence of social support and self-esteem on students' happiness. Previous research in the field of social support theory has consistently demonstrated that social support, as a crucial environmental resource in individuals' social lives, plays a significant role in regulating and preventing negative emotions. Adequate social support has been found to promote healthy levels of self-esteem and have a positive overall effect on individuals' well-being and emotional stability. It is important to note that the same situational context can have different effects on individuals based on their unique circumstances. Those who receive greater support from their family and friends tend to exhibit stronger mental resilience and better overall mental and physical health (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Conversely, individuals who lack similar levels of support often experience lower mental capacity and poorer mental and physical health. In essence, an individual's social relationship background has a positive influence on their happiness levels through the mediating effect of self-esteem. Therefore, the present study to determine the link among social support, self-esteem and happiness among undergraduate counselling students at Malaysian universities.

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

Researcher believes self-esteem can work as mediators between social support and happiness. According to previous study Schwarzer (1992) defined the effect of social support and self-esteem work as essentially the degree of perseverance and enthusiasm in dealing with specific situations such as hard time during pandemic Covid-19. As a result, social supports can help to regulate emotions (happiness) (Schwarzer, 1992). Individuals who have high self-esteem are more confident in their ability to achieve better happiness outcomes (Diamond, 2013). In other words, when a person is preoccupied with self-esteem, his or her anxiety level rises. Their effects on happiness could come from either direct or indirect social relationships. This is because happiness can be improved when an individual is able to control his or her emotions in order to minimise or escape negative feelings and promote positive ones (Hofmann, 2004).Therefore, self-esteem can work as a mediator between the responds from relationship (feedback) and the outcome (emotional) by

influencing how the individual interprets and responds to the experience. This understanding of the role of self-esteem as a mediator can be helpful in promoting happiness and well-being. For that reason, the present study to study self-esteem as mediates between social support and happiness among undergraduate counselling students at Malaysian universities.

1.2.1 Counselling Students

Counselling is a mental healthcare profession, and a counsellor requires intensive education and training to help people solve emotional, social, personal or interpersonal problems (Levitt & Jacques, 2005). Throughout the helping process, counsellor attends genuinely and empathically to produce a conducive environment for healing and growth to occur. Therefore, a study on counselors themselves is needed as they are their most efficient tool in overcoming the clients' issues and conducting effective counselling.

One of the prerequisite requirements to become a registered counselor in Malaysia is to have a four-year bachelor's degree in counselling course. During the course, counseling students acquire relevant knowledge and skills from practice and training to equip them in assisting individuals in need. Astin (1997) believed that university experiences play an active role in building relationships. University exposure facilitates the development of enhanced interpersonal and intellectual competence, as well as fostering meaningful intrapersonal relationships. This concurs that university is a stronghold to nurture students for greater commitments so that they can develop a more meaningful outlook on life. Thus, it is concluded that social contacts such as friends, family members and other significant relationships are important to maintain a healthy exposure throughout university, as it influences the students' development, values, beliefs and aspirations that influence the direction of their life decisions (Astin, 1997).

Social support plays a vital role in professional identity building (Jin & Myers, 2006). Besides counseling students, other helping professions like nursing students and pharmacy students noted that social support as one of the best means in experiencing happiness along the pursuit study in the university (Jin and Myers,

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

2006). Jin and Myers (2006) also reported that counselors who lack social support faced more obstacles in handling cases professionally. Research indicates that counselors who experience lower levels of happiness tend to be less responsive to recognizing their own need for assistance (Roach & Young, 2007; Jin & Myers, 2006). This may be attributed to their limited awareness of unresolved personal issues, which can contribute to burnout, compassion fatigue, and other impairments that hinder the therapeutic process, as noted by Figley (2002). Similarly, students pursuing counseling degrees encounter similar challenges within the university setting, with studies revealing a positive association between students' happiness and social support from friends, family, and significant others (Zimmerman 1995, Awang, Kutty & Ahman, 2014). Therefore, having support from meaningful relationships can create a social bond that contributes to producing positive emotions while enduring difficult times especially those counselling students in the university (Garland et al. 2010). Despite counselling students being future professional mental health practitioners, a very limited amount of literature has studied how social support is perceived by counseling undergraduates. Hence, it further highlights the importance of how psychological happiness and social support affect counseling students' quality.

Counselling students ought to apply their knowledge and skills acquired in a professional and ethical manner (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992; Woodside, Krauss, & Chebat, 2007). However, counselling theoretical theory itself would not be sufficient in identifying the methods and techniques used at an appropriate time (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). In addition, Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) acknowledged that counselling students struggled during university years and affected their happiness levels. Counselling students have also reported to be engrossed in a single perspective which hinders their capability to be genuinely present with the client when establishing rapport. These experiences result in feelings of frustration and lower levels of happiness among counselling students (Levitt & Jacques, 2005). Therefore, it is imperative to study the happiness levels of counselling students to allow them to improve and grow professionally (Granello, 2002; Jenings, Goh, Skovholt, Hanson, & BanerjeeStevens, 2003).

UMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

In relation to this, Bloom (1975) also indicated that a lack of social support highly affects one's emotional state. Lim, Kuar and Thi (2007) noted that limited research have studied the happiness levels of university students especially counseling students in Malaysia. Hence, it is worthy for counseling students to equip themselves with healthy resources before assisting others professionally as a happy counselor will be able to assist their clients more efficiently. Counseling students with great social support, high levels of self-esteem and happiness allows them to adapt better and provide sufficient amount of social support as they venture into this helping profession.

Social support was also found to be an important predictor in psychological adaptation when transitioning from secondary school to university (Brandt-Brown, 2014; Britz & Pappas, 2010). University is a transitioning phase where the teenagers step into young adulthood and experience vast life changes such as living from home to living on their own, and such transition results in high stress as they learn to cope with the psychological changes, academic stress and time management (Stallman, 2010; Vazquez, Otero, & Diaz, 2012). It is worrisome to note that many Malaysian students continue to suffer from poor mental health (Mey & Yin, 2015; Ministry of Health, 2016). The Malaysian government has recently introduced the National Transformation Plan 2020 (NTP), which places emphasis on public happiness. In Malaysia, several empirical studies have been conducted to explore various aspects of happiness, including the happiness of adults (Cheah & Tang, 2013), the meaningful life and happiness of Malaysian youths (Kok et al., 2015), the Malay subjective happiness scale (Swami, 2008), happiness in the academic environment (Applasamy et al., 2014), happiness of professionals (Omar and Noordin, 2015), social skills, friendship, and happiness (Demir et al., 2012), happiness and life satisfaction (Chan, 2012), and the happiness of Malaysian students (Rahim, Rahman & Rosman, 2013). However, there is a research gap when it comes to investigating the happiness levels of undergraduate counseling students in Malaysia. To address this gap, the present study aims to examine the levels of happiness among undergraduate counseling students in Malaysia.

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH