



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**EXPLORING ETHICAL DILEMMAS & CHALLENGES AMONG SITE
SUPERVISORS IN ORGANISATION**

Anis Najihah Binti Ahmad Nazri

Bachelor of Counselling with Honours

2024

EXPLORING ETHICAL DILEMMAS & CHALLENGES AMONG SITE SUPERVISORS IN ORGANISATION

ANIS NAJIHAH BINTI AHMAD NAZRI

This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Bachelor of
Counselling (Honours)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK (2025)

The project entitled Exploring Ethical Dilemmas & Challenges Among Site Supervisor In Organisations was prepared by Anis Najihah Binti Ahmad Nazri and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Counselling with Honours.

Received for examination by:

.....
(DR NOR MAZLINA BINTI GHAZALI)

Date:

.....

Grade:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

“In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful”

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my parents, Abah, Ahmad Nazri Bin Zainul Abidin and Ibu, Siti Rufiah Binti Ismail. Your love, patience, and unwavering belief in me have been my greatest source of strength throughout my academic journey. From the very beginning, you have provided me with the emotional and financial support I needed to pursue my dreams. Your sacrifices have not gone unnoticed, and I am forever indebted to you for always encouraging me, even when the path seemed challenging. Thank you for your endless sacrifices and for always being there to lift me up, no matter the circumstance. I dedicate this thesis to you both, as it is a testament to your love and dedication.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my FYP supervisor, AP Dr Nor Mazlina Ghazali, for your continuous guidance and support throughout this research. Your expertise and constructive feedback have been invaluable in shaping this thesis. I deeply appreciate the time you took to mentor me, answer my questions, and push me to think critically. Your encouragement and patience throughout the entire process have been an integral part of this accomplishment.

Additionally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the participants of my study, whose valuable time and insights were essential to the success of this research. Without your willingness to share your experiences, this thesis would not have been possible. I am truly grateful for your contributions and the trust you placed in me to conduct this research. Your participation has provided me with a deeper understanding of the topic, and for that, I am deeply appreciative.

Lastly, to the one who has consistently offered words of encouragement, steady support, and quiet strength throughout the most challenging moments—thank you, Rafif Irsyadi. Your presence has been a constant source of motivation and reassurance, and I am sincerely grateful for your role in this journey.

With loves,

Anis Najihah

(Anis Najihah)

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the ethical dilemmas and challenges faced by site supervisors in Malaysian organisations, focusing on boundary limitations, confidentiality issues, and competency gaps in supervision. Site supervisors play a pivotal role in guiding and evaluating trainee counselors, yet they often encounter ethical complexities that can compromise the integrity of the supervision process. Using purposive sampling, six supervisors from five different organisations participated in in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Their experiences highlighted recurring struggles such as balancing confidentiality with institutional expectations, managing dual relationships, addressing gaps in ethical awareness, and handling sensitive supervisee issues with discretion. The findings were interpreted through the lens of Kitchener's Ethical Principles, providing a structured framework for understanding ethical decision-making in supervision. This study contributes to the local counseling field by highlighting the need for clearer supervision guidelines, targeted ethics training, and institutional support. It also offers insights for policy development and improvements in counselor education and professional supervision practices in Malaysia.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore in depth on the ethical dilemmas and challenges faced by site supervisors in organisations in Malaysia. Besides, this chapter comprises few sections that will elucidate the overview of this particular research which are background of study, statement of problems, purpose of study, research questions, significance of study, operational definition in terms of contextual dan conceptual, ethics of study and chapter summary.

1.1 Background of Study

This research was conducted to achieve the main objective, which is to explore the ethical dilemmas and challenges face by site supervisors in Malaysian organizations. Site supervisors play a critical role in overseeing the professional growth and ethical conduct of supervisees within various organizational settings. Their responsibilities include providing guidance, evaluation, and feedback to trainees or junior employees, ensuring their activities align with ethical and professional standards (Tribitt & Moody, 2021). According to Hutchings & Michailova (2021), supervisors play a crucial role in ensuring ethical and culturally appropriate research in developing countries, ensuring valuable knowledge and avoiding damage to student, supervisor, and university reputations. Despite their essential role, site supervisors often encounter complex ethical dilemmas and challenges, primarily due to the nature of their duties and the intricate dynamics of supervision. The purpose of this study was to acknowledge the ethical dilemmas and challenges faced by site supervisors in

organization based on the ethical standards developed by the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) Ethical Guidelines for Counseling Supervisors (1993).

This study is particularly relevant within the Malaysian context, where limited research exists on the ethical complexities faced by site supervisors in local organizations. Understanding these dilemmas is crucial for enhancing supervision practices, as well as for developing guidelines and training that can better support supervisors in addressing ethical challenges. By exploring the ethical dilemmas and challenges experienced by site supervisors, this research aims to contribute valuable insights into improving supervision standards and ensuring ethical practices within professional settings in Malaysia.

1.2 Problem Statement

The current study is conducted qualitatively through face-to-face interviews to gain a nuanced understanding of ethical dilemmas and challenges faced by site supervisors in organizational settings. Undergraduate counselling interns in Malaysia are most satisfied with supportive supervisory styles, which can help supervisors enhance the supervision process (Ali et al., 2020). However, site supervisors are often confronted with numerous ethical challenges, such as maintaining confidentiality, handling privacy issues, managing emergencies, evaluating supervisees, addressing unprofessional behaviors, and navigating multiple relationships. These challenges require supervisors to employ coping strategies like seeking consultation, referring to relevant literature, and fostering strong supervisory relationships (Özyiğit, 2022).

Practicum and internship experiences are critical in students' professional development in counselor education programs, and the dynamics that occur between programs and field

sites can impact these experiences (Tribitt & Moody, 2021). A primary issue is the difficulty of maintaining professional boundaries. Site supervisors often find themselves juggling dual roles, acting as both mentors and evaluators, which can blur professional lines and create risks of favoritism, dependency, or emotional entanglement (Schultz et al., 2020). This blurring of boundaries complicates the supervisor-supervisee relationship, making it challenging to maintain objectivity and professional distance.

Another key challenge involves balancing confidentiality with organizational demands for transparency. Supervisors are expected to respect supervisee confidentiality, yet they may also be required to disclose sensitive information to higher management. This conflict can place site supervisors in ethically complex situations where they must navigate competing demands to uphold ethical responsibilities while adhering to organizational policies and expectations. Supervisors should create a safe environment for open discussions about ethical issues and encourage ongoing learning and development regarding ethics (Schultz, Yoo, Baraka & Watson, (2020).

Additionally, many site supervisor face knowledge and competency gaps when it comes to handling ethical dilemmas. Site supervisors' task performance can be measured using 13 key indicators, which can be broadly categorised as job knowledge, job skills, cognitive ability, and task proficiency (Ijaola, Idoro & Oladokun, 2021). While site supervisors are expected to possess a thorough understanding of ethical guidelines, they often lack the specialized training needed to manage complex ethical issues, which can lead to inadequate support for supervisees or unintentional ethical breaches. These competency gaps are particularly problematic in scenarios that demand swift and informed ethical decision-making. Ethics in social work supervision involves monitoring and developing ethical

practice, focusing on supervisors' knowledge, competencies, ethical theories, principles, and decision-making models (O'Donoghue & O'Donoghue, 2019).

In the Malaysian context, the lack of research on the specific ethical challenges faced by site supervisors further complicates the issue. Most existing studies focus on clinical or academic supervision, leaving a significant gap in understanding the unique ethical dynamics in other organizational settings. This lack of local, context-specific insights limits the development of culturally relevant and effective supervision practices, potentially impacting the quality of supervision (Johari & Amat, 2019).

This study aims to address these challenges by exploring the ethical dilemmas and boundary limitations faced by site supervisors in Malaysia. By investigating issues such as boundary management, confidentiality, and competency, this research seeks to provide insights that can guide the creation of targeted guidelines and training programs. These findings will help ensure that Malaysian site supervisors are better equipped to handle ethical challenges, thereby enhancing the overall quality and integrity of supervision practices across organizational settings. Besides that, it would be interesting for the researcher to see the dilemmas and challenges faced by site supervisors in doing supervision.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study will explore the ethical dilemmas and challenges among site supervisors, limitation of boundaries and supervisors knowledge. The objectives are as follows:

1. To explore the common ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors in organizations.
2. To explore the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations.
3. To understand the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the common ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors in organizations?
2. What are the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations?
3. To what extent the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations?

1.5 Significance of Study

This study may contribute to counselling professions related to counselling supervision. The findings of this study are more reliable as it is according to Malaysian context and since not many studies focus on ethics in supervision. The research is significant to help in raising awareness within Malaysian counsellor and counsellor trainees since this study specifically focuses on the common ethical dilemmas and challenges faced by site supervisors and how the limitation of boundaries that are faced by site supervisor with its supervisee. Other than that, current study acknowledges the researcher about the knowledge and expertise of the site supervisor in doing a supervision.

The research is beneficial to the society and future supervisors to ensure them to understand the conflicts and struggles faced by site supervisors, offering valuable insights and implications. By examining ethical boundaries and knowledge limitations, this research contributes to enhancing the competence of site supervisors, enabling them to better support and guide their supervisees.

Additionally, the study raises awareness about common ethical issues supervisors encounter, fostering a deeper understanding of these dilemmas and helping to develop preventative measures and ethical guidelines for resolving such issues. The findings of the study can be used by the Malaysian Board of Counsellor which known as a statutory body

under the Ministry of Women, Family and Society Development and having the responsibilities in overseeing and regulating counselling supervision in our country. Insights from this research may also improve supervision standards by identifying prevalent challenges, allowing organizations to implement targeted training and policy adjustments to elevate supervisory quality.

Furthermore, the study provides evidence to inform policymakers and professional bodies in developing guidelines and policies that address ethical challenges, ensuring that supervisory practices align with both ethical standards and organizational needs. By highlighting the nuanced challenges faced by supervisors, the research supports the creation of tailored training programs, such as case-based learning and ethical decision-making frameworks, to equip site supervisors with practical tools for navigating dilemmas. The findings can guide educational institutions in designing counselor training curricular, bridging the gap between theory and practice while fostering a deeper understanding of how to uphold ethical standards in professional supervision.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Key concepts and terms that emerged from the review of the literature are defined in this section. According to Kreuger and Neuman (2006), conceptual definition means a careful and systematic definition of a construct to clarify one's thinking and often related to concepts or theoretical statements. On the other hand, operational definition is the definition of a variable in term of the specific activities to measure or indicate in the empirical world. Concepts and terms are defined to help readers understand how site supervisors during times of supervision relates to the study. The terms are commonly used in this dissertation:

1.6.1 Ethical Dilemmas

i. Conceptual definition

Complex situations where individuals must choose between two or more conflicting ethical principles or actions, often resulting in a moral conflict. It is a situation where there are two conflictive ethical alternatives, a choice between them, difficulty in comparing alternatives, and a feeling of powerlessness of the individual (Kim & Park, 2019).

ii. Operational definition

It is a situation where there is a conflict between two or more ethical principles or values, making it challenging to determine the right course of action. This often involves a choice between equally undesirable alternatives, where adhering to one ethical principle may result in the violation of another. The ethical dilemmas will be explored in depth via interview and further assessed for alignment in opinions by triangulation method.

1.6.2 Site Supervisor

i. Conceptual definition

A professional with expertise and experience in a particular field who provides oversight, training, and evaluation to individuals such as interns, trainees, or junior employees engaged in hands-on work in a real-world setting. The main purpose of a site supervisor is to ensure that the supervisee's work aligns with both organizational standards and ethical practices, contributing to their professional growth and competence. Supervisors play a crucial role in sustaining supportive working contexts by fostering resiliency and receptivity in their work with clients (Vetere, 2021).

ii. Operational definition

In this study, site supervisors refer to the individual who holds supervisory roles at a specific organization.

1.6.3 Limitation of Boundaries

i. Conceptual definition

The restrictions or confines established in professional relationships to protect the integrity, safety, and ethical standards within those interactions. In counseling, boundaries are guidelines that define acceptable behavior, roles, and responsibilities between supervisors and supervisees to ensure a clear, professional, and supportive environment (Zur & Fisher, 2019).

ii. Operational definition

Situations or conditions in which established professional, ethical, or role-related boundaries are challenged or constrained, impacting a professional's ability to maintain appropriate relational or functional limits with others. Therefore, it will be measured by the interview with the participant.

1.6.4 Confidentiality

i. Conceptual definition

Confidentiality is the duty to protect the privacy rights of individuals and groups, while allowing authorized disclosure in certain contexts (Colosi, Costache & Colosi, 2019).

ii. Operational definition

Process of securely storing participants or clients personal data. The confidentiality aspect will be thoroughly examined through interviews and further evaluated for consistency in perspectives using the triangulation method.

1.6.5 Competency

i. Conceptual definition

Interchangeably usable term that refers to various dimensions of site supervisors performance, including hard and soft competence, knowledge, skill, and self-actualization-related competence, (Salman, Ganie & Saleem, 2020).

ii. Operational definition

Measurable ability of site supervisors to effectively apply knowledge, skills, and behaviors required to perform specific tasks or roles to a predetermined standard. The competencies part will be explored in depth via interview and further assessed for alignment in opinions by triangulation method.

1.6.6 Dual Relationship

i. Conceptual definition

Any instance where a professional relationship between a site supervisor and its supervisee is complicated by an additional, non-professional relationship. According to Doyle (2019), dual relationships or multiple relationships in psychotherapy refer to holding more than one relationship with a past or current client/patient, which can be ethically challenging or highly unethical in certain circumstances.

ii. Operational definition

A supervisor has more than one role or type of interaction with its supervisee, leading to overlapping or conflicting responsibilities that can blur the boundaries of the primary professional relationship. These overlapping roles may include personal, social, business, or other non-professional interactions. Therefore, it is measured on the interview with the participant.

1.6.7 Supervision Process

i. Conceptual definition

Bekki (2023) defined this term as an intensive, interpersonal, one-on-one relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee. In this dynamic, the supervisor aims to stimulate, guide, enhance, rejuvenate, encourage, and oversee the performance of the supervisees. Moreover, according to Fye et al., (2020), supervision is the process by which a senior-level professional (supervisor) provides services to a junior member (supervisee) of the same profession.

ii. Operational definition

In this study, the supervision process refers to the guidance and evaluation provided by counseling site supervisors to supervisees in an organizational setting. The supervisors continuously assess and support supervisees in various areas, including the application of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, ethical conduct, and professionalism.

1. 7 Summary

This chapter gives some overview on the topic selected for research. By stating the objectives, research questions and problem statement of the study, it will give a clear understanding towards the significance of the study. The next chapter will be discussing on the previous research that are related to this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discussed on the previous research that synchronized with the researcher's topic. It contains the theory that will be applied in the research. Continually, the theoretical framework will be discussed as well.

2.1 Boundary Limitation in Supervision

Boundaries are acknowledged as an important concept within counselling and psychotherapy (UKCP, 2019). Boundaries divide one thing from another, clarifying and sharpening zones of difference (Weller, 2019). Boundaries serve as ethical guidelines that define the professional relationship between site supervisors and supervisees. Professional boundaries are critical for maintaining the integrity of the supervisory relationship. These boundaries ensure clarity in roles, protect the integrity of the relationship, and maintain a safe, professional environment for both parties. Zur and Fisher (2019) describe boundaries as guidelines for ethical interactions, protecting both parties from conflicts of interest. In the Malaysian context, site supervisors often encounter blurred boundaries due to dual roles, leading to risks of favoritism or emotional entanglement (Schultz et al., 2020). Research highlights the need for robust boundary management training to mitigate these risks. Boundaries can also be broken down into further subcategories, such as the structure (e.g., time, venue, costs, and contract) or the interpersonal (e.g., the use of touch, gifts from clients and relational limitations) aspects of therapy (Sawyer & Prescott, 2011). These types of boundaries are sometimes grouped together under the heading of “professional behaviour” or “professional boundaries” (Black, 2017).

According to Zur and Fisher (2019), boundaries are established limits that define acceptable behaviors, roles, and responsibilities within professional interactions. In counseling supervision, these boundaries ensure that site supervisors remain impartial, objective, and focused on the supervisee's professional development. Violations of these boundaries can lead to conflicts of interest, erosion of trust, and ethical breaches, all of which can compromise the supervision process and the well-being of the supervisee. Research findings supported by Schultz et al. (2020) which evaluated that one significant issue involves dual relationships, which occur when a site supervisors engages in a secondary relationship with the supervisee, such as a social, familial, or financial connection. Such relationships can compromise objectivity, reduce supervision effectiveness, and create conflicts of interest (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). According to Özyiğit (2022), faculty supervisors face challenges in counseling supervision, and coping methods include consultation, literature support, and strong supervision relationships. In practice, maintaining boundaries is complex due to the dual roles often held by site supervisors. Site supervisors frequently act as both mentors and evaluators, creating a potential conflict between fostering a supportive environment and making objective assessments. Finlay (2019) agrees, additionally noting that however therapists approach boundaries, they will always “have implications for power and control”. This overlap can lead to tension and misunderstanding, as supervisees may struggle to separate the supportive and evaluative aspects of their supervisors’ roles.

The inherent power dynamics in the supervisory relationship also present challenges. Site supervisors hold evaluative authority, which may inhibit supervisees from expressing concerns or disagreements due to fear of negative evaluations (Corey et al., 2019). Additionally, both over-involvement and under-involvement by site supervisors can

negatively impact the supervisee's professional development. Over-involvement can foster dependency or favoritism, while under-involvement might result in insufficient guidance. Furthermore, unclear expectations regarding time, tasks, or responsibilities often lead to misunderstandings and frustration, such as supervisees seeking excessive guidance outside agreed supervision hours or supervisors imposing unreasonable demands. Cultural and ethical differences between site supervisors and supervisees are also complicate boundary maintenance. Diverse cultural backgrounds or ethical perspectives can lead to miscommunication and varying interpretations of what constitutes appropriate professional behavior (Falender & Shafranske, 2020). Moreover, the rise of virtual supervision introduces new challenges, such as blurred lines between professional and personal interactions, particularly on social media platforms. Maintaining confidentiality and professionalism in online environments requires supervisors to exercise extra diligence.

The concept of boundaries in counselling and psychotherapy is both ambiguous and open to interpretation (Gutheil & Gabbard, 1993). Therefore, research exploring counsellors' and psychotherapists' understanding and experiences of boundaries is useful to develop deeper insights about how boundaries can impact on the therapeutic process. Webb (1997) recommended, over twenty years ago, the need for further research into boundaries. To address these challenges, site supervisors must establish clear guidelines at the outset of the supervisory relationship, often formalized through supervision contracts. Regularly revisiting and reassessing boundaries can help ensure they remain relevant and effective. Training in boundary management and ethical decision-making is vital for site supervisors, as is seeking consultation or their own supervision to navigate complex situations. Encouraging open communication between site supervisors and supervisees is equally important to foster trust

and address boundary-related concerns proactively. By prioritizing these strategies, site supervisors can safeguard the ethical and professional integrity of the supervisory process.

2.2 Confidentiality Challenges

Site supervisors face complex ethical dilemmas related to confidentiality, highlighting the importance of developing their competencies to provide ethical guidance and foster supervisees' adherence to ethical principles in their practical work (Vidmar, 2024). Confidentiality is a cornerstone of counseling ethics, forming the foundation for trust and effective therapeutic relationships. A research by Taquette and Souza (2022) highlights that site supervisors often faces ethical dilemmas, with breaches of confidentiality, violations of autonomy, and potential harm to participants being primary concerns. However, site supervisors often find themselves in challenging situations where they must balance the ethical obligation to protect sensitive information with the need to fulfill organizational transparency requirements. For instance, site supervisors may be required to disclose information to higher management in cases involving supervisee performance issues or administrative policies. These conflicts can create significant tension, as site supervisors must navigate the competing priorities of maintaining confidentiality and adhering to institutional demands. Without adequate preparation, site supervisors risk compromising ethical standards or creating a sense of mistrust among supervisees. Researcher like Colosi et al. (2019) emphasize that safeguarding sensitive information is critical for building a safe and trusting environment for supervisees, as it encourages openness, reflection, and professional growth. However, in practice, site supervisors often lack the necessary resources, institutional support, or clear policies to effectively address these challenges, leaving them vulnerable to ethical breaches.

Another key challenge involves balancing confidentiality with organizational demands for transparency. Site supervisors are expected to respect supervisee confidentiality and the confidentiality of client-related information, yet they may face situations where sensitive details need to be disclosed to higher management to comply with organizational policies. This conflict places supervisors in ethically complex situations where they must carefully weigh their responsibilities to their supervisees and clients against institutional expectations. Furthermore, psychologists and counseling supervisors are legally required to maintain confidentiality, and failure to do so can lead to serious legal consequences (Vesal, 2019). Site supervisors must not only understand these legal and ethical obligations but also develop strategies to address such conflicts effectively. Schultz et al. (2020) recommend creating a safe and supportive environment for open discussions about ethical issues. By fostering ongoing learning and professional development in ethical practices, site supervisors can empower both themselves and their supervisees to handle these dilemmas with confidence and integrity.

Rapid changes in the field of education, driven by technological advancements, have sparked interest in the use of online counseling as a method of mental health support, as well as its application in supervision (Anindya et al., 2024). The integration of technology into supervision offers convenience and flexibility, particularly in remote or hybrid settings. However, it also poses significant challenges in maintaining confidentiality. One major concern is the risk of data breaches, as sensitive information such as case notes, recordings, and evaluations may be stored digitally or transmitted online. This makes the data vulnerable to hacking or unauthorized access. Site supervisors must ensure that all devices and platforms used are secure, encrypted, and comply with relevant privacy regulations, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the General Data Protection

Regulation (GDPR). HIPAA, a U.S. law enacted in 1996, sets strict limits on the use and disclosure of Protected Health Information (PHI) by healthcare organizations, referred to as covered entities. In contrast, the GDPR, which came into effect on May 25 2018, is one of the most stringent data privacy and security regulations worldwide, protecting the personal data of individuals within the European Union. Moreover, platforms utilized for virtual supervision—such as video conferencing tools or cloud-based storage systems—may not always provide sufficient security measures. Free or unregulated platforms often lack the necessary safeguards, increasing the risk of confidentiality breaches. To address this, site supervisors should prioritize professional platforms equipped with end-to-end encryption and verify their compliance with confidentiality and data protection standards.

Similarly, in online counseling, which has been shown to have equivalent effectiveness to face-to-face counseling, confidentiality is a critical ethical concern that must be carefully addressed (Anindya et al., 2024). The parallels between supervision and counseling in online settings highlight the shared responsibility to safeguard sensitive information and mitigate potential risks. Site supervisors must ensure that the ethical practices applied to counseling, such as securing digital communication and protecting client data, are equally upheld in supervision to maintain the integrity and confidentiality essential to both processes.

The challenges of confidentiality are not limited to specific cultural or geographic contexts but are evident globally. For example, Tu et al. (2023) report that counseling psychologists supervision in Taiwan frequently face ethical dilemmas related to confidentiality. In their study, 82% of the participants took active steps to address these issues, ranging from engaging in professional interventions to seeking consultation from colleagues

or ethics committees. This global perspective highlights the universal nature of confidentiality dilemmas, emphasizing the importance of cross-cultural understanding and the development of universally applicable ethical guidelines. It also underscores the value of collaboration, where professionals share strategies and resources to manage these challenges effectively.

In addition to supervision and practice, confidentiality dilemmas extend to research methodologies. For instance, Sim and Waterfield (2019) highlight the unique challenges posed by focus group methodologies, where informed consent, confidentiality, and the potential for unintended harm must be carefully managed. The group dynamic inherently increases the risk of accidental disclosures, as participants may inadvertently share sensitive information. Addressing these challenges requires robust ethical planning, clear communication with participants about confidentiality limitations, and the implementation of strategies to minimize risks. Ethical research practices are critical for maintaining the integrity of studies and protecting the well-being of all participants.

2.3 Competency Gaps Among Supervisors

Competency in supervision encompasses the knowledge, skills, and ethical decision-making abilities necessary for effective guidance and oversight (Salman et al., 2020). Site supervisors play a critical role in ensuring that supervisees develop the competencies required to deliver ethical, professional, and effective counseling services. These competencies include applying theoretical knowledge, mastering practical skills, and cultivating a professional attitude aligned with ethical standards. However, research by O'Donoghue and O'Donoghue (2019) indicates that many site supervisors lack specialized training to navigate complex ethical issues, leading to potential breaches or insufficient support for supervisees.

This challenge is particularly relevant in Malaysia, where limited research on site supervisors' competency development points to gaps in training tailored to local needs. Counseling is a professional field governed by strict ethical policies to ensure healthy and confidential client-counselor relationships. The effectiveness of counseling services hinges on the competency of counselors in addressing diverse client issues, as underscored by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (2012), which highlights school counselors' roles in fostering students' personality development, discipline, career education, and psychosocial well-being (Abdul Rahman et al., 2013). Thus, building supervisory competency is essential for achieving counseling goals and enhancing the quality of services provided.

The competencies required of trainee counselors in Malaysian universities align with the standards set by CACREP (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs). These standards emphasize professional counseling orientation, ethical practice, social and cultural diversity, human growth and development, career development, counseling and helping relationships, group counseling and group work, assessment and testing, as well as research and program evaluation (Myers, 2010). Counseling competence, as defined by Sue and Sue (2015), encompasses the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary for effective functioning in a pluralistic democratic society at both organizational and societal levels. This definition highlights three key components of counseling competence: knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

One major issue is the lack of clarity in supervisors' roles and responsibilities. Site supervisors often juggle supervisory duties with other administrative tasks, which detracts from their ability to focus on mentoring and guiding their supervisees. By progressively guiding trainees, site supervisors ensure they attain independence, self-awareness, and

proficiency in their roles. However, competency gaps often arise due to insufficient time, resources, or institutional support for professional development. These gaps hinder site supervisors' ability to provide adequate guidance, especially when addressing complex ethical issues such as confidentiality, dual relationships, and cultural sensitivity. Research by Bernard and Goodyear (2019) emphasizes that site supervisors who lack proper training and resources are more likely to experience difficulty in addressing these ethical dilemmas, potentially compromising both supervisee development and client welfare. Researchers like Falender and Shafranske (2020) also highlight that unresolved role ambiguity often leads to frustration and burnout among site supervisors, further affecting their ability to provide effective supervision. Moreover, the lack of institutional support exacerbates the challenge, as supervisors may not have access to workshops, continuing education, or structured supervision models to enhance their skills (Corey et al., 2019).

Another pressing concern is the limited exposure to specialized training programs for site supervisors, particularly those tailored to local cultural and institutional contexts. While universal standards like CACREP provide a robust foundation, they may not fully address the unique challenges faced by site supervisors in diverse cultural and professional environments, such as Malaysia. The lack of tailored training not only limits site supervisors' ability to handle context-specific dilemmas but also undermines their capacity to prepare supervisees for the nuanced realities of counseling practice (Sue & Sue, 2015). Addressing these competency gaps requires systemic changes, including the introduction of comprehensive training programs, clear role definitions, and ongoing professional development opportunities that emphasize both global standards and local relevance (Myers, 2010; Abdul Rahman et al., 2013).

The ability to integrate theoretical knowledge into practical application is a critical competency in counseling supervision, yet it remains a significant challenge for many site supervisors. This skill involves translating academic concepts, models, and frameworks into actionable strategies that supervisees can use in real-world counseling scenarios. A common gap arises when site supervisors lack sufficient training in applied practice, leaving them ill-equipped to guide supervisees in effectively implementing counseling theories during client sessions (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). Site supervisors may overly focus on theoretical rigor without adequately addressing how these concepts can be tailored to meet the unique needs of clients, particularly in diverse cultural or institutional contexts (Sue et al., 2009). Additionally, site supervisors themselves may lack experience in applying theoretical knowledge, which can result in vague or generic feedback that fails to support supervisees in navigating complex client issues (Ladany et al., 2013).

Past research by Evans, Wright, Murphy, and Maki (2016) reveals that most counselors, particularly administrative and on-site supervisors, lack formalized supervision training, which results in inconsistent and confusing training experiences for counselors-in-training (CITs). This gap in structured supervision training is a persistent issue, as researchers continue to report that many site supervisors, especially those in administrative roles or working directly on-site, are not equipped with the necessary skills or knowledge to provide consistent and high-quality supervision. Without formalized training, these site supervisors often struggle to deliver coherent guidance, leading to significant variability in the quality of supervision across different training environments. As a result, CITs may experience confusion about expectations, lack clear direction in their professional development, and face challenges in applying theoretical knowledge to practice effectively. This inconsistency not only affects the learning experience for CITs but also hinders their ability to develop the

skills necessary for ethical and competent counseling practice. Addressing these gaps through structured and comprehensive supervision training programs is essential for ensuring that CITs receive the consistent and effective guidance needed to succeed in their professional roles.

Site supervisors must possess strong competencies to effectively guide their trainees through the developmental stages of becoming competent counselors. By adopting various models, such as the Integrated Developmental Model (IDM), site supervisors can evaluate and enhance trainee progress across key competency domains. The IDM categorizes developmental stages from novice to expert, with supervision methods tailored to each level (Stoltenberg et al., 1997). For site supervisors to successfully apply these methods, they must demonstrate competency in areas such as:

1. Intervention skills
2. Client conceptualization
3. Professional ethics
4. Treatment planning
5. Assessment techniques
6. Interpersonal assessment
7. Individual differences
8. Theoretical orientation

A site supervisor with these competencies can provide the necessary guidance and support to help trainees develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to become effective and ethical counselors. Ultimately, strong supervisory competency ensures that

trainees receive the appropriate feedback and training to progress through the stages of their professional development, from novice to expert. Such frameworks not only enhance the competency of site supervisors but also ensure that ethical standards are upheld, fostering a culture of professional growth and accountability. Additionally, fostering open communication between institutions and site supervisors about their challenges and needs can help create an environment where supervisors feel supported in their critical role.

2.4 Kitchener's Ethical Principles

Ethical dilemmas in counseling supervision, such as breaches of confidentiality, boundary limitations, and competency gaps, can be effectively addressed through the lens of Kitchener's Ethical Principles (1984). These principles provide a comprehensive framework for making ethical decisions that consider the complexities of supervision. Kitchener's approach helps supervisors navigate the tension between competing values and responsibilities, ensuring that supervisees and clients are treated with respect, fairness, and care. When faced with dilemmas, site supervisors can draw upon these principles to make decisions that align with both ethical guidelines and the well-being of all parties involved. By applying Kitchener's Ethical Principles, site supervisors can better manage the challenges inherent in counseling supervision, fostering an environment that promotes professional integrity, trust, and effective development for supervisees (Kitchener, 1984; Corey et al., 2019). These principles offer a solid framework to guide site supervisors in making ethical decisions.

Kitchener's Ethical Principles (1984) serve as a vital foundation for addressing the multifaceted challenges that arise in counseling supervision. They provide site supervisors with a structured approach to resolving conflicts, helping them prioritize ethical practices and

balance their professional duties with the needs of supervisees. Site supervisors who embrace these principles are better equipped to handle the emotional and professional challenges that supervision presents, creating an environment where both supervisees and clients feel supported and respected. Ultimately, by adhering to Kitchener's framework, site supervisors can ensure that their decisions uphold ethical standards while promoting the growth and development of their supervisees. These principles are:

1. Autonomy
2. Nonmaleficence
3. Beneficence
4. Justice
5. Fidelity

These principles not only provide a theoretical guide for ethical decision-making but also help site supervisors foster a professional and ethical culture in their relationships with supervisees (Kitchener, 1984). Autonomy emphasizes the importance of respecting supervisees' and clients' rights to make informed decisions, requiring site supervisors to balance empowering supervisees with ensuring their actions align with ethical standards and client welfare. Site supervisors must cultivate supervisees' ability to engage in self-directed, ethical practices while providing the necessary oversight to protect all stakeholders involved.

The principle of nonmaleficence, or "do no harm," is particularly significant in addressing confidentiality dilemmas, boundary limitations, and competency gaps. Site supervisors must ensure their practices and decisions prevent harm to both supervisees and clients by upholding ethical standards, addressing supervision conflicts, and avoiding actions

that could lead to breaches of trust or ineffective guidance (Corey et al., 2019). Beneficence, meanwhile, calls on site supervisors to actively promote the well-being of supervisees and clients by creating a supportive, growth-oriented supervisory environment. This includes providing constructive feedback, fostering open communication, and addressing supervisees' developmental needs. Bernard and Goodyear (2019) highlight that supervision anchored in beneficence enables supervisees to gain the competencies needed for effective and ethical counseling.

Justice, the principle of fairness and equity, ensures that supervisees are treated consistently and impartially. This principle is critical in navigating challenges such as favoritism, dual relationships, or unequal access to supervisory resources. Site supervisors must ensure equitable treatment and avoid preferential behaviors that could undermine the professional development of supervisees or create an unhealthy power dynamic. Justice also guides site supervisors in making ethical decisions regarding confidentiality and boundary limitations, ensuring that any actions taken are transparent, fair, and in line with professional standards (Falender & Shafranske, 2020).

The principle of fidelity, centered on trust and honoring commitments, is crucial for maintaining a strong supervisory relationship. Fidelity requires supervisors to establish and uphold clear boundaries, safeguard confidentiality, and provide consistent and honest guidance. By fostering a culture of trust, site supervisors can create a secure environment where supervisees feel supported and confident in addressing ethical dilemmas. Schultz et al. (2020) emphasize that fidelity is integral in preventing conflicts of interest, maintaining professional integrity, and promoting a collaborative supervisory experience. Additionally, site supervisors who embody fidelity contribute to an environment of mutual respect, enabling supervisees to express concerns or seek guidance on difficult ethical issues without

fear of judgment or retribution. This ultimately strengthens the supervisory relationship and promotes ethical and professional growth for both the site supervisor and the supervisee.

2.4.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

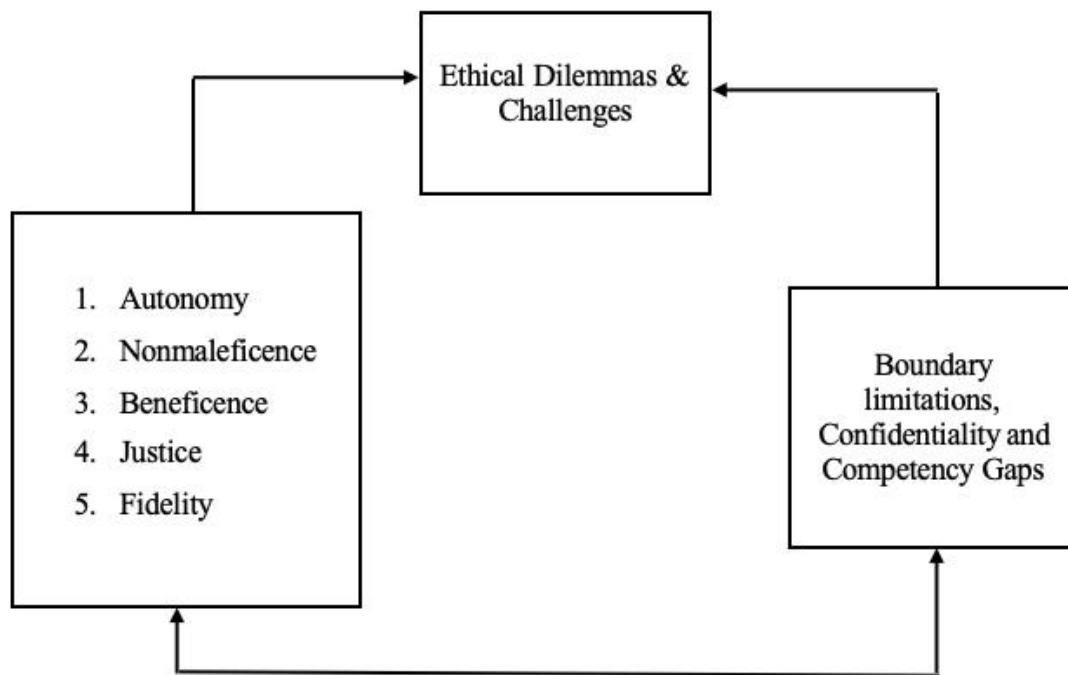


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of Kitchener's Ethical Principles

Boundary limitations are a frequent source of ethical challenges, particularly when supervisors assume dual roles as evaluators and mentors. These dual roles can blur professional boundaries, leading to conflicts of interest or compromised relationships. In these scenarios, autonomy becomes central to empowering supervisees to navigate ethical dilemmas independently while ensuring site supervisors maintain clear boundaries to model professionalism. Justice ensures that all supervisees are treated equitably, avoiding favoritism

or exploitation, while fidelity reinforces the need for trust and consistency in maintaining appropriate boundaries.

Confidentiality dilemmas further illustrate the application of Kitchener's principles. Supervisors often face competing demands between protecting sensitive information and meeting institutional or organizational requirements for disclosure. Nonmaleficence obligates supervisors to minimize harm by safeguarding client and supervisee confidentiality, while fidelity reinforces the importance of maintaining trust through ethical disclosure practices. Justice and autonomy require supervisors to make decisions that are fair, transparent, and aligned with ethical responsibilities, empowering supervisees to understand and adhere to these principles in their practice (Colosi et al., 2019; Vesal, 2019).

Competency gaps among supervisors pose significant ethical challenges, as they directly impact the quality of guidance provided to supervisees. Site supervisors lacking formal training or specialized knowledge may struggle to address supervisees' developmental needs, leading to inconsistent guidance, poor role modeling, and ethical oversights. O'Donoghue and O'Donoghue (2019) argue that continuous professional development is essential for bridging these gaps and ensuring supervisors meet ethical and professional standards. Beneficence motivates site supervisors to seek training and consultation to enhance their skills, while nonmaleficence demands they recognize their limitations and take steps to prevent harm resulting from their own inadequacies. By prioritizing their growth and aligning their practices with ethical standards, site supervisors ensure that supervisees receive high-quality supervision that fosters their competence and ethical awareness.

In conclusion, Kitchener's Ethical Principles provide a comprehensive and practical framework for addressing the multifaceted ethical dilemmas encountered by site supervisors in counseling. These principles offer valuable guidance in navigating challenges such as confidentiality, boundary limitations, and competency gaps. By integrating these principles into their supervisory practices, supervisors can uphold ethical integrity, foster professional growth among supervisees, and ensure the provision of high-quality, ethically sound counseling services.

2.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher discusses various literature reviews that focus on the ethical dilemmas and challenges faced by site supervisors in counseling supervision, including boundary limitations, confidentiality issues, and competency gaps. The researcher also implements Kitchener's Ethical Principles as a framework for the study and presents a diagram outlining the theoretical framework used in the research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology employed in the study. It includes a detailed discussion of the research design, population, sample size, sampling procedure, pilot study, validity and reliability measures, ethics of study, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures.

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study to explore the depth and complexity of the participants' experiences and perspectives. This methodology is particularly suited for understanding how individuals interpret their social interactions and subjective realities in specific contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative research seeks to address questions such as *why*, *what*, and *how* regarding a given phenomenon, providing rich, detailed insights (Bryman, 2016). According to Flick (2018), qualitative inquiry is grounded in the assumption that social phenomena are best understood through the meanings participants ascribe to them, emphasizing the importance of context and personal interpretation.

This study incorporated multiple methods of data collection, including in-depth interviews and document analysis, to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the research topic. In-depth interviews facilitated a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and viewpoints, while document analysis offered additional layers of contextual information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By combining these methods, the research achieved a nuanced

understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This approach also aligns with qualitative principles that prioritize flexibility in methodology to suit the research context and participant needs (Patton, 2015).

3.2 Population

Bryman (2016) describes a population as the group identified for research or statistical analysis, emphasizing that selecting a representative sample is critical to the success of a study. Establishing the target population in advance ensures clarity and efficiency in the recruitment process, eliminating irrelevant data and focusing on participants that align with the research objectives. Researchers must carefully consider the traits of ideal participants, eligibility criteria, study settings, and appropriate sampling strategies to maximize recruitment and retention efforts.

Eligibility criteria play a pivotal role in determining participant suitability. As outlined by Creswell (2018), these criteria provide a framework for the ethical application process and guide data collection procedures. As highlighted by Bryman (2016), well-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria are crucial for ensuring the reliability and validity of research outcomes. Inclusion criteria specify the essential characteristics participants must possess, while exclusion criteria highlight factors that might compromise the reliability of the data or the safety of participants. Defining these criteria rigorously ensures that the study collects high-quality, relevant data, fostering credible and meaningful results.

Inclusion criteria required participants to have served as site supervisors within the last five years and to possess direct experience in supervising counseling trainees. On the other hand, exclusion criteria excluded individuals without direct supervisory roles or those with

insufficient exposure to the field, as such factors could compromise the relevance of the collected data. By focusing on site supervisors who meet these criteria, the study ensures that its findings are both credible and meaningful. This targeted approach facilitates the collection of robust data that contributes to understanding and enhancing ethical practices in counseling supervision.

For this research, the targeted population are the counselling supervisors from:

1. Inclusion criteria:

- Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)
- Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)
- Pertubuhan Keselamatan Sosial (PERKESO)

2. Exclusion criteria:

- Ibu Pejabat Polis Kontinjen Sarawak (IPK Kuching)
- Bodhi Counselling Centre

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size refers to the number of participants or units selected from the population for inclusion in the study. Sampling is the process of selecting a statistically representative subset of individuals from the population of interest. This is essential because the population is often too large to include every individual in the research. A good sample not only represents the population accurately but is also large enough to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. The sample size is determined by considerations such as the study's purpose, the research design, and the level of accuracy needed to address the research question effectively. The sample data selected for this study consist of 6 participants from 5

selected different organizations. Creswell (2018) suggest that a sample size of 6 to 10 participants is generally sufficient for phenomenological studies utilizing in-depth interviews. This range ensures that data saturation is achieved, allowing for a thorough exploration of participants' lived experiences while maintaining a manageable dataset for analysis.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

When a population is large, geographically dispersed, or difficult to access, it becomes necessary to use a sampling method. This approach enables researchers to gather information from a smaller subset of the population, referred to as the sample, and make accurate inferences through statistical or qualitative analysis. In this study, the purposive sampling method was employed to select the sample. Also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, this technique relies on the researcher's discretion to choose participants who are best suited to provide relevant data for the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method where elements of the sample are deliberately chosen based on the researcher's evaluation. Babbie (2002) highlights that purposive sampling involves selecting participants who meet specific research criteria, ensuring their relevance to the study's objectives. Similarly, Silverman (2002) emphasizes that the careful selection of participants is critical for obtaining detailed and meaningful information that aligns with the research goals. This method is particularly advantageous as it saves time and resources while ensuring that the sample effectively represents the aspects of the population relevant to the research.

Moreover, Patton (2002) notes that purposive sampling is often used when researchers are focused on gaining in-depth understanding rather than generalizability. The researcher's expertise and understanding of the study context allow for more targeted participant selection,

which is crucial for qualitative studies exploring complex phenomena. This approach also facilitates the exploration of particular experiences, attitudes, or behaviors within specific groups that may be underrepresented or overlooked in other sampling techniques. Additionally, it enables the researcher to access individuals with knowledge or experiences that are particularly valuable for addressing the research questions, enhancing the depth and quality of the data collected (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, purposive sampling is especially beneficial in qualitative research, where the emphasis is on richness and relevance of data rather than on statistical representativeness.

In this study, the researcher selected 6 supervisors from five different organizations, UNIMAS, UKM, PERKESO, IPK Kuching and Bodhi Counselling Centre, based on several criteria, including the researcher's judgment, available opportunities, time constraint and the research objectives. The selection of participants was focused on individuals who have relevant experience in supervising counseling sessions, as this would provide valuable insights into their roles and experiences. The researcher aimed to interview site supervisors who could share their firsthand knowledge and expertise, specifically relating to their experiences in conducting counseling sessions and overseeing their supervisees during their practicum hours. This approach ensures that the data collected will be directly relevant to the research questions and provide in-depth perspectives on the supervision process in real-world counseling scenarios.

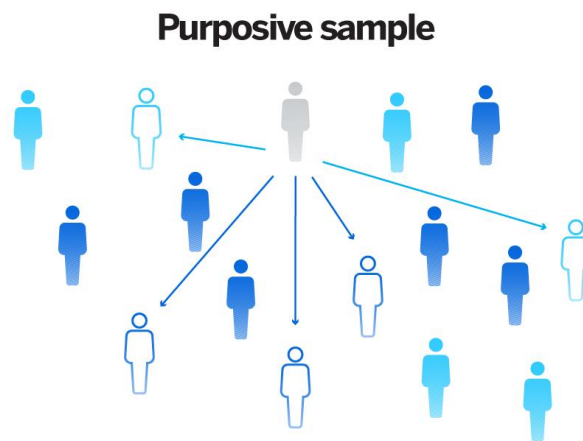


Figure 2: Purposive Sampling

Source: <https://www.qualtrics.com/en-au/experience-management/research/non-probability-sampling/>

3.5 Pilot Study

Small-scale preliminary investigation conducted to evaluate the feasibility, design, and methodology of the main study. It helps identify potential challenges, refine data collection instruments, and test sampling strategies to ensure their appropriateness and effectiveness. According to Rashid et al. (2019), pilot studies are essential for determining the suitability of interview questions and observation frameworks, ensuring the quality and depth of the data collected. Additionally, they provide insight into logistical aspects, such as participant recruitment, timing, and resource allocation, which are crucial for the smooth execution of the main study. By addressing unforeseen issues, researchers can make necessary adjustments to enhance the reliability and validity of their findings.

The first step in conducting the pilot study is to design clear and precise interview questions. These questions are aimed at understanding the ethical challenges, dilemmas, and

supervisory practices among site supervisors. According to Creswell (2018), carefully developing interview questions ensures they are directly related to the research objectives and allows the researcher to gather relevant and meaningful data. Once the initial interview questions are drafted, they will undergo review by an expert in the field, which is the researcher's supervisor. This review is essential for evaluating the clarity, language, and appropriateness of the questions. According to Evers et al. (2020), feedback from an expert helps refine the questions, making them more effective in exploring the topic at hand.

For participant selection, the researcher will use purposive sampling to identify site supervisors. As noted by Fusch and Ness (2015), purposive sampling allows the researcher to target participants who have specific knowledge or experience that is directly relevant to the research, ensuring that the data collected is rich and informative. The pilot study will involve interviews with site supervisors, where the researcher will test the interview questions and data collection process. One site supervisor from UKM will be selected for the pilot study. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. According to Turner (2010), it is important that pilot study participants share characteristics similar to the intended sample for the main study, to ensure that the findings from the pilot are applicable. The pilot study will be conducted in a comfortable and appropriate setting, with each interview lasting between 15 to 30 minutes, in line with the guidelines suggested by Jacob and Furgerson (2012). The interviews are going to be recorded by using smartphone recorder. The interviews are conducting via physical and online meeting in any available discussion room at the organizations or in site supervisor's room at the organizations itself. Besides, the letter of informed consent is going to be given to each informant and researcher will get the approval from informants.

After the pilot study is completed, the researcher will transcribe and analyze the data to identify any issues with the interview process or questions. Based on the feedback and analysis, the interview questions will be refined. This can be done by identifying that the selection criteria of participants need to be improved, Fusch and Ness (2015) argue that pilot studies allow researchers to make necessary adjustments, such as rephrasing questions, adding probes, or modifying the interview structure to improve the quality of data collection. These revisions will enhance the overall reliability and validity of the research instrument, ensuring that the main study is well-prepared and capable of capturing the depth of information required.

The primary goal of the pilot study is to assess the relevance and clarity of the interview questions, while also providing early feedback on the feasibility of the research approach. Additionally, the pilot study offers the researcher valuable experience in conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews and helps in establishing rapport with the participants. According to Jacob and Furgerson (2012), building a strong rapport is crucial as it encourages participants to provide more honest and detailed responses. Therefore, the interviewer begins the session with informal conversation to create a comfortable atmosphere. Although the interview will focus on specific research topics, the initial aim is to foster a positive relationship with the participants. Participants are encouraged to share their perspectives openly, and the researcher will employ probing questions to obtain richer, more detailed insights. All participants will be asked the same set of questions to maintain consistency across interviews. The interviews will primarily be conducted in English, with occasional use of Malay to ensure a more relaxed and conversational exchange between the interviewer and interviewees.

3.6 Validity

Validity in qualitative research is established through several strategies, including triangulation, minimizing researcher bias, participant feedback, and providing detailed explanations. Triangulation involves using multiple data collection methods which are observation, interviews, and document analysis to enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings by corroborating data from diverse sources. This multi-method approach ensures that the data is robust and provides a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. To minimize researcher bias, the researcher sought verification and guidance from her supervisor, Dr. Nor Mazlina Binti Ghazali, who reviewed and validated the identified themes and categories to ensure that interpretations remained objective and grounded in the data. This external validation acts as a safeguard against subjective influence and enhances the neutrality of the research.

Moreover, participant feedback was also incorporated, with participants scrutinizing the raw data, commenting on its accuracy, and evaluating the themes and categories for relevance, evidence, and realism. Participants were encouraged to provide critical feedback and suggest modifications to ensure that their perspectives were authentically represented. All feedback was thoroughly considered and included in the final report, which significantly bolstered the trustworthiness of the study. Additionally, a thorough explanation of the findings was provided, focusing on the phases of the supervision process, its objectives, methods, and practices used by supervisors in guiding trainee counselors. The inclusion of rich, detailed descriptions enables readers to gain an in-depth understanding of the context and draw informed conclusions about the applicability of the findings to different or similar settings. This meticulous approach not only enhances the validity and credibility of the research but also ensures its transferability and relevance to broader contexts.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews, chosen for their flexibility in allowing participants to share detailed, personal experiences while providing the researcher with the ability to explore emerging themes in depth. Participants were purposefully selected based on specific inclusion criteria, including having at least five years of experience as site supervisors and having supervised counseling trainees. This approach ensured that the participants' insights were relevant and aligned with the study's objectives. The recruitment process began with identifying eligible participants from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Pertubuhan Keselamatan Sosial (PERKESO), Ibu Pejabat Polis Kontinjen Sarawak (IPK Kuching) and Bodhi Counselling Centre. Once selected, participants were briefed about the purpose and scope of the study, and informed consent was obtained to uphold ethical standards. The briefing included assurances of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time. After securing consent, interviews were scheduled based on participants' availability and conducted either in person or virtually, depending on their preferences and logistical considerations.

Each interview session lasted approximately 15 to 30 minutes and was guided by a carefully developed set of open-ended questions. These questions were designed to explore critical areas such as boundary limitations, confidentiality challenges, and competency gaps in supervision. Probing questions were used to encourage participants to elaborate on their experiences and provide richer, more nuanced data. During the interviews, an audio recorder was used with participants' permission to ensure accurate transcription and analysis. Additionally, the researcher maintained detailed field notes to document non-verbal cues, contextual observations, and personal reflections immediately after each session.

To complement the interviews, document analysis was conducted to review relevant policies, supervision guidelines, and ethical codes. This provided a secondary layer of data, allowing for triangulation and enhancing the validity of the findings. All collected data, including interview transcripts, audio recordings, and field notes, were securely stored to protect participants' confidentiality and ensure compliance with ethical research practices. The language for individual interview session conducted based on the participant's comfortability. It is because to avoid any misunderstanding in answering the question that was asked to the participant. In this session the researcher used an audio recorder and jot down the important notes while collecting the data.

To further ensure data credibility and trustworthiness, member checking was employed. Participants were provided with their interview transcripts to review and confirm the accuracy of the recorded information. This process allowed for corrections or additional clarifications, ensuring that the data authentically represented their experiences and perspectives. The researcher also engaged in reflective journaling throughout the data collection process to identify and mitigate any potential biases, thereby maintaining the integrity of the study. At the end of the session, all of the information and data obtained compiled. The result of session transcribed into a full text of transcripts typed in the computer from the data that was collected by audio recordings. The researcher then the analysis based on the participants and the data that have been transcribed.

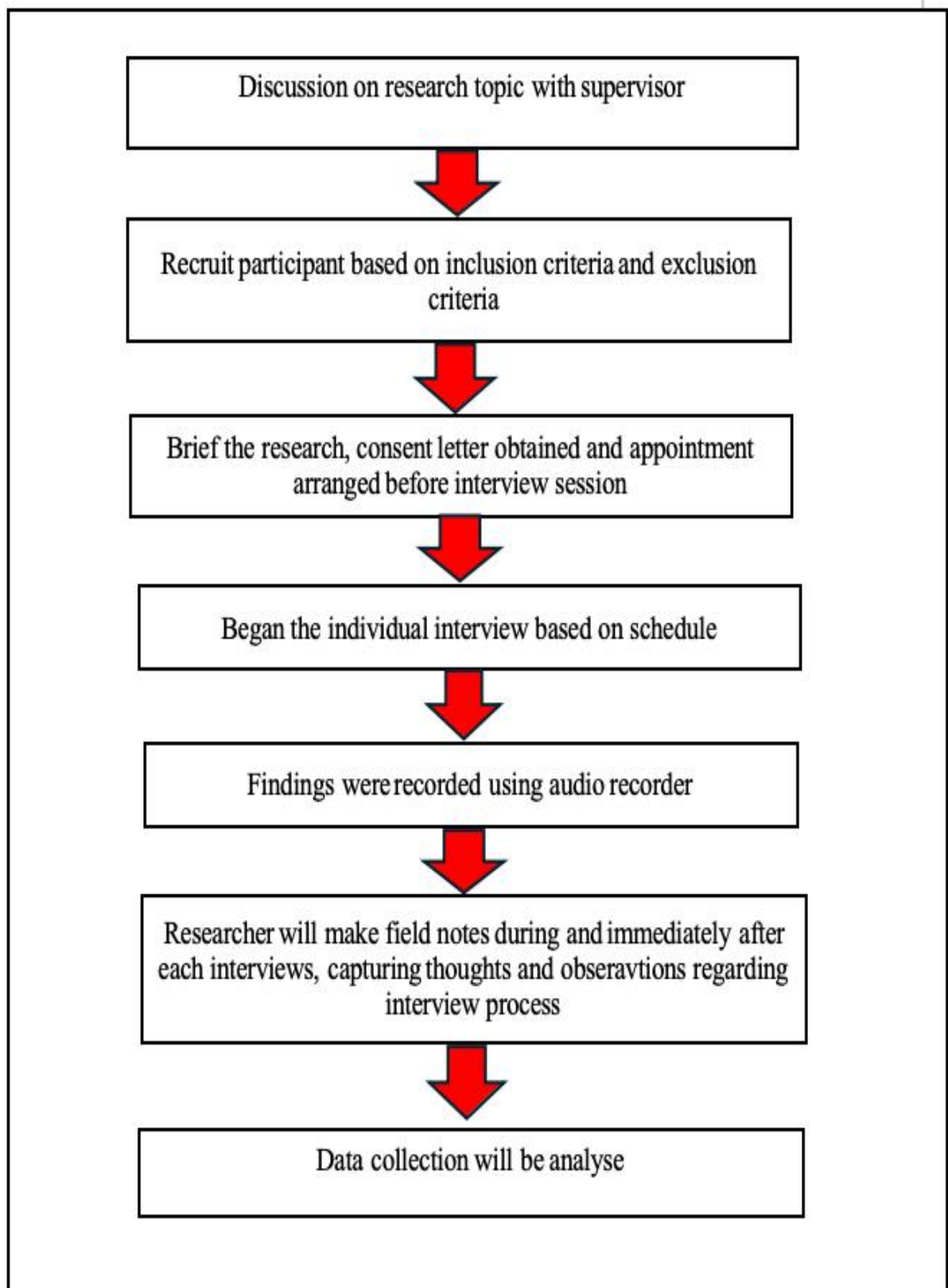


Figure 3: Data Collection Procedures

3.8 Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis followed a thematic approach, which is widely recognized for its flexibility in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. This approach was particularly suitable for exploring the complex ethical dilemmas and challenges faced by site supervisors.

The first step in the data analysis process involved the transcription of audio-recorded interviews. Each interview was transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and preserve the richness of participants' responses. The researcher carefully reviewed each transcript to familiarize themselves with the data, making initial notes and highlighting key points that aligned with the research objectives. These notes served as the foundation for subsequent coding and theme development. Coding was the next stage, during which significant segments of text were systematically categorized based on their relevance to the study's key focus areas, such as boundary limitations, confidentiality issues, and competency gaps. An open coding approach was initially employed to allow for the emergence of unexpected themes or patterns. This was followed by axial coding, which involved organizing the open codes into broader categories that reflected relationships and connections between the data points. Themes were then refined and consolidated to ensure they accurately represented the participants' experiences.

To enhance the validity and credibility of the analysis, triangulation was used by comparing interview data with findings from document analysis. Relevant documents, such as organizational policies, supervision guidelines, and ethical codes, were analyzed to identify recurring patterns and contradictions that could complement or challenge the interview findings. This multi-source approach ensured a more comprehensive understanding

of the ethical challenges in supervision. Additionally, member checking was employed to validate the interpretations of the data. Participants were provided with summaries of the identified themes and invited to provide feedback or clarify any points they felt were misrepresented. This step ensured that the findings were grounded in the participants' authentic perspectives. Throughout the analysis process, the researcher maintained a reflective journal to document thoughts, insights, and potential biases. This practice helped in maintaining objectivity and transparency, ensuring that the analysis remained focused on the data rather than the researcher's assumptions.

Finally, the identified themes were structured and presented in a coherent narrative to address the research questions. Themes were supported with direct quotes from participants, providing vivid illustrations of the ethical dilemmas and challenges they encountered. This systematic and rigorous approach to data analysis ensured that the findings were both credible and meaningful, offering valuable insights into the ethical complexities of site supervision in Malaysian organizations.

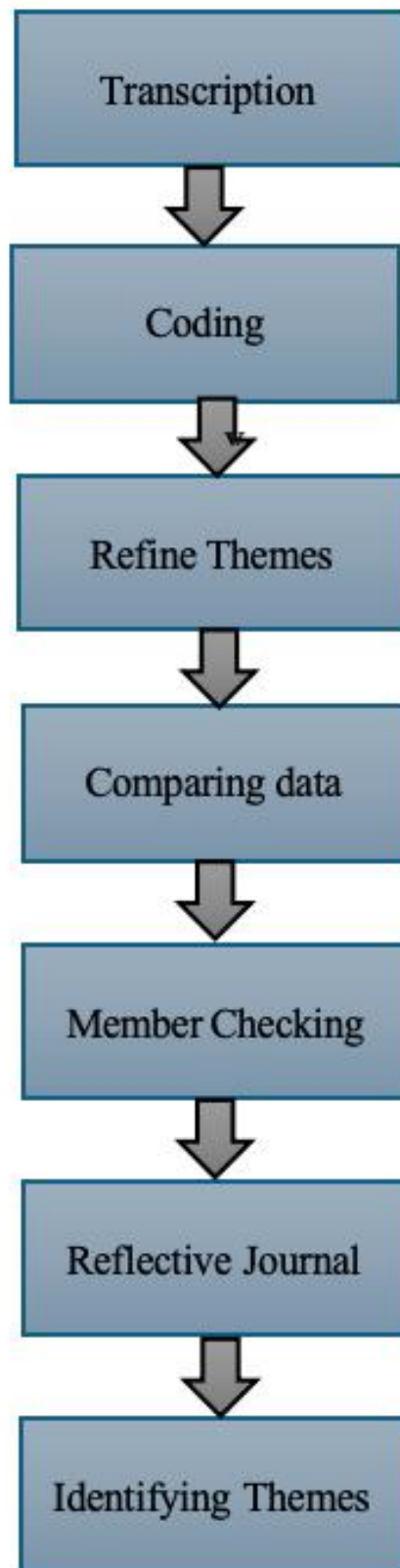


Figure 4: Data Analysis Procedure

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations play a crucial role in qualitative research to ensure the integrity of the study and the protection of participants. Central to these considerations is the principle of informed consent, where participants are fully briefed about the nature, purpose, and potential implications of the study before agreeing to participate. This agreement is documented in a consent form that outlines key information such as the study's objectives, procedures, and the voluntary nature of participation. Participants are assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Confidentiality is another critical ethical aspect, involving measures to safeguard participants' identities and personal information. Researchers often use pseudonyms or anonymize data to protect participants from identification (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006). Additionally, all collected data, including recordings and transcripts, are securely stored to prevent unauthorized access, and their use is restricted strictly to academic purposes. By adhering to these ethical practices, researchers respect participants' autonomy and privacy while ensuring the study's credibility and trustworthiness.

3.10 Summary

This chapter focuses on the methodology applied in the study, utilizing a qualitative research approach. Participants were selected based on specified inclusion and exclusion criteria. An interview session was conducted, and a consent form was prepared to ensure ethical considerations. The data were analyzed by the researcher through themes and keywords derived from the interview transcripts. This chapter also details the procedures for data collection and analysis. The collected data were used as the foundation for the findings and discussion presented in this research paper.

CHAPTER 4

FINDING AND RESULT

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the demographic information of the 6 participants, outlines the data analysis process using thematic analysis, addresses the research questions, and concludes with a chapter summary. The findings include a thematic analysis of interview data, highlighting the coding process applied to responses from the 6 participants. During the qualitative phase, the researcher identified and organized the data into key generative themes.

4.1 Demographic Data of Participants

Table 1: Demographic Data of Participants

Participant	Name of Organisation	Year of Supervision	Gender	Age
Participant 1	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	6	Male	32
Participant 2	Bodhi Counselling Centre (NGO)	2	Male	30
Participant 3	Bodhi Counselling Centre (NGO)	3	Female	30
Participant 4	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak	2	Female	26
Participant 5	Ibu Pejabat Polis Kontinjen Sarawak	9	Female	35
Participant 6	Pertubuhan Keselamatan Sosial	13	Male	42

Summary of demographic of participants

The study involved a diverse group of six participants from five different organisations around Malaysia. The participants were selected to provide a comprehensive representation of various demographics. Among the participants, three were male, and three were female, ensuring a balanced gender distribution. The age of the participants ranged from 26 to 42 years old.

The six participants, all of whom were site supervisors from various organizations in Malaysia, which are UNIMAS, UKM, PERKESO, IPK and a private counseling center. These participants were purposefully selected to provide diverse perspectives based on their organizational settings and supervisory experiences. The participants had varied levels of supervisory experience, ranging from two to thirteen years, reflecting both early-career and seasoned site supervisors actively engaged in overseeing trainee counselors in organizational settings.

All participants were currently serving as site supervisors for trainee counselors undertaking their practicum or internship, offering rich insights into real-world supervision practices. Their supervisory roles spanned various contexts, such as government agencies, rehabilitation centers, and private institutions, which enriched the diversity of experiences shared during the interviews.

This demographic composition contributed to a comprehensive understanding of ethical dilemmas and challenges faced by site supervisors in different organizational settings, thus enhancing the depth and credibility of the research findings

4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

For the findings, the researcher will address few themes and subthemes which align with the research objective one (1), two (2), and three (3).

4.2.1 Research Objective 1: To explore the common ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors in organizations through interviews.

The first research objective for this study is to explore the common ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors in organizations which is also relatable to the research question 1, “What are the common ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors in organizations?”. In order to address this question, the researcher conducted thematic analysis based on all six interview transcripts and reflective journals. These themes reflect recurring patterns and concerns shared across various organizational contexts, highlighting the practical and ethical complexities of site supervision in the field of counselling. The first theme is to explore the common ethical dilemmas. Four subthemes were identified under this theme which are the confidentiality vs. institutional demands, dual relationships, unfamiliarization of ethical issues during supervision process and the limitation of disclosing supervisees personal issues.

4.2.1.1 Confidentiality vs. Institutional Demands

The first theme for the common ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors in organizations is confidentiality vs. institutional demands.

One of the most prominent ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors is the conflict between maintaining confidentiality and complying with organizational requirements. Site supervisors expressed concerns over the conflict between maintaining supervisee confidentiality and the expectations from their organizations to disclose sensitive information.

Site supervisors often find themselves in situations where they are expected to share sensitive information about supervisees with institutional authorities, despite ethical codes that emphasize confidentiality.

“Kalau contoh saya nak baca laporan untuk klien tu, saya kena minta izin untuk kaunselor pelatih bagi ID dekat saya. Tapi ikut etika, kita tak boleh tahu pun siapa klien tu”.

Participant 1, UKM

Based on the finding, one participant, a site supervisor in a public university, highlighted the challenge of maintaining client confidentiality when institutional systems and supervision procedures demand access to client information. He explained how he is required to access a digital system to monitor and assess the work of his supervisees, which involves viewing client case notes and reports. It illustrates the conflict between ethical standards and administrative systems. While informed consent was technically sought, the very process of requiring access to client data by a third party (the site supervisor) raises concerns about unintended breaches of confidentiality and the potential discomfort this may cause to clients who are unaware of such supervisory requirements.

"Centre tu minta detail of this para counselor. So, saya ada minta kebenaran and then para counselor itu dia tak nak bagi tahu. Kita cuma beritahu bahawa para counselor ini dia tak ready in terms of emotion”.

Participant 3, Bodhi Counselling Centre

Two participants, who supervises in an NGO setting, described a similar issue involving a supervisees who was struggling with depression. When the organization's leadership requested personal information about the supervisees, they faced an ethical dilemma in choosing between protecting the supervisees privacy and fulfilling organizational

expectations. In this instance, they prioritized ethical confidentiality by only disclosing minimal, non-sensitive information. The participant's decision reflects a nuanced understanding of respecting autonomy and dignity, particularly when supervisees are vulnerable.

Overall, the theme of confidentiality versus institutional demands highlights a systemic ethical tension that is deeply embedded in supervisory practice. Supervisors must often balance competing obligations — to the client, to the supervisee, to the organization, and to the profession. The data show that supervisors manage these dilemmas through strategies such as seeking informed consent, limiting disclosure to only what is necessary, involving senior management in decisions, and consistently referring to professional ethical guidelines. However, these solutions are often improvised and context-dependent, underscoring the need for clearer policies, structured ethical training, and support mechanisms within organizations.

4.2.1.2 Dual Relationships

The second theme for the common ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors in organizations is dual relationships.

Another key ethical dilemma encountered by site supervisors in this study revolves around dual relationships, where a supervisor's professional role intersects with personal, social, or hierarchical connections with their supervisees. These overlapping roles can compromise objectivity, create role confusion, and influence the supervisory relationship, especially in small organizational settings or close-knit communities.

"Intern saya adalah sepupu kepada ketua unit saya. Saya tak selesa sebab ada campur tangan. Saya tak boleh bagi penyeliaan dengan objektif sebab nanti ketua unit akan masuk campur dalam penilaian saya".

Participant 1, UKM

One participant provided a clear example of such a dilemma when he was assigned to supervise a trainee who was the niece of his department head. While he had no personal relationship with the supervisee, the familial connection with a higher authority figure created pressure and a sense of conflict. It illustrates the power imbalance and indirect influence that can arise from dual relationships, even when the connection is not directly between the site supervisor and the supervisee. The participant's concern was not only about fairness in evaluation but also about protecting his own professional autonomy and avoiding potential accusations of bias or favoritism.

"Supervisee saya juga merupakan rakan saya. Kami sudah kenal lama dan jadi rapat. Jadi bila buat sesi penyeliaan tu saya kena ingat untuk berperanan secara profesional, bukan sebagai kawan".

Participant 2, Bodhi Counselling Centre

"Supervisee saya anggap saya macam kawan je. Bila saya beri nasihat semasa penyeliaan, mereka anggap macam gurauan atau tak serius".

Participant 3, Bodhi Counselling Centre

"Situation yang selalu berlaku la bila saya dengan supervisee saya, kebanyakan supervisee saya adalah orang yang saya kenal. Contohnya macam kawan, ahli keluarga rakan-rakan saya".

Participant 4, UNIMAS

All six participants described experiencing ethical dilemmas stemming from dual relationships, where the boundary between personal and professional roles became blurred.

Supervising individuals with whom they had prior relationships such as friends, acquaintances, or socially connected individuals which created significant challenges in maintaining objectivity and professional distance. These dual roles often resulted in difficulties asserting supervisory authority, as the supervisees tended to perceive the relationship as informal or familiar, which diminished the seriousness of the supervision process.

Site supervisors noted that such dynamics affected the formality and effectiveness of supervision. In some cases, supervisees did not treat feedback seriously, interpreting constructive comments as casual suggestions rather than professional guidance. This eroded the respect typically afforded to the supervisory role, limiting the supervisor's ability to hold supervisees accountable or to facilitate their professional growth. Furthermore, the tendency for supervisees to treat the supervisor as a peer or friend contributed to challenges in setting boundaries, managing expectations, and maintaining the integrity of the supervision process.

Additionally, the prevalence of dual relationships appeared to be influenced by contextual factors, such as the size of the organization, the structure of practicum placement systems, and the social networks within close-knit communities. In some settings, site supervisors regularly encountered situations where supervisees were either friends or known through mutual connections. This made it even more difficult to avoid role conflicts or to ensure impartiality in supervision.

4.2.1.3 Unfamiliarization of Ethical Issues During Supervision Process

The third theme for the common ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors in organizations is unfamiliarization of ethical issues during supervision process.

The site supervisors stated that there is a lack of familiarity with ethical issues to guide supervision, especially in NGO settings, which has led to inconsistent practices. This issue was especially evident among site supervisors in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and smaller institutional settings. Although ethical policies exist, the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for ethical supervision were often unclear or entirely absent.

“Kami tak ada SOP khusus untuk penyeliaan etika, jadi banyak bergantung kepada budaya kerja sedia ada dan persefahaman antara staf”.

Participant 1, UKM

"Kita ikut je kod etika, tapi tak ada garis panduan rasmi. Semua berdasarkan pengalaman dan perbincangan dengan senior SV".

Participant 3, Bodhi Counselling Centre

Two participants highlights how the absence of formal guidance forces them to rely on subjective interpretation of the ethical codes, which can lead to inconsistencies in ethical judgment and practice. While the Malaysian Code of Ethics provides general principles, it does not always offer practical, context-specific guidance on supervision, leaving supervisors to interpret how best to apply those principles. In some cases, the lack of boundaries is exacerbated by organizational culture or hierarchy. The participant also shared that their institution lacks clear SOPs for ethical supervision and that much of the decision-making depends on institutional norms or unwritten expectations. This creates a situation where site supervisors must negotiate boundaries on a case-by-case basis, which increases the risk of ethical breaches and reduces the consistency of supervision across different trainees and departments.

4.2.1.4 The Limitation of Disclosing Supervisees Personal Issues

The fourth theme for the common ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors in organizations is the limitation of disclosing supervisees personal issues.

“Para counsellor tu ada depression sampai tak boleh cope. Jadi saya report kepada senior SV tapi hanya maklum yang minimum”.

Participant 3, Bodhi Counselling Centre

Three site supervisors also reported facing ethical dilemmas when supervisees exhibited misconduct, emotional instability, or sensitive personal issues that impacted their performance and client safety. These situations placed site supervisors in ethically complex positions, where they had to balance their duty of care to clients, their obligation to protect supervisees' dignity, and their responsibility to inform the organization when serious issues arose. This highlights the ethical tension of reporting serious concerns to higher authorities while trying to limit the disclosure of personal information to respect the supervisee's confidentiality

“Saya pernah ada pengalaman ada seorang klien e-mel kepada saya yang kaunselor pelatih saya ganggu dia di luar sesi. Tindakan saya, saya tak bawa kepada pengurusan atas tapi saya maklum kepada ketua unit saya sebab benda itu menyebabkan kualiti maksudnya sebagai satu teguran. Saya tak pernah bagitahu dekat yang lain sebab saya jagalah sebab ini adalah kerahsiaan dengan kaunselor pelatih juga”.

Participant 1, UKM

One of the site supervisor also had to address supervisee behavior that directly endangered clients. This situation required the site supervisor to act swiftly to protect the client and uphold professional standards, while also managing the supervisee's rights. By informing only the head of the unit, the site supervisor limited the spread of confidential

information, reflecting ethical discretion. These findings reveal that handling misconduct and sensitive issues is one of the most ethically demanding aspects of supervision. Site supervisors are often left to navigate these dilemmas without clear procedural guidance, relying instead on their judgment, ethical principles, and consultation with peers or senior supervisors. The lack of formal reporting systems or emotional support for site supervisors also makes this task more difficult and stressful.

“Ada satu kes ni, kami dapat aduan daripada klien pelatih saya tu. So benda tu sampai ke pengurusan atas la. Mereka tanya kan dekat saya kenapa pelatih saya ni buat kesilapan lah senang cakap. Jadi, sebelum saya bertindak apa-apa. Saya ambil tahu dulu dari semua pihak. Supaya tak jadi aduan tipu. Saya tanyakan dekat pelatih saya tu. Saya cari bukti. And memang betul pelatih saya tu memang ada buat silap. Jadi saya bagitau dekat dia la saya memang kene ambil tindakan dengan laporkan dekat pengurusan saya dan pensyarah universiti dia. Tapi saya hanya bagitau brief sahaja lah walaupun pengurusan nak juga tahu detail”.

Participant 6, PERKESO

Similarly, one site supervisor described a case where a complaint about a supervisee's mistake reached upper management. Rather than responding impulsively, the site supervisor took a measured and ethical approach. This response reflects an ethically grounded process. The site supervisor verified the facts from multiple sources, confirmed the validity of the complaint, and informed the necessary authorities with only a brief disclosure. Although the site supervisor attempted to protect the supervisee's privacy by providing only a brief summary of the incident, the management continued to seek closure. This reflects the organizational need for transparency and accountability, even when site supervisors strive to uphold confidentiality principles.

Table 2: Summary of Themes and Subthemes of Research Objective 1

Themes	Subthemes
Explore the common ethical dilemmas	1. Confidentiality vs. Institutional Demands 2. Dual Relationships 3. Unfamiliarization of Ethical Issues During Supervision Process 4. The Limitation of Disclosing Supervisees Personal Issues

4.2.2 Research Objective 2: To explore the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations through interviews.

The second research objective for this study is to explore the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations. which is also relatable to the research question 2, “What are the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations?” To address this objective, the researcher analyzed the data gathered from all six participants and organized the emerging patterns into relevant themes. The second theme is to explore common challenges. Three subthemes were identified under this theme which are maintaining professional boundaries, organizational pressures in disclosing supervisees personal issues and risk of conducting online supervision.

4.2.2.1 Maintaining Professional Boundaries

The first theme for the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations is maintaining professional boundaries.

“Kita pernah dapat arahan daripada pihak atas, dia minta anak dia intern dengan kita tanpa go through proses interview dan sebagainya”.

Participant 1, UKM

“Cabaran paling ketara ialah bila pelatih terlampau selesa dengan kita. Mula-mula memang tak nampak, tapi lama-lama mereka mula anggap saya macam kawan sendiri, bukan lagi penyelia. Pernah juga pelatih berkongsi terlalu banyak kisah peribadi”.

Participant 6, PERKESO

“Masa tu pelatih perempuan, dia baru habis putus tunang masa tengah praktikum. Jadi dia memang fragile. Dia mula banyak confide dekat saya, dan pada satu tahap saya sendiri pun tak selesa sebab perbualan kami dah lari jauh dari skop penyeliaan”.

Participant 5, IPK

Based on the findings, three site supervisors stated that their main challenge was maintaining clear and consistent professional boundaries with their supervisees due to emotional closeness or institutional pressure. This issue is particularly significant in settings where site supervisors are expected to wear multiple hats or where personal and professional roles frequently overlap due to institutional culture, social familiarity, or power dynamics. Site supervisors reported difficulties in upholding the necessary level of formality and objectivity, especially when supervisees were connected to them through personal relationships or were closely affiliated with individuals in positions of authority within the organization. Site supervisors shared that it was often challenging to strike a balance between being supportive and being firm. This situation made it difficult for site supervisors to enforce accountability or offer critical feedback without concerns about potential backlash or conflict of interest.

In other instances, site supervisors found themselves becoming overly familiar or emotionally close with supervisees. While rapport and trust are essential for effective

supervision, the blurring of professional boundaries can lead to reduced respect for authority, reluctance to accept constructive criticism, and challenges in maintaining the integrity of the supervisory process. Site supervisors expressed that when boundaries became too relaxed, supervisees were less likely to treat supervision seriously, often perceiving it as an informal interaction rather than a structured and evaluative process.

“Kebiasannya pelajar di sini kan muda-muda lagi. Jadi ada seorang supervisee saya ni macam menunjukkan minat kepada saya. Dia tak cakap direct, tapi dia ada bagi hint”.

Participant 4, UNIMAS

According to one participant, such situations represent a form of boundary-testing, where the supervisee may be uncertain about or intentionally ignoring the limits of the professional relationship. For the site supervisor, this creates an ethical dilemma as it may compromise the objectivity and authority needed in the supervisory role. The site supervisor must remain professional while managing the interaction carefully to avoid escalating the situation or allowing it to interfere with the supervision process. The ethical concern here centres on the potential for dual relationships to develop, where the professional line between site supervisor and supervisee becomes blurred due to personal or emotional entanglement. Even if unreciprocated, perceived emotional closeness can shift the dynamics of supervision and compromise the supervisee’s ability to receive honest feedback or the site supervisor’s ability to assess performance impartially.

Moreover, the lack of clear institutional guidelines regarding boundary maintenance further complicated the issue. Without specific policies or training on how to navigate such relationships, site supervisors were often left to rely on personal discretion, which varied widely depending on individual judgment and experience. This inconsistency in practice

posed a risk to the ethical quality of supervision and to the development of professional conduct among site supervisees.

4.2.2.2 Organizational Pressures in Disclosing Supervisees Personal Issues

The second theme for the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations is organizational pressures in disclosing supervisees personal issues.

“Ada satu masa, pihak pengurusan tertinggi nak tahu kenapa seorang pelatih kurang perform. Tapi bila saya jelaskan yang saya tak boleh dedahkan sebab berkaitan isu peribadi pelatih tu, mereka agak push juga”.

Participant 5, IPK

“Saya pernah ditegur sebab tak ikut arahan untuk lapor penuh tentang kes supervisee. Tapi saya rasa benda tu terlalu peribadi untuk dikongsi”.

Participant 6, PERKESO

Two of the site supervisors also provided examples of the institutional pressure faced by them when expected to disclose personal information about their supervisees who was underperforming. This situation clearly reflects the power imbalance between supervisory staff and upper-level administration. They were aware of their ethical obligation to maintain the confidentiality and dignity of the supervisee, particularly when the issue involved personal or emotional challenges. Despite this, they still experienced persistent pressure from upper management to provide explanations or justifications for the supervisees performance.

These pressures often placed site supervisors in a situation where their roles as practitioners, mentors, and organizational employees were in conflict. Without clear institutional policies or ethical safeguards, many site supervisors felt unsupported in resisting

these pressures and were left to navigate these dilemmas independently. This theme reflects a broader issue of organizational culture and structure, where ethical supervision is sometimes undervalued in favour of administrative convenience or hierarchical preferences. Site supervisors may feel disempowered or coerced into compromising on professional standards, which not only affects the quality of supervision but may also set a problematic precedent for supervisees regarding ethical conduct.

This theme highlight that organizational pressure emerges as a significant barrier to ethical and effective supervision. It underscores the need for institutional awareness, ethical literacy among administrators, and clear policies that protect supervisory autonomy. Without these, even the most well-intentioned site supervisors may find it challenging to uphold ethical integrity in the face of systemic or hierarchical demands. It underscores the need for institutional awareness, ethical literacy among administrators, and clear policies that protect supervisory autonomy.

4.2.2.3 Risk of Conducting Online Supervision

The third theme for the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations is risk of conducting online supervision.

“Satu lagi, risiko kebocoran maklumat pon boleh berlaku jika perisian atau peranti tidak selamat. Penyimpanan dan perkongsian maklumat tu pon perlu mematuhi garis panduan etika kaunseling. Macam record meeting tu ke, kene jaga baik-baik lah”.

Participant 4, UNIMAS

“Saya tak tahu pelatih berada di mana masa sesi. Pernah sekali, dia buat sesi dari kedai makan. Lepas tu, ada background bising, orang lalu-lalang. Itu terus saya tegur”.

Participant 5, IPK

“Saya adakan supervision tersebut, saya dekat area ruang tamu, so it's not really suitable and safe lah”.

Participant 2, Bodhi Counselling Centre

The transition to online supervision, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, has introduced several challenges for site supervisors. Although virtual platforms provide accessibility and continuity in the supervision process, participants expressed concerns about the limitations of the online format in maintaining confidentiality, engagement, and supervision effectiveness.

Three participants noted that online settings created risks for confidentiality breaches and less effective supervision. One of the primary concerns shared by site supervisors was the lack of a secure and private environment for both supervisors and supervisees during online sessions. Some supervisees were reported to attend sessions from public or shared spaces, which compromised the confidentiality and openness required for effective supervision. This limitation created ethical concerns, particularly when discussing sensitive cases involving clients.

Another limitation involved the technological constraints and distractions commonly associated with online platforms. Participants shared that poor internet connections, multitasking, and environmental distractions often disrupted the flow of supervision, reducing its effectiveness and focus. Furthermore, supervisors expressed that documentation and feedback felt more transactional in online formats, making it harder to create a reflective and supportive supervision environment. The absence of face-to-face connection also led some supervisees to approach supervision with less seriousness or commitment, viewing it as a mere academic requirement rather than a professional development opportunity.

Table 3: Summary of Themes of Research Objective 2

Themes	Subthemes
Explore the common challenges	1. Maintaining Professional Boundaries 2. Organizational Pressures in Disclosing Supervisees Personal Issues 3. Risk of Conducting Online Supervision

4.2.3 Research Objective 3: To understand the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations through interviews.

The third research objective of this study is to understand the extent of the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations. This objective corresponds directly to Research Question 3, “To what extent are the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations?” In addressing this question, the researcher analyzed all six interview transcripts and reflective journals to identify recurring patterns that reflect not only the types of challenges encountered, but also the frequency, severity, and impact of these challenges on ethical supervision practices. The third theme is to understand the common challenges. Three subthemes were identified under this theme which are incompetencies, lack of experiences and guidance and resource limitations.

4.2.3.1 Incompetencies

The first theme to understand the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations is incompetencies.

“Saya rasa tidak cukup terlatih, saya cuma belajar dari pengalaman dan nasihat senior SV”.

Participant 3, Bodhi Counselling Centre

“Saya tak pernah diberi kursus atau bengkel khusus tentang penyeliaan. Semua saya buat berdasarkan pengalaman sendiri”.

Participant 4, UNIMAS

“Kadang-kadang kita tak tahu sama ada tindakan kita betul atau tidak, sebab tak pernah dibimbing secara formal sebelum jadi penyelia”.

Participant 2, Bodhi Counselling Centre

A key finding that emerged is the incompetence among site supervisors to handle the ethical, procedural, and relational complexities of supervision. Most participants admitted that they had never received structured or formal training specific to counselling supervision, and instead relied on personal experience, peer advice, or trial-and-error methods. Site supervisors often entered their roles with strong counselling backgrounds but without proper exposure to the skills, responsibilities, and ethical considerations unique to the supervisory context. As a result, many felt unprepared to address real-world challenges such as boundary issues, supervisee misconduct, and ethical dilemmas involving client cases. The lack of structured preparation contributed to uncertainty in decision-making and inconsistent supervision practices.

This theme also reflects a broader systemic issue, where organizations and academic institutions may assume that good counsellors naturally become effective supervisors, without providing adequate support or capacity-building. Site supervisors expressed a desire for more formal training, especially in areas such as ethical decision-making, conflict resolution, supervisee evaluation, and crisis management. Additionally, the lack of incompetence led to anxiety and self-doubt, particularly when site supervisors were required to make ethically sensitive decisions or intervene in serious situations involving supervisees

or clients. Without prior exposure to such scenarios or clear institutional guidance, site supervisors felt they were navigating their roles blindly.

4.2.3.2 Lack of Experiences

The second theme to understand the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations is lack of experiences.

“Kalau ikut buku etika je, benda tu tak fleksibel. Kena banyak real case study untuk latih kita.”

Participant 3, Bodhi Counselling Centre

“Saya pernah ragu-ragu nak buat keputusan etika sebab tak ada contoh kes yang spesifik. Kita perlukan latihan dalam bentuk situasi sebenar”.

Participant 6, PERKESO

“Saya pernah join kursus latihan macam yang dianjurkan oleh lembaga kaunselor tapi ni bukan latihan yang bersifat berstructured, boleh tahu benda tu secara knowledge sahaja, saya tahu untuk level of learning kita which is dalam tahap koneksi sahaja tapi dalam level macam tingkah laku saya tak tahu”.

Participant 1, UKM

Another key challenge that emerged from the data is the need for structured ethical competency development among site supervisors. While most participants had a general understanding of ethical principles, they expressed a lack of confidence in applying these principles effectively in real-world supervision scenarios. Site supervisors shared that the ethical dilemmas they faced were often complex and context-dependent, requiring more than just theoretical knowledge.

Three participants admitted that although they had studied counselling ethics during their academic training, they felt underprepared when faced with real ethical decision-making in supervision, particularly in areas such as dual relationships, confidentiality conflicts, and supervisees misconduct. The abstract nature of textbook ethics often fell short when applied to the diverse and nuanced situations encountered during practicum supervision. It reflects the participants' recognition that ethical reasoning requires context-based training, not just memorization of codes. Without exposure to case-based learning or simulation, site supervisors were left to rely on personal judgment, which varied widely and introduced inconsistency into supervisory practices.

“Saya jarang jumpa kursus yang fokus pada etika dalam penyeliaan, kebanyakannya hanya sentuh etika kaunseling secara umum.”

Participant 2, Bodhi Counselling Centre

Based on one participant, this reveals a significant gap in ongoing training and suggests that ethical supervision is often treated as a secondary competency, rather than a specialized area requiring its own development framework. The participants recommended more workshops, case-based discussions, and peer consultations to strengthen their ethical awareness and decision-making skills.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that while site supervisors are committed to ethical practice, there is a clear need for more structured, practical, and supervision-specific training in ethical competency. Addressing this gap will not only enhance ethical consistency across placements but also empower supervisors to respond confidently and responsibly to the ethical challenges they face in complex organizational environments.

4.2.3.3 Guidance and Resource Limitations

The third theme to understand the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations is guidance and resource limitations.

Another significant challenge faced by site supervisors is the lack of systemic support and limited access to resources, which impacts their ability to carry out ethical and effective supervision. While site supervisors are entrusted with crucial responsibilities such as mentoring, evaluating, and guiding trainee counsellors, many operate without sufficient institutional backing. This includes a lack of dedicated training opportunities, financial support, time allocation, and practical supervision tools.

“Setakat ni, saya pernah hadir satu bengkel penyeliaan anjuran JPA, tapi fokus dia lebih kepada pembangunan kerjaya . Untuk etika secara spesifik, saya cuma rujuk Kod Etika dan hadiri sesi refresher bila ada penceramah dari universiti datang berkongsi. Saya harap satu hari nanti ada modul khas untuk penyelia tapak dalam agensi kerajaan macam kami ini”.

Participant 5, IPK

Three site supervisors reported that available workshops or professional development programs were either too general or focused on unrelated themes such as administrative tasks or career progression. Although some ethical content is embedded in standard counsellor training, it does not always address the complexities and role-specific dilemmas encountered in practicum supervision. This disconnect leaves site supervisors underprepared to navigate real-world ethical scenarios such as dual relationships, confidentiality breaches, or supervisee misconduct.

“Dalam masa terdekat saya nampak macam bulan 7 ini lembaga nak buat satu kursus penyeliaan. Saya berniat dan berminat untuk join tapi masih dalam proses permohonan lah. Sebab selalunya tak dapat sebab organisasi tak cukup bajet”.

Participant 1, UKM

In addition, one participant also highlight that financial constraints within organizations were frequently cited as a barrier to accessing relevant training. Even when supervision-focused programs were available, many site supervisors could not attend due to lack of funding or organizational approval. This reflects a deeper issue in institutional prioritization, where supervision is treated as a secondary duty rather than a core function deserving structured investment.

“Kadang-kadang saya kena buat sesi penyeliaan lepas waktu kerja sebab waktu pejabat penuh dengan tugas lain”.

Participant 4, UNIMAS

Time constraints further complicate the situation. One of the site supervisors are often required to manage their regular workload alongside their supervisory duties, with no specific allocation of time or adjustment of responsibilities. As a result, supervision sessions are sometimes rushed or conducted outside normal working hours. This not only affects the quality of engagement with supervisees but also contributes to supervisor fatigue and reduced job satisfaction.

In settings without formal supervision frameworks or standard operating procedures (SOPs), supervisors must rely on personal judgment, peer consultation, or trial-and-error approaches. While these strategies may offer short-term solutions, they can result in inconsistent supervision quality and increased risk of ethical oversight. Without consistent institutional policies, supervision becomes highly variable depending on the experience and initiative of the individual supervisor.

Overall, the findings highlight that guidance and resource limitations are a systemic issue that hinders the standardization and ethical implementation of practicum supervision. Addressing this challenge requires a shift in institutional mindset—recognizing site supervision as a formal and essential professional role that warrants clear guidelines, structured training, financial backing, and dedicated time. Only through such systemic reforms can organizations ensure that supervision upholds both ethical integrity and developmental effectiveness for future counsellors.

Table 4: Summary of Themes of Research Objective 3

Themes	Subthemes
Understand the common challenges	1. Incompetencies 2. Lack of Experiences 3. Guidance and Resource Limitations

4.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher explored the ethical dilemmas and challenges faced by site supervisors in Malaysian organizations through thematic analysis of interviews with six participants from diverse institutions. The study revealed three major themes that reflect common issues in supervision. Some of the issues and challenges are conflicts between confidentiality and institutional demands, dual relationships, unfamiliarization of ethical issues during supervision process, and challenges in handling supervisee misconduct or sensitive issues.

Site supervisors often found themselves caught between ethical obligations to protect confidentiality and pressure from organizations to disclose sensitive information. Dual relationships, particularly with supervisees who were friends or socially connected, further complicated the objectivity and professionalism of the supervision process. Additionally, unfamiliarization of ethical issues during supervision process led to inconsistent ethical practices across different organizations. Supervisors also faced significant challenges when dealing with supervisees experiencing emotional distress or involved in misconduct. These situations demanded careful ethical judgment to protect client welfare, support the supervisee, and fulfill institutional responsibilities.

Overall, the findings highlighted that site supervisors face complex ethical dilemmas without consistent institutional frameworks or support systems. Despite these challenges, supervisors demonstrated ethical sensitivity and professionalism, often relying on personal judgment, peer consultation, and ethical codes. The chapter emphasizes the need for structured ethical guidelines, targeted training, and policy support to enhance the ethical quality of supervision in organizational settings.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the entire research study. It summarizes the key findings, highlights how the research objectives and questions were addressed, and offers recommendations for future studies. Additionally, this chapter reflects on the overall understanding of the research topic by linking the findings to the study's aims. It also discusses the study's limitations and outlines its practical and theoretical implications.

5.1 Discussion

This analytical discussion will delve into the implications of these findings, highlight the significance of each ethical dilemma, and offer a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations.

In this qualitative study, research objectives one aimed to explore the common ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors in organizations through interviews. This finding revealed that one of the most prominent dilemmas identified was the conflict between maintaining confidentiality and meeting institutional expectations. Site supervisors reported that they were frequently placed in situations where they had to decide whether to protect sensitive information shared by supervisees or to comply with organizational demands (Taquette and Souza, 2022). For example, submitting detailed performance evaluations or providing updates to management. These situations created moral distress and required site supervisors to balance competing ethical responsibilities.

Next, the dilemma of confidentiality became more pronounced in cases where client records were digitized and accessible through institutional systems. Site supervisors noted that even though informed consent was often obtained, the process still felt ethically uncomfortable. This is because clients may not have been fully aware that their private information was being accessed by third parties for supervisory purposes. Several site supervisors emphasized that they tried to disclose only what was necessary, but this still raised concerns about breaching the client's trust. These challenges demonstrate the ethical tension between professional discretion and institutional protocol which a gap that many supervisors had to navigate alone. Researcher like Colosi et al. (2019) emphasize that safeguarding sensitive information is critical for building a safe and trusting environment for supervisees.

To better understand and interpret these ethical dilemmas, the Kitchener's Ethical Principles that was introduced in Chapter Two can help as a guiding theoretical framework. These five principles—autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice, and fidelity serve as ethical cornerstones in professional decision-making. These principles not only provide a theoretical guide for ethical decision-making but also help supervisors foster a professional and ethical culture in their relationships with supervisees (Kitchener, 1984). In the context of confidentiality, the principle of fidelity, which refers to trustworthiness and keeping commitments, is especially relevant.

Moreover, when site supervisors are asked to share confidential information, they risk violating the trust established with their supervisees. Similarly, the principle of nonmaleficence, or "do no harm," compels supervisors to avoid causing psychological or professional harm through unethical disclosure. By referring to Kitchener's framework, this

study reveals that the ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors are not only situational but deeply rooted in the struggle to uphold core professional values.

One the other hand, another recurring ethical issue involved dual relationships, where site supervisors had existing personal, social, or hierarchical relationships with their supervisees. Several participants reported supervising individuals who were friends, acquaintances, or even relatives of their colleagues or superiors (Schultz et al. (2020). This created discomfort and challenges in maintaining professional distance. Site supervisors expressed concerns about being perceived as biased or being pressured to provide lenient evaluations. Moreover, in some cases, they felt their ability to provide honest and constructive feedback was compromised (Zur and Fisher, 2019). These blurred boundaries interfered with the intended purpose of supervision, which is to provide structured, ethical guidance and evaluation.

The presence of dual relationships also introduced power dynamics that affected the quality and fairness of supervision. For example, when the supervisee had a personal connection with someone in a higher organizational position, the supervisor feared repercussions if they provided negative feedback (Sawyer & Prescott, 2011.. This situation illustrates a conflict with the Kitchener's ethical principles of justice and autonomy, where fairness, equality, and the right to independent professional development are at risk. Site supervisors shared that these dilemmas were emotionally taxing and often left them feeling unsupported by their organizations.

Also, in addressing these dilemmas, many site supervisor reported using strategies such as seeking peer consultation, limiting disclosures, documenting decisions carefully, and

adhering to the Malaysian Code of Ethics. However, the lack of specific organizational guidelines or ethical supervision SOPs meant that these solutions were applied inconsistently. The findings strongly indicate a need for institutional reform, including the development of supervision frameworks that clearly outline procedures for handling confidentiality and dual relationships. Site supervisors also expressed a desire for ethical decision-making training and regular case-based discussions to prepare them for real-world dilemmas.

In conclusion, the findings related to Research Objective 1 highlight the multifaceted ethical challenges faced by site supervisors in Malaysian organizations. The dilemmas of confidentiality and dual relationships reveal the complexity of balancing ethical standards with organizational demands and interpersonal dynamics. These challenges call for immediate attention from professional bodies, counselor education programs, and organizations to provide clear ethical frameworks, training, and institutional support to uphold the quality and integrity of counseling supervision.

Next, research objectives two and three aimed to explore and understand the common challenges faced by site supervisors in organizations. Firstly, one of the most pervasive issues identified was the unfamiliarization of ethical issues in supervision. There is a structured ethical guidelines, but site supervisors themselves may lack experience in applying theoretical knowledge, which can result in vague or generic feedback that fails to support supervisees in navigating complex client issues (Ladany et al., 2013). Site supervisors frequently relied on personal experience, informal peer consultation, or organizational norms to make ethical decisions. This lack of consistency often led to confusion, ethical ambiguity, and varied supervisory practices across institutions. According to Corey et al., (2010), the

lack of institutional support exacerbates the challenge, as supervisors may not have access to workshops, continuing education, or structured supervision models to enhance their skills

Next, according to research by O'Donoghue and O'Donoghue (2019), the absence of ethical training and organizational policies can expose site supervisors to ethical uncertainty and increase the risk of oversight or error. From the perspective of Kitchener's principle of beneficence, this challenge implies that site supervisors are hindered in their ability to act in the best interest of their supervisees consistently. Beneficence requires professionals to actively promote well-being and prevent harm. Bernard and Goodyear (2019) highlight that supervision anchored in beneficence enables supervisees to gain the competencies needed for effective and ethical counseling. Without proper structures, site supervisors are left to make critical decisions without clear guidance which potentially compromising both the supervisee's growth. Research by Bernard and Goodyear (2019) emphasizes that site supervisors who lack proper training and resources are more likely to experience difficulty in addressing these ethical dilemmas, potentially compromising both supervisee development and client welfare.

In addition to structural gaps, many site supervisor reported facing pressure from their organizations to prioritize administrative outcomes, institutional reputation, or efficiency over ethical supervision. This pressure often manifested in the expectation to overlook certain supervisee issues, avoid formal reporting to protect the image of the institution, or expedite assessments regardless of supervisee readiness. Such expectations created moral conflict and further undermined fidelity and justice, as supervisors were caught between loyalty to their institutions and their ethical responsibility toward supervisees and clients. Justice also guides site supervisors in making ethical decisions regarding confidentiality and boundary

limitations, ensuring that any actions taken are transparent, fair, and in line with professional standards (Falender & Shafranske, 2020).

Another emerging challenge was the shift toward online supervision, particularly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Limited nonverbal cues, technological issues, and lack of privacy during online sessions made it more difficult to build rapport, address emotional concerns, or assess supervisee competence accurately (Anindya et al., 2024). Site supervisors expressed concern about confidentiality breaches during remote sessions, especially when supervisees were in shared spaces or using unsecured internet connections. These concerns relate to nonmaleficence and autonomy, as clients and supervisees may be unintentionally harmed or deprived of safe and confidential environments.

Therefore, another challenge revealed in this study was the emotional and ethical burden of dealing with supervisees misconduct, emotional instability, or client-related complaints. Site supervisors shared experiences in which they had to intervene when a supervisee was not performing appropriately or was facing psychological difficulties. These situations required delicate ethical judgment, as site supervisors needed to ensure that clients were protected while also maintaining the dignity, confidentiality, and professional development of the supervisee.

These dilemmas are directly connected to Kitchener's principle of nonmaleficence, which calls for actions that avoid causing harm, and fidelity. It emphasizes maintaining trust and loyalty within the supervisory relationship. Site supervisors demonstrated a commitment to these principles by limiting disclosures and only reporting incidents to necessary parties. However, these actions were often taken without formal protocols or institutional backing

that can lead to increasing the emotional pressure and ethical risk for site supervisors (Falender and Shafranske, 2020). The burden of navigating these complex situations alone also highlights the need for consistent ethical supervision frameworks and stronger organizational support.

Moreover, these ethical challenges is part of a broader pattern of systemic gaps in supervision practices. Many participants expressed that even when misconduct occurred, there were no standardized steps for managing or documenting the incident (Johari & Amat, 2019). The principle of justice, which emphasizes fairness and equal treatment, is also compromised when site supervisors have no institutional guidance to ensure that all supervisees are held to the same standards. Some site supervisors feared being perceived as unfair or inconsistent, especially when handling sensitive issues involving dual relationships or personal vulnerabilities. In such cases, autonomy, the principle that supports individual decision-making and professional independence was also at stake.

Therefore, the findings related to research objectives two and three emphasize that site supervisors face complex and emotionally taxing challenges in the absence of formal ethical structures. These challenges are deeply intertwined with all five of Kitchener's Ethical Principles which provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the ethical responsibilities of supervisors. These insights point to an urgent need for policy reform, structured training modules, and ongoing ethical support mechanisms across organizations to ensure ethical, fair, and effective supervisory practices.

To conclude, the Kitchener Ethical Principles provide a useful guide for site supervisors in dealing with ethical issues in supervision. These five principles—autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice, and fidelity help supervisors make fair, safe, and professional

decisions. By using Kitchener's principles, supervisors can better handle these problems while protecting the rights and well-being of both clients and supervisees. These principles should be included in training and supervision policies to support ethical and effective supervision in all settings.

5.2 Implications of Study

Firstly, this study has significant implications for supervision practices within Malaysian organizations. The identification of recurring ethical dilemmas indicates the urgent need for organizations to establish clear, formalized supervision policies. Many site supervisors rely heavily on personal judgment or informal workplace culture due to the absence of structured ethical guidelines. Hence, the study highlights the need for standardized supervision protocols that align with professional codes of ethics thus promoting consistency and fairness in supervisory practices across diverse organizational settings.

Secondly, the findings suggest that supervisory competency development is critically needed. Site supervisors frequently reported gaps in their ability to navigate complex ethical dilemmas, pointing to a lack of training and preparation in ethical dilemmas areas. Therefore, educational institutions and professional bodies should incorporate comprehensive and context-specific training modules in counselor education programs. These modules should not only cover theoretical frameworks such as Kitchener's Ethical Principles but also emphasize applied ethical practices through role-plays, simulations, and case-based discussions to bridge the gap between knowledge and real-world application.

From a policy perspective, the study provides actionable insights for the Malaysian Board of Counsellors and other regulatory bodies. The documented challenges faced by site supervisors underline the importance of updating and localizing ethical supervision

guidelines to reflect the realities of Malaysian cultural and organizational contexts. Policymakers could use the findings to develop clearer national-level frameworks for ethical supervision, including required competencies, ethical safeguards, and mechanisms for accountability and feedback.

In terms of organizational implications, the research reveals the need for better institutional support systems for site supervisors. Site supervisors often work in isolation without access to consultation, peer support, or ethical review committees. Organizations should establish formal supervision support systems, such as peer review groups or ethical advisory panels, to help site supervisors navigate dilemmas without compromising their integrity or their supervisees' rights. Enhancing interprofessional communication and providing platforms for ethical discussion could also foster a healthier, more transparent workplace culture.

Additionally, the study has implications for technological adaptation in supervision. With the rise of digital platforms for counseling and supervision, ethical concerns about data privacy and confidentiality have become more pressing. The research urges organizations to ensure secure digital infrastructure and to train supervisors in digital ethics, particularly when using cloud-based storage or virtual communication tools. This aspect is especially relevant in post-pandemic work environments where hybrid and remote practices are becoming normalized.

Finally, the research highlights important societal and cultural implications. Site supervisors in Malaysian settings often face ethical challenges influenced by close-knit social relationships, hierarchy, and collectivist values. These cultural dynamics affect how

boundaries are understood and managed. Thus, culturally informed training and supervision models must be developed, taking into account the nuances of Malaysian social norms while still upholding universal ethical standards.

In conclusion, the study not only illuminates the ethical tensions faced by site supervisors but also lays the groundwork for systemic improvements. By addressing training gaps, enhancing policy clarity, and strengthening organizational and technological infrastructures, this research has the potential to contribute meaningfully to ethical and effective counseling supervision in Malaysia and beyond.

5.3 Limitations of Study

Current study is mainly focus on site supervisors in Malaysia. However, there is not much previous literature on site supervisor especially in this country. The available literatures on site supervisors are mostly form other different countries, making it difficult to conduct a thorough review that reflects local cultural values and professional practices relevant to Malaysia. Hence, not much reviews can be done in terms of cultural and customs that are related to Malaysian contexts.

Other than that, the available data and statistics are mostly emphasizing on clinical dan academic supervisors. Thus, it limits the findings for site supervisor. Moreover, much of the available literature is outdated due to the lack of recent research in this area. Consequently, limited contemporary findings could be incorporated or compared within this study, highlighting the need for more updated and locally relevant research on site supervision in Malaysia.

Another notable limitation lies in the use of purposive sampling, which, while appropriate for qualitative research, may introduce selection bias. The participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate, which might have excluded voices from site supervisors with less favourable or more critical experiences. This could potentially skew the data towards more cooperative or reflective individuals, thereby affecting the range of ethical challenges reported.

Lastly, the study may have been constrained by time and resource limitations, affecting the breadth of data collection and analysis. A more longitudinal approach could have captured how site supervisors' ethical decision-making evolves over time, especially as they face recurring or escalating challenges.

5.4 Recommendation

Every research has its own limitations and it is important to make suggestions and amendments in order to improve the research. Besides that, the researcher also can make recommendations to the counsellor, society and also future researcher in order to make this kind of study is applicable in daily life. Means that, this kind of research, is not only will be a bundle of papers with words in it, but also give benefits to others in a practical way.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to improve ethical supervision practices among site supervisors. From the counsellor's perspective, it is crucial that site supervisors are equipped with the necessary knowledge, ethical awareness, and decision-making skills. Therefore, it is recommended that structured and mandatory training programs focused on supervision ethics be developed and made available for current and future site supervisors.

It is also recommended that formal supervision contracts be introduced at the beginning of every practicum placement to clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and ethical expectations between site supervisors and supervisees. This not only enhances the professionalism of the supervision process but also protects both parties in ethically complex situations.

For future research, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted with a broader sample of site supervisors across different regions and cultural backgrounds in Malaysia to gain deeper and more diverse insights into ethical supervision practices. Comparative studies between clinical, educational, and organizational settings would also be valuable in identifying context-specific challenges and best practices.

Additionally, future researchers should consider exploring the impact of structured ethics training programs on the competencies and decision-making abilities of site supervisors over time. Such longitudinal studies can offer important data on the effectiveness of interventions and contribute to the development of a standardized ethical supervision model that fits the Malaysian context. The research become broader and the findings will be more interesting since the research also take the internal and external into account as the elements that will give impact to the site supervisors in Malaysian organizations.

5.5 Conclusion

The journey of exploring ethical dilemmas & challenges among site supervisor in organisations setting has offered us a deeper understanding of the real-world complexities they face and valuable insights for their future counseling practice. Through the voices of six site supervisors from various institutions, this study uncovered how ethical decision-making

is shaped by the dynamic interplay between professional standards, personal values, organizational culture, and institutional demands. These findings highlight the importance of equipping site supervisors with the right tools, support systems, and ethical frameworks to guide their actions confidently and responsibly.

This study emphasizes that ethical supervision requires more than technical competence. Site supervisors must be equipped with critical thinking skills, emotional resilience, and the ability to make ethically sound decisions under pressure. Equally important is the presence of organizational structures that promote ethical awareness and provide clear guidance. The findings underscore the importance of equipping site supervisors with the right tools, support systems, and ethical frameworks to guide their actions confidently and responsibly. Institutions must recognize the weight of supervisory roles and respond with adequate training, mentorship, and policy development.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing awareness that ethical supervision requires more than personal experience or good intentions. It requires structure, support, and commitment. As the counseling profession continues to evolve in complexity, especially in response to societal, technological, and institutional changes, there must be ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of supervision. This can be achieved through continuous professional development, reflective practice, ethical dialogue, and an openness to reform outdated practices. By doing so, we ensure that site supervisors are not only effective mentors but also ethical leaders who uphold the integrity of the counseling profession.

In summary, this study has shown that effective supervision depends not only on professional knowledge but also on the presence of strong ethical foundations and supportive

environments. Kitchener's Five Ethical Principles—autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice, and fidelity, proved essential in understanding and guiding the actions of supervisors facing ethical dilemmas. Moving forward, integrating these principles into supervision training, institutional policies, and counselor education programs will enhance the ethical quality of supervision. By addressing the dilemmas and challenges identified in this research, the counseling profession in Malaysia can continue to grow in integrity, professionalism, and effectiveness.

5.6 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, this chapter summarizes the research with an addition of recommendations and implications of the study. As this is the last chapter of current research, hence this particular chapter gives an overview of the study as a whole.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A INFORMATION SHEET

Research Topic: **Exploring Ethical Dilemmas & Challenges Among Site Supervisors in Organisation.**

My name is Anis Najihah Binti Ahmad Nazri (82428), and I am currently conducting my Final Year Project titled “Exploring Ethical Dilemmas & Challenges Among Site Supervisors in Organisations”.

This research aims to explore the ethical dilemmas and challenges faced by site supervisors, particularly in relation to boundary limitations and supervisory knowledge. I am reaching out to invite you to participate in this study, as your insights would be invaluable in understanding these challenges. The research involves an interview session that will take approximately one hour. Please be assured that your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Participation in this research is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time. If you choose to withdraw, any data you have provided will be securely destroyed, and there will be no consequences for discontinuing your participation. If you are willing to take part, kindly complete the attached consent form. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, feel free to contact me via email at 82428@siswa.unimas.my. I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration and hope that you will be able to contribute to this research.

APPENDIX B
CONSENT LETTER



Research Topic: Exploring Ethical Dilemmas & Challenges Among Site Supervisors in Organisation.

Participant

I have read the participant Information Sheet, which explains the nature of the research. The information has been explained to me and all my questions have been satisfactorily answered.

I have been given a copy of the Information Sheet to keep. I am happy to be interviewed and for the interview to be tape-recorded as part of this research.

I understand that I do not have to answer particular questions if I do not want to and that I can withdraw at any time without consequences to myself.

I agree that research data gathered from the results of the study may be published provided my name or any identifying data is not used.

I have also been informed that I may not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study.

I understand that all information provided by me is treated confidential and will not be released by the researchers to a third party unless required to do so by law.

Signature of Participant

Date

Researcher

I have fully explained to (participant's name) the nature and purpose of the research, and the procedures to be employed. I have provided the participant with a copy of the Information Sheet.

Anis Najihah

Signature of Researcher

Date

APPENDIX C
CORRECTED SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTION

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (PILOT TEST DONE)

1. **Profiling the site supervisors's background/demographic data, including theorem and academic background.**

No	Profiling Demographic
1.	Name
2.	Gender
3.	Ethnic
4.	Age
5.	Higher Institution Level/Name
6.	Programme
7.	Current Position Role
8.	Years of Supervising

2. **Exploring Ethical Dilemmas, Boundary Limitations, Confidentiality Challenges, and Competency Gaps in Counseling Supervision: Perspectives from Site Supervisors**

No	Factors
1.	Ethical Dilemmas 1. Can you describe any ethical dilemmas you have encountered while supervising your supervisees? 2. How do you navigate situations where ethical guidelines conflict with organizational policies? 3. Have you ever faced a situation where you had to choose between confidentiality and organizational transparency? If so, how did you handle it?

	4. What strategies or frameworks do you use to assess ethical dilemmas in supervision? 5. In your experience, what are the most frequent ethical dilemmas faced by site supervisors, and why do you think they occur?
2.	Boundary Limitations 1. What are some challenges you face in maintaining professional boundaries with your supervisees? 2. Have you encountered situations where dual relationships (e.g., personal-professional overlap) affected your supervision? 3. How did you manage them?
3.	Confidentiality 1. How do you handle confidentiality concerns when dealing with sensitive supervisee issues? 2. Have you ever been pressured by higher management to disclose confidential supervisees information? How did you respond? 3. In virtual or online supervision settings, what challenges do you face in maintaining confidentiality, and how do you address them? 4. What policies or guidelines does your organization have in place to protect confidentiality in supervision?
4.	Competency Gaps & Training Needs 1. Do you feel adequately trained to address ethical dilemmas in supervision? Why or why not? 2. Have you received formal training on ethical supervision, or is your knowledge mainly from experience? 3. What are some areas where you believe site supervisors need additional training or support? 4. How do you stay updated on ethical guidelines and best practices in counseling supervision? 5. Do you think a standardized training program for ethical supervision should be implemented in your organization? Why or why not?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SESSIONS WITH PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPANT	LINK
Participant 1 (UKM)	https://unimasmy.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/82428_siswa_unimas_my/_layouts/15/doc2.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B1b999836-036e-41cc-8ab0-7676dc5848f5%7D&action=editnew
Participant 2 (Bodhi Counselling Centre)	https://unimasmy.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/82428_siswa_unimas_my/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B3d2c4ab8-4d64-4f62-aab9-e8d43169e239%7D&action=editnew
Participant 3 (Bodhi Counselling Centre)	https://unimasmy.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/82428_siswa_unimas_my/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B8a194a9e-1a8e-420b-829b-c26bffb575e0%7D&action=editnew
Participant 4 (UNIMAS)	https://unimasmy.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/82428_siswa_unimas_my/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7Bb9d14319-def1-4bbd-9b78-030f94ff7705%7D&action=editnew
Participant 5 (IPK Kuching)	https://unimasmy.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/82428_siswa_unimas_my/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7Bc4e3d92b-1f13-4ce1-8977-4268cfa4a994%7D&action=editnew
Participant 6 (PERKESO)	https://unimasmy.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/82428_siswa_unimas_my/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B2eb46630-d5bd-4d66-b65c-a10e65ed0b0d%7D&action=editnew

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KMC3104 Final Year Project (II) Assessment Rubrics – Supervisor (80%)

Name of Student: ANIS NAJIHAH BINTI AHMAD NAZRI

Matric Number: 82428

Program of Study: COUNSELLING

Title of FYP: EXPLORING ETHICAL DILEMMAS & CHALLENGES AMONG SITE SUPERVISORS IN ORGANISATION

Categories	Exemplary 4	Good 3	Developing 2	Insufficient 1
Title & Abstract (5%)				
Title	Title is informative, succinct, and descriptive of key	Title is relevant, descriptive of key issues/topic, context,	Title is relevant but lacks description of key issues/topic, context,	Title is irrelevant or fails to offer appropriate details of

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	issues/topic, context, and methodology of the proposed study.	or methodology of the proposed study.	or methodology of the proposed study.	the proposed study.
Abstract	Concisely states the background, research question, objectives, methodology, results, and conclusion.	Clearly states the background, research question, objectives, methodology, results, and conclusion.	States the background, research question, objectives, methodology, results, and conclusion. but includes vague or confusing information.	- Does not clearly state background, research question, objectives, methodology, results, and conclusion. - Information provided is inaccurate or irrelevant to the study.
Chapter 1, 2 & 3 Introduction, Literature Review & Methodology (15%)				
Introductory paragraph(s), research questions, or hypotheses	- Clearly identifies and discusses research focus/purpose of research - Research focus is clearly grounded in previous research/	- Limited discussion of research focus/purpose of research - Research focus is less well-grounded in previous research/	- Minimal discussion of research focus/purpose of research - Research focus is not well-grounded in previous research/	- Little or no discussion of research focus/purpose of research - Research focus not grounded in previous research/ theoretically

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	theoretically relevant literature • Significance of the research is clearly identified (how it adds to previous research) • Research questions/hypotheses are clearly articulated.	theoretically relevant literature • Significance of the research is not as clearly identified (how it adds to previous research) • Research questions/hypotheses are described but not as well articulated.	theoretically relevant literature • Significance of the research is not clearly identified (how it adds to previous research) • Research questions/hypotheses are not well articulated.	relevant literature • Significance of the research is not identified (how it adds to previous research) Research questions/hypotheses are poorly articulated or are absent altogether.
Literature Review/Theoretical Framework	• Comprehensive literature review. Includes current and landmark literature highly relevant to the topic. Establishes an advanced theoretical/conceptua	• Complete literature review with sound organization. Includes very few non-referred sources and provides current research relevant to the field and the topic.	• Partially complete and somewhat disorganized. Includes few non-refereed sources. Establishes a basic theoretical/conceptual framework for the	• Incomplete or disorganized. Includes an inappropriate number of non-refereed sources. Fails to establish an appropriate theoretical/conceptual

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	I framework for the research topic.	Establishes a sound and proficient theoretical/conceptua I framework for the research topic.	research topic.	framework for the research topic.
Methodology	- Provides accurate, thorough description of how the data was collected, what/how many data sources were analysed, plan of analysis or measurement instrument, research context. - Methods are highly appropriate and are directly linked to the purpose and research	- Description of how the data was collected, what/how many data sources were analysed, plan of analysis or measurement instrument, research context is adequate but limited. - Methods appear sound, appropriate, and related to purpose and	- Description of how the data was collected, what/how many data sources were analysed, plan of analysis or measurement instrument, research context is somewhat confusing/not clearly articulated. - Methods appear to be appropriate and related to purpose and research questions	- Description of how the data was collected, what/how many data sources were analysed, plan of analysis or measurement instrument, research context is very confusing/not articulated sufficiently. - Methods appear inappropriate or unrelated to purpose

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	questions.	research questions.		and research questions. Data analysis is incomplete and inappropriate.
Chapter 4 Findings/Results & Discussion (20%)				
Presentation (Tables, Figures)	Data are clearly organized using appropriate styles (tables, graph, chart, etc.).	Data are organized using appropriate styles (tables, graph, chart, etc.).	Data are moderately organized using appropriate styles (tables, graph, chart, etc.).	Data are not organized using appropriate styles (tables, graph, chart, etc.).
Accuracy of Results Interpretation	- Results are accurate and scientifically presented. - Statistical analyses (if used) are appropriate tests and are accurately interpreted.	- Results are mostly accurate and scientifically presented. - Statistical analyses (if used) are appropriate tests but are not accurately	- Results are partially accurate and scientifically presented. - Statistical analyses (if used) are inappropriate tests and/or are not accurately interpreted.	- Results are inaccurate, and not scientifically presented. - Statistical analyses (if used) are inappropriate tests and/or are not accurately interpreted.

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		interpreted.		
Addressing Research Objectives/Questions	Interpretations/analysis of results are thoughtful and insightful, are clearly informed by the study's results, and thoroughly address how they supported, refuted, and/or informed the research questions/hypotheses	Interpretations/analysis of results are sufficient but somewhat lacking in thoughtfulness and insight, not as clearly informed by the study's results, and do not as thoroughly address how they supported, refuted, and/or informed the research questions/hypotheses	Interpretations/analysis of results lacking in thoughtfulness and insight, are not clearly informed by the study's results, and do not adequately address how they supported, refuted, and/or informed the research questions/hypotheses	Interpretations/analysis of results severely lacking in thoughtfulness and insight, are not informed by the study's results, and do not address how they supported, refuted, and/or informed the research questions/hypotheses.
Discussion	Able to explain the strength and weakness, justify the	Able to explain the strength and weakness of the	Able to explain the strength and weakness of the results in line	Able to discuss but limited to current findings. Not able to

	main results, compare, and criticise results with previous studies/literature to satisfy and support the objectives of the study.	results in line with the objectives of the study and compare the results with previous study or standard.	with the objectives of the study. No comparisons with other study.	explain the strength and weakness of the results.
Chapter 5 Summary, Conclusion & Recommendation (20%)				
Implication	Potential implications of study clearly outlined.	Potential implications of study outlined.	Potential implications of study not clearly outlined.	Little or no discussion of the potential implications of the study.
Limitation	Discusses the limitations of the study and how these limitations moderate conclusions; offers	Discusses the limitations of the study and how these limitations moderate conclusions; offers	Minimal discussion of the limitations of the study and how these limitations moderate conclusions; does not	Little or no discussion of the limitations of the study and does not offer solutions.

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	appropriate solutions.	reasonable solutions.	offer solutions.	
Further Recommendations	- Recommendations for using this research in other fields of study is considered and examples of potential uses are given. - Consideration is given to how this research might be continued in the future.	Recommendations are made and consideration is given to how this research might be continued but there is little to no discussion of the potential use of the study.	The need for future research is included yet the discussion is vague and does not address other fields of research.	Little or no mention of future research.
Summation and Conclusion	- Have a basic conclusion to the chapter and thesis. - Re-articulates research question. - Summarize key concepts in chapter. - Provides a profound	- Have a basic conclusion to the chapter and thesis. - Re-articulates research question. - Summarize key concepts in chapter.	- Have a basic conclusion to the chapter and thesis. - Re-articulates research question.	Have a basic conclusion to the chapter and thesis.

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	ending, make it engaging and meaningful to the reader.			
Writing and Formatting (10%)				
Writing Style, Clarity & Formatting	• The FYP is very well written. Sentences and flow of content are easy to read and understand. • No spelling & grammar mistakes • FYP follows standard APA format.	• The FYP is well written but occasionally some points are difficult to understand. • Minimal spelling & grammar mistakes • Standard APA format is fairly used. •	• The FYP is well written but occasionally some points are difficult to understand. • Noticeable spelling and grammar mistakes • Standard APA format is fairly used.	• The FYP is too difficult to understand, or plagiarized works are presented. • Excessive spelling and/or grammar mistakes • FYP does not follow standard APA format.
Citation & References	All facts and information are clearly cited with references.	• Some facts and information are not clearly cited. • Some missing	• Minimal citations • Missing references	• No citations • Missing references

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		references.		
Aptitude & Logbook (10%)				
Meeting Frequency (The minimum number of formal contacts between FYP students and Supervisor(s) is 6 per semester)	• => 6 meetings	• 5 meetings	• < 5 meetings	• Hardly meet, < 2 meetings
Logbook Report	• Comprehensive description of • progress from the beginning of the FYP. Process.	• Adequate description of progress from the beginning of the FYP process.	• Brief description of progress from the beginning of the FYP process.	• Does not include any description of progress from the beginning of the FYP process.
Work Ethic	• Student has kept continuous contact during the work and	• With only a few exceptions, the student has been on	• The student has been late in sending deliverables in a way	• The student has a serious problem with keeping to deadlines.

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	has been on time in sending deliverables	time in sending deliverables and in reporting their progress.	that have hampered the process. The supervisor had to prompt the students with questions about the status of the work.	The supervisor has not been able to get a picture of the status of the work during the FYP.
Initiative & Effort	Student has an excellent initiative to complete the FYP, with extra ideas exploration, two-way discussion, and exchange of information.	Student has a good initiative to complete the FYP and demonstrated effort to explore ideas outside the proposed idea by supervisor.	Student has adequate initiative and effort to complete the FYP.	Student lacks initiative and effort to complete the FYP.

Notes:

Mark calculation:

If mark given is 1: $1/4 \times 10 =$
2.5 %

If mark given is 2: $2/4 \times 10 =$
5.0 %

If mark given is 3: $3/4 \times 10 =$
7.5 %

If mark given is 4: $4/4 \times 10 =$
10.0 %

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General Comments (Suggestion for Improvement)

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Supervisor:

Date:

	Marks awarded
Title & Abstract (5%)	
Chapter 1, 2 & 3: Introduction, Literature Review & Methodology (15%)	
Chapter 4: Findings/Results & Discussion (20%)	
Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusion & Recommendation (20%)	
Writing & Formatting (10%)	
Aptitude & Logbook (10%)	
Total	