

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The current qualitative descriptive phenomenological study aims to explore, understand, and describe the roles of religion in guiding the lived experience of self-care practices among Malaysian counselors involved in crisis work and how this interplay affects their functioning. Three research questions were developed to guide the study in examining the phenomenon within its context:

- i. How does religion play a role in guiding self-care experience?
- ii. What is the experience of Malaysian crisis counselors in self-care practices?
- iii. How do crisis counselors perceive the impact of the interplay between religion and self-care practices on their personal and professional functioning?

This chapter discusses the emergent findings of the study derived from the analysis and interpretation of in-depth interview transcripts and reflective forms from each participant. The first section presents the demographic data of the participants, providing background details of those involved in the study. Subsequent sections outline the findings related to each research question. Descriptive quotes from participant interviews are provided to further illustrate their experiences and support the themes that emerged from the data.

4.2 Demographic Information of Research Participants

The research participants were selected through a purposive sampling approach, based on the following inclusion criteria: 1) the participants must be working in the public sector as Psychology Officers; 2) the participants must be registered counselors; 3) the participants must have working experience in any of the following settings: Ministry of Health, Department of Royal Malaysia Police, Social Welfare Department, or Malaysian Prison Department; 4) they have at least three years of concurrent working experience in crisis work at selected settings; and 5) the participants must belong to one of the following religions: Muslim, Christian, Hindu, or Buddhist. Additionally, participants who consented to be interviewed and recorded were considered. Those who meet the inclusion criteria but are unwilling to be interviewed and recorded will not be selected.

The selection process eventually identified thirteen qualified participants. The participants who took part in this study ranged in age from 37 to 54. They represented four different religions: Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Their years of professional experience ranged from 10 to 28. Brief descriptions of the participants' information are provided in Table 4.1. To maintain privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used in place of the participants' names.

Table 4.1: Brief Information of Research Participants

No.	Participant's Background	Years of Services	Setting of Experience/ Types Crisis cases	Religion
1.	Pseudonyms: Zudi Age: 39 Gender: Male Level of Education: Master's Degree	13 (5 years in crisis work)	Prison Department (Adjustment issues and suicidal attempts among prisoners, and crisis in death-row inmates)	Islam
2.	Pseudonyms: Lai Age: 41 Gender: Female Level of Education: Master's Degree	12 (9 years in crisis work)	Social Welfare Department (Human trafficking-related crisis and psychological issues among female illegal immigrants)	Buddhism
3.	Pseudonyms: Ram Age: 54 Gender: Male Level of Education: Master's Degree	15 (15 years in crisis work)	Social Welfare Department (Domestic violence, marital conflict, natural disaster crises, and MH370 ambiguous loss crisis)	Hinduism

4.	Pseudonyms: Wince Age: 38 Gender: Male Level of Education: Bachelor's Degree	12 (12 years in crisis work)	Social Welfare Department (Domestic violence, homicide-related crises, children's sexual offense crises, natural disaster crises, elderly-related issues, and adolescent offenders' developmental crises)	Christianity
5.	Pseudonyms: Arul Age: 53 Gender: Male Level of Education: Master's Degree	28 (28 years in crisis work)	Health Department (Parasuicide cases, postvention, rape cases, and mental health-related crises)	Islam
6.	Pseudonyms: Athy Age: 38 Gender: Female Level of Education: Master's Degree	13 (5 years in crisis work)	Social Welfare Department (Natural disaster crises, tragic incident-related crises, MH370 ambiguous loss crisis, marital conflicts, and beyond-controlled teenagers' developmental crises)	Hinduism
7.	Pseudonyms: Geena Age: 38 Gender: Female Level of Education: Bachelor's Degree	13 (13 years in crisis work)	Social Welfare Department (Natural disaster crises, tragic incident-related crises, domestic violence cases, marital conflicts, and beyond-controlled teenagers' developmental crises)	Christianity

8.	Pseudonyms: Reina Age: 44 Gender: Female Level of Education: Master's Degree	11 (11 years in crisis work)	Social Welfare Department (Natural disaster crises, tragic incident-related crises, rape victim crises, domestic violence cases, and beyond-controlled teenagers' developmental crises)	Christianity
9.	Pseudonyms: Nora Age: 46 Gender: Female Level of Education: PhD	20 (11 years in crisis work)	Social Welfare Department (Natural disaster crises, tragic incident-related crises, domestic violence cases, elderly crises, people with disabilities developmental crises, and MH370 ambiguous loss crisis)	Islam
10.	Pseudonyms: Ying Age: 38 Gender: Female Level of Education: Master's Degree	12 (12 years in crisis work)	Royal Malaysia Police (Rape victims-related crises, domestic violence cases, child sexual abuse cases, child physical abuse cases, child crime witness-related crises, child suspect crises, tragic death involving children, and criminal-related crises among victims and their families)	Buddhism
11.	Pseudonyms: Anju Age: 37 Gender: Female Level of Education: Master's Degree	14 (10 years in crisis work)	Social Welfare Department (Natural disaster crises, tragic incident-related crises, domestic violence cases, depression issues, incest cases, marital issues, suicidal attempt cases, and beyond-controlled teenagers' developmental crises)	Hinduism

12.	Pseudonyms: Dil Age: 39 Gender: Female Level of Education: Master's Degree	15 (15 years in crisis work)	Social Welfare Department (Natural disaster crises, tragic incident-related crises, beyond-controlled teenagers' developmental crises, and marital conflicts) Royal Malaysia Police (Rape victims-related crises, domestic violence cases, child sexual abuse cases, child physical abuse cases, child crime witness-related crises, child suspect crises, criminal suspect issues, and criminal-related crises among victims and their families)	Buddhism
13.	Pseudonyms: Azna Age: 57 Gender: Female Level of Education: Master's Degree	12 (11 years in crisis work)	Royal Malaysia Police (Rape victims-related crises, domestic violence cases, child sexual abuse cases, child physical abuse cases, child crime witness-related crises, child suspect crises, criminal suspect issues, and criminal-related crises among victims and their families)	Islam

Participant 1 – Zudi

Zudi was the first research participant I interviewed, and I conducted two in-depth interview sessions with him. Both sessions took place at his new office, and he warmly welcomed me during our initial meeting. He assured me that he would be available to provide further information if needed. Zudi is 39 years old Muslim man and has been working as a Psychology Officer since 2008. He obtained his undergraduate degree from one of the Malaysian public international universities, specializing in psychology. He also holds a master's degree in drug abuse counseling, which qualifies him as a

registered counselor. Zudi's professional journey began at the Department of Royal Malaysia Police. He later worked for a state secretary's office before being transferred to the prison department. During his five-year tenure in the Prison Department, he gained extensive experience in crisis intervention, particularly with prisoners who had received the death penalty. Currently, he is employed in a ministry. Zudi openly shared that in the initial phase of his service in the prison, he experienced shock while listening to the prisoners' cases. He also admitted to feeling upset about being posted in that particular setting. He acknowledged having a skeptical mindset toward prisoners. However, as time passed and he gained more experience, he successfully adapted to the environment. He implemented self-care practices to cope with the demands of his job.

Participant 2 – Lai

I conducted interviews with Lai using the Google Meet platform because the strict procedures at her workplace prohibit non-employees from bringing recording devices, including mobile phones. Lai expressed concern a few days before the interview session, voicing doubt about her ability to provide sufficient information for my study. However, I reassured her that she was capable and that the interview would be conducted less formally. Eventually, she agreed to participate and share her experiences. Lai is 41 years 41-year-old female officer who has adopted Buddhism as her religion. She has twelve years of working experience as a Psychology Officer in the public service with nine years of experience in crisis work. She is a registered counselor and obtained her first degree in counseling from a local university. She further pursued a master's degree in counseling psychology. Initially, Lai began her career at the Social Welfare Department, where she served for nine years. Presently, she is working at the Department of Royal Malaysia Police. Lai shared that she encountered numerous crisis

and trauma cases during her tenure at the Social Welfare Department, which differed significantly from her current workplace. In her previous role, she was responsible for providing crisis intervention and therapy to immigrant women who had been rescued from sex trafficking syndicates and abusive employers. She acknowledged that one case had a profound emotional impact on her. However, she managed to overcome the situation by engaging in self-care practices.

Participant 3 – Ram

I met this gentleman at his office after facing some difficulty finding the correct location. I had gotten lost several times and ended up going to the wrong office building. However, upon finally meeting him, I felt a sense of comfort. He exuded a calm demeanor and warmly welcomed me. His presence had a calming effect on me. Before starting the session, we engaged in some small talk. Ram is 54 years old, married, and has a child. He holds a master's degree in counseling and openly shared that he is a strong believer in Hinduism. During our conversation, I was able to glean some wise words from him, influenced by the perspective of Hinduism. He has served at the Social Welfare Department for fifteen years and currently works there as a Psychology Officer with a license as a registered counselor. His vast experience includes providing crisis intervention and counseling in various cases, such as domestic violence, marital conflicts, ambiguous grief resulting from plane disappearance incidents, and natural disaster crises. His religion plays a significant role in his life, serving as the foundation for many of his self-care routines.

Participant 4 – Wince

The fourth participant I interviewed was Wince, and I conducted the interview through the Zoom Meeting platform. Due to the significant distance between our locations, Wince recommended using this platform instead of a face-to-face interview. On the scheduled day of the interview, he was occupied with a crisis intervention session that arose suddenly after receiving a phone call from a client. Consequently, we had to reschedule the interview, and we were able to conduct it the following day. Despite it being our first interaction, Wince was friendly and approachable. Wince, a 38-year-old married Christian man, holds a degree in counseling that qualifies him as a registered counselor. He has worked as a Psychology Officer at the Social Welfare Department for twelve years. Throughout his career, he has gained experience in providing crisis intervention and counseling to victims of domestic violence, homicide, children's sexual offenses, and natural disasters. Additionally, he has worked with adolescent offenders who were placed in a correctional institution under the Department of Social Welfare. He spent nearly seven years in this setting, and he acknowledged that working in the juvenile correctional institution presented the most challenging task in his career. To help balance the difficulties he encountered, he incorporated the teachings of Christianity into his professional life.

Participant 5 – Arul

I met Arul at his office located in one of the public rehabilitation hospitals. Despite his busy schedule, he made a sincere commitment to the interview. However, the interview had to be interrupted several times due to urgent calls he received. Arul, a 53-year-old Muslim male Psychology Officer, has been working in a mental health setting since 1993. He holds both a master's and a bachelor's degree in counseling psychology.

Prior to his current position, he worked in three different hospitals. Arul specializes in providing counseling intervention and therapy for patients with mental health issues. He has extensive experience dealing with cases such as rape and parasuicide. He is recognized as an expert in suicide intervention and therapy, often being referred to cases involving parasuicidal or suicidal individuals. He also offers postvention services to families who have lost a loved one to suicide. Additionally, Arul and his team have developed a therapeutic module for handling suicidal cases, which has become a standard practice in public health facilities. Admitting that the worst part of his job is receiving a call informing him that one of his patients has passed away before recovering from her suicidal attempts, Arul acknowledges the emotional toll it takes. However, he effectively manages his emotions by practicing his self-care routine.

Participant 6 – Athy

The interview with Athy took place in a face-to-face setting at her office in one of the police headquarters. She greeted me warmly with a smile and was willing to remove her face mask during the session. Athy, a 38-year-old Hindu female Psychology Officer, began her career in 2009 after completing her counseling degree in the previous year. She was initially posted in the Social Welfare Department. After serving for five years, she secured a scholarship to pursue her master's in counseling. Upon completing her studies, she returned to offer counseling services to polytechnic students. However, she claimed due to her passion for crisis and trauma intervention, she decided to transfer to a different department. This led her to the state police headquarters where we met. During her time at the Social Welfare Department, Athy provided crisis intervention and trauma counseling to individuals affected by various tragedies and crises, including floods, house fires, hijacked airplanes, marital issues, and challenges with

uncontrollable teenagers. In her current department, she also occasionally offers crisis intervention to police officers. Prior to our interview, she had just finished providing crisis intervention to police officers affected by flooding. Despite dealing with her clients' difficult experiences, Athy shared that it rarely has a significant impact on her. She believes that her experience has made her emotionally resilient and unbreakable.

Participant 7 – Geena

Due to the distance and movement control rules, I conducted an online interview with Geena using the Zoom Meeting platform. Geena, a Christian female officer is based in Sabah state and has four children. Just a few days prior to the interview, she had returned from a course. Geena is a friendly and enthusiastic individual who is eager to share her experiences. She holds high regard for her work at the Social Welfare Department. Geena has dedicated thirteen years to her role in the Social Welfare Department after completing her bachelor's degree in counseling. Throughout her career, she has served individuals from diverse backgrounds and has gained extensive experience in handling life-threatening situations such as earthquakes, floods, and house fires. Additionally, she provides counseling to teenagers dealing with behavioral issues. Geographical constraints present challenges for Geena, as she finds it difficult to visit clients in various parts of her district. Some destinations require over an hour of travel by car. However, this does not hinder her commitment to providing her services. Geena openly shared that she used to be easily touched by her clients' suffering. However, she has learned to maintain control over her emotions. This allows her to offer empathetic services without losing herself in her clients' experiences.

Participant 8 – Reina

The interview with Reina was also conducted online using the Zoom Meeting platform. It took place in the afternoon, following my session with Geena. To my surprise, Reina, a Christian female officer revealed that she works in the same office as Geena, both being from Sabah. We encountered some network problems during the interview, but they were only temporary and did not significantly disrupt our conversation. Reina's career in the public sector began as an assistant social development officer in the Social Welfare Department in Peninsular Malaysia. The entry requirement for this role is a diploma, and she served in that capacity for four years. Although Reina already had a degree in counseling, she initially did not apply to become a Psychology Officer. It was only after feeling the need for a change that she decided to apply for the position. In 2010, she was appointed as a Psychology Officer and was posted to the social welfare office in the Sabah district. Reina demonstrated exceptional adaptability in transitioning to her new role as a Psychology Officer. Recognizing the importance of staying up-to-date with the field, she pursued a master's degree in counseling. After three years, she was transferred to her current office. With her extensive experience in social welfare settings and having served in two different positions within the department, Reina now focuses on providing crisis and trauma intervention to targeted groups, including beyond-controlled teenagers, victims of domestic violence, and survivors of natural disasters. Her previous role as an assistant social development officer taught her the significance of establishing boundaries to prevent negative impacts from the adversities faced by her clients.

Participant 9 – Nora

A few weeks after undergoing her minor surgery, I had the opportunity to conduct a face-to-face interview with Nora, a 45-year-old Muslim female Psychology Officer, at her office. Despite still recovering from a persistent cough following the procedure, Nora displayed unwavering commitment in sharing her extensive twenty years of experience in crisis and trauma intervention. Throughout the interview, we had to pause multiple times to allow her to relieve her coughing episodes. Nora embarked on her career in a social welfare setting in 2002, immediately after completing her bachelor's degree in counseling the previous year. In her seventh year of service, she decided to pursue a master's degree in psychological counseling to further enhance her knowledge and skills. Subsequently, she spent another four years working in social welfare before being transferred to one of the police headquarters. She dedicated three years of her career to that role before undertaking her doctorate. Currently employed in the public service department, Nora has amassed a wealth of experience in handling crisis and trauma cases spanning a wide range of issues. Her expertise extends to social issues, tragic incidents, mental health concerns, and policing matters. Notably, she was deployed to crisis work during both the MH370 incident and the devastating tsunami. Nora firmly believes that her cumulative working experiences have shaped her character, fostering a resilient and compassionate heart in the face of challenging situations.

Participant 10 – Ying

Ying, a Buddhist female Psychology Officer, is based in one of the police headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. I had concerns about finding parking in the area, but fortunately, there was ample parking right in front of her office building. However, the

bustling traffic and occasional ambulance sirens on the roadside did cause some interruptions during the interview. Despite facing difficulty in answering some of the interview questions, Ying expressed her willingness to share what she already knew. Ying disclosed that she had some challenges in fully understanding her religious teachings, but I reassured her that she could still provide valuable insights based on her existing knowledge. After obtaining her master's degree in psychological counseling, she was assigned to the criminal division, where she has been working for twelve years in the public service sector. Her primary responsibility involves providing crisis and trauma intervention to various individuals, including victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, child victims, and juvenile suspects. Ying revealed that cases involving the death of children deeply saddened her. However, she emphasized that she has a supportive social network that helps her cope with the emotional challenges she encounters in her work. Despite the emotional toll, Ying remains committed to her role in providing much-needed support and intervention to those affected by crisis and trauma.

Participant 11 – Anju

During a face-to-face interview, I had the opportunity to visit Anju's office, which was in a neighboring state. On the day of the interview, Anju warmly welcomed me, creating a friendly environment during the meeting. At 39 years old, Anju, a Hindu female officer, has built an extensive career in counseling and psychology. She initially began her journey as a trainee counselor at a general hospital after completing her bachelor's degree in counseling in 2008. Following her work as a counselor at a private university, Anju was appointed as a Psychology Officer in the Social Welfare Department in 2009. She spent nine years there, gaining valuable experience in crisis

and trauma interventions. During this period, she pursued her master's degree in education, specializing in guidance and counseling. In 2018, Anju applied for a transfer to one of the police headquarters, where she has been working until recently. She is grateful for her first posting in the Social Welfare Department, which allowed her to handle numerous crisis and trauma interventions. Her experience includes supporting domestic violence victims, survivors of tragic incidents, out-of-control teenagers, and individuals dealing with depression and suicidal thoughts. Interestingly, Anju's personal experience with depression has played a significant role in shaping her empathic sense and skills when dealing with such cases. During her studies, Anju was diagnosed with depression after enduring bullying. However, she transformed her struggle into a source of strength and resilience. As a Psychology Officer and a fighter against depression, Anju highly values her own life and is keenly aware of any symptoms she may encounter. Her firsthand experience enhances her ability to understand and assist others facing similar challenges. Anju's unique perspective, combined with her professional expertise, makes her a compassionate and knowledgeable Psychology Officer, dedicated to supporting individuals in crisis and helping them navigate through trauma.

Participant 12 – Dil

During an interview conducted via the Zoom Meeting online platform, I had the opportunity to speak with Dil. Dil, a Buddhist female officer who prioritized safety due to the COVID-19 situation at her office, preferred an online session. Despite intermittent network outages that occasionally disrupted the conversation, we managed to complete the interview within a two-hour timeframe. Dil's journey as a Psychology Officer began in 2008, immediately after she completed her bachelor's degree in counseling. At that time, she was assigned to the social welfare department, where she

worked on a wide range of cases. Her responsibilities included assisting individuals dealing with domestic violence, marital problems, natural disasters, tragic incidents, and out-of-control teenagers. Through her work, she gained valuable experience in crisis and trauma intervention. In 2013, Dil obtained her master's degree and was subsequently transferred to one of the police headquarters. Her current assignment places her in the criminal division, where she continues to provide support and intervention to individuals in need. Her clients include victims of domestic violence, survivors of sexual abuse, child victims, and juvenile suspects. In addition to her counseling role, Dil has been called upon to testify in court based on her professional expertise. Dil candidly shared that some of the cases she has handled throughout her career have had an emotional impact on her. However, with the aid of proper training and her vast experience, she has developed effective strategies for managing intense emotions that may arise in such situations. Dil's commitment to her profession and her ability to navigate challenging circumstances with resilience and expertise enable her to provide valuable support to those in need.

Participant 13 – Azna

Despite experiencing several setbacks, including three postponements due to Azna's previous contraction of COVID-19 and subsequent long-term COVID-19 symptoms, I was finally able to interview her. We conducted the interview session via the Zoom Meeting platform. Azna, a Muslim female officer, began by sharing her background, highlighting her impressive career journey. Despite starting in the public sector as a nurse and dedicating twenty-five years to the field, she decided to embark on a new path. After obtaining a degree in counseling, she applied for a Psychology Officer position, ultimately landing a role in one of the public skill-based institutions.

However, despite her anticipation, Azna soon realized that the new environment did not align with her longstanding passion for helping others, which developed over her extensive nursing career. Determined to find the right fit, she pursued a transfer to a police headquarters. Her perseverance paid off, and she was assigned to the criminal division, where she has diligently served for the past decade. Within her role, Azna works with a diverse range of clients, including victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, child victims, and juvenile suspects. She specializes in crisis and trauma intervention, providing much-needed support to those in distress due to crime incidents. In some instances, she also offers counseling to adult suspects to encourage truthful confessions. Azna's expertise has led to numerous occasions where she has been called upon as an expert witness in court cases. Azna firmly believes that her prior experience as a nurse has greatly contributed to her ability to adapt and thrive in her current workplace setting. It has equipped her with a unique perspective and a resilient nature, enabling her to tackle challenges head-on and make a lasting impact in her field.

4.3 Emergent Themes from Participants' Experience

The in-depth interview sessions provided insights into the role of religion in guiding self-care practices among crisis counselors. Participants shared how their religion helps construct positive religious schemas that guide spiritual self-growth and finding meaning in their clients' suffering. These schemas foster positive coping and adaptive self-care practices, consoling their emotions and preventing maladaptive, unethical, or unprofessional behaviors. Incorporating religion into their personal lives and professional work helps crisis counselors embrace meaningful self-care experiences through a dynamic growth process that sparks psychological shifts. This process drives

them to become effective personal and professional providers for themselves, their loved ones, and their clients.

These experiences reflect the counselors' day-to-day encounters with self-care practices during crisis work, incorporating their religion as a guiding force. Their experiences were thematized into three main themes specifically 1) addressing the role of religion, 2) experience of self-care practices, and 3) empowerment of functioning. Each theme has its subthemes, meaning units, and condensed meaning units. Altogether, under 3 themes, there are 28 subthemes, 33 meaning units, and 22 condensed meaning units. A detailed description was presented in the following subheadings, supported by quotes from participants.

4.4 Addressing the Role of Religion

The first theme explores the role of religion in self-care experiences. Religion encompasses beliefs, expectations, and assumptions of religious values that are transmitted through early exposure and interactions within an upbringing setting (Mohd Rosmizi et al., 2015). Religious knowledge is then encoded into cognitive schemas, which serve as frameworks for interpreting future experiences (McCann & Pearlman, 1990b). In the current study, participants were found to appreciate their religion in every experience they encountered during their professional work in crises. They regarded religion as a significant framework that guides in navigating life's challenges. Participants reported that religion plays a role in guiding three important phases of their self-care experience: 1) meaning-making experience, 2) adaptive coping experience, and 3) moral reflection experience. These three phases reflect the subtheme within this overarching theme, each with its meaning units as presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Subthemes and Meaning Units Emerging Under the Theme of Addressing Role of Religion

Subtheme	Meaning units
Religion in Meaning-making Experience	Understanding the crisis
	Understanding the client
	Understanding the role of the counselor
Religion in Adaptive Coping Experience	A non-judgmental platform for emotional release
	Consolation to justify frustration
	Sense of hope
Religion in moral reflection experience	A moral compass for behavior and thought
	A framework for upholding professional ethics
	Guidelines for navigating interpersonal relationships

4.4.1 Religion in Meaning-making Experience

The first subtheme reflects the role of religion in guiding the meaning-making experience. In this study, participants shared their experiences in religious introspection to make sense of their client's experiences. Religion is found to offer transcendental elaboration, providing a safe guide for self-talk sessions that typically arise from client-counselor interactions (Leo et al., 2021). Religion was found to serve as a reference point in defining three important aspects of crisis work, resulting in more insightful self-talk and fewer negative thoughts. These aspects include 1) understanding the crisis, 2) understanding the client, and 3) understanding the role of counselors in the relationship. The inclusion of religion during this reflective meaning-making experience guides participants to develop a more insightful and transcendental perception in interpreting their work in a crisis.

Firstly, religion plays a role in guiding counselors' understanding of their clients' crisis experiences. Participants often incorporated their religion to find meaning in their clients' crisis experiences. The analysis reveals that integrating religion into their process of meaning-making guides participants to perceive crisis incidents in a more transcendental manner, contemplating the wisdom behind the experiences in terms of their origins and purposes. Zudi, Nora, Azna, and Reina believe that crisis is something predetermined by God.

"First, I think we must have faith and believe that what is going on in our lives is not merely what we ask for. Sometimes, we think that what comes to us that we like is good for us, but the truth is that the things we like aren't necessarily good for us. I love this concept. Allah has determined all destiny." – Zudi

"To me, the crisis that has been going on throughout my career is actually God's determination to educate me." – Nora

"Based on religion, for any problems we must go through, we have to endure, we have to deal with it in the best way possible. Like it or not, it was already determined for us to face it. How tragic it is, as a Muslim, that I must accept it as fate." – Azna

"When we talk about crisis, of course it's in a negative aspect. In terms of spirituality, it was already written from the beginning. It is written that crisis will exist, it exists to happen, has happened, and will keep happening in life. It's not always sunshine and rainbows for your whole life." – Reina

Besides them, Lai, Dil, and Anju also viewed crises based on their origin. They believe that crises happen due to karma or fate.

"I said, 'why did this person experience something like this? Why this person, and not someone else?' I've been thinking that way. After that, I think because I prayed, read sutra, and chanted, finally, I think the reason why this person has this experience and not someone else is because of karma." – Lai

"I rarely encounter counter transparent, because in the teachings of Buddha, everything happens for a reason. Perhaps it's because of a previous life, maybe because of fate, maybe because of anything." – Dil

"I don't want to say they deserve it, but if you want to take it in a religious way, I prefer to think if you want to make peace with the trauma and the crisis, then you may be thinking in that way. Maybe something I did is coming back to me, or if this person is doing this to me, then that is this person's karma. They will also pay for it. You can look at it that way." – Anju

In addition, participants also interpreted the purpose of the crisis through a religious lens. Their religious understanding led to various perspectives on the meaning of a crisis. For example, Zudi associates crisis with a gift from God and tends to avoid viewing it as a trial, as he perceives this interpretation as negative.

"After I understood what a test and gift are, I don't like to use the word test, because it sounds negative. Usually, people say that God wants to test you. I feel like, why should I get tested? We question it. This year, I started turning the test into a gift. I see the issue of crisis and trauma in a better way when I put into perspective that what happened to me is a gift." – Zudi

This view contradicts Nora and Ram, who associate crisis with God's trial. However, Ram has his justification for holding this view. He explained that God's trial

through a crisis is not intended as a form of punishment but rather as a calling to the right path. This explanation provides a more positive perspective in understanding a crisis as a trial from God.

“To me, my belief in crisis is that I see all people will be tested. God will test us anywhere and everywhere.” – Nora

“As a hardcore Hindu, crisis is a test. I believe, as a Hindu, God will test us. Not because he wants to punish us. He's not punishing, he's just saying, son, go back to the base of the road. I believe that God is not punishing anyone. He just wants to educate His children to get back on the right path or to remind them that all this is a lesson for them not to live with impunity until they lose their way of life. That's my belief.” – Ram

Meanwhile, Wince associates the crisis with God's training. He explains that in the Old Testament, crises were considered punishments from God, whereas in the New Testament, they are seen as opportunities for growth and improvement. Thus, Wince believes that crises serve as training for the betterment of the individual. His view aligns with Ying and Athy, who also believe that crises occur for a good reason. Additionally, Arul views crises as reflections of God's love. The following are quotes from their statements.

“In Christianity, something happens for several reasons. I don't remember all of it, but as I remember, it was a training. In the Old Testament, it's more of a punishment. If we look at the Old Testament, it's more about if we make a mistake, He will bring a penalty. In the New Testament, according to my understanding, any of the hardships or crises that occurred did not imply punishment. It can just be something that happens

unexpectedly, and it can also be considered training for yourself to be better. It is not interpreted as a punishment.” – Wince

“As far as I know, in general, Buddhism teaches that when there is a challenge (crisis), it is an opportunity for us to learn and grow. This principle has become the principle of my life as well. Whatever challenge I face, I would think of it that way.” – Ying

“I read something from Bhagavad Gita, it's a book for Hinduism, it mentions that whatever happened is for good, whatever doesn't happen is also for good. I keep those words and it is my motto. Thus, this thing happened because of some reason.” – Athy

“Life is like a wheel, and when we have a crisis, it means God loves us. That's what I always say.” – Arul

Secondly, religion plays a role in guiding counselors' understanding of their clients. It helps them avoid adopting judgmental thoughts and instead allows them to define their clients in a more positive light within a religious framework. Religion also guides participants to develop empathy towards their clients and accept them without passing judgment. For instance, Zudi views his clients as individuals in need of help and encouragement, considering his assistance as a form of charitable act. Nora and Ram perceive their clients as individuals sent by God to them, with Ram considering his clients as a divine trust bestowed upon him.

“I've always established in my mind that the prisoner I'm going to meet is a prisoner who needs help and support. Prisoners are likely to have an impact in terms of my own charity.” – Zudi

“For as long as I’ve dealt with them, I assume I’m facing a human being.

That’s it. I always say I’m dealing with humans. In front of me was a man who God entrusted me to help him. It’s not out of that.” – Ram

“When I met this client, when I saw her, it crossed my mind. Oh Allah, luckily Allah quickly brought her to me.” – Nora

Both Lai and Anju tended to approach their clients from a karma perspective. Although the karma principle suggests that individuals may be experiencing a crisis due to past negative actions, they did not view their clients in a judgmental manner. Instead, Lai described her clients as potentially having performed good deeds in their past lives, resulting in a karmic debt that she aimed to repay by helping them in their current lives. On the other hand, Anju acknowledged the influence of past negative karma in the current crisis but avoided adopting a judgmental mindset toward her clients. She believed that such thoughts could generate further negative karma, requiring her to repay it in the future.

“In Buddhism, when we meet someone, there’s something going on before this life. So, in this new life, we’re going to meet that person. It’s like I met you, God sent me the case. Maybe in the previous life I was dealing with trauma and that person helped me, so in this life, God set the opposite. That’s why now I’m helping her back.” – Lai

“For example, there is somebody wronging me, and I feel like they will pay for it. Then something bad happens to that person, so I might say they got this because they wronged me. It’s a payback to you, but the universe did it. If I have a better understanding of my own religion, I will believe that person is paying for what they did, and you will pay for your own thinking. Your thought, that you think this person should get punishment

for what they did. Even that thought is wrong. You will also pay for it because every single action has a reaction. This is very true in Hinduism.”

– Anju

Arul and Wince hold their own unique perspectives regarding their clients. Arul, despite his religious prohibition against any attempt to end life, does not judge his clients as losing their faith. Instead, he views them as individuals who are ill and in need of treatment. On the other hand, Wince admits to facing frustration when dealing with clients who are inmates at a juvenile correctional center. However, his frustration was alleviated after reciting Bible verses about how Jesus treated young children. This led to a shift in his perception, enabling him to see his clients in a more positive light. The statements from both counselors are quoted below.

“I handle them as patients.” – Arul

“I’ve been educated from the beginning that, even though our patients are dead, maybe they killed themselves, it doesn’t necessarily mean they are not Muslim. If you look at his psycho-pathological side, he might not be able to control his anger.” – Arul

“In Christianity, there is something that Jesus once said, ‘Let the children be in front of me.’ During that time, Jesus went to a place to deliver a lesson. There were children playing in front of him, so the adults there scolded them that they shouldn’t play in front of the prophet. However, Jesus reprimanded them. He said, ‘Let them be in front of me, because they are loved by God, and they are innocent. Let them play in front of me, let them listen to what I am saying.’ So, for me, these kids (juvenile inmates), I don’t see them as evil. I look at them as being naughty. I don’t think they’re evil, but they may not be guided.” – Wince

Thirdly, religion also guides counselors in understanding their roles within the intervention relationship. It is observed that the way participants describe their roles is closely linked to how they define their clients. Zudi, Ram, and Arul view their responsibilities as counselors as entrusted duties that they must fulfill.

“Over time, when the thought leads to good things, the emotion is automatically better. God has put me here and given me a chance to deal with these people, to help them, so I must help them. I must hold my trust. The heart will feel calm.” – Zudi

“Why didn't she go to another counselor? Why was it that on that day, I had to see her, when there were ten other counselors there? Why wasn't she consulting someone else? Why me? I assume it meant that God is giving me a chance. He trusts me. God trusts me.” – Ram

“As a counselor, I took the trust. He was telling me stories and I'm going to explore. I looked for his issue. I consider it a trust. I gave him therapy, a steady and competent session.” – Ram

“I consider this as part of my responsibility. As a servant of God, we just do it. For me, I must be humble, and then as a servant, I have to be responsible for the trust that was given to me.” – Arul

“My responsibility as a Muslim counselor. I guided her to say shahadah, made sure she performed repentance. True repentance, many times.” – Arul

Anju, Geena, Reina, and Nora described their role as an act of worship to serve God.

“I believe my service to people is a service to God.” – Anju

“As a counselor, I must perform my assigned tasks well, and with prudence. I view my work as my worship, so I must perform well.” – Geena

“I consider my current job as a counselor, to be my service to God. When it goes well, I feel like I treated God, so I must do it very well and as sincerely as I can.” – Reina

“In the early stages, this is something I couldn't accept, but I trusted God, that this is the destiny. God tested her and at that moment, God tested us also, to see how we would help her. That's my view. I used to say, 'Oh Allah, I want to work. Indeed, I want to help them in their affairs, and this is my worship.' I used to say that when I applied for a job. I want a job that I can make as my charity for my afterlife.” – Nora

Athy, Azna, Ying, and Dil expressed their religious perspectives on helping behavior and how it relates to their roles as counselors. Athy and Azna stated that their religion encourages helping behavior, even in the form of simple support. On the other hand, Ying and Dil described their roles as counselors in helping relationships as a means of generating positive karma.

“In Hinduism, it states, it's okay that you don't help that person by giving money, property, wealth, or material things, but helping people sincerely, even in terms of support, is better than not helping people at all. Then, for every help we offer, we have to do it sincerely without expecting retribution. Indeed, this is mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita, that I mentioned earlier.” – Athy

“We help in counseling services in terms of moral support and so on. The concept of a helping relationship is inherent in my line of work, and it is parallel to what religion demands.” – Azna

“In my religion, if we do good, we'll get good karma. Doing bad will bring bad karma. So, I view my career as an opportunity to make good karma. I always thought of it that way.” –Ying

“We are the person that helps the other person. We are the person who guides the other person. So, in a religious way, it also has cause and effect. Last time, we were being helped by someone and now we can help other people. Returning the good karma.” – Dil

In addition, Wince and Anju described their roles as counselors as representatives of their religion. Wince viewed his role as an ambassador of God, while Anju perceived herself and other helping professionals as messengers of God.

“A priest once said, 'what we do is reflecting our religion. You are an agent of your religion. We are the ambassadors of God.' If I don't perform, if I don't do my work properly, it reflects on my religion.” – Wince

“God Himself won't come down to help you. God will send messengers. God will send people to help you, and that's what we are. I'm not talking only about counselors. All the other professions are just the same. We are a messenger of God, doing our job. And what we are doing is we are giving our presence to them. That is very spiritual.” – Anju

4.4.2 Religion in Adaptive Coping Experience

The second subtheme implies the contribution of religion in guiding the adaptive coping experience. Regarding coping mechanisms, religion can serve as a source of both solace and stress, depending on how individuals interpret and comprehend their religious beliefs in relation to the traumatic event (Courtois, 2017). According to

Pargament (1997) and Syed Mohamad Hilmi et al. (2023) having religious beliefs can offer a unique sense of direction, hope, trust in divine support, and purpose that other forms of social support may not be able to provide, especially in the aftermath of a traumatic event. In addition, religion can help individuals acknowledge their limitations and find appreciation for what they cannot control. Participants in this study were found to incorporate religion in navigating the coping experience. Religion provides them with 1) a non-judgmental platform for emotional release, 2) consolation to justify frustration, and 3) a sense of hope. These experiences emerged as meaning units for this subtheme.

First, religion offers individuals a space free of judgment to soothe their emotions during challenging moments. By practicing religion, individuals can express their feelings privately and take solace in the reassurance that they are not being judged by a Higher Power. Different religions offer various techniques to help people cope with tough times, such as prayer, fasting, reciting holy verses, chanting, and meditation. (Isaacs, 2000; Abdul Aziz, 2001; Sharma, 2002). Additionally, religion also provides recommendations for appropriate emotional reactions in encountering difficult situations including patience, surrendering, repentance, endurance, mindfulness, right understanding, and right thought for wisdom (Thrane, 2010; Thathong, 2012; Tan & Castillo, 2014; Rouzati, 2018).

Based on the analysis, participants find solace when they practice their religious teachings and practices. Ram and Wince used to allocate a special time to converse with God, freely expressing their feelings, finding peace, and seeking guidance. Nora also performed a similar practice. She found her peace when she expressed her feelings and hope in her night prayers. Meanwhile, Lai usually takes leave to concentrate on her religious practice when she encounters a stressful situation. Similarly, Dil practiced mindfulness techniques from her religious teaching to be aware of her emotion and gain

calmness. Ying prefers going to the temple to pray whereas Athy has a special room to pray in her house, providing her with a composed environment to release her emotions. Geena also found solace when she referred to God about her difficulty. All of them shared their experience as follows.

"My religious belief gives me a very open space to share my problems, because I know He has no interruptions, no evaluation and no judgment. There are no such things. God doesn't judge me, wrong or right. He's listening." – Ram

"For example, as I mentioned earlier, I talked with God. It is just a kind of conversation (where) I am asking (and) I am answering it with the belief that the answer might be from God. But sometimes even if the question turns out to be no answer, I just ask. Why is this happening? Could you show me the way how I could overcome this and so on?" – Wince

"I pray when there's something undesirable that occurs. It can relieve my burden a little bit. I will no longer feel tired." – Wince

"I have developed the habit of performing the night prayer, because during the night prayer, we can have a full conversation with God. I'll perform it at times when I may experience disappointment and so on. For me, I'll make ablution and pray. I submit my supplication, cry and so on. After that, I will feel relieved. That is my true source of strength. There is no other way." – Nora

"When I'm feeling tired, I will take a leave. Then, during the holiday, I will continue to do my religious practices." – Lai

"It's important for me to have a peaceful mind. That's why I'm going to keep praying, read Heart Sutra, and chant to ensure peace of mind and soul so that I can handle the case." – Lai

"Mindfulness in Buddhist teaching is also very important. We need to observe why we get angry; we observe why we are sad. We need to observe why this triggers our feelings. So, when we are observing that, it helps to calm us down." – Dil

"If I have a problem, or I feel like I haven't gone in the temple for a long time, I will go and pray." – Ying

"Prayer will calm us down. Then, it will remind us that there are a lot of things we can't control." – Ying

"I have my own prayer room. It's self-care for me. I can cool down my emotions, stress, pressure, everything." – Athy

"When I have problems, I can think clearly because I remember God. I try to seek guidance from God about what I should do, and I feel better when I incorporate my own religious beliefs into my life." – Geena

Additionally, Anju stated as a counselor, one must follow religious practices to attain self-calm and clear and rational thoughts. She was quoted based on her reflective form. She also stated her religious teaching command her to express her problems to God.

"A counselor needs to adhere to their religious practices to attain inner peace, clear and rational thinking, in line with human values, so that the life they lead will always move toward goodness." – Anju (reflective form)

"Our religion teaches us that when you have a problem, talk about it, at least to God. And then God will guide you. He will bring a feeling that you should go and talk to people. You should seek help." - Anju

In support of Anju's argument, Reina divulged that in times of difficulty and adversity, she has consistently sought solace and direction from her faith in God. It has been her unwavering source of comfort and guidance, enabling her to navigate through the tough times.

"That's the principle. When we were teenagers, we were told that. So, no matter what problems arise, there is no other way, we must turn back to God." – Reina

Second, in guiding adaptive coping religion also provides consolation to justify frustration. Many people turn to religion during times of crisis, finding comfort in the belief that their difficulties are part of a larger, positive plan created by a benevolent higher power (Pargament, 2005). This perspective helps individuals view their struggles as lessons to be learned rather than insurmountable obstacles. As a human, the participants also experienced frustration. It is quite common to encounter undesirable outcomes in crisis work as well as in personal life, leading to frustration. Participants reported using a variety of external and internal resources from their cognitive schemas and frame of reference to justify their frustration. But they found consolation in assimilating or reframing the frustration into their religious schemas. Religion provides satisfactory and less disruptive justification to navigate frustration and instill perseverance.

Wince reported he encountered frustration pertaining to juvenile inmates' disciplinary problems. Geena felt upset about her client's decision to return to her

abusive husband. Both found a religious explanation behind the experience to get rid of frustration.

“I don't see them as evil, but they may not be educated well and there is also the environmental factor. When living in a dormitory, the issue of bullying and so on causes them to be very selfish and makes them hypervigilant. That's where I've been frustrated many times, But the thing (the words of Jesus) reminds me. They are just kids. We still have to teach them.” – Wince

“We're just following (the client's developments). I think that is probably her fate. It's that path she took. The important thing is that I've tried my best to help her at that time.” – Geena

Furthermore, Zudi added his religious understanding that God is all-knowing of what is good and bad for humans, strengthens his belief that there is a lesson behind every challenging situation. His argument was supported by Nora, Athy, and Azna based on their statement. Anju also holds the same belief. She even cited her unfulfilled dream of becoming a psychiatrist as an example of how this belief helps her cope with frustration. In supporting Anju, Dil emphasized looking for positive meaning in every challenging incident, disclosing how she perceived her experience of becoming a scammer's victim.

“Sometimes, we think that what comes to us, the things we like, are good for us. But it turns out that these things are not good for us. So, I like the concept that all of Allah's destinies are already determined. If we continue to jump to the conclusion that whatever bad things happen will cause death, destruction, and harm, we will see paths of death and destruction.

Whereas, in reality, when we fall, we will learn how it feels to be hurt, and we will be cautious so as not to fall again.” – Zudi

“If Allah doesn't provide, no matter how we do it, Allah will not give it to us, because it doesn't suit us. That's what I hold on to. Simple.” – Nora

“As I said before, Mahabharata mentioned, anything that happens is for good, and anything that doesn't happen is also for good. So, I believe in that.” – Athy

“When we are patient, we endure, and we believe that in all these events there will be another wisdom. We will receive that goodness.” – Azna

“I realized that I wanted to become a doctor, specifically a psychiatrist. I had a strong desire to pursue a career as a psychiatrist. However, I couldn't get into that field (giggles). Instead, I ended up in counseling. Nevertheless, I believe that, as I mentioned earlier, sometimes the universe intervenes to prevent us from getting what we want because something better is destined to come our way.” – Anju

“I didn't lose anything, and I earn a very precious experience. Religion also teaches me that whatever happens has meaning, so I try, looking for the positives. I practice in this way.” – Dil

In addition, religion also guides participants to develop a sense of hope in encountering their life challenges. It provides a moderate concept in explaining God's influence and human autonomy (Pargament, 2005). This kind of religious elaboration inspires participants to build a sense of hope, thereby precipitating them to be perseverant. Wince shared his experience in navigating hardships in his life that made him question God, until he reframed his perspective on religion by deepening his understanding of a Bible verse. He learned that God only gives a hardship that he is able

to bear, thereby preventing him from giving up his efforts. Anju also found similar inspiration when she learned that God will not test anyone beyond their ability. She found a moderate view in comprehending punishment and wisdom, expediting a sense of hope over God's blessing. They illustrated their experiences as follows.

"The verses of the book (Bible) help, especially like Jesus used to say, if God closed one door and there appears to be no path, He would have opened another door for us to go through. He also said, He won't give me any difficulties that I can't handle. So, when something happens that I find very difficult and so on, I will find some space and I will ask God. God, why did you give me this difficulty? I am tired. Then this verse will trigger in my mind. God won't give us anything that we can't deal with." – Wince

"Some people are very kind to themselves, so when something bad is happening to them, they argue why God gave a test like this to them. I couldn't go through that. It's because they can't think they might have done something wrong and they're paying for it now. But there are more moderate people. They can still be positive. Okay, God wouldn't test me with something I cannot endure." – Anju

Furthermore, the religious principles convey valuable teachings that cultivate a sense of hope in participants to make an effort to overcome the challenges. Zudi, Athy, and Reina discovered their religious teachings bring them hope and strengthen their heart to face the challenge in both personal and professional life.

"Allah has determined all the destinies. It's just that when it's doomed to be, how are we going to handle that situation, or those circumstances." – Zudi

"In terms of Hinduism, there are many things in our lives that are not in our hands. Not everything is under our control. But we have common sense for us to cope with that problem, or issue." – Athy

"I can't deny that the crisis is so closely linked to Christianity. He has already told me this, so be prepared. In addition to that, of course, we must strive. We want to avoid all of this because we want to take care of ourselves." – Reina

Additionally, Azna reflected on the Quranic verse, commanding the believers to ask for God's assistance through patience and prayer. She was inspired by this verse not to lose hope in seeking God's assistance in attaining the success of her intervention session. Similarly, a strong belief that God will answer every prayer offers hope for Nora to seek God's assistance while encountering difficulties during her crisis work.

"In addition to techniques and skills, the role of religious belief in self-care practices is an essential element in the success of any session. The words of Allah in the Quran state: 'O believers! Seek comfort in patience and prayer. Allah is truly with those who are patient.' (Surah Al-Baqarah: verse 153). In line with this, I need to have faith, pray, and seek help from Allah SWT to facilitate the process of handling the case." – Azna (reflective form)

"Actually, I am very confident that every time we pray, Allah will provide the way." – Nora

The belief in karma brings a sense of hope to Dil. Dil stated her strong faith that God will protect her in doing her job as she did something good. Her good deeds give her hope that she will get good things in terms of God's protection in return. A similar belief was shared by Lai and Ying. Practicing good deeds gives Lai hope to gain good

returns in the afterlife while Ying finds hope in continuing to contribute her services as means for her to do good things, ensuring good returns in the afterlife.

*"I believe my God will protect me as I am doing good things" – Dil
(reflective form)*

"I think it's better for us to practice doing good and never engage in any wrongdoing so that we can gain good karma in the afterlife." – Lai

"In my religion, if we do good, we'll get good karma. Doing bad will bring bad karma. So, I view my career as an opportunity to make good karma. I always thought of it that way." – Ying

Wince was also inspired by a Bible verse that consoles him not to worry, strengthening his faith that God is the all-provider. God fulfills the needs of every creature including humans, thereby inspiring him to put his hope on God while also putting effort into his work.

"In the verse of the Bible, it does state that you should look at the birds outside. God will still give them food. So, as a man, you are God's creation. What do you want to worry about tomorrow for? God will determine and give you something. Sometimes these verses make me think back, what is there to worry about, what is there to be scared of? Let God set us up. We just leave it up to God, but I myself have to do something too." – Wince

Based on the findings, religion contributes to adaptive coping by offering a non-judgmental platform for emotional release, offering consolation to make sense of frustration, and instilling a sense of hope. Verses from holy scriptures, religious teachings, and principles offer participants with satisfactory explanations related to their situation, promoting calmness, mental clarity, and a sense of hope in fulfilling their professional responsibilities and life goals. Furthermore, these verses and teachings

prompt moral reflection in the participants, thus protecting them from participating in harmful actions and negative thoughts. This brings us to the next contribution of religion in guiding the self-care experience.

4.4.3 Religion in Moral Reflection

The third subtheme signifies the role of religion in guiding participants to evaluate on appropriate self-care practices during the moral reflection experience. It is common practice to investigate, formulate, and make judgments before appropriate self-care is taken into action (Denyes et al., 2001). The study shows that religion serves as a catalyst for promoting moral reflection, inspiring people to reflect on their behaviors and thoughts. It not only provides a foundation for ethical conduct in professional endeavors, but it also offers guidelines for interpersonal relationships, shaping positive perspectives and attitudes towards other people. This highlights three important ways that religion contributes to the experience of moral reflection: 1) a moral compass for behavior and thought, 2) a framework for upholding professional ethics, and 3) guidelines for navigating interpersonal relationships.

Firstly, religion serves as a moral compass for both behavior and thought. Participants of this study were found to draw upon their religion in making judgments about appropriate thought and behavior that can secure them from harm. Every religion has its own code of conduct in determining what is lawful and what is unlawful, which is parallel to morality and humanity. Most religious rulings set the limitation of every thought and behavior that can result in negative consequences such as suicide, tobacco abuse, and excessive alcohol intake (Hasanović & Pajević, 2010; Kick et al., 2016;

Amanato et al., 2017). Both Zudi and Ram described the self-harm behavior in which their religious beliefs prohibited them.

“From a religious point of view, Allah commands us to love ourselves, maintain cleanliness, and so on. Do not let our deeds be harmful or cause harmful effects. In terms of religion, Islam does emphasize these things.”

– Zudi

“This religion is a healthy lifestyle. Without it, I might take drugs, I might drink alcohol, I might be a smoker, and I might try other unhealthy alternatives. That is what a lot of people do now. I don't have to do that because I know I always believe everything is by God. I know why I am doing this. Why did I get this thing? He tested me. He gives me another extra piece of knowledge, so I take it as a positive. I don't have to look for an alternative. That's how I see it.” – Ram

Azna and Nora also talked about the limitation of behavior in the profession based on their religious belief. For Azna, religious belief provides clear guidance on the lawful and unlawful things in the profession. Her argument later was further supported by Nora.

“When we remember the fundamentals of religion, we will be clear about its legal and illegal ruling.” – Azna

“To me, if we hold strong to our religion, we will automatically have strong principles. Our faith is strong because we already know what we can and can't do. We know our limits. Religion shapes us with one basic principle that makes us perfect. When we have a hold, we already know what we can and cannot do. God has arranged it beautifully, but if we

violate those limits, then that means we don't really understand the religion.” – Nora

In addition, Ying and Dil shared about the five precepts in Buddhism which become the guideline for every Buddhist. They stated about five harmful behavior that must be avoided.

“Buddha taught his followers to tell no lies. There are five precepts. Abstain from lying. Abstain from promiscuous sex. Abstain from killing. Then there is also, abstaining from alcohol and gambling.” – Ying

“For Buddhism, our practice is everything is impermanent. Our core belief is everything has a cause and effect. The basic principle is the five precepts. There is no killing, no lying, no drinking alcohol, and no promiscuous sex. Don't steal and don't take away something that is not yours. The five precepts. The core values help me a lot.” – Dil

Besides that, religion also promotes participants to be good people with good moral conduct. Both Anju and Athy mentioned their religion serves as a moral compass and a way of life, guiding them to be good people and to do good things.

“If I don't have my beliefs based on my spirituality or religion, I think I'd be a very lousy person. Some people are not religious, but they have a good moral compass, they'll know if something is the right thing to do. But if I don't have that, I'm going to be a very lousy person who is not even fit to be here or be a provider, because I'm not going to provide. I'm just going to mess things up.” – Anju

“Hinduism is more of a way of life. How do you live your life? How do you live in this world? One by not hurting people and then giving alms.” – Athy

Interestingly, Ram and Nora had reached the state of realization that God is all-seeing and all-knowing. To them, God always watches them and knows what they are talking about. This makes them aware of their actions. Ram also reflected on his belief in karma, that every deed is paid back.

“Everything we pray for, God will know. Like all of our actions, God will see everything we've done. Then I must keep within what is allowed in carrying out my duties in crisis.” – Nora

“That's why I say, belief in God is very helpful. I know my every action is observed by Him. Right now, I'm talking to you. If I say the right thing, He is listening. If I tell a lie, He will listen to it too. For I'll get a return. That's how I see it. That's what I believe.” – Ram

Besides Ram, Geena and Lai also share a similar view on the return of their deeds. Geena also believed that God is observing and giving credit to human good deeds and punishment for bad deeds. Lai emphasized collecting good karma which guides them to commit good deeds.

“For me, we must do a good job. We must perform the given task, because whatever we do, God sees us. He's going to give credit for what we do. If I do a good job, then it's a credit for me to have God's grace. I always think so. That's why I think of this work as our worship, for our ticket one day when we're called by God. We do well with our work, and hopefully, that time, God will count what we do.” – Geena

“I think if that's the case, then I'd better practice doing good. Never do bad, so that my karma becomes good in the afterlife.” – Lai

Despite serving as moral compass for behavior and thought, religion also serve as a framework for upholding professional ethics among participants. Religious teaching

was found to inspire the participants to maintain good performance in providing their service as counselors. Geena stressed her religious belief taught her to be committed to her work as a counselor and to avoid behavior that can tarnish the organizational image. Wince also underscored his religious command to perform his work at his best as it represents the image of his religion.

"We cannot do our work with a lazy attitude. We won't perform well. We would feel empty, because of how terrible we are doing our job. So, to combat that, we must believe in religion. I believe that work is one with religion. Work is a form of worship, so I must do good work. Don't quarrel in the office, don't aggravate the office, department, and so on." – Geena

"Religion teaches us to do our work correctly, to do it honestly, to do it sincerely, and not to take advantage of our work. In my opinion, what we do represents our religion." – Wince

"Religion also demands that I be honest, sincere, and perform my work correctly. My religion requires me to take my role as a counselor seriously and execute my duties diligently." – Wince (reflective form)

Furthermore, Azna was inspired by the saying of the prophet, which encouraged her to deliver a high-quality work performance. Nora added she considered religion as a pivotal factor for counselors to wholeheartedly commit to their work, viewing their responsibilities as trust and an act of worship. Her perspective found support in Anju, who asserted that work is a means to attain rewards from God, fostering a sense of responsibility. In alignment with Anju's view, Reina believed that her work reflects her service to God, encouraging her to dedicate herself fully to her tasks. Arul upholds the concept of humility and responsibility in approaching work as trust, while Athy

highlighted the importance of sincerity in performing tasks in helping profession settings without expecting anything in return. Their quotes are stated below.

"Verily, Allah loves someone when they do their work, they do it in the best possible way.' This hadith clearly indicates that I need to make thorough preparations to ensure that my tasks proceed smoothly and produce the best and highest quality results." – Azna (reflective form)

"Religion is the key for a counselor to manage all aspects, including self-care, task execution, and so on. If they truly adhere to their faith, they won't approach their tasks casually. Automatically, they will carry out their duties as a trust to themselves. They will undoubtedly perform their work wholeheartedly." – Nora

"Religious belief provides counselors with the conviction that the tasks they undertake are within the path of their religion. It also enhances the effectiveness of a counselor as they earn rewards while working." – Anju

"I consider my current job as my service to God. So, when things are going well, I feel like I'm also serving God in that way. Therefore, I have to do my very best, with the utmost sincerity I can offer." – Reina

"For me, being humble. Then as a servant of God, we have a responsibility toward the trust given to us." – Arul

"Every act of help we perform should be done sincerely without expecting anything in return. This matter is indeed mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita, as I have said earlier." – Athy

These findings imply the role of religion as a framework in upholding professional ethics while performing professional responsibilities as counselors. Religion encourages participants to uphold a sense of responsibility, sincerity, and commitment

to their work. Ram's statement generally concluded the importance of religion in character development.

"Religion is your very important self-care. It will beautify both your inner and outer self." – Ram

Further discussion on the role of religion in moral reflection brings us to the third aspect. Religion also serves as guidelines for navigating interpersonal interactions. Zudi explained his belief in a prophet saying, stating the best person is the person who can bring benefits to others, rousing him to be the one. Similarly, Wince was also inspired by his religious teaching that encouraged him to provide help for anyone in need.

"Mentioned in the hadith, the best of people is those who provides benefits or become beneficial to others. If we can bring benefits to others, that is the best kind of person." – Zudi

"The Christian faith asks me to help anyone in need according to my abilities." – Wince

Religious encouragement of becoming a beneficial person accelerates participants to be aware of their conduct while interacting with other people especially their clients. Ram, Anju, and Azna mentioned their religion guides them to be non-judgmental toward their clients and to use nice words in communicating with other people. Athy also stated her religion prohibits her from hurting other people's physical bodies and emotions. Similarly, Dil mentioned her religious teaching forbids her from doing harm to other people.

"To me, as a Hindu, I have no issues with my clients, because the religion has put me in a very, very steady state. One, do not belittle people, never

disturb people's feelings, always respect people's point of view, and give way to people. It's all in the religion.” – Ram

“In Thirukkural, there is a proverb that states (pronounces a sentence in Tamil), meaning that if you can use a beautiful language to speak, why be rude to people? Never do this. So, all these things give me inspiration. All these religious beliefs I can say I already know. I used all these elements to establish myself. Automatically my personality and my thinking are at a healthier level because I don't punish, judge, or try to compare people.” –

Ram

“I talked to them and after they left, I didn't judge them. To be genuine, when we have a normal conversation, we say, 'The person looks so pious, but she slept with a man.' Although it's common, I avoid saying that, because you won't know what you will do until you are tested, until you are put in that situation. You cannot guarantee. I believe the more you challenge yourself, the universe will put you in that situation and they will really test you and you won't know how you'll end up. So, I don't do that. That's how I take care of myself, by telling myself that whatever I do, it comes back to me. So, I really need to take care of my thoughts.” – Anju

"I try to provide the service as best as I could. At the same time, I still treat my clients with respect, regardless of who they are. I hold on to these principles based on my religion." – Azna

“Do not let anyone get hurt because of me. The hurt, in terms of physical, mental, or emotional. Meaning I'm doing something negative to others. I'm very conscious of it.” – Athy

"We must do no harm to people. In our religion, we emphasize good karma. Do good. Do no harm. So, for me, the principles of counseling and psychology are very similar. Do good things for people, then it will bring a good return." – Dil

Additionally, Lai stated religion uplifts her motivation and brings her calmness of mind, which in turn accelerates her ability to deliver professional service while avoiding being harsh toward her clients. Her perspective was supported by Geena who underscored the significance of showing compassion to her clients as dictated in her religion. Geena also incorporates other religious values when engaging with clients experiencing conflict in their lives, prompting them not to disregard compassion. Wince also shared that his religion guides him to be sincere and avoid lying and burdening other people. Ying also has a similar view and stressed her religion taught her to treat people with kindness and not to take things for granted. This indicates religion inhibits bad manners and initiates good manners in dealing with other people.

"Religion uplifts and enhances my spirit. It indirectly brings me a sense of motivation, which in turn grants me inner peace and clarity of mind. Consequently, I can become a professional counselor. I don't handle cases with negative emotions or react with anger toward clients." – Lai

"My religion teaches compassion. As a counselor, I practice compassion when dealing with clients who may not understand what compassion is. This is what my religion teaches. In my profession, I practice the values taught by my religion to assist those experiencing conflicts in life." - Geena

"For example, in religion, we must do things honestly. Don't cheat. It also says to not bring trouble unto others. But bringing trouble unto others, to

me, also includes troubling someone by doing nothing. We can't leave it alone. When something is not right, we must fix it.” – Wince

“As a Buddhist, I believe I should treat people with a good heart. We must do good. I have heard that there are also those with weak faith, who take advantage of the client. With a strong belief, we are not going to manipulate the client. Taking advantage of the client will not happen.” – Ying

Additionally, Dil provided a concise summary that highlights the significant role of religion in her life. Her words encompass the concept of how religion contributes to guiding the self-care experience, revealing the interplay between religion and self-care in empowering participants' overall functioning.

“I still have a lot of dissatisfaction, disappointment, anger, and sometimes depression with the clients I meet, but my core beliefs give me the strength to overcome it. I am still a human being who can function well.” – Dil (reflective form)

In the next description, participants shared their experiences implementing self-care practices during their day-to-day encounters with various crisis cases, ranging from developmental crises and criminal issues to occasional natural disasters and unexpected tragic incidents. The incorporation of religion in meaning-making, coping, and moral reflection described previously was also evident as they shared their self-care experiences during exposure to traumatic narratives, navigating challenges, practicing self-revitalization activities, and reflecting on the lessons learned from these experiences.

4.5 Experience of Self-Care Practices

The second theme explores the experience of self-care practices among crisis counselors during their crisis work. These experiences also reflect the counselors' psychological development progress at each stage. It was observed that counselors incorporated their experiences into their psychological development, leading to trauma adaptation (McCann & Pearlman, 1990b). The theme of self-care encompasses four subthemes that signify the four stages of holistic experience: 1) exposure to traumatic cases, 2) navigating the challenges, 3) self-revitalization, and 4) lessons learned. Each subtheme consists of several meaning units and condensed meaning units as presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Subthemes, Meaning Units, and Condensed Meaning Units Emerging Under the Theme of Self-Care Experience

Subthemes	Meaning Units	Condensed Meaning Unit
Exposure to traumatic cases	Unforgettable moment	
	The impact	
Navigating the challenge	Talking to oneself	
	Seeking spiritual support	Devine Reliance
		Supplication
	Seeking social support	Mentoring and supervisory support
		Peer support system
		Familial support
Self-revitalization	Physical care	Physical activities
		Nutritional care
		Sleep management

	Personal time	Leisure activities
		Self-therapy
	Spiritual practice	Prayer
		Reciting the holy scriptures
		Chanting
Lessons Learned	Upgrading knowledge and skills	
	Recognizing Professional Boundaries	Psychological boundary
		Professional limitation
		Authority boundary
		Case intake limitation
		Professional stand
	Comprehending unconditional Acceptance	Client as an ordinary person
		Clients' reality
		Clients' traumatic reaction
		Personal human limitation
	Interconnection between religion and self-care	

4.5.1 Exposure to Traumatic Case

When crisis counselors first see their clients for crisis intervention, they are exposed to the traumatic cases of their clients, and this is when their experience with self-care practices begins. During this process, counselors utilize their imaginative faculties to envision and comprehend the client's experiences, aiming to deeply understand their clients' vulnerabilities, disharmony, and emotional reactions to empathize with them, thereby leaving counselors with vivid sensory memories and

intense emotions (McCann & Pearlman, 1990b; Clark & Simpson, 2013; Hughes, 2014).

Being a freshie and first-timer in handling severe traumatic cases may leave the counselors a meaningful experience that cannot be easily forgotten. In revisiting this experience, the participants recalled the moment when they met their clients and the feelings that they had during the meeting. This experience is one of their recollections of vast experiences. Their experiences were thematized into two subthemes: 1) unforgettable moments and 2) the impact.

4.5.1.1 Unforgettable moment

The first subtheme under the theme of experience of exposure to the traumatic case is the unforgettable moment. The participants shared one of their most unforgettable moments in handling crisis intervention for their clients. Revisiting the moment assists them in recalling the self-care practices they engaged in at the time which were hardly explained without looking back to the experience. The participants can still recall the details of the experience.

Anju recalled the experience she encountered during her training that had a meaningful impact on her. She admitted she was traumatized by the experience, but she learned something from it. That day, she was undergoing her first week of training in a public hospital. She received a case of a pregnant mother whose little daughter was molested. The perpetrator was her husband who is the biological father of the girl. She illustrated her experience as follows.

"Okay (taking a deep breath). Then I must mention my first-ever case. I was a practical student at the time. This was my first ever trauma and crisis

case and I'm still traumatized because of it. There was a 3-year-old girl. She was brought in by her mother. Her mother was pregnant and in her final trimester. I still remember the lady and she looked so pitiful. She came because her daughter had scars on her vagina. Her daughter was in extreme pain when urinating. Her daughter was crying, so she went to see and asked her what was wrong, and the daughter said the father did it. She couldn't believe what she was hearing because the child was so young that you would think the father should love their child. She also felt that her relationship with her husband was very good. Why would her husband want to do something like this? Suddenly, her husband was like a stranger. She still took her daughter to the emergency room and the doctor checked. The doctor confirmed that there were traces of a finger being used or some other foreign object. She was then sent for counseling because she looked so traumatized at the time. She was very unstable and kept on crying. Moreover, she was pregnant. The doctor was worried something might happen to her or she might do something to herself, so when she was sent to me you can imagine how I was, being twenty-three years old at the time." – Anju

In addition, Lai also recalled her experience in handling a traumatic case when she was a freshie. Like Anju, she also mentioned she was traumatized by the case at the time. Her story is quoted below.

"The case I remember most is the one about an immigrant worker. She was abused and molested by her employer, and then the employer didn't pay her salary. He locked her up in one place and she could not leave. This meant she had no choice but to stay there. Then, when she couldn't stand

it anymore, she told me that she wrote down a slip of paper that said, "Save me, and call the police." She waited for when the employer was out of the house and threw the note in the direction of someone passing by the house. The person picked up and read the note. They saw her and subsequently called the police. The police came to the house to save her. When she came into the shelter, I saw her emotional state was unstable and she was still crying. During that time I was still in the office. The shelter called my department, and my boss told me to come immediately. I went in the company car to the shelter to oversee the case and I saw that she was still crying." – Lai

Like Lai, Athy also recalled the experience of handling a crisis case during her freshie time. However, she did not mention she was traumatized so much by the experience. Her case involved a traumatic little girl who was being blamed for not being able to save her younger brother in a fire. Athy mentioned the following in her sharing.

"I remember when I was in Penang. I was a fresh, new counselor, and back then I was single. There was a death involving a small child. A Chinese kid. A fire ensued. There were two kids sleeping in the house and the parents were managing the farm in the village, so it meant the two kids were left alone. The oldest child was 8 years old and the youngest was 5 years old. I can't remember how the fire happened, but if I'm not mistaken it was because they forgot to turn off the kettle. It's a village-style house and the house went up in flames. The sister (eldest) wasn't able to save her younger brother; the brother ended up dying. The parents blamed the daughter for not saving the younger brother, but the girl was just a petite 8-year-old. She was not big. She was a very small,

cute girl. She witnessed the death of her brother, meanwhile, people were putting the blame on her for not saving her brother.” – Athy

Dil, Reina, Wince Azna, and Ying also recalled their experience in handling traumatic cases due to a tragedy. All the cases they shared involved death. Dil was recalling two of her experiences in providing crisis intervention. The first experience involved the survivors of a tragic shipwreck tragedy and their families. The second case involved the survivor of a murder case. Like Dil, Reina also recalled her experience in providing crisis intervention for the family members of the victims who were lost in a tragic shipwreck incident while Wince shared his experience in handling the remaining family members who were saved in a murder case involving one of their family members. Meanwhile, Azna shared her experience in dealing with a victim's family who died after being severely injured during a riot. This case is well-known and still under further investigation. Ying also remembered her experience in dealing with a child victim's family who died after he fell from the fifth floor of their apartment house. Their experiences are illustrated as follows.

“An unforgettable experience, I once handled a crisis case involving the unexpected death of a group of children who were practicing for Dragon Boat racing. If you google it, I believe it happened around 2010. One group of students from their school drowned. When I was there, my job was more towards providing support to the victims (survivors) and family members who were waiting for the missing children to be found. The situation was very sad because all the family members were crying, worried, restless, and not wanting to eat. The rescue team was still searching in the ocean and the port nearby. That was one of my experiences.” – Dil

"I once remembered a case of false imprisonment involving a man who used a knife to stab his victim. Blood was smeared all over the house. I was asked to negotiate with the suspect to release the 68-year-old man who was locked inside. This was the first time I had seen a crime scene with so much blood. Everything was red, from the floor to the ceiling. Perhaps while the suspect was trying to slash and stab, the first victim put up a struggle. I was informed by the police on duty that the stabbing victim was in critical condition, and that his hand had been amputated. This was a very dire moment. Can you imagine losing a hand? That means that he was very forceful in his method of violence." – Dil

"One case was from around 5 or 6 years ago. It wasn't far from here or the city. We have an island, on the other side is another island called "Pulau Gaya." It might be famous. There was a passenger boat, which is normally operated by a captain and an assistant, that had crashed. The crash became a case that was referred over to us. We assumed that the victims died since we couldn't find the bodies. It was a crash after all. Some were saved, and some were not, but there was one client, her son was the assistant, and could not be found. For days on end, the mother was waiting on the beach next to the hotel, just sitting on a cardboard box. ... So, I went there. I would go in the afternoon a few times. Maybe I wouldn't be able to give proper formal counseling in-depth, but all I could think of was that I could at least be there with them. ... Sometimes I would drop by to ask if there was any progress and just see from there. I felt like my role was very limited at the time. It was as if I just came to sit down with them, even though they were still hoping for good news that I didn't have." – Reina

“A case I can't forget happened in 2010 if I'm not mistaken. From 2009 to 2010 I was still fresh on the job. In this case, he cut off his father's head. His mom survived, but the father's head was cut off. The younger sister was killed by the brother and the father was beheaded. He brought the head all the way to Kuala Lumpur. When I visited the house there were apparent traces. I gave help to his family, the surviving mother, and the other sister who survived. It was the first time I received a case like this and I wasn't sure what to do.” – Wince

“I have a lot of stories, which one do you want to hear? Okay, a memorable experience. I took a slightly bigger case, an MA death case. I conducted a session for the family members; I held separate sessions for his parents, siblings, and fiancé. He has two sisters. They have all experienced traumas. The fiancé suffered severe trauma. ... It was not an ordinary death. A tragic and infamous death. When I faced them, it was clear what the mother's situation was like. The father on the other hand, maybe because he is a man, he was quite strong, but the mother's face was obvious.” – Azna

“The case I find hardest to forget is one that happened probably 6 to 7 years ago. There was a family with a 5-year-old kid. The father went down to pick up food at the guard post. The 5- year-old lives on the 5th floor. Perhaps because he was left alone in the house, he went to the balcony to find his father. He died falling from the fifth floor. The family was Chinese, and the kid needed to undergo a post-mortem (autopsy), but their Chinese belief, which is not a religious teaching, was that if people die their bodies need to be kept fully intact. The parents became distressed due to the

child's death requiring an autopsy. They were very reluctant and prevented IO from running the autopsy. IO called me because their emotions were getting out of control. IO requested that I calm them down and help them understand why this procedure was necessary. It was more for psychological support. I remember this case because it happened close to Chinese New Year.” – Ying

In addition, domestic violence cases also may trigger a challenge to professional counselors. They do not only listen to the narrative but also witness the severe impact of injuries on the clients. Ram, Nora, and Geena shared their memorable experience in dealing with clients who endured tragic domestic violence.

“There's a case that I still remember. At times it crosses my mind. There's a lot more. A case in which a wife came with her head sliced here (points to a portion of the head) with a meat cleaver. The wound was long too, about half a foot to maybe a foot long. The client was still bleeding and didn't want to go to the hospital. When I recall this, I can still feel the situation. I can feel the pain. When she came in, I was told there was a client. As soon as I came in, she looked at me. I couldn't breathe for a few seconds. I just froze. Oh my God! What is this? Why would someone who was supposed to go to the hospital come here? She's in the wrong place. What am I going to do?” – Ram

“This case happened while I was at SWD. I still remember it to this day. ... When she was still single, she fell in love. She fell in love with her current husband who was self-employed. She was on a fixed salary. She didn't care if he could take care of her. So, they eventually got married. ... When I asked her if there were any signs of domestic violence. She said

there was. ... She couldn't reprimand her husband about anything. ...When they got married and had a child, her husband would always come home late at night. Always late. It started with him coming home around 10 PM, 11 PM. Then it became later until it was 1 AM or 2 AM. This was when he started beating his wife. This was the final time that caused their divorce. On the night of the incident, the husband returned late, and the wife did not cook. He slipped up. He acted more harshly. His wife is smaller than him and is unable to fight, but it just so happened that when he hit his wife, she ran away near the fridge. He pushed his wife and coincidentally made her eye hit the corner of the refrigerator. Imagine this beautiful girl, even her mother never hit her. She was the eldest daughter and a very good one at that. Suddenly, this incident made her go blind in one eye. That's what made me remember this case.” – Nora

“There are a lot of cases that I can't forget because many cases are very traumatic, but there's one case in particular that I still remember until now involving domestic violence. The case involved a woman aged around 50 to 55 years old. I think she is Chinese. She was rescued and placed in a woman's shelter. ... When I met the client, she was in a very helpless state. Bruises all over to where you could physically see she was in a bad state. Not to mention how bad her mental state was. I remember her telling me about being beaten so badly for years that she finally had enough and ran for her life.” – Geena

Witnessing the clients' suffering might be challenging yet receiving the news of their death might be more challenging. Zudi and Arul have this kind of experience

although they are serving in different settings. They described their experience as follows.

“The hardest experience for me to forget, I think, was when I handled the death row inmate case. It was an experience that not everyone can get. He was sentenced to death on Friday. That Thursday night we went to meet him. It was like we met him on Thursday night, right before the angel of death found him on Friday. That's how it was. There was a lot of sharing of stories and narratives that I can still picture his face. I can still remember the way he talked, the way he expressed himself. He made a huge impact on my life. ... During the session, I went in with the Ustaz. The Ustaz would explain the religious portion. Typically, he would explain the procedures that take place after his death, the management of his body, and so on. I was there more to calm his emotions. At the time, I listened to his stories. If he states that he's innocent, there's nothing I can do but keep praying for him. ... When we sat with him, we were not allowed to take him out of his cell. He sat in his cell, and I took a chair and sat across from him. The grill became a barrier between us, but his voice was still clear, and his face was still clear. I could touch him, hold him, it was all possible. That's how he was.” – Zudi

“The case I remember most was one involving a Muslim happening in the hospital. I was instructed to handle this case. It was a burn case. A Muslim burned herself with kerosene because she disapproved of her daughter marrying a non-Muslim. She had an impulsive behavior; she bought kerosene and burned herself. She was put in the ward in a swollen state. I was instructed to handle her because at the time she was emotionally

unstable. She was sedated, but still conscious. I was told my purpose was to give some preparation for the client. She had no hope of survival. The medical words used at the time were the preparation for dealing with death peacefully. I was ordered to wear protective clothing and so on. At that time, I saw that her eyelashes were gone. When got burned her body and face became swollen. The first thing I told her to do was to say Shahadah. I taught her and asked her if she had regrets about what she had done. I thought I had 45 minutes to talk to her. I tried creating a sense of comfort because this was a worst-case scenario. There's nothing to regret anymore, you just must be ready. I taught her to say Shahadah many times and to wholeheartedly repent. ... Maybe she had impulsive behavior, but most importantly was to say Shahadah over and over. Afterward, I told her there was no possibility of her recovering from this. According to the evidence, it was hopeless. Her oxygen was dropping. She nodded. After that, when I had just reached my office and sat down to write the case notes I received a call. The nurse told me, 'Mr. Arul, your patient has passed away.' That's what scared me the most." – Arul

Exposure to the traumatic narratives of the clients and witnessing the anguish they endured precede psychological impact on participants. The way the encounter affects the participants may vary. Participants further shared their experiences as described in the following meaning unit.

4.5.1.2 The Impact

Persistent exposure to traumatic narratives and witnessing the impact of the incidents on clients bring psychological impacts on counselors (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). Participants in this study also are not excluded. They further shared their inner experience during the moment they intervened with their clients.

Anju shared how she felt and thought during and after the session. But she quickly reflected on the lesson from the experience, which she regarded as a very precious one. Lai also encountered a psychological impact after she was exposed to the case. She experienced the feeling of guilt and at the same time started to self-blame for not being able to help the client.

“My feelings were a bit mixed up. Anger, confusion, a lot of questions, and curiosity. Very curious. And very self-absorbed (chuckles). I couldn't handle my emotions. I was not ready for it.” – Anju

“At the time I thought, 'Oh my god, a little kid?' We view small children like angels. A little girl. They're so cute, we just want to play with them. I wondered, 'How could a father do this to his daughter?' Then I composed myself. ... It was a completely priceless learning point for me, but when I went back, I still couldn't forget it. I did cry. ... Actually, I was thinking like any other person. Not like a counselor. I was being judgemental, so caught up in my own emotions and not the client's emotions. I kept thinking about how the father could do this to her. Such a pitiful child. Then I thought about how the wife was deceived by her husband. Her husband molested their child. If I were in her position, what would I do? These were my thoughts that were not helpful.” – Anju

“At the time, I was still a freshie, so I didn't have the knowledge and skill to handle the case. I felt very worried, scared, and sorry for her. That's how I felt. ... Initially, when I handled the case, after each meeting with the client, I would keep thinking about how pitiful her situation was and how I could help her. Then she told me how she was molested and locked up. It made me think how evil this employer was. I felt uneasy.” – Lai

“In the initial stage, as I mentioned, I didn't know how to handle the case. Every time I worked on the case, I had no idea how to help her. At that time, I wasn't that knowledgeable, but couldn't just leave the case like that. Every time I met with the client, I felt nervous. Yes, that's right. I wondered how to help her. I didn't know how to assist her. I became aware of what I was lacking. My weakness or a sense of guilt. I felt that it was my fault for not knowing how to help her.” – Lai

Athy, Dil, and Reina, despite being able to regulate their emotions, still experienced profound sadness. Dil emphasized the importance of training and exposure to crisis case management before a counselor is deployed to handle crises. Wince initially claimed that he was not affected much, but he admitted feeling scared and confused about what to do before going to the crime scene. Azna, who previously was an experienced nurse, was not deeply affected by the case and could easily regulate her emotions. But she was aware that she had to be careful in giving any statement because she might be asked by the journalists who covered up the case. On the other hand, Ying confessed to shedding tears on her journey back home after handling the case, revealing her susceptibility to being moved by cases involving young children. They all shared their experiences in their subsequent statements.

“That was the first case that I felt like it was quite tough for me. I come from an educational background where we learned theories. I didn't have much real-world practical experience. When I entered the real world, it was different.” – Athy

“When I found out about the death of the five-year-old child, I was like, 'Oh my God! So pitiful.' It's a natural feeling. I felt sorry for the mother seeing her cry. I also felt sad. I can't say I'm strong and didn't feel any sadness. No, no. For me, I can't lie. I was so sad seeing the mother cry like that. I saw the sister sitting there. She didn't want to talk to anyone. It's a very sad situation. So sad.” – Athy

“Going back to the year 2010, my friends would say, 'Wow! Dil is so stoic. She never cries, she's neutral, professional.' But they didn't know that inside, I was crying. We witnessed family members crying when they saw the body, which had become a swollen balloon. They couldn't even recognize the face, and the hand was soft like a balloon because it had been submerged in water for a whole day and night. If you have never been exposed to that training and crisis management, you shouldn't go to the site. Even I, who had received training, also experienced side effects, what's more for those without training or exposure. I'm telling you, if you go, you will die.” – Dil

“I felt sad. I was sad to witness the mother's grief. Every day she waited to hope that her child would be found alive. Her hope had reached that point. Her child also had a wife, but at the time I saw the presence of the mother more often. Every day she waited by the beach hoping for news. I remember the situation lasted for weeks. ... My impression was sadness.

Heartbroken to witness the graveness of the situation that the mother had to face. All I felt was sadness. I was sad because I wished I could do better, but I couldn't. I felt sorry for them. I tried to imagine how I would feel in their situation. I have my limitations, and there was nothing more I could do for them. Even though I provided them with items, I still felt disappointed that my role ended there. I was truly sad.” – Reina

“I felt scared. Terrified. When I went to the house, the traces of blood were very apparent. The house was secluded as it was located on a rubber plantation. It was a bit remote. It was difficult to get help because it was far from other houses. When I went there, I was scared and puzzled at how such an incident could take place. ... Actually, at the time, I was quite confused as there was no established workflow on what I needed to do. Emotionally, I was anxious and scared to go to the scene of the murder. I was afraid I couldn't handle it well because the procedures were not clear to me. I was also saddened that a life was lost just like that. Those were some of the feelings I had at that time.” – Wince

“Because this issue was so big, various parties, including journalists, were present every day (at the victim's house). I'm afraid of journalists. Worried, that's what I mean, because as a counselor, as a Psychological Officer, we have ethics. So, I'm worried that when I'm interviewed, I might say the wrong thing. I need to be very careful about this matter. By that, I mean I need to be prepared. If I need to face the journalists, how should I answer? If I'm facing the parents, how should I handle it? If it's with colleagues, how would my answer differ?” – Azna

“Actually, at that time, I thought of attending the post-mortem. But after seeing the body of the child, I gave up. I ran away. I feel bad whenever a case involves children. I remember it was close to Chinese New Year. After being with the family, I went back. I remember crying in the car. By that, I mean tears were falling because I also have a child, and I felt sadness for all of them. That's what I remember most.” – Ying

In addition, Ram was shocked to see his client bleeding. He perceived the client's gaze as a challenging one, provoking a sense of unease within him. On the other hand, Nora expressed gratitude that the client promptly sought assistance at her office, preventing the situation from deteriorating further. Alongside this gratitude, Nora also felt a tinge of sadness towards the client's predicament. However, Nora's previous encounters with similar cases equipped her with the ability to regulate her emotions effectively. In contrast, Geena struggled to release her sadness and found herself shedding tears alongside her clients. Geena often envisioned her client, who was in her fifties, to be like her own mother. Their sharing is as quoted:

“That was one of the challenges I had to face. What am I going to do now? I saw her bring small children, two or three of them. I should have felt at ease, calm, of peace of mind. I had to take a few minutes to calm myself before I approached the client. She looked at me with a lifeless gaze. Empty. She just looked at me. Perhaps she was thinking about what this person could do for me. I could see it. Her empty gaze gave me a challenge.” – Ram

“When I met this client, I looked at her and thought to myself, 'Oh Allah, thankfully Allah brought her to me quickly.' When the client comes in, I won't reject her, because I know she thought a hundred times over before

coming into my office. For her to step in here and talk about her dignity is not an easy thing. ... I wondered if she had the money or not to come in, and if she does come, is she in a dangerous situation? In some cases, the wife has already arrived, but the husband followed her. Those things were on my mind.” – Nora

“As someone new in the counseling field at the time, I felt like crying. I was sad because I saw her as my mother. At that time, I hugged her. She cried so hard. I hugged her. When I hugged her, I also felt sad. I won't deny that I also cried with her.” – Geena

Furthermore, it is also not easy for Zudi and Arul to accept the news regarding the death of their clients. In their situation, both met their clients right before they passed away. Zudi described the details of his feelings when he met the death-row inmate and his feelings after he learned he was dead. Meanwhile, Arul did not share much of his feelings. He regarded the experience as something indescribable. They further shared their experience as follows.

“I also felt nervous, scared, and excited, because based on what my friends told me, not everyone gets this opportunity. I was excited to meet him. That was a valuable experience. A priceless experience for me. Praise be to Allah, my expectation to learn something from that moment was achieved.” – Zudi

“I also felt sad when he told me he didn't commit the crime. It wasn't him who killed. He told me that if someone asks about the case, tell them that he didn't do it. He was innocent. I was also with him when he met his family. Thursday, he was able to have a moment with his family. I was also there for that reunion and met with him again that night. I felt close to him.

Since I knew his story and his family, the feeling of sadness was even stronger.” – Zudi

“The morning was quiet. Melancholic. I remember it was raining. After I arrived at the prison, the rain stopped. Usually, we would associate it (the rain) with the possibility of clemency for him. At that moment, I pondered all the way until Friday prayer when I met with the religious teacher. I asked, 'Ustaz, how is it? Is it settled?' Ustaz answered, 'Praise be to Allah, it's done. Everything went smoothly.' I finally felt a sense of relief. I still recall how carried away by emotion I was at the time.” – Zudi

“Not long after, the body was taken to the morgue. The family members couldn't accept it, but the saddest part was that her daughter still got married to a non-Muslim partner and never accepted Islam. That's what hurt the most.” - Arul

“It was difficult to describe. I needed to have the confidence to handle such cases.” – Arul

As the participants noted, dealing with traumatic cases daily poses a challenge. Participants set up self-care practices to traverse the difficulty to carry out their responsibilities as professional counselors. The following subtheme highlighted how they shared their adaptive processes.

4.5.2 Navigating the Challenge

The second subtheme delves into the participants' profound professional experiences pertaining to the process of adapting or regulating themselves into the experience. Scholars have addressed that prolonged exposure to traumatic narratives

may affect counselors psychologically and threaten their belief system, resulting in post-traumatic stress (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016; Dyarman, 2019). Considering such impacts, counselors are strongly recommended to undertake proactive measures to prioritize self-care, either by seeking professional assistance or engaging in revitalizing activities (Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2011). In the current study, participants described their experience to regulate themselves to the experience. They were found actively engaged in self-talk during the session and after that. They also tried to recall what they had learned previously. They also sought spiritual and social support to unfold their emotional turbulence. Spiritual support was sought from their personal beliefs in a Higher Power or God through Divine reliance and supplication while social support was derived from their mentors, supervisors, peers, and family. These experiences were thematized as the meaning units under the subtheme of navigating the challenge. Specifically, the meaning units are; 1) talking to oneself, 2) revisiting the learning experience, 3) seeking spiritual support, and 4) seeking social support.

4.5.2.1 Talking to oneself

Talking to oneself or self-talk is a form of communication that occurs within an individual driven by internal and external stimuli that causes the individual to be involved in thinking, planning, imagining, analyzing, problem-solving, strategizing, producing messages, daydreaming, reflecting, and perceiving (Shedletsky, 2017). It occurs in the form of a statement a counselor says to himself or herself overtly or covertly (Geurts, 2018; Marshak et al., 2022;). Engagement in a therapeutic relationship during crisis intervention triggers counselors to self-talk to make them

comprehend the client's experiences, understand the client's expectations through their reaction, and validate their own emotional experience (Rober et al., 2008). It assists the counselors to give meaning to their experiences and how they could manage themselves to thrive in the experience. In constructing the meaning of their experience with the clients, participants in the current study described how they engaged themselves in self-talk. The self-talk session was found to occur during the crisis intervention session as well as after the session.

Ram, Geena, Azna, and Lai described their experience in self-talk by relating it to the previous traumatic experience they shared. Ram, Geena, and Azna employed this technique to reaffirm their role as professional counselors rather than succumbing to their emotions. However, Lai was still unable to regulate her emotions as she was still questioning the incident her client had encountered.

“First of all, I asked for permission to leave (the intervention room). I won't sit there. I left and went to the washroom. I looked at myself in the mirror. I splashed some water on my face. Then I talked to myself. 'Oh you, what is your duty? Why is the client here? What are you going to do now? You are going to be emotional or are you going to help them?’” – Ram

“At that time, I inhaled, exhaled, held my breath, and then deep down to myself I said, 'Okay, we hug her. We hug her so she regains some strength.' I must do something to show that I am not shaken by her situation.” – Geena

“Although I feel sad as a human being, as a mother, I said to myself, 'Okay we're here to support this mother, so we have to be firm.' Being firm does not mean that we do not have feelings. The feeling is still there, but when

I do my job, I have to remind myself, I came here to help her, so that is what I must do.” – Azna

“Yes, it was affecting my life. I had a lot of questions. Why is there such an evil person? As if I'm asking myself. Why is there an evil person that would do that to her? I had thoughts like that.” – Lai

Talking to oneself also becomes a common practice during intervention sessions among other participants too. After years of experience, the way the participants engage in self-talk becomes more effective in helping them control their emotions. Reina and Ram employed self-talk during the intervention session to regulate their emotions. Ying employed self-talk to help her stop judgmental thoughts. However, Anju avoided self-talk that dragged her into curiosity. She employed another way of self-talk to stop her from entertaining her curiosity.

“Aside from praying, I talk to myself during the session. 'Calm down Reina. Relax. Relax. Hold on Reina, relax.' No matter how, I need to do self-talk even during the session.” – Reina

“I do self-talk a lot because I think it helps me in the session. I don't care about what others do, but for me, self-talk is very helpful. I talk, talk, talk, and then I tell myself, commanding the person in the mirror, 'Stop! Stop your emotions. Get back to normal. Do your job. Do what they trust you to do.' I will be enthusiastic again. I have trained myself in that way so I can come back from it.” – Ram

“Self-talk perhaps, in my heart. For example, I might get shocked, or the client was a criminal suspect. Even though I may not agree or feel anger towards him, in my heart I will keep telling myself, 'It's okay, I am not the

IO, nor am I the judge. I am nobody; who am I to judge him? This is a counseling session.'” – Ying

“I avoid self-talk. I'll tell you. When a client talks to me and I like inside of me I'm going 'Oh my God, really?' But I don't say it. So, I just try to minimize that kind of self-talk.” – Anju

“So, whenever I feel the client's story doesn't make sense to me, then I tell myself. 'It is not about you, Anju. This is about the client. You need to control your curiosity. Okay. There are many ways to go and satisfy your curiosity about how this happens. Read the articles. ... You are not the first person to be curious about it. Go and read.'” – Anju

Nora and Azna were inclined to integrate supplication into their self-talk. When encountering an extraordinary case, Nora perceived it as a test from God and reminded herself how she supplicated for having her current job that provide her a chance to give help and worship Him. Azna also encountered a big challenge when she was assigned to help the investigation officers make criminal suspects confess their crimes. She mentioned that she used self-talk and supplication to regulate the challenge. She reflected that self-talk and prayer reaffirmed her intention in her work.

“When I encounter a rare case, I would say, 'Allah wants to test me.' I have asked Allah for a job that allows me to both, provide assistance and worship Him. I asked for that when I applied for a job. I want a job that can be my charity in the future.” – Nora

“Pray and self-talk. It means we go with intention. My intention was to make him break down and confess. That's it.” – Azna

Meanwhile, Zudi and Wince also reported practicing self-talk to counter negative comments they received. Both encountered a challenge when receiving comments

questioning their intervention's effectiveness. Zudi and Wince used self-talk to reaffirm the nature of their work.

"Our protection might be a statement that we build within our mind, 'This is my responsibility. I get paid to listen to the complaints and issues of the prisoners. If I can help the prisoners, then goodness will return to me.'" –

Zudi

"When the management asked why it was like this, even psychologists didn't know what to do in this situation. There seemed to be no change. None. Nothing. After that, I thought I wanted to rationalize to myself, 'Wince, your job has results, but the result may not be now, but instead when they go back out to work one day. That will be what brings them to soldier on.' Something like that." – Wince

Zudi also employed self-talk to remind himself not to be carried away by the cases that he listened from his clients.

"I always remind myself that I am like a trash bin. People who have problems, issues, challenges, and negative thoughts come to me to throw everything away. I want to ensure the bin won't be brought back home so I need to empty it as soon as possible." – Zudi

Participants also reported they often engage in self-talk to deal with internal conflicts arising from challenging and uncontrollable situations. This practice helps them find clarity and inspiration to fulfill their role as counselors. Several individuals, including Zudi, Lai, Ram, Wince, and Geena, shared their experiences of using self-talk. Zudi initially felt reluctant when assigned to work in a prison. He used self-talk to express his feelings. But he realized the wisdom behind it after he started working there.

Lai and Ram relied on self-talk to handle the traumatic cases that they had mentioned

before. Wince recalled using self-talk when dealing with a juvenile inmate at a correctional center to control his reactions to him. On the other hand, Geena questioned her abilities when a domestic violence survivor returned to her abusive husband. However, her further effective self-talk helped Geena regain confidence in her efforts to assist the client.

“At the beginning of my time at the prison, I felt a little disappointed. Of all places, why do I get posted at a prison? I was a little disappointed because I had set in my mind that in prison all of them were bad people. Thank God, when I was working there, I learned so many things. All walks of life can be seen clearly from prison.” – Zudi

“Every time I saw the client, I would wonder what I could do to help her. I kind of had the feeling that I didn't want to take this case. If possible, I wouldn't want to handle this case. Move on to another case. I thought back, I don't think I can run away from this. I felt that I would be irresponsible if I did not handle this case. Then with a pounding and guilty heart, I continued to handle the case. I listened to whatever she wanted to share with me.” – Lai

“I couldn't start the process properly because I was so shocked. I could see blood coming out. ... ‘How was I supposed to help her? Where should I start?’ I shouldn't think like that, but I didn't know where to begin with this case, because I had never experienced this. I had never seen a client like this. She suddenly came in with fresh blood still dripping, so I looked at her and thought to myself if I wanted to treat the injury on her face first or the root of the problem. It was very challenging.” – Ram

“... The other boy did not want to give me his mobile phone. He ran away. I chased him, but he ran down the stairs and his tablet fell. I said this is a chance. I wanted to kick him, but suddenly my inner voice said, 'SPM is just starting. He is an SPM candidate. If anything happens to him, if he faints or is unable to sit for the exam, I will be responsible. ... I called him to my office. I had locked the door and pulled up my sleeves. I was thinking of giving him a lesson, but suddenly a voice was asking if beating him would change him for the better. 'If you beat him and he doesn't change, then what?'” – Wince

“When the second time came around, I realized we wanted to help her, but she didn't want to help herself. I thought maybe I was not doing enough to help the client, so she was still thinking of staying with her abusive husband. ... When she came in for the second time, with the same condition, I thought my help during the first session was still not enough. I can only advise, guide her, and help the client to think rationally, so that she knows what to do next. I have done my task.” – Geena

Self-talk is discovered to be the most readily available practice during encounters that do not demand any precise condition to be performed. Besides self-talk, participants also relied on their learning experiences to navigate the challenge of their clients' traumatic cases. The learning experiences bring meaningful guidance for the participants during their encounters with their clients. The following meaning unit provides a vast description of their experience.

4.5.2.2 Revisiting the learning experience

In addition, cognitive schemas that are rooted in past experiences also play a crucial role in counselors' comprehension of their clients' crisis experiences and guiding their subsequent responses. These past experiences encompass aspects such as professional training, supervisory engagement, and educational background (Viviani, 2011). Within the context of the present study, participants referred to their past learning experiences as a source of meaning construction in relation to their work in crisis intervention. Specifically, these experiences played a significant role in redefining and reaffirming their professional identities. Wince, Lai Arul, Nora, and Azna shared anecdotes about how advice received from their lecturers had a profound impact on their perception of clients' issues and their understanding of their professional roles.

"I try to keep the mindset I had during my time with the late Professor S. He said that we are professionals, and the client's issue is the client's issue. You do not bring them back home with you." – Wince

".... I wondered why in Malaysia there are people like this. He abused his staff. I, myself, had a feeling of discomfort, even when I reminded myself of what I was taught by my university lecturer. The lecturer said if the case is completed or pending, whatever happens at the office, should not be brought home. Later, it will affect your life." – Lai

"That is why we have the SOP. If you cannot make the counseling session, then note down the history. I usually shared it with the late Professor S. By hook or by crook we must face the system." – Arul

"I remember the late Professor S, my teacher in counseling; he said we must learn how to separate our clients' matters, meaning our duties from our personal or family matters. We must learn to separate them." – Nora

"At that point, I remember Professor Dato' Dr. A. who taught us that if we get involved as a counselor, we should not attend the client's ceremony and so on. But I asked him, what if we were invited? He said for those scenarios, we need to make an excuse. ... If we do have to attend the event, then we must not discuss any issue that had been discussed during the counseling session. That is what I try to keep in mind." – Azna

"The important thing is whatever we learn, we must understand. When we really hold on to what we have learned in the counseling course when it comes to practice, we will be on the right track." – Azna

Besides that, the knowledge that they gained through their past training experiences was also referred to make sense of their experience in crisis intervention. Dil and Wince recalled what they had learned during their training that assisted them to stay calm during crisis work while Ying stated she took a short period of time to recall the steps in psychological first aid that she learned previously to handle her clients in the crisis case she mentioned before. In addition, Anju learned precious lessons from her supervisor after her encounter with the traumatic client she had shared. Anju kept her supervisor's words in her mind when she deals with her clients.

"Before I was exposed to the crisis work, I think I was very lucky that I was exposed to psychological first aid and crisis management, debriefing through training conducted by the Penang Psychosocial Child Trauma Response Team. ... I think I was very lucky. I was selected to participate in the training. Then the incident happened shortly after the training was over." – Dil

"... I had experience serving an NGO. It was a Christian center. There was one senior, who had done counseling services for quite a long time. He told

me, 'Wince, the client's issue is the client's issue. Yes, we are empathetic. We are empathetic, but our empathy does not require you to wear his shoes. So, no matter how much they cry in front of us, telling us they have no money, all we can do is help them by channeling them to the right avenue. If you are thinking of giving them money, that's up to you. That's only one case. What if there are hundreds of cases? Are you willing to give all your money, or will you prioritize helping yourself?' That is the mindset I adhere to." – Wince

"I was prompted to think about what the next steps were. I immediately recalled what I had learned in psychological first aid training. Occasionally, we need to readjust our approach as we might forget certain techniques. Therefore, if I realized I had overlooked something, I would refer to the internet to review the steps." – Ying

"But whenever I listen to the client, I always remember what Mr S asked the client. What does the client really want? And that is what is supposed to happen in counseling sessions. I'll always make myself clear that I must ask my client, 'What is it that you want? What can make your situation better?' His sentences are different but the point of the matter is going to go back to the client. I don't know how I got the awareness. But I just practice that." – Anju

Furthermore, apart from relying on previous knowledge, the participants also indicated a need for seeking support to attain emotional release. Given that the participants were required to engage in crisis intervention with clients in the absence of other colleagues, spiritual support emerged as their primary preference. This brings us to the emerging meaning units under this experience.

4.5.2.3 Seeking Spiritual Support

Participants also developed a strong reliance on a Higher Power to seek spiritual support. Divine reliance offers a unique sense of direction, hope, and purpose that other forms of social support may not be able to provide, especially in the aftermath of a traumatic event (Syed Mohamad Hilmi et al., 2023). Usually, the divine was symbolized as an attached figure who provides a secure base that is commonly obtained through attachment relationships with significant others (Bock et al., 2018). In the context of this study, participants demonstrated a significant reliance on a Higher Power, such as God or a Higher Power they believed in, to facilitate the ease of managing their responsibilities in crisis work. Zudi firmly said whatever he has does not belong to him but to God. Thus, he maintained in his reflective form the importance of full submission and reliance on God and doing work for goodness. Reina also stressed that she cannot separate her work from her religion as for her, she is depending on God to perform her duty. Nora, Azna, and Geena also agreed with Reina. All of them claimed their knowledge and skill is not going to work without God's assistance. They put a strong reliance on God to function as a professional counselor. Their statements are as quoted.

"What we have is not ours. It all belongs to God. Submission and reliance should be on Him. We just must work toward goodness." – Zudi (reflective form)

"For the record, I can't separate my religion from my work. I still rely on God to carry out my work." – Reina

"That is why I said in the early stages, every step in my journey for work is not because I have knowledge of counseling or psychology. No. It is true that it's there, but what I put first is asking Allah, because He is the one who makes it easy." – Nora

"That's why I said, if we're doing any work, our intentions must be correct.

Insya Allah, Allah will give. He gives us the route. That's why I said we can't get away from it. It doesn't matter how great you are with theory if the suspect doesn't want to disclose it, we won't get it." – Azna

"Okay, as I told you earlier, religion is very important in my work as a counselor, because I believe what I do in my work is all done with help from God as well." – Geena

Furthermore, Ram stated that the objective of the religious notion is to remind mankind of God's immense power in aiding, demonstrating humans' dependency on God in carrying out their daily responsibilities. Meanwhile, Dil and Wince shared how they put reliance on God into practice. Dil mentioned that she always brings a religious card with her to obtain God's blessing, and Wince practiced conversing with God to obtain guidance in his endeavors.

"Every religion has a different concept. Even though the concept is different, the purpose is the same. Just one. To remember God. So, every human being when he tries to carry himself in his concept, in his principle, in his belief, we can see that he believes there is a great power that can help him." – Ram

"For the daily routine, I have a card. Wait a moment, I'm taking it (participant takes a piece of card to show) Can you see? (Showing a card with a man figure on it). It is just like a lucky charm. I don't know what the correct word is. It is not a talisman. It is just like I think if I had that thing, then God will bless me. So, I'll bring it along wherever I go." – Dil

"For example, as I mentioned earlier, I talk with God. It is just a kind of conversation (where) I am asking (and) I am answering it with the belief

that the answer could be from God. But sometimes, even if the question turns out with no answer, I just keep asking. Why is this happening? Could you show me the way how I could overcome this and so on? But sometimes, He (God) does not give (any ideas). It doesn't mean that He doesn't want (to guide). Maybe at that time, I had not reached the level (of comprehension) yet. I didn't think in that direction. Maybe one fine day, I will get the answer (solution)." – Wince

Besides divine reliance, the participants also practiced supplication as an endeavor to adapt to the crisis work challenges. The recitation of supplication serves as a mode of transcendental communication, facilitating a connection between individuals and a divine or transcendent entity in whom they place their belief. This practice can be viewed as an intrapersonal dialogue, reflecting an individual's inherent devotion to a Higher Power (Suryani, 2015). Engaging in supplication offers a sense of control, internal motivation, support, strength, and hope, particularly in the face of illness, disability, and limitations (Salgado, 2014). The participants in this study utilized supplication to seek guidance, safety, calmness of mind, and harmonious outcomes in their endeavors. Nearly all the participants recounted their personal encounters with supplication, expressing their inclination to employ it for personal betterment, especially in dealing with their crisis work. The following quotes summarize their reflections.

"As in Islam, we know that supplication is the weapon of the believers. Therefore, when we face a deadlock and can't see how to overcome it, we supplicate to Allah so that all our affairs will be simplified." – Zudi

"For me, I will continue to supplicate, read the Heart Sutra, and chant to gain a peaceful mind and peaceful heart, so that I can handle the case." –

Lai

"I always said (to God), I wouldn't ask for anything, but give me strength to find a solution on what I should do." – Wince

"There was a crisis in the office. At that time, I prayed to God to give me the wisdom to figure out what to do." – Wince

"I strongly believe that God is there to help us. Moreover, for me, before I start to do something, I will listen to prayer songs and spiritual-based songs for tranquility, supplication, and so on. Then we can perform our duties more enthusiastically and with much calmer." – Geena

"Usually, I pray with the holy verses. Then I'll try to be calm. Relax. Then, when I go out (from my office room), I try to bring a positive aura to all my colleagues." – Ram

"It was quite difficult when I ran the first session for a sexual abuse case. Usually, I would do a short prayer so that I can handle the case at my best, but sometimes, during the session, I get stuck. Then at that time, I will supplicate. God help me. Just like that, so I can move forward and carry on at my best. As a normal human being, I have limitations, so for me, that is the only hope I have." – Reina

"It is not easy to handle a case like this. First, I will ask Allah. Oh, Allah, please make my affairs easier because this case is not an ordinary case.

For me, what I have learned, my knowledge is only secondary. If Allah does not make it easy, then I cannot handle such a case, since the case is complicated" – Nora

"I had a client who I was unaware was bipolar. He was very aggressive and very angry. He slammed the bottle on the table, and I asked, 'What do you want, sir?' I don't know why, but he just suddenly said 'I only want it like this.' Okay, I will work on it, and then he was okay. In my heart, I was already crying. Really. I prayed to God. Please, God. I said, 'My God, please keep him calm.'" – Anju

"... Whenever I go to my work, I would say, 'Please bless me for today. I am going somewhere else. Protect me. Free me from harm and danger. Thank you, God, for helping me.' Something like this. A simple prayer." – Dil

"Of course, sometimes I encounter an unfamiliar situation. How do I make this suspect confess? He is still being defensive. At that time, I couldn't show the client that I was triggered. I would be talking, but at the same time, I was praying. 'Oh Allah, please make him open. Oh Allah, how?' In the meantime, I was kind of talking to myself. 'Oh Allah, please make him open up.' But usually, when we do that, things turn out unexpectedly. After the session, only then did I start thinking, 'How did I make him confess?' But really, it was actually because of my prayer." – Azna

In addition, some of the participants utilized supplication for the goodness of their clients. Such practice makes them feel emotionally released. Zudi, Lai, Wince, Reina, Nora, and Dil stated their experience in doing this practice.

"At dawn, I performed morning prayer. I, myself, created a moment where I said, 'Allah, perhaps the prisoner has been hanged. Oh Allah, please put him in the place of the believers, and please ease all his affairs.'" – Zudi

“Then I prayed for the client to have a peaceful mind, so that she could find a solution, or she could let go of her bad thoughts and memories. I prayed for her.” – Lai

“I frankly told him that day, 'I will not forgive you now for your obscene disciplinary problems, but if you truly change, then my forgiveness will reach you. I'm going to pray for this.' That's what I told him.” – Wince

“Sometimes, I pray for her so that she can deal with the problem. She may not know that I'm praying for her, but I will keep praying.” – Reina

“I pray for the client so that she can feel stronger indirectly. It is also therapy for me. Sadness will disappear when I pray for her. That is true for me based on what I'm doing, and I think it means a lot.” – Nora

“After that, she said she would go to another state hospital for treatment. The family wanted her to go there to live a better life. She didn't want to stay here anymore because there would be constant reminders of her incident. Then we terminated the session nicely and I prayed for her so that she could overcome the crisis.” – Dil

Seeking spiritual support was found to be the most available resource for participants to deal with their encounters during crisis work. It also connects the participants with their clients in a transcendental way. Despite spiritual support, participants also seek social support after the session to navigate their challenges.

4.5.2.4 Seeking Social Support

Specifically, participants seek social support from their supervisor in their professional setting and someone whom they regard as their mentor. Good supervisors

and mentors guide participants to gain practical knowledge and skills, promote professional growth, and provide meaningful experiences that serve as valued guides throughout their professional journey (Wei et al., 2022; Lee & Zhooriyati, 2023; Siti Balqis et al., 2023). Moreover, this relationship also fosters an ongoing process of knowledge refreshment and readiness to acquire new skills (Viviani, 2011). In the recent findings, participants claimed they have mentors who offer direct advice and professional guidance. Notably, the mentors hailed from diverse professional backgrounds yet provided pertinent guidance and counsel. The experiences shared by Zudi, Arul, and Dil underscored the significance of these mentoring relationships.

“Personally, I do have a mentor in religion. I had made this Ustaz as my reference when I have any question.” – Zudi

“That time I usually contacted the state mufti's office. Many times, I had sought out advice from the late Tan Sri Mufti. He said, 'Rul, if you teach the person to profess their faith, the person truly repents. Insyah Allah (you are doing good things). That is the commitment I have when I handle the Muslim cases.’” – Arul

“I also get in touch with the former assistant director, Mrs. J. For cases that I feel uncertain about the investigation procedure, I will refer to her. When I briefed her, I would feel more confident and calmer. I also have a counseling supervisor named Dr. D. Another psychiatrist I have consulted is Dato' Dr. L. These three people are my references.” – Dil

Besides that, Wince, Arul, and Athy also mentioned they received guidance from their supervisor in handling cases. Based on their experience, it is found that their supervisor provided systematic guidelines to carry out the task and was together with them until they were able to complete the job. Anju also recalled how her former

supervisor helped her in handling the first crisis intervention she attended. The experience gave her inspiration to grow further in her career as a professional counselor.

The statements from all of them are as follows.

“During that time, when I received the call or got information about the incident, I first called my director. I asked him what I should do in this situation. He just told me to go to the scene and get the information about what happened. After returning to the office, the director came, so he and I prepared the report together to be sent to Putrajaya.” – Wince

“Because my background is more about psychiatry management before I went to court, I read books. My head of department said, ‘Okay Mr. Arul, how are you going to testify?’ Not exactly a mock-up session, but he told me what you can and cannot say. ... Let’s say today I receive a subpoena, usually, they give you a week or two before proceeding for preparation. The boss will ask what we are preparing. Before the proceeding he will read the case notes, then he will inform that I have to say it like this or that.” – Arul

“I had a team when I was in Penang. My leader at the time was Mrs. L. She taught me a lot because she had been in SWD Penang for a long time. She would say ‘You must do this or that. You must be strong.’ I learned a lot from my senior’s tips on how to handle and everything.” – Athy

“This was the first trauma case that I handled. Although it was my first time doing it, fortunately, I had a supervisor like him. He gave me instructions, ‘Okay Anju, you do it like this, do it like this.’ It was a completely priceless learning point for me. Then I told myself, the next time I see a client like this, I’ll be like Mr. S.” – Anju

Unfortunately, Lai did not receive similar adequate guidance from her supervisor when she attended an intense traumatic case that affected her psychologically. But her lecturer's advice reminds her to not bring the clients' issues as hers. The advice led her to find a solution to cope with her affected emotion. She recalled her experience as follows.

"Back then I was still fresh on the job, so at the time I didn't have the knowledge and skills to handle the case. I was very worried, afraid, and sorry for the client. My boss also didn't teach me how to handle it. I thought of a way myself." – Lai

Furthermore, participants also seek support from their peers. Peer support system provides space for counselors to share and process their experiences and reaction to the trauma narratives of their clients (Forsyth, 2016). It also provides a safe space for professional helpers to identify their biases, involve in critical thinking, reduce shame and isolation, and counter burnout (Miu et al., 2022). Zudi, Lai, Wince, Geena, Ying, Dil, and Reina shared how they count on their colleagues to listen to their sharing session.

"Sometimes we go out to eat together after work because in the prison there are only three of us. When one of us goes out, we would send a message to the others like, 'Can we have high tea today? I want to discuss this case a bit.' So, we would share with each other, and it would automatically bring us some release too." – Zudi

"At the time I was the only counselor in my department. After a few years, we had a contract counselor, so sometimes we would sit down and share our case. Sharing like this can give me a little bit of a release." – Lai

“When I talk to other counselors from other institutions, the same thing (disciplinary issues) happens. Here and in other institutions, even among primary school children. So, from there we began to encourage each other. We support each other to not be frustrated with whatever we do.” – Wince

“And then, I talked and shared with my fellow counselor. She would say, it’s okay you have done your job. You gave her insight. You have guided her to think rationally. You have done your part, so hopefully she will be okay.” – Geena

“Commonly, for me, I need to share and vent. I have a group we call VCO, Victim Care Officer, but I also have another group among my batch mates, so sometimes I share with them.” – Ying

“Sometimes I share my feelings with my colleagues. After I finish all my work, I will share my feelings in terms of personal reflection. ‘Oh, it’s really bad, the father did that to his own son, like the kid isn’t human.’” – Dil

“But if it’s with my colleague, I can share more than that. We can understand because we are from the same field.” – Reina

In addition to emotional sharing, the participants in this study displayed a proclivity for seeking professional consultation and support from peers within their professional domain. These colleagues comprised both individuals from their immediate workplace and other acquaintances operating in the same field. Zudi, Wince, Geena, Reina, Nora, Ying, and Dil offered insights into their experiences with colleagues, elucidating the significance of these relationships.

“My reference is from the prison officers, the senior officers, and the senior counselors. It helps me in providing information and necessary skill.” – Zudi

“At first, I cannot deny that I felt disturbed. Memories of that time keep flashing back, but after I listened to Ustaz's experience, other officers' experience, and some other people I asked for input, I was able to overcome those issues.” – Zudi

“We must be proactive. Searching, asking two or three people, and so on. ... Maybe sometimes God does not directly give us the answer, but by asking our questions to others around us, then maybe their answers will help us to think and decide on which things we should pay attention to, and so on.” – Wince

“For me, it depends on the situation. If I think I need to share, then I will share it with my colleagues. I share with them to get an opinion on treatment or anything else I should do for this client. If I feel like I am okay to handle the case, I will not share. It depends on the case.” – Geena

“My friend and I, we're not only colleagues but also best friends. Usually, we will discuss cases, tasks, and how to release our workload. We also discuss the techniques we're using. That's how we do knowledge exchange amongst ourselves. I think this method can provide a little relief.” – Reina

“I prefer if the person is not from among my family or any other relationship with me. That way, the person can be more open and honest in giving an opinion.” – Nora

“Sharing about workload, fatigue, and stuff related to my personal life, I will find the right person. Some are among my colleagues in the office, and some are from other places. Certain people that I trust.” – Nora

“For example, I've tried a lot of methods with the client, but nothing has worked, and I feel stuck. I will ask my colleague if they have any ideas.” –

Ying

“We have a team, a support group. I will ask the group, what do you do when you're facing this kind of case? They would tell me they had come across a similar case. If the case involves many children, what was their strategy? So, I will get their feedback. Is the type of assessment I used acceptable? We would discuss.” – Dil

“I am lucky because, in this state, I don't work alone. I have a good assistant. We work together. We read the case facts together. Sometimes we will share our inputs, exchange thoughts, opinions, and discuss cases. This discussion helps me to release.” – Dil

Finally, besides peers, the participants also turned to their families for support and understanding. Participants in the study expressed a tendency to confide their emotions in their family members, specifically their spouses, and parents, as a means of seeking emotional solace and alleviating their burdens. They shared their emotional reactions to the traumatic cases they encountered and the exhaustion they experienced. Athy articulated her preference for finding emotional release through conversations with her father, while Ram, Anju, Zudi, and Dil leaned towards sharing with their respective spouses. However, Dil encountered a situation in which her husband sometimes declined to listen due to the distressing nature of the shared experiences. In contrast, Ying found comfort in confiding in her husband, given his professional background as

a counselor, which facilitated a greater understanding of the challenges inherent in the counseling profession. The participants narrated their individual experiences as in their quoted statements.

“And then, if I want to talk, I'd rather talk to my father than anyone else, because he is very empathetic. He will listen to everything I talk about. After talking with him, I will feel a little better. Even now, if I have anything to share, I will rather share it with my father.” – Athy

“When I feel really distracted, I will try to vent to my wife.” – Ram

“I will tell my husband how my day was. 'Oh, my goodness, today, I couldn't even eat a lot. Today I have this many cases.' When I'm too tired, I don't even talk, but because we practice asking about each other's day, I'll go, 'It was good. Today was productive. Today I did this.' Sometimes, it's just something basic, other times I'll go into detail.” – Anju

“Some people say any issues in the office stay in the office. If you have a problem with your boss in the office, never tell your wife. Things like that. But for me, you better go back and tell your spouse. It doesn't mean that the husband or wife is going to attack the boss the next day. No. It's just to release some tension.” – Zudi

“When I share my stories, my spouse feels stressed. He said all my stories are sad. Negative stories. A story about the reality of a very miserable life. So, he said, if possible, please don't share these stories with him anymore. After that, I stopped sharing these things with him.” – Dil

“Because my husband is also a Psychology Officer, sometimes when I get a heavy case, I will share it with him. Of course, I don't mention the names and all the sensitive details. I just tell him there is a child's case that I feel

sad about. He would support me. He also understands because we are in the same field. He will listen to me.” – Ying

Reina, Azna, and Nora rarely share their emotion related to the case they are handling with their spouse. Sometimes, they just share the case facts in general to let their spouse know where they had been on the day or to share some lessons from the case. Zudi also will only share the general case fact information when he intends to share with them the lesson learned from the case.

“My husband and I do not talk much about work. Only sometimes will I share, today I got a case like this. A toddler was abused. It would end just like that. My husband isn't interested in listening to more. He does not like asking to find out more.” – Reina

“I don't like bringing my work back home, but it would be a lie if I said I don't think about it at all. Especially in this case. I just told my children, my family, that just now I was visiting the victim's family.” – Azna

“For the cases that I handle, I rarely share it with my husband, but if I wanted to educate him, I would use the case as a model to teach him. For example, in terms of alimony, I got a case related to alimony or the concept of charity, I will use an example from my client, whom I keep anonymous, to educate him indirectly.” – Nora

“If the case was just an ordinary case, I wouldn't share it with my family, but sometimes the case is unusual, and I want my family to learn from it. I'll share it with other family members.” – Zudi

Lai who is the only unmarried participant also rarely shared her emotion with her family. But her family learned she was tired when she went to bed earlier. They just let

her rest without any disturbance. But she regarded her family members, her special boyfriend, and her friends as her support system.

"My support systems are my family members, my boyfriend, and my friends." – Lai

For the married participants, the presence of spousal support and understanding assumes a critical role in assisting them in navigating the challenges inherent in crisis work and rejuvenating their resilience to sustain their well-being and commitment to providing their services (Mohd Zaliridzal, 2018; Masson, 2019). In this study, the participants reported their spouses strongly support and understand the nature of their work. The support and understanding are manifested in terms of their emphatic responses after listening to their emotional sharing. Their spouses also show high commitment to share childcare responsibility during their deployment in crisis work as well as during their self-care time. Arul, Zudi, Wince, and Dil shared the emotional comfort and advice they get from their spouses during their difficult days.

"It would be a lie if I said I don't think about a case when I'm back at home. Back then, my kids were small, and one of them said, 'Daddy, let's jog.' I had to say I couldn't make it. I would request my wife to attend to them and tell them I had a very difficult day, but I would never share what the case was. Thank God I have a very good wife and she understands." – Arul

"I told my wife (about the traumatic experience). Then my wife would always remind me. She would say, 'Don't think too much' when she noticed that I was looking off into space too much. After that, she would continuously remind me to do this or don't do that and so on." – Zudi

"I had asked my wife. I'd say I'd do it like this or that. She asked if there was any danger in it if I did it that way. So, from there, perhaps when I

ask, her answer helps me to think more about it. After that, I try to weigh my options before I decide.” – Wince

“I am thankful to my husband because we have no blood ties. He is an outsider. We don't have any blood relations, but God set me up with him. He is willing to sacrifice his working hours, buy presents, and accompany me when I'm upset. When I'm happy, he is happy for me. He helps me. I think he is an angel in my life.” – Dil

Besides showing understanding of the triggered emotion that the participants encountered, their spouses also provide support and understanding about their unexpected working time. Geena, Nora, and Azna revealed their story of how they feel comforted by the understanding they gained from their spouses when they are suddenly called for deployment in crisis work.

“My husband, he really understands my work, but the kids, not so much. They would ask, 'Why does mummy want to go to work?' So, it is a bit challenging to handle the kids.” – Geena

“My husband, thank God! Allah gifted me a husband who never said no to me doing my work. Although I must leave him, when I have to go out at night, he never says not to go. Never. Allah blessed me with a husband who truly understands my work.” – Nora

“In terms of support, it is a must. If he cannot understand, it will be difficult. But for me, if I'm going to stay back, I'll inform him earlier that I will be running late today. He doesn't question me. He isn't worried because I have already told him.” – Azna

Not only that, but the participants also particularly the female counselors stated that their husbands will take over childcare and housework responsibilities especially

during their outstation and crisis work deployment. Ying, Reina, Anju, Dil, and Athy mentioned their experience.

“My husband and I will cook together. If I am doing it alone, there is not enough time, so we do it together to speed things up.” – Ying

“It is quite tough when I'm in conflict with my duties. When I am posted outstation, no one can fetch the kids if my schedule clashes with my husband's, so we must plan it together.” – Reina

“Even now, if I say I need to go to headquarters and it takes some time to get back, he'll be okay. He can take care of the kids. At that time, my husband had to prepare the kids for school. He's very supportive. He doesn't mind that.” – Anju

“I always discuss with him. He had resigned as a lecturer and now runs his own consulting business, so he has flexible hours. When I must work outstation, I will inform him so that he can make arrangements for the family. For example, usually, I am the one who sends the kids to school, nursery, etc. For one week I had to attend training with the NCA (National Crime Agency) in Putrajaya. He would take care of everything.” – Dil

“One more thing. I got very good support from my family. They don't disturb me. At that time (during the MH370 crisis), I already had a one-year-old daughter. My mother took care of her, so I could concentrate on what I was doing. It was a very big thing for me. There was no disruption in terms of household chores and cooking because my husband is very independent. He can cook. He can clean the house and all those things, so I can put one hundred percent concentration in the work that I'm doing.”

– Athy

Besides that, the participants also reported their husbands also willingly take over childcare responsibility while they are spending some time on their personal self-care activities. This complimentary action provides them some space for taking naps, self-cleaning, jogging, and traveling. This is based on the experience of Athy, Reina, Geena, and Anju.

"I want to be in my room. I got some important things to do. Those are my words. That's the keyword. My husband will understand, then he will take care of the kids for a while." – Athy

"If my husband can send my children to school and I manage to settle everything, I will text my friend. 'Okay, by seven we start jogging.' We adjusted our time to arrive before eight. We would jog or walk briskly about two kilometers." – Reina

"Self-care in terms of sleep is insufficient, but if I really need to rest, I will ensure either my husband or someone else can take care of the baby. Only then will I sleep." – Geena

"They will stay with my husband (when I'm traveling). My kids had already grown by that time, but now I can't go traveling with my friends because my youngest is still breastfeeding. My husband can handle it if the child is no longer breastfeeding." – Geena

"When my kids grow up, I have more time for myself. Then, I have time to go out with my friends. My husband has no social life. He's a homebody. My husband will be able to take care of the kids so I can go out." – Anju

When discussing self-care activities, participants additionally addressed their favorite things they do in their spare time. Their participation in such activities revitalizes them after lengthy hours of dealing with crisis intervention sessions,

allowing them to spend quality time with themselves. This leads us to the next meaning unit.

4.5.3 Self-Revitalization

Self-revitalization encompasses the experiential perspective of crisis counselors who engage in self-care practices to alleviate negative emotions, replenish their reservoir of positive energy, and restore their professional efficacy. It signifies counselors' experience of employing personal activities to maintain a positive self-image, fulfill their internal demands, cultivate positivity, and sustain their physical well-being (Butler et al., 2019). These practical experiences were thematized into three meaning units including physical care, personal time, and spiritual practices. A thorough explanation of these meaning units and their condensed meaning units was provided in the following subsection.

4.5.3.1 Physical care

Physical care implies deliberate action or behavior of attending to the needs of the physical body to support body functioning, prevent deterioration of the body system, and optimize safety (Lee & Miller, 2013; Butler et al., 2019). Common practices for physical care include regular exercise, a healthy diet, and adequate sleep (Bloomquist et al., 2015). Lee & Miller (2013) and Marzband & Zakavi (2015) add illness prevention, coping with illness, and general health maintenance of oneself are also part of physical care. Based on the analysis, it is also common for the research participants to practice health-promoting lifestyles such as engaging in physical activities, taking a healthy diet, and having adequate sleep. This finding leads to the emergence of the

following condensed meaning units under physical care specifically 1) performing physical activities; 2) monitoring nutrition intake; and 3) managing sleeping time.

The first element is performing physical activities during leisure time. Participation in physical activities was associated with extensive health benefits to prevent physical disease as well as mental disorders (Mikkelsen et al., 2017; Kiessling II, 2019). Malaysian adults are showing a rising number of active participations in physical activities since 2019 which reflects the awareness of the benefit was also increasing (Khoo et al., 2020). This trend was also found in the participants of the recent study.

Based on thematic analysis, it is found the participants commonly involve in hiking, camping, jogging, cycling, brisk walking, and indoor physical exercise as their leisure-time physical activities. Some of them engaged in more than one activity. They also engage in these physical activities in groups, surrounded by close friends who have similar interests. For instance, Zudi engaged in various social groups for physical activities, exposing him to variety of leisure-time physical activities. In addition, Geena, Reina, Ying, and Arul also participate in more than one type of physical activity.

"I am in WhatsApp groups for cycling, hiking, and running. My friend will post, 'This week we will have a 10-kilometer run, who wants to join?' Then I'll join. 'Next week or tomorrow we will go hiking, would anyone like to join us?' I'll join that as well. It depends, but I don't go too frequently." – Zudi

"To maintain physical health, I like to jog. When I have free time on the weekend, I usually jog. I have a treadmill at home. If I don't have time to jog, I will do it at home. I love hiking. When I have free time, I like to go hiking." – Geena

"... That's my routine. Right now, I'm into outdoor activities, jogging, brisk walking, and hiking. That's it." – Reina

"Climbing and camping is my passion. I also like to have picnics. I'll feel relaxed." - Ying

".... Apart from that, I do something else. I usually cycle, but sometimes I will swim, and it naturally relieves my stress." – Arul

Besides that, some of the participants are involved in one activity regularly from the mentioned activities. Nora prefers cycling for her leisure-time physical activities while Dil likes to go camping. Like Zudi, Dil also engaged in camping activities in a group. She brought her family to enjoy camping activities together. Lai regularly performs brisk walking. Their statements were quoted as follows.

"For physical, I have a bicycle, so I will cycle a bit." – Nora

"Recently, I joined a camping group. I've started going camping. I will choose places like the beach, jungle, or natural parks. We go camping with the children and friends." -Dil

"I will exercise on Saturday and Sunday because Monday through Friday are working days. So, on Saturday and Sunday, I will take about half an hour to brisk walk. I brisk walked around the area near my house for half an hour. Enough to sweat. Afterward, I will relax for a bit." – Lai

Apart from hiking, jogging, cycling, camping, and brisk walking the participants also reported performing indoor physical exercise. This includes Zumba, Aerobic, Tabata, and Piloxing. Some of them bought exercise equipment. This experience was shared by Athy, Dil, Ying, and Anju.

".... Otherwise, we (my kids and I) will play Zumba songs at home, and we will dance together. All three of us." – Athy

"I bought a Nintendo Switch. There is a game on the Nintendo Switch that uses a ring instrument. The ring has a sensor. It will connect to the TV, so we must exercise by following the game. I'm playing the game and at the same time I'm working out." – Dil

"I do exercise, but not every day. Perhaps in a week, I'll work out three or four times, but not for long, half an hour or so, because I don't really have the time. I do it at my house. For example, Tabata. I follow along on YouTube, or sometimes I will follow something like aerobics." – Ying

"But now, these past two years, I have really devoted myself to my physical health. In one week, at least four times, I will attend classes. It could be Zumba, Tabata, or Piloxing. I am going to all of these, and I also have a personal trainer now." – Anju

Nevertheless, based on the analysis only one participant reported considering work-time physical movement as her exercise due to time constraints. The ability of occupational physical movement to bring extensive health benefits like physical activities is still under further research (Holterman, 2022). Azna was reported to say the following.

"I don't sit in the office all the time. I have a lot of movement. But for formal exercise, I don't have time. There is the equipment I bought and want to buy. Only my child uses it. I don't have time. ... Maybe I can categorize myself as active worker even though I'm getting old." – Azna

Despite its benefit for healthy body, physical activities were also found to be a platform to form social groups among some participants, fostering a healthy social self-care as well. This demonstrates the dual advantage of physical activities. Individuals

may choose to engage in activities alone or with a group, depending on their preferences.

Besides engaging in physical activities, participants are also mindful of the food they consume daily. Monitoring nutritional intake is also a major concern under physical care. This reflects the experiences of research participants in managing their diet and nutrition. Much research has indicated the link between improper nutrition and diet with chronic diseases such as a range of cancers due to the intake of total dietary fat, overweight, and alcohol consumption (Kennedy, 2006). From the analysis, it is found that the participants embrace healthy nutritional lifestyles by monitoring their sugar intake, controlling the portion of food intake, managing proper meals time, and taking adequate water as recommended in Malaysian Dietary Guidelines 2020 (NCCFN, 2020). Athy and Ying mentioned cutting down sugar intake in their daily nutrition. They are reported to share the following statements.

“First, I am trying to cut down all my sugar.” – Athy

“I watch what I eat, like not eating sugar or any food that is high in sugar

I will cut back on.” – Ying

Meanwhile, Zudi, Arul, Azna, Reina, and Athy used to reduce the portion of their food intake. Some of them reduce the portion of their food intake during certain mealtimes, while some of them practice intermittent fasting. They were reported to share the following.

“I make sure I eat on time. I try not to eat too much.” – Zudi

“I’m eating less. I think it’s related to metabolism. I also take medication for cholesterol.” – Arul

"I eat a balanced diet. For instance, I eat less rice and I eat more vegetables and meat. I am used to that because I was a nurse, not because I am on a diet. I'm used to that diet, so I can't eat a lot of rice." – Azna

"I will eat in the morning and the afternoon. At night I will eat less. I think I'm okay with that. I want to maintain my weight." - Reina

"And then I tried to follow one of the groups. Intermittent fasting group. I tried to do it, but not one hundred percent yet." – Athy

Besides that, the participants also talked about the importance of having breakfast. They ensured they will have breakfast before conducting any crisis intervention or counseling session, particularly among those who need to travel from one district to the others in order to conduct the crisis counseling and intervention session. In this situation, Dil, Azna, Ying, Geena, and Reina were reported to take some meals before they started their journey or before they began the session.

"For example, when I go outstation. The journey might be difficult. No matter what, I will eat first and make sure I am full. Take care of yourself first. For me, that's an element of self-care." – Dil

"Usually, if I have a session, I'll drink at home. I don't like stopping to take a break during the session for breakfast." – Azna

"For breakfast, I'll take some food. If I'm hungry, I will lose focus. I want to run a session, but I cannot focus." – Ying

"Some tips for a long journey. Ensure we eat enough because if we go on an empty stomach, we will get nausea if the road is crooked and more."

Drink enough water. If possible, stop for a while." - Geena

"Usually, breakfast is very important. Whether it's before the trip or after arrival, I'll have breakfast." - Reina

Besides breakfast, the participants were also concerned about their lunch. Azna, Nora, and Geena shared their daily routine experience in having their lunch after they finished their session with their clients. Occasionally, Geena will spend her free time during lunch hours having her favorite food. She claimed it brings her peace and happiness. They shared the following:

“But if I'm in the office, usually if the session with the client finishes by noon, I will go downstairs to eat.” - Nora

“If I don't feel like going out again, after the session, on the way back to the office I will buy some food and eat at the office. If the place is far away, after I finish, I will go out and eat and pray in advance. Then I'll go back to the office.” – Azna

“When I have free time during lunchtime, I will find food I like. I think it gives me peace.” – Geena

Geena's statement demonstrates that there is a link between food and emotion. In further explanation, Geena regarded good food intake as a therapy for her. Her opinion was supported by Dil. Both claimed food can heal their emotions after dealing with traumatic crisis cases.

“If I have a lot of cases, I need to find food that I like. I need to eat good food. I need to find a place where I can eat properly. I must savor the food. I like to eat. It's therapeutic for me during a busy day.” – Geena

“If I face a case that I think makes me stressed, or feel that it is a bit difficult or maybe I feel a bit down, I will go somewhere that I might buy ice cream, sweets, desserts or any tasty food to reward myself. It can help me calm my negative emotions. Then after that, I can go back to work as usual.” – Dil

The participants also consume water after they have finished their session. They usually take plain water, a cup of coffee, or other sweet drinks during their short break before the next client comes. Water consumption was also claimed to be effective to regain energy and calm down emotions. Ram, Zudi, Arul, Azna, Geena, Reina, Anju, Ying, and Athy shared their practice as follows.

"First, I will drink water because water is very effective. Plain water.

Drink first. Even before I come to the office I will drink. Depends on my need." – Ram

"If I need to drink, I will drink first." – Zudi

"Take a deep breath. Relax. Go for a cup of coffee." - Arul

"After the session is over, I don't go straight into the next session.

Meaning, I will put in a gap of about 10 minutes to have some drinks." –

Azna

"... Drink water and then if I want to have some sugary drinks or desserts, there are always some sweet treats in my office, I will eat them to boost my energy." – Geena

"If there are three cases, in between the cases we will take a break. Rest.

Drink water." - Reina

"I always drink my water. That mug of water is a must." – Anju

"I might go look for food for a while and have some drinks." – Ying

" That time, do you know what I did? I drank a lot to calm my emotions."

- Athy

Apart from their concern about food intake, participants also shared the importance of sleep, that is the third element under physical care based on the analysis.

According to Lan et al. (2007), sleep is as important as other health-promoting behavior

such as physical activities and diet in maintaining a healthy life. Swinkels et al. (2013) stated insufficient sleep increases risk factors for medical problems and mental health issues. Aware of the importance of sleep, the respondents of the current study practice regular sleep time. Zudi, Lai, Arul, Dil, Azna, and Anju, have set a specific time for their nocturnal sleep.

"I can sleep easily. I usually sleep by ten." – Zudi

"...Usually, I sleep at eleven or twelve." – Lai

"I wake up early in the morning and I'll go to bed early. That's my routine.

That is my self-care." – Arul

"Usually around 10:30 or 11, I have to go to sleep" – Dil

"If I have a lot of work during the day, after Isya' prayer, I will fall asleep in front of the TV." – Azna

"Well, if my kids have school, we usually go to bed at nine because we always wake up at five o'clock." – Anju

Although they have a specific time for sleeping, they also adjusted the time accordingly based on their need, especially during their tired day. Lai and Ying mentioned their sleeping pattern during a tiring day. Anju also shared her experience of having sleep during a tired day. She sometimes skips her shower when she feels so tired. She justified her practice as her self-care for that day.

"When I get back, and let's say I'm tired, I'll practice three of my religious activities or I'll play some songs and exercise. One more thing. I'll go to bed early. I'll rest earlier." – Lai

"Sometimes I feel tired and a little emotional. Then, at home I have to do housework, so sometimes my patience reaches its limit. I need to sleep

soon. I cannot control my patience. I need to recharge. I recharge my energy with sleeping.” - Ying

“Every time I have a personal issue, as well as issues at work, it can be very difficult. I don't have the energy to practice self-care. There are days I sleep without taking a bath, because I feel like that is my self-care today.”

– Anju

Nevertheless, being the caretaker for a breastfeeding baby may cause some changes in sleeping patterns for Geena. Thus, she got enough sleep during holidays or weekends when she had someone to take care of her baby. She disclosed her experience as follows.

" Self-care in terms of sleep is not enough, but if I need a break, I will ensure that my husband or other guardians can take care of my baby. Only then will I sleep. At night, I don't get seven or eight hours of sleep. The baby will wake up at night. Maybe by noon or during a holiday or weekend, I will sleep in the afternoon." – Geena

Some difficulties at the workplace may also trigger sleep patterns. Wince had gone through such an experience. He started to realize the problem after the third night of being awake. He realized that was not good for him. He then started to figure out certain techniques and approaches to overcome his sleep problem. His self-care experience in regulating his sleep was as reported.

“At first, I didn't realize. On the first day, and the second day, I will be awake at night. So, on the third day, I thought I couldn't let myself not sleep. My mood will not be good. I searched for how to overcome this insomnia. ... Slowly it gets better. My bedtime must be earlier. If I delay my bedtime, I will not be able to sleep until late at night.” – Wince

Furthermore, the participants also may take some naps during the afternoon to refresh themselves especially after they were having a crisis intervention session. Zudi, Ram, Arul, and Nora described their experience in taking a nap in their free time during working days. Meanwhile, Anju reported having a nap in the morning after her kids go to school when she has ample time to do so before she goes to the office. They illustrated the following.

"At the prison, we will be out for lunch around 12:30 PM because the officers who work in the morning will switch shifts, so we cannot stay inside without their supervision. ... Usually, when I go out, I will go to the mosque to rest, sleep, nap, and so on." – Zudi

"I took a nap for about ten minutes. When I'm awake, I feel refreshed. That is one of my therapies." – Ram

"I will rest. Relax. Take a nap for a while." – Arul

"The solution is that when I have free time, I will use that time to recharge myself. I will take a nap. Sleep is important for me to recharge. After I wake up, I usually feel refreshed. That's my remedy." – Nora

"So, once they leave, then it becomes my time, where I'll take my own sweet time. Sometimes I have enough of a gap to actually take a nap for ten to fifteen minutes. I sleep because I'm not the type of person that sleeps during the day. So, the morning sleep is actually very helpful." – Anju

Getting a good night's sleep can boost positive emotions in participants. It refreshes their physical body and fills them with energy to tackle their work with a positive attitude. In addition to fulfilling their physical needs, participants also engage in unique leisure activities to revitalize their psychological well-being. They usually spend their personal time on these activities.

4.5.3.2 Personal Time

Personal time implies the participants allocate their time to be spent with themselves. White et al. (2022) conceptualized having personal time or solitary time as an activity that is spent by oneself without the involvement of direct physical or verbal interaction with others. Spending personal time provides opportunities for self-reflection and enhances emotional regulation skills that are essential to cope with a stressful situation (Dixon, 2020). During this allocated time, the participants practiced certain leisure activities and self-therapy, or just be in solitude.

Leisure activities include enjoying hi-tea, shopping, watching movies, and listening to talks or lectures. They might vary from one person to another. Some of them might have similar interests in certain activities. For instance, Zudi, Ram, and Reina have similarities in enjoying coffee time and hi-tea to get some release. They shared their enjoyment of having this activity in their statements.

“During lunchtime, if I want to have some me time, I will go to any shop, sit down, and drink coffee like a rich person.” – Zudi

“Even for a walk-in client, I will meet with the client first. I will come out of my room, see the client, and ask for 30 minutes. I will try to clear my mind of any unfinished business with the previous client's issue. I will make some coffee and try to calm myself down first.” – Ram

“Sometimes, before I get home, I go for hi-tea first, for my own therapy. But not for long, 30 minutes and I'll finish and go.” – Reina

Shopping activity is also another leisure time activity which the participants like to do. Nora and Geena enjoy buying food for their children before they return home.

"If, let's say, in the evening, I go home, usually what I'll do is I will stop by a shop and buy food. Buy food and bring it back for my kids. I feel happy in that way." – Nora

"Going to the market and buying food for my children. That is my 'me time'. I don't have a specific time I set aside for myself." – Geena

Reina, Nora, and Ying also shared the same interest in shopping activities. But Reina described she did window shopping through online applications instead of going to physical shops like Nora and Ying. The statements below were quoted from their sharing.

"Sometimes I'll go window shopping. Window shopping and reviewing things on Shopee." – Reina

"Sometimes I like to go dine, walk around, and shop." – Nora

"I like to go shopping on my breaks." – Ying

Besides that, Ying also likes to watch movies. She usually watches movies on YouTube at nighttime. However, Reina, Anju, and Dil do not frequently watch movies. They watch movies occasionally. Here are their experiences.

"Soon after the kids go to bed, I will have some 'me time'. I watch YouTube." – Ying

"After coming home, I will watch YouTube. I will watch a movie, drama, or comedy. I enjoy it. Afterwards, I'll feel happy." – Ying

"Sometimes I like to watch movies too, but not often. It'll be a spiritual movie or whatever movie I feel like watching." – Reina

"When I take leave, it's my day off. On my day off I don't clean. I'm the kind of person who likes to read. So, it's either my book or a good movie with good food." – Anju

“Sometimes I'll watch movies, entertainment shows, but I rarely watch movies.” – Dil

Besides watching movies, the participants also informed that they do listen to the audio and visual talk. Dil mentioned she used to listen to the talk during her journey to the office and her journey to return home. In her explanation, she said she usually listens to spiritual talk as well as other kinds of talk related to her field of work. Azna also likes to listen to talks that are related to her work on radio and television. She frequently records television talk programs that are related to her field for future reference. In addition, Zudi listens to talk on social media to calm down his emotions and curiosity after he met a case that affects him. Three of them were reported to describe their experience as the following.

“Some speakers will give talks online and they record the audio. So, I'll just play the audio to listen to their lectures sometimes. I'll listen to Dharma talk sometimes to fill the one-hour travel time.” – Dil

“I like to record TV programs, let's say, for example, a program that I can't watch on time. I'll see and if I find that the program's topic is related to counseling, trauma, or anything related to that field, and I'll record it. So, when I get back, I will play the recording, take some notes, and put the notes in a bag. If I want to get some input for my lectures, I will look there. That's how I fill my time.” – Azna

“From the early stages, it was undeniable that I could not forget and would let things influence me. ... I am the type that calms down from consuming the stuff people share on social media, such as YouTube.” – Zudi

Another activity that the participants did while having their personal time is doing self-therapy. The therapy activities are found to be in the form of Mandala therapy, sand

playing, aromatherapy, diary reflection, self-cleaning, deep breathing, listening to relaxation music or simply being in solitude. Four of the participants, specifically Lai, Ying, Dil, and Anju described their therapeutic experience in doing their self-therapy activities in the following statements.

".... I will print out a Mandala and color them. It is like channeling all my negative energy to exit through coloring the Mandala." – Lai

"Sometimes I use sand play. I will go and touch the sand to express my feelings, because we believe the sand will make us more connected through our sensations. The connection makes me feel more grounded, comfortable, and relaxed." – Ying

"I have one habit. I like to keep a personal diary, in which I journal or do simple reflection. Sometimes I will draw, sometimes I will write or sometimes I will make simple Mandala art drawing just to feel the pattern, the line." – Dil

"I am a consumer of essential oils. I use whatever fragrance I like, such as mint, lemon or rose to diffuse." – Dil

"When I don't have a client, I keep the door open so there is enough ventilation for air and positive vibes to get in. And as of now, I have aromatherapy candles that I will burn there." – Anju

Anju and Athy also described their pleasure in self-cleaning activities. Both enjoy the bathing time. Anju described her bathing experience as her sweet time. Both statements are quoted as follows.

"Bath time is also very important. Bath time is very personal because we finally open up to the universe. So, I'm normally going to take my own sweet time. The bathroom is like my own heaven, I would say." – Anju

"I would say, 'Mommy wants to go into my room, okay. So, none of you come into the room. I want to be in my room.' My husband will understand. Then he will take care of the kids for a while. During that time, I will take a shower, scrub my body, and so on. I also burn an aromatherapy candle."

– Athy

Deep breathing is another self-therapy activity that the participants used to practice releasing their emotions. Eight out of thirteen participants mentioned practicing deep breathing. Deep breathing is found to be frequently practiced while attending heavy emotional crisis cases and after the session. Lai, Ram, Arul, Athy, Geena, Reina, Anju, and Dil described their experience during the interview.

"In that moment, to let go of all my feelings, usually I will perform breathing techniques. Through breathing in and breathing out I can let all my feelings go." – Lai

"I would go through a breathing process, then I try to bring myself to a state of relaxation." – Ram

"Take a deep breath. Relax." – Arul

"If I am in the office, after I am done with the session, I will perform some breathing techniques. A simple one. Simple deep breathing technique." – Athy

"When I was in that place, whenever I felt like I was not strong enough and I felt like crying, I tried to calm myself down by taking a breath." – Geena

"Of course, we must first calm down by taking a deep breath. I usually take breaths in my own style. It really helps me." – Reina

“Breathing is very important. You will hear me say breathing. I always make sure I take a deep breath, so there is more oxygen, and it makes me more focused.” – Anju

“I had faced a situation in which I didn't know what to do. I was just counting (things in the surrounding area) and performing breathing techniques.” – Dil

Wince also reported doing deep breathing while he was having sleep difficulty due to some working issues at his workplace. In addition, Athy also mentioned her deep breathing practice when she has sleep difficulty. Both are quoted for saying the following statements.

“Once or twice, I'll do breathing techniques. I will lay down as usual and then perform the breathing technique, and then relax.” – Wince

“I always do a breathing technique. It's rare, but if I cannot sleep at night, I will do breathing techniques when I lie down before I sleep.” – Athy

The participants also reported that they like to listen to music too. Lai and Dil mentioned that they like to listen to instrumental relaxation music including nature sounds. They claimed such music can bring calmness and help them to discharge. Geena and Anju have an interest in a variety of music. They have their own favorite songs. Both listen to the song during their drive to the office and back. Four of them described their experience in the following quotes.

“Even in the office, I'd play songs and sometimes I will play relaxation music such as wave sounds or rain sounds. That will also calm my mind.”

– Lai

"Sometimes I turn on soft music that I like. No singer. I like going to a quiet place, where I usually sit, and start listening until I feel ok. This is my way of discharging stress." – Dil

"That is the reality we have to face (long commute home). So, I will listen to the music I like. Sometimes it'll be spiritual songs." – Geena

"I listen to my favorite songs. I have a list of songs that I listen to and just enjoy it. On certain days, I love to listen to all romantic songs. Some days, it will be a very rock-centric type of song. On other days, I'm just very religious and I'll listen to the mantra on my way to the office. It depends on my mood, but there will be sometimes when I don't listen to music at all. Just quietness, stillness, and calm." – Anju

Instead of doing specific therapeutic activities for themselves to fulfill their personal time, some of the participants at certain times prefer to be in solitude until they regain a peaceful mind especially after they have gone through a tough and tiring day. Being in solitude seems to bring a therapeutic effect for some participants. Azna, Dil, Anju, and Geena described their therapeutic solitude experiences.

"If, let's say, I feel very tired, as if my mind is tired, when I get home, I will go into my room and lock the door." – Azna

"For example, my kids said, 'Aiyoo mummy! Why are you so angry today? Keep scolding people.' Then I'll ask to myself, 'Oh, why am I so angry today?' I will take five to ten minutes to sit in a quiet place and repeatedly listen to soft instrumental music. Then I will observe what is happening. Something like that. I think it helps." – Dil

"When I am having a tough day, I will go and sit near the hospital emergency unit. Just sitting in my car. That's the best place to see how

fragile life is and I get to see how people work inside and outside the hospital. They want whoever that's in the hospital to come back home alive, right? So, I love that. And that is my 'me time' when I feel depressed for no reason. I'll just go and sit down till I feel good, and then I'll go home." –

Anju

"When I find myself in a psychologically uncertain state, such as feeling stressed, I prefer to isolate myself and enjoy a cup of coffee." – Geena
(reflective form)

Writing reports and case notes are also one of the most satisfying activities the participants reported doing during their personal time in their office. Although writing reports and case notes are part of their formal daily duty in case management, it has the same therapeutic effect as journaling, providing a pleasant psychological release for participants because they can put all their thoughts about the client into writing. Preparing reports and case notes immediately after the session also brings calmness to the participants as they have completed their job. Dil, Arul, and Ying described how writing reports and case notes brings a good impact on them.

"After the session is over, it becomes our routine to make case notes. I feel that the case notes also help. So, as I'm doing my report and during the process of writing the report, I've transferred everything in my mind in the form of writing." – Dil

"Usually, I will write case notes right away. That will give me calmness."

– Arul

"One more thing. After the session, I will write a report. I feel writing the report helps. It is like journal therapy. I think it helps us to transfer the

case from memory into words, express my words verbally in the form of writing.” – Ying

It has been observed that the participants of this study share a common interest in therapeutic activities that have demonstrated positive effects on their overall well-being. These activities range from simple breathing exercises to more complex practices such as the documentation of case notes. Irrespective of the level of complexity, these practices offer emotional comfort and relief to the participants. Additionally, the participants also engage in spiritual pursuits that help to revitalize their spiritual domain.

4.5.3.3 Spiritual Practices

Spiritual practices signify the spiritual care experience the counselors engage in their personal lives. It involves nurturing inner needs and spiritual connection to find the meaning of life by using the intellect, tendencies, and abilities to experience awareness and transcendence related to the origin of the universe, worshipping God, and instilling a sense of submission (Marzband & Zakavi, 2015; Butler et al., 2019). Spiritual practice is usually manifested in prayer, reflection, meditation, yoga, mindfulness, or any religious ritual practices that can bring an internal sense of peace, calm, and wellness (Gaston, 2018). It also fosters self-awareness and personal growth that transcend beyond religious teaching and community practices (Trimulyaningsih et al., 2024) The thematic analysis discovered the participants engaged in three forms of spiritual practices based on their religion namely prayer, reciting, and reflecting on holy scriptures, and chanting.

The first element that reflects spiritual practice is prayer. Ida Hartina et al. (2022) state performing prayer as a form of worship that helps a lot in diverting the

concentration from a painful emotion to a connection with a Higher Power. The analysis found the participants show commitment to performing regular prayer based on their religion. The Muslim participants might be particular about performing five times daily prayer as it is compulsory in their religion. But they do not mention all the prayers they perform in a day. They just shared some of the prayers they performed. Arul, Zudi, Nora, and Azna were reported to state the following.

“Do not forget to perform prayer. You can ask my staff. Whoever delays their prayer, their ears may fall off from all my nagging. They will be nagged because that is what was taught to me by my father.” – Arul

“When I was working in the prison previously, our RNR at noon is the mosque. We took a break from Zuhr, took a nap, and so on. After making ablution, we performed congregational prayer. Afterwards, we walked back into prison.” – Zudi

“After everything is settled, I will go upstairs. I take a bath and perform prayer. I perform special prayers all the way until dawn prayer. After dawn prayer, I will go to work.” – Nora

“After that, at 6:15 AM, it is dawn. After dawn prayer, I’m ready to go to the office.” – Azna

Athy who is Hindu, in her sharing, reported that she performed prayer in the morning before she goes to work as well as in the evening.

“Before I go to work, I take a shower and get ready. I will go downstairs and perform prayer first before I prepare everything and go to work.” –

Athy

“I will take a shower and then perform prayer first. Then, I will go to pick up my kids in the evening. If my husband takes them, when he finishes his

work early, I will take a shower and go downstairs. The kids always say, 'Come mommy, pray. Come. We pray.' Then as a family, we pray together." – Athy

Some participants might not be practicing prayer daily but they will do that at a specific time. For instance, Christianity may have a specific day to perform prayer. The participants talked about their experiences as follows.

"... During the last MCO, we couldn't be in church. I felt empty, but we listened to spiritual songs, performed prayer, and followed the online mass praying session. So, I think I felt fine. I started to feel there was no point in us practicing good self-care if the spiritual part is not there." – Geena

"If I have something that I cannot tell my wife, such as a serious case, meaning it can't be disclosed, I will go home, take a shower, and put on my prayer clothes. After that, I sat down to pray. Then I talk to God." – Ram

"Sometimes I go for prayer, and it will be like sharing my feelings. Sharing or self-talk. It feels like I am talking, so I feel relieved." – Ying

Anju's perspective is quite different. She appreciates the omnipresence of God. Thus, she explained that she could just perform prayer inside her heart instead of standing in front of an altar. Her view is like Wince's notion. He also stated that although he rarely prays, he carried God in his life.

"I am not the type to have something like an altar in our house. I am not the type to go and stand there to pray. It's more like it's always inside my heart and it is allowed, because, for us, God is omnipresent." – Anju

"I have incorporated God into my life. Striving to align my actions with what is expected. However, I must admit that I do not adhere to a regular

prayer routine. I maintain Christianity as my religion and carry its principles within both my personal life and professional endeavors."

Wince

Besides the regular prayer, it is also common among participants to perform additional prayers such as night prayer, special wish prayer, and repentance prayer. Some participants found solace and inspiration in prayer to help their clients. Statements from Zudi, Arul, Nora, and Lai are related.

"At that moment, I frankly said that I performed a repentance prayer. After I came back that night, I got home, took a shower, and performed the repentance prayer before I went to bed. Because yeah, it was a moment for me, a very remorseful moment." – Zudi

"When I am called to court, I will perform a special wish prayer." – Arul

"When I am doing research, usually, I will start working around four or five in the morning. I will pray first. That is my self-care. Night prayer. After that, I will do my research and so on. That is my self-care practice. I started performing night prayer from the very beginning. It became a routine, I think." – Arul

"I used to perform night prayers. No one else. Only me and Him. I talk to God through my prayers." – Nora

"When I receive a case or a call, a fight for example, before I go there, in my heart I will say, 'Oh Allah, I accept this case as my trial, oh Allah.' If I have time, or if the case is not urgent, I will perform additional prayers, and then I'll go." – Nora

"It's important for me to have a peaceful mind because, with a calm mind, I will get inspiration or ideas to help clients who are facing trauma and crisis. That's why I'm going to keep praying." – Lai

In addition, the participants also reported performing prayer in their place of worship. Some of the participants routinely go to their place of worship and some other participants will go to theirs occasionally. Eight participants shared their practice of going to worship places for prayer as well as listening to religious sermons and lectures.

"Afterwards, at dusk, since I am blessed with a house near the mosque, I will to the mosque." – Zudi

"One more thing. I am the type to go to the prayer hall, and what makes me happy is when I go for a lecture session there." – Arul

"Every week we will pray. We follow the mass at church. We listen to the sermons delivered by the father." – Geena

"My religion is Seventh Day Adventist. Half of the day on Saturday, from, for example, nine o'clock until twelve o'clock, is to worship in church." – Reina

"I am one who doesn't go to the temple often, because, for me, I need a calm place to pray. But, if it is necessary, I will go. Otherwise, I prefer to pray at home. That is why during Thaipusam, I do not go to Batu Caves (temple), because there are a lot of people there. However, I will go after a month or so, after everything has calmed down. No crowds, no shops. Everything is closed, then I will go. I need a calm and composed environment to concentrate on my spirituality." – Athy

"I don't pray every day. In my house, I don't have an altar, because my husband is Christian. There is no need for an altar at my house, but every

time I pass by a temple, I will slow down a little out of respect. If I have a problem, or I feel like I haven't gone in the temple for a long time, I will go and pray.” – Ying

“I pray maybe during Deepavali or Pongal or any special days. We will go to the temple. Then I'll pray.” – Anju

“At the beginning of the year, my family will go to the temple. But, during the movement control order, all the places of worship did not operate. We couldn't go to the temple. This year we can. My family and I went to the temple to perform a safety prayer. We would do recitations and prayers and ask for blessings all year round. That is all for the beginning of the year.” – Dil

Besides that, the participants also practiced reciting holy scriptures. There are a variety of holy scriptures forms based on the participants' religion and their fundamental beliefs. For instance, Muslims read the Quran whereas Christians read the Bible, but Catholic Christians read Rosary too. Hindus also have their own mantra and Buddhists have sutras. Holy scriptures are considered one of the sources of transcendental communication with God, covering all life dimensions including previous events (Suryani, 2015). Reading religious scriptures resulted in a sense of well-being, intrinsic peace, feeling blessed, gratitude, and a sense of purpose and meaning in life (Mashhadimalek et al., 2019) The participants in this study mentioned the holy scriptures they are reading as the following.

“There is no time pressure when working in the prison. We can't enter the prison complex on time at two o'clock, because that is the time for shift rotation. So, we have a longer time to spend in the mosque. We have a chance to relax, take a nap or read the Qur'an.” – Zudi

“On my way to work, I usually take the train from Batu Caves station. I will recite the Qur'an, the chapters and verses I've picked out, every day until I arrive at my destination.” – Nora

“Then there are times I listen to spiritual songs. It's not just for me. The kids will listen to this. They're all listening and then I will recite short verses from the Bible for the kids.” – Reina

“We have our Rosary. In Catholicism, we will recite the Rosary prayer. I will recite Rosary on my journey to work. I think that is also self-care for myself.” – Geena

“In our religion, we have something like reciting mantras. We have the verses that, doesn't get rid of back luck, but rather to empower me.” – Ram

“Every time I want to do something, like I know Muslims say Bismillah (in the name of God) and everything, so we have that kind of mantra too. I always start with my mantra.” – Anju

“For me, I really like reciting Heart Sutra. I really enjoy it. Every day, in the morning, on the way to the office, I will recite the Heart Sutra as I drive.” – Lai

In addition, the recitation of holy scriptures also helps the participants to feel calm. When Wince faces a problem for which he cannot find a suitable solution, he reads the Bible to restore his peaceful mind. Meanwhile, Ram recites his holy verses as a means of calming himself and boosting his positive aura. Their experiences are described in their quotes.

“For me, myself, when something happens that I have no answer for, reading the Bible will give me some peace.” – Wince

"I will perform religious activities. Usually, I pray with the holy verses. Then I'll try to be calm. Relax. Then, when I go out (from my office room), I try to bring the positive aura to all my colleagues." – Ram

Besides reciting the holy books, the participants also said they practice chanting. The practice of chanting is a form of meditation and prayer. Lee (2021) confirms the finding that chanting can regulate emotional and physical symptoms of stress and develop a connection to the Higher Power, self, and community. It also improves mental health, wellness, and well-being. Athy and Reina found calmness in chanting while Lai regarded chanting as an act of self-reflection. Arul also practices chanting like the other Muslims. Meanwhile, Zudi stated he practices chanting during his journey to work and back. Nora also stated that chanting is one of the practices that can provide her with the inner strength to face challenges in providing her service. Six of them were quoted as saying the following statements.

"I like to chant. Chanting our own mantras will calm us down and then we will be fine." – Athy

"I say, God, please help me. God, please help me. Just like that, for me to calm myself down. God, please help me so that I am capable. For me, it's like my own chant so that I can be more relaxed and calmer." – Reina

"I also chant. Chanting for self-reflection." – Lai

"My chanting practice is something common." – Arul

"I have a lot of experience working in a place far from home, so usually on the way, I will chant." – Zudi

"What makes me a counselor who can face challenges is my inner strength, which makes my heart always pray, chant, and perform the prayer, so that

I can be strong and always eager to continue my career as a counselor.” –

Nora (reflective form)

The participants' sharing highlights the significance of taking care of oneself physically, allocating personal time, and engaging in spiritual practices to rejuvenate oneself. These practices improve the well-being of the participants in the physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects, giving them personal experiences to adapt and regulate themselves in encountering personal and professional challenges. Additionally, it enables them to reflect on the wisdom gained from their encounters, as demonstrated in the following subtheme.

4.5.4 Lessons Learned

The fourth subtheme that signifies the experience of self-care practice is the lessons learned experience. This subtheme indicates adaptive self-care practices the participants had learned through their self-care experience in crisis work. A stressful challenge pushes counselors beyond their comfort zones, prompting them to step back, reflect, and ultimately gain wisdom (Le, 2008). After long exposure to professional experience, the participants learned to embrace essential self-care practices that can effectively preserve their functioning. Specifically, this experience brings them to appreciate five practical self-care: upgrading knowledge and skills, recognizing professional boundaries, comprehending the application of unconditional acceptance, and acknowledging the interrelation between religion and self-care.

4.5.4.1 Upgrading Knowledge and Skills

The first lesson the participants learned from the experience is related to the acquisition of knowledge and skills. In the Malaysian context, practicing professional counselors are highly encouraged to take endeavors to preserve their competencies in applied skills by upgrading their knowledge and skills related to new procedures and the population they are servicing (Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2011). Knowledge and skills not only empower the counselors' competencies but also reduce the risk of vicarious traumatization and distress (Pearlman & Ian, 1995). The current study discovered the participants were inspired by their experiences to improvise their knowledge and skill. They went for a reading, asked other experienced people, and upgraded their educational level. These practices illustrate the experiences of Zudi, Ram, Reina, Nora, and Azna.

“As time passes, because we are human, sometimes we have ups and downs. Therefore, when we are stressed, we also need proper self-care. We need to attain knowledge, add more areas of our understanding, ask friends, and get information from more experienced people.” – Zudi

“I do a lot of reading related to the experiences of counselors who are affected. In that situation, I try to get back. I'm trying to strengthen my skill.” – Ram

“I also get input from other counselors who have written books and are established. I read and applied. I also bought a soft copy book. It is very, very helpful. I can't call myself a counselor and depend on my own knowledge without taking in information from others. Cannot.” – Reina

“When I was working in Grade 29, I didn't think about applying for grade 41 to become an officer. But one day in 2008-2009, I thought it would be

good to switch. I applied for the Psychology Officer post. ... I thought I had left the field of counseling psychology for too long, from 2004-2010, so I took the initiative. For three to five years, I pursued a master's degree to refresh my knowledge.” – Reina

“From 2009 until 2011, I pursued my studies, because in the SWD, when I reached a certain level, I felt like I needed more knowledge. I still felt inadequate. With the various cases I handled at SWD, I didn't think it was enough. I must gain more knowledge, and so I studied from 2009 until 2012 and then went back to work. I was then posted in a police setting. Again, I didn't think I had enough knowledge, and from there I became more interested in learning things related to crisis.” – Nora

“I just wanted to have a paradigm shift. Stress from working is normal, but at the same time we must put in effort. That is why I decided to pursue my bachelor's degree in human development. Then in 2007, two years after graduating with my bachelor's degree, I did a master's degree in counseling science.” – Azna

Besides that, the participants also improvised their knowledge and skills by attending training courses that are relevant to their work. Working as public service officers gives them the advantage to get proper training. Their service provider used to provide relevant training courses occasionally. They also may request their service provider to provide them with the necessary training course. Arul, Anju, Zudi, and Ying mentioned the training courses they attended to improvise their knowledge and skills. Meanwhile, Lai shared the benefit she gained through the field experience and formal training, equip her with adequate knowledge to handle traumatic cases. Her notion was

supported by Geena who underscored attending to courses and related workshop equipped her with sufficient skills to encounter clients from diverse backgrounds.

"I also got the chance, while working at Penang Hospital, to go to London. I have also been attached to Oxford University and other universities. They attached me to a psychiatric specialist. He lectured on suicidal modules and managing suicide. From time to time, we improve our services in the country." – Arul

"SWD has a training structure for Psychology Officers, and I think it is well-designed. They give training on how to handle children; how to deal with domestic violence." – Anju

"I feel it's difficult because it's like we were sent to a battlefield without sufficient knowledge. So, we go back to the ministry and ask them to provide courses like this. Request the Public Service Department to provide it." – Zudi

"We were given courses by headquarters. Sometimes when they don't have a sufficient financial allocation, we propose it to the ministry. So, the ministry will organize it for us." – Ying

"At that time, I still did not have the knowledge. I didn't have the knowledge to handle the case. So at least, now I have it (the knowledge)." – Lai

"To ensure that my role as a counselor remains in good condition, I always strive to enhance my skills and practices by attending various courses and workshops. This is to ensure that I am always prepared to deal with diverse clients who have different background issues." – Geena (reflective form)

The participants' self-care experience during crisis work inspires them to learn more through reading, pursuing formal education, and attending training to equip

themselves with sufficient knowledge. Through this learning process, the participants also learned to recognize their professional boundaries. Further description is provided in the subsequent explanation.

4.5.4.2 Recognizing Professional Boundaries

Professional experiences in crisis work also initiate the participants' awareness to recognize the importance of professional boundaries. Professional boundaries refer to a set of guidelines, expectations, and rules from various sources including laws, government policies, organizational procedures, health and safety consideration, therapeutic process, and professional practices that set limits on safe, acceptable, and effective behavior within the ethical and technical standards of a profession (Cooper, 2012). For crisis counselors, the source of their professional boundary lines is the Malaysian Counselor Ethical Code, Counselor Act 1998, current service circulars, and other circulars and codes of conduct related to Malaysian public service officers. Thus, the professional boundary for Malaysian public service counselors may be varied from another professional counseling setting. Based on the analysis, five types of professional boundaries were discovered: psychological boundary, professional limitation, authority boundary, case intake limitation, and professional stand.

The first important professional boundary is a psychological boundary. Setting a professional psychological boundary reflects the effort to separate the psychological experience of the clients from the counselors' own experience. A deep sense of empathy without a clear psychological boundary increases the risk of compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatization among professional counselors (Wallace, 2023; Agnetti, 2024).

In this study, there are various approaches that were found to be practiced by the participants to set their psychological boundary to avoid losing themselves to their clients. The participants reported setting their minds to realize the clients' problems are not theirs. They also set in their mind that the problem-solving action is in the end returned to the client. Thus, the client's actions and decisions are out of their control, and it does not reflect their competency. Additionally, they also control their curiosity about the client's experiences and keep themselves to be non-judgmental. Zudi, Wince, Athy, Geena, Reina, Ying, Anju, Dil, Azna, and Arul shared their experience in setting a professional psychological boundary. Lai also stated she now equipped herself with proper techniques that help her to maintain her psychological boundary, hindering her from psychological impacts when encountering a traumatic crisis case.

"Well, in the end, I need to realize his problem is his problem. I'm just making it easier. I must be aware that justice has a process and counseling also has its process, so I help them from the sidelines. The rest, they are the ones who must manage to the best of their ability." – Zudi

"As much as we can do, we do. The client's issue, they still need to handle it themselves in the right and proper way. That's it." – Wince

"What I did was I would pretend it was my counseling case and I am not in the case. I do not get deeply involved. Psychologically I am out of it. I give knowledge and share how to manage their emotion, stress, and all these things, but the extent to which the client will apply what we have discussed is entirely dependent on the client themselves. I cannot force the client." – Athy

"Whatever is best for the client, I must let them go with their decision. That is their choice. I will just go with them and accept it. That is their decision,

so I must go of my feelings on the matter. Whatever we plan does not necessarily pan out. That's their choice. The most important thing is that I've tried my best to help them at that time.” – Geena

“I still have feelings of sadness, pity. It still exists. What sets it apart is previously, when I was a morality officer, and a protection officer, my mind was absorbed in the clients’ issues. Back then, I was really involved in the case, but when I became a counselor, I couldn't do that. Otherwise, I would be killing myself.” – Reina

“I think we as counselors have been trained and wear the counselors’ hat, so even if we feel surprised or whatever, we try to calm down because we don't want our expression to affect the client. During the counseling session, I will try to be as natural as possible emotionally. I have used my approach as a counselor to do my best for them. Sometimes, there isn't a significant change, but I will not blame myself or make myself feel sad as if my skills are lacking or whatever.” – Ying

“I will try to use a sentence that will not involve me in the context. I will identify with the client. So, you feel like this, or you think like this. I will not say the reason for that is because of this. I will throw the question to the client, when actually I am asking myself that question also. I'm not the one doing it, so then I don't have to take it personally. The issue is not my issue. I don't have that.” – Anju

“For instance, a wife found out her husband was having an affair, and it leads to a fight, beatings, and all. What I won't be able to understand is how you say you're just friends and then suddenly, you're talking about sex and sending nude pictures. I don't understand how the process goes. I'll

tell myself, it's my own curiosity. I'll tell myself that I don't want to entertain my curiosity, because that's not the point of the session now.” –

Anju

“The client is the client. I am me. We are not the same person. Okay, rule number one. This is the number one rule that we keep in our minds. The client and I are in a helping relationship. Maybe their story will touch my heart, but I am not them. I don't identify myself in their world. I think if we can maintain both principles so we can minimize the risk of being countertransference. We are two different people.” – Dil

“The case is high profile. It is quite tragic. In addition, most of the mass media was reporting the issue daily. Sometimes, when I watch the news related to the victim, for example, a riot event, it is just for me to get updated on the case's progress. I'm not going to entertain thoughts like, how? No.” – Azna

“In comparison, when I was a freshie (and) I handled a case, I carried the case back home (in my mind). I used to be like that (in those days). Now with the techniques that I've learned, I already know what to do. I can just leave the case in the office (I do not think about it after office hours anymore.)” – Lai

In addition, both Azna and Arul also keep in their mind their role as a counselor in strengthening their professional psychological boundary, thereby the clients' experience will not affect them servicing their role.

“As I mentioned before, in terms of feelings, they are still there, because we are human. I must make it clear that I am still a human being. I have

feelings of sympathy, but at the same time I have a role as a counselor.”

– Azna

“If I don't attend to the patient, the patient cannot be discharged. That is the SOP. If I leave him any longer, I will be pressured by the surgeon, physician, and so on. So, by hook or by crook, I must work smart and I do not have time to entertain my depression or grief for a long time.” –

Arul

Setting a psychological boundary helps the participants to control their thoughts and emotions from adopting the clients' way of thinking and feeling about their issues. It increases the participants' awareness that they are different individuals from their clients, reaffirming their professional roles as providers for the clients. In addition, participants also recognize their professional limitations as described in the following paragraph.

The second type of professional boundary is acknowledging professional limitations. Professional counselors must be aware and honest, admitting their professional limitations that they may not successfully work with all types of clients (Corey, 2005). Professional counselors must be doing their professional responsibility within their professional limitation that was set based on their education, training, supervision experience, professional accreditation, and related professional experience (Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2011). The finding of the recent study revealed the participants are aware of crisis case classification that are beyond their field of expertise or simply not their interest. This is important to avoid being judgmental towards the clients. Ram, Athy, Nora, Arul, Ying, and Anju shared their limitation in a specific case.

"I uphold my trust. Whatever the case, I try my best, except for a financial case. I already told them from the very beginning not to inform me of any financial issues. That's it." – Ram

"I cannot handle a case like that, because for me, child psychology is really, deep. Therefore, I advised the mother to take the child to a psychiatric to check his developmental issues, if there is a delay or if he has hearing problems." – Athy

"I have no interest in gender issues, such as lesbians and the like. Usually, when I get such a case, I will refer the case to someone else, because I know my limits. I know I am not an expert in this field. I will refer them to another counselor. Not all cases I will take, because I, myself, felt unsafe handling the case. Counselors must know their limitations. They must evaluate themselves. For me, I cannot handle gender (LGBTQ) issues." – Nora

"I cannot handle drug addiction cases. I'm not saying they won't change, but the change is too slow. That is why, if I get a drug addiction case, I will refer to someone else." – Arul

"If, from the beginning, I know it was such a taboo topic or case, it would be better to not meet the client. That is why, before I go into a session, I already know. There are cases where I feel I'm not confident in handling. For example, there was a case of a sodomized boy. I will not take a case like that. I will refer to Mr. H or send an application to headquarters to see if anyone can help." – Ying

"I have referred my client to other counselors, especially from LPPKN (National Population and Family Development Board), because LPPKN

has many counselors handling marriage cases, so I am referring to them.

For this one, it's an extramarital affair, and I will say it's not my specialty."

– Anju

The participants also reported referring their cases to other relevant agencies when they found their clients needed advice from other parties such as religious bodies or when they found their clients had psychiatric issues. This is based on the quote from Anju, Athy, Ying, and Dil.

"... And if they want a religious perspective, if they're Muslim, I am not the person to talk about that. I will refer to Ustaz. I will refer to the Islamic religious council." – Anju

"I will keep in touch with the supervisor to see if the client has made any improvement. If there is no improvement, we will refer them to another Psychology Officer. I don't feel ashamed to refer a case to another Psychology Officer, because I know I have some limitations. It's not all I can do. Sometimes, for example, a Muslim client needs something more spiritual or Islamic psychology. Therefore, I will refer the individual to a specific counselor, because in the end, I know the client's psychological well-being is more important." – Athy

"I had a case where he was the suspect. He abused his son. I met him three times, but I'm unsure. I suspect he has a personality problem. Obsessive disorder. After that, I referred him to a psychiatrist, because I met him three times and nothing worked. In each session, he was still the same. It's hard for me, so I will just refer." – Ying

"If the case was not my specialty, I'd tell the client honestly. For instance, the case that I attended to, a nanny had caused a seven-month-old baby

under her care to have been admitted to the ICU (Intensive Care Unit).

When I interviewed her, I observed that she might have post-depression symptoms. When I administered BDI (Beck Depression Inventory), she had a very high score, but she never attended any psychiatric care. In my report, I stated that she may need psychiatric care.” – Dil

The statements of Anju, Athy, Ying, and Dil imply the importance of being genuine to admit their limitation in providing certain professional services. They may not be able to provide intervention in all types of cases. The limitations are due to a lack of competence and abilities, or simply because they hold different beliefs than their clients, which they are unable to accept, necessitating the referral of cases to other experts.

In addition, the participants also recognized their professional boundaries by setting their authority boundary. As professional counselors, they must be aware of their authority to fulfill the demands of their clients and make the clients clear about the boundary of their role power to head off the demand (Corey, 2005). Apart from clients' demands, the professional counselor may sometimes encounter a demand from a third party such as the press demands for a statement about a crisis incident. In Malaysia, public service officers are not allowed to give public statements related to government policies, programs, or decisions on any issues, give information related to their department or give any explanation on any incident or report related to their department without permission from their head (Public Officers Conduct and Discipline Regulations, 1993).

The participants of this study showed their understanding of their limits in these two areas. They realize that they do not have the authority to enforce something beyond their professional authority or to give a statement on any issue without permission from

their leader. Wince spoke about his experience in dealing with the demand of his clients that is beyond his authority. Reina, Zudi, and Ram also shared how they avoided promising their clients something that they felt was uncertain to be fulfilled. Meanwhile, Athy and Azna avoid giving statements on something they have no authority to speak about. Azna also avoided giving a statement on behalf of her client. In addition, Nora underscored the obligation to follow standard procedures during crisis work that limit counselors to taking their own action without permission or entering certain crisis areas for safety purposes. She added in crisis work, counselors can only enter certain places after getting permission from the authorized body. The following are their quoted statements.

"... She asked me if I could talk to the judge about not charging her with a prison sentence. I said in my heart, I was thinking of contacting the judge too, but I think that is beyond my authority unless the judge calls me. So, I still must rationalize what I can and cannot do." – Wince

"When they sit, I sit. Just like that. When they talk, I just listen. I don't want to overdo it, because I do not want to talk about something that I'm worried I cannot fulfill. I'm afraid of promising something I cannot do." – Reina

"The reason why he did not want to talk to us was because he was promised sweet things many times in the past, but he gained nothing. So, I have to be clear with him about what I can help him with, and what I can't." – Zudi

"I don't promise anything. I don't want to give you any false promises. But if you allow me, I will go one by one. But you must follow my way.' So, the client just nodded." – Ram

"... I think they (NGO Volunteers) are more than the immediate family members (of the victims of MH370). The press too, Al Jazeera, wanted this

and that. They wanted to interview me. I told them I was not allowed to be interviewed. I said I cannot because I was not given permission to give any media statement. If you want anything, you need to ask my boss.” – Athy

“I explained to the director, in the current circumstances, when the mother must face the crisis, if we drag the story back out, she would be triggered. She will have trouble moving on. I briefed the director so he could explain it to his staff. Me, I don't want to make the explanation myself, because I am not suited for it. ... It is better to be informed by their leaders and let them explain it to their subordinates.” – Azna

“I would say yes ... because that is your right. If you feel uncomfortable or too sad to answer all those questions, just let them know (the press). Both parties have rights. Only when you tell them will they understand. Then I told her that I couldn't when she asked me to inform the press. I said I couldn't tell reporters, because it could give them the wrong impression that I am trying to control you. So that's not right.” – Azna

"We can't do whatever we wish, take our own action, (or) enter (the crisis site) by ourselves. We still must follow the regulations that has been set by the National Security Council. We can't do anything on our own unless they ask for our assistance, then we go (to the crisis areas)." - Nora

Furthermore, participants also limit their number of case intakes to respect their professional boundaries. It indicates the participants know their capacity limitations in conducting intervention sessions. A higher caseload and continuous exposure to trauma narratives put the professional counselor at risk of developing PTSD as it brings more disruptions in one's belief systems (Pearlman & Ian, 1995). On average, the participants

were reported to conduct two or three sessions in a day. The followings are their statements that describe how they set their capacity in conducting intervention sessions.

“Usually, I do two sessions only. Morning and evening. Then I'm done.

Nothing in between except for walk-in clients.” – Ram

“When I get a case, I will see if the case involves a work issue, such as absenteeism, coming in late, etc. If it is such a case, I can take two sessions in one day, but if the case involves a client who suffers from depression and has keywords such as depression or stress, then I will only do one session in a day. After the morning session, in the afternoon, I need to relieve my mind, because I cannot put too many things on myself.” – Athy

“For me, two or three cases per day, because if there is more than that, I will feel like my schedule is too packed. I wouldn't be able to think properly. Cases are not easy. They are very complicated for us to handle.”

– Geena

“If we're counting actual crisis counseling sessions, I can conduct about three cases. However, if the case requires communication with other parties, I can't. Maybe about two of those cases.” – Nora

“I do not take more than three cases a day. It's fine if it is a referral case where I can plan and put it on the schedule, but there are some ad hoc cases. We can take in walk-in clients, but what I do is I will try to limit myself to one hour with the client. More than one hour is exhausting.” –

Anju

“Usually, as I said just now, I meet victims and suspects on the same day.

An average of about three cases, but it depends. If the case involves

murder, I may not be able to handle three cases. Perhaps only two, because I must deal with so many people.” – Azna

Besides that, they also put a time gap between one session to another to prepare themselves. They also schedule their session wisely and they do not hesitate to voice out if they are requested to do a session beyond their capacity. Ram, Arul, Athy, Dil, and Azna spoke about their experience.

“Normally I wouldn't accept a case immediately except for a walk-in client. But even for a walk-in client, I will see the client first and ask for thirty minutes. I am sorry for taking your time, but I need some time to get myself to relax. I want to clear my mind, not to make the report, but I will try to clear my mind in case there is still unfinished business with the previous client's issue.” – Ram

“For a less severe case, I will put a bit of a time gap in between appointments. That is the coping mechanism that I am practicing.” – Arul

“I try not to put too heavy burden on myself. I do it slowly and steadily, because I have told the head of my department that I cannot handle things in a rush. I can't. I must take my time and do it slowly and steadily, because otherwise I cannot do it. I need to know my limits too.” – Athy

“If it is beyond your capacity, voice it. Okay, I can't do this, or can I do it later? Voice it. Inform them. Don't keep it to yourself.” – Dil

“Like yesterday, I was preparing for this interview and my boss called me. He said, madam, we have a case like this or that, I'm asking for your help with this case. I told him, forget it sir, just tell me the details and I will call the client. I will deal with this. We can negotiate with our leaders, so we

don't feel stressed. I made a deal. In terms of time, I will decide. This means we have a win-win situation. We must give ourselves time to think.” – Azna

In addition, emotional unpreparedness may affect the process of intervention, leading Lai and Arul to put a little gap in their upcoming session. Working in the shelter home and hospital provides freedom for Lai and Arul to schedule their session with the inmates and patients. Lai avoided conducting intervention sessions when she felt emotionally not ready for that. While Arul mentioned his strategy to do the history-taking when he was not ready for conducting an intervention session.

“If let's say, at one period I feel like a sense of unease of the soul or mind, it's better (for me) not to take a case (intervention session). Because later, I won't be able to help the client. I'm not helping the client but ruining him.” – Lai

"Usually, when I am no longer able to continue the intervention session, I will first conduct history taking. After that, when I feel calmer, then I will resume the session." - Arul

The sharing indicates participants have the autonomy to plan their work properly without ignoring the targeted performance of their service. However, in achieving the expectations of their organization, participants must firmly uphold their professional principles to balance the demand.

Having own professional principles is another way to create professional boundaries. It reflects the participants' insistence on their professional stand regardless of what other people might say to challenge their stand and ethical conduct especially when other people question the effectiveness of their intervention. In fact, it is a clear stand that significant outcomes may not be seen immediately right after the intervention

is given (Corey, 2005). Zudi, Athy, Wince, Ram, and Azna shared their experience facing this professional challenge.

“Before this, when I was working in the prison, we did not put a goal on changing people from bad to good. Rather, our goal was to ensure that, during their period of imprisonment, their emotions are stable. When people ask why this prisoner, after he was released, still comes back to prison, then the counseling session was unsuccessful. We don't intend to change him, but we want to make sure that during his imprisonment, he doesn't bring harm to himself or others. He can follow the programs provided by prison management.” – Zudi

“Despite all the information and knowledge, I got from an experienced prison officer, I did not make use of all the knowledge. For example, there are prison officers who do not trust our service, but for me, I usually take a stand to not argue with him, because he has his own perception as a prison officer. It is his right to perceive us in that way, but we as counselors must justify ourselves. We need a shield. Protection. Our protection might be in the form of a statement we make in our mind. This is my responsibility. I get paid to listen to the complaints and issues of the prisoners. If I can help the prisoners, then good will come back to me. That is how I counter their statement to myself.” – Zudi

“At my previous workplace, I did not face this, but I am dealing with this here. He said if nothing changes, then it won't be tolerated. I told him, if out of ten things, the client manages to make a difference in one aspect, then that is already pretty good. He is only human. Over the years, he was accustomed to the practice, the attitude that was taught to him by his

seniors. You hope for him to change in just one session. No, sir. I explained this to the Dato' State Police Chief so he can understand and support me."

– Athy

"“When the management asked why it was like this, even psychologists don't know what to do in this situation. There seemed to be no change. None. Nothing. After that, I thought I wanted to rationalize to myself, 'Wince, your job has results, but the result may not be now, but instead when they go back out to work one day. That will be what brings them to soldier on.'” – Wince

"I have a client who came with the intention of staying with me. She said she could pay me. I told her, no thank you, I have enough money." – Ram

"There are some officers who do not understand, asking me about the case. Normally, I wouldn't say that I couldn't tell them because it is confidential. I just excuse myself by saying that my case is the same as a normal criminal case. If you ask me to share details, I cannot, because this is confidential."

– Azna

"And then (when) I had already done the session, the client left. (Other officers asked), 'Madam, did you see the person just now? He is this, this, (and) this.' So, everybody knows the problem. (I said), 'You know the problem, but you don't know the real problem.' And that is my exclusiveness." - Anju

Upholding their own professional boundaries safeguards the participants from frustration and burnout, guides them to recognize their scope of work, and preserves their ethical obligation. Participants learned to set their professional boundaries through

experiential learning they gained in their fieldwork. In addition, they also comprehended their understanding of practicing unconditional acceptance.

4.5.4.3 Comprehending the Unconditional Acceptance

Professional experience plays a significant role in fostering participants' understanding of acceptance. Acceptance, as defined by Corey (2005), entails recognizing and respecting clients' rights to hold their own beliefs, emotions, and experiences. Through their experiences, participants gain valuable insights into the importance of accepting the clients' tragic experiences and maladaptive or severe reactions. They also learned to accept their limitations as human beings.

Many participants demonstrated a firm grasp of the non-judgmental approach to unconditional acceptance. They refrain from making judgments based on clients' outward appearances or social backgrounds. Notably, Zudi, Ram, Azna, Athy, Geena, Arul, Ying, and Nora emphasized the practice of non-judgmental acceptance in their interactions with clients.

“In terms of mindset, I have to set it in my mind that I cannot judge them as bad guys.” – Zudi

“I used all these elements from religious teaching to strengthen myself. Automatically, my personality and mind are at a healthier level because I don't judge, evaluate, or try to compare (my clients). I don't do that because religion does not allow me to do that.” - Ram

“It's hard too, but when it becomes normal it will be okay. The important thing is that we must accept it unconditionally. Unconditional acceptance as I said earlier. First, in terms of speech, it's important that no matter

who we talk to we must speak politely. For example, here I handle the suspect, but for me, even when I speak to the suspect, I will speak to them like I would anyone else.” – Azna

“I accept them as they are because I don't think he's being a nuisance on purpose. Maybe the problem is caused by factors around him or even his own personal factor.” – Athy

“As I mentioned earlier, as a counselor, I have to be prepared to accept the client as they are and be nonjudgmental of his situation.” – Geena

“Crises happen everywhere. They just aren't labeled as such.” – Arul

“In general, I would think this child, or this victim needs help. They are in trouble. Maybe they are emotional because of grief, so I try to go in prepared with this perception.” – Ying

"We can observe various things when it comes to crisis tasks, and we can't solely blame the clients either. Some people said, 'Oh, despite the disaster happening, they still don't remember God.' For example, we might say that. It's not necessarily true, because people's level of acceptance and beliefs may differ." - Nora

The second part of acceptance is to accept the clients' reality. Most of the participants shared that it is quite difficult to accept the tragic reality of their client during the early stage of their profession in crisis work. However, with proper self-care practices, a strong grasp of religion, and more experience they manage to accept the reality of tragic incidents that have happened to their clients. Zudi, Reina, Nora, Anju Geena, and Athy recalled their experiences in their sharing as below.

“When we listen to their story in prison, we're going to wonder what happened. It won't be an enjoyable story, but when we go back to religion, there must be a reason why God sent them to prison.” – Zudi

“Sometimes I must let go. Of course, it's still a problem. For example, the shipwreck, I can't keep processing it over and over in my head. I must accept it. That's what I said during my self-talk. That's their problem.” – Reina

“Suddenly I feel like my world just turned upside down. I question myself whether this is real. I've never experienced this. I'm from a small village, so my worldview didn't prepare me to come across a case like this. This is how I felt during the early stages. It was like I couldn't accept it, but that's where I learned. Oh Allah, this is a test for me to see the realities of life.”

– Nora

“Everything is important. Only then did I know this is the reality out there. ‘Welcome to the real world.’ I would tell myself. That's all I do. Acceptance. I must accept this thing is something that normally occurs.” – Anju

“I would watch cases of abuse on TV, mass media, and so on, but when I dealt with it myself, it really touched my heart, feelings, and my life for some time. I learned from it. Indeed, this feeling is inherent in us. We just must accept and help those that face it.” – Geena

“As I mentioned earlier, during the early stages, I felt very sad, but the advice from all my seniors helped. They would say, you have to be strong to help in these kinds of cases. What I did back then was I would pretend this was my counseling case and I would take myself out of the case.” –

Athy

The third type of acceptance that was found in the participants is the acceptance and validation of clients' traumatic reactions. The knowledge and experience in crisis work are found to help the participants to cope with the traumatic reaction of their clients during the acute moment. Nora shared her experience with a domestic abuse client who came to get help after office hours. She mentioned that she did not reject the client as she understood the client might be in a difficult situation. Anju also has a similar view to Nora. She prioritized walk-in clients as she believes they really need to talk to someone at the time. Geena added not to judge client who comes to get counseling services based on their problems. This argument is parallel to Arul's stand. Arul preferred to view his client's reaction from a pathological perspective. He believes the reaction such as the attempt of ending life is caused by abnormal distortion in the brain mechanism. Zudi was also prompted to see the hidden issues lie in his clients' resistance reaction to going for counseling intervention sessions, giving him the understanding to accept their reactions. Their stories are revealed in the following statements.

"I'm not going to reject the client, because I know she must have thought a hundred times before coming here. For her to step into my office and talk about her dignity is not an easy thing. I won't rule her out even if it's already late in the evening." – Nora

"I think compared to a referral client; a walk-in client is more important. (I'll give) more priority for them because as a counselor I assume they have the need at that moment to talk to someone. Not necessarily do they need a solution (but) they just need somebody to listen to them." – Anju

"Don't judge by saying he just has a minor problem. It is still a problem that he wants to come and see a counselor about." – Geena

"Yes, maybe in Islam, it's related to the level of faith, but if we look at it in terms of psychopathology, there's a person that he, himself can't decide or maybe the mechanism of brain capacity has a distortion. Anywhere that we might find difficult to say in terms of normal thinking. That's my understanding." – Arul

"Even if there's rejection from the prisoner, I would say it's okay. I could see from the way he sat, the way he showed interest or showed uninterest. I noticed from his approach. Some of them felt daunted by the false promises. (They) met this officer, (the officer said), 'Okay, never mind, I will help you.' Then (when they) met another officer, (he said), 'This is a small matter, I will help you.' But they still didn't get any help. So, I have to understand from his point of view." – Zudi

The traumatic reactions also may be manifested in the form of high dependency on the counselor. Azna mentioned her experience in dealing with the traumatic reaction of her client who showed high dependency on her. She also described her technique and strategy to decrease dependency. In addition, Athy shared her early experience when she was scolded by a client and how she learned that it is just a traumatic reaction. Both Ying and Dil also disclosed their experience in dealing with the traumatic reactions of their clients. They expressed their acceptance of the traumatic reaction even though they were treated offensively. All their experiences are reflected in their statements below.

"Sometimes in a traumatic situation, as is the case of this victim's mother, when she gets to know me, she will become dependent on me, so that's where I, as a counselor, must manage the client so that she doesn't have such a high dependency. In this case, I had to be smart in carrying myself

by not letting her depend too much on me, but at the same time I am still helping her.” – Azna

“Actually, I felt disgusted. You know that kind of feeling. I wanted to help her, but why would she do that to me? Why would she yell like that to me? But when I found out that the pieces of jewelry, she had collected for twenty-three years, including the heirloom from her mother was all burnt, I realized that of course she would have felt bad. I think maybe it wasn't my mistake, but my timing was not right.” – Athy

“They were not even mad at me. In fact, they were angry because they were in grief, so I tried to keep some distance from that place to let them calm down. After that, I would come back. They were angry because they couldn't handle their grief.” – Ying

“Religion helps me to be calmer. Sometimes I don't expect that I'll be scolded by the suspect's family. I would get scolded by the families of the victims who were unhappy with the police investigation process or not satisfied with the court's decision. I wouldn't hate it. I wouldn't feel like I was angry or wanted to quarrel with the client. I understand their feelings.” – Dil

“I don't think he was mad at me. He was angry at the criminal justice system itself. He needed someone to blame for him to let go of his emotions and I was chosen to be his target. It's okay. It wasn't my fault. I can be scolded and stay calm.” – Dil

Additionally, participants also learned to accept their limitations as humans. They used religious explanations to justify their limitation, thereby they were unburdened with irrational expectations that were beyond their ability. Religion offers a guide to

acknowledge their limitations and find appreciation for what they cannot control, recognize the power of God, and inspire them to exert effort in addressing crisis-related challenges (Pargament, 1997). This perspective is exemplified by the insights shared by Zudi, Wince, Athy, Reina, and Anju as outlined below.

“The moments that don't turn out good are a lot too, but we have to realize that we are human beings, not God, who can change the fate of others.” –

Zudi

“First, I think we must have faith and believe that what's going on in our lives is not merely what we ask for. Sometimes we think what comes to us that we like is good for us, but the truth is that the things we like aren't good for us. I love this concept. Allah has determined everyone's destiny. It's just that when it's meant to be, how are we going to handle that situation, or circumstance.” – Zudi

“Actually, there are several issues in the workplace that I faced. The verses in the book have helped me, especially as Jesus always said when God closes one door and it seems there is no path to go, He would open another door for us to go to.” – Wince

“In the verse of the book, it does state that if you look at the birds outside, God will still give them food. So, as a man, you are God's creation. What are you worrying about tomorrow for? God will determine and give you something back. Sometimes these verses make me think back, what is there to be scared about? What is there to fear? Let God sort it out. We just leave those things to God, but I have to do something too.” – Wince

"In terms of Hinduism, there are many things in our lives that are not within the palm of our hands. Not everything is under our control, but we have common sense for us to cope with that problem or issue." – Athy

"Usually, for severe cases, or cases like the shipwreck, everything that happened that day, it involves the human aspect. So, I genuinely pray. That's it. I, as a regular human being, have limitations. Therefore, that's my only hope." – Reina

"It (religion) helps me with acceptance. And accepting my limits, I know I can't help everybody." – Anju

Additionally, Dil reflected on her religious practice of mindfulness assists her to accept her limitations. Her reflection was quoted below.

"Be mindful. I have limitations." – Dil (reflective form)

By delving into the concept of unconditional acceptance from both counseling ethical and religious perspectives, participants can gain a deeper understanding of how to apply this knowledge in practical settings. They come to the realization that, as human beings, they are not able to single-handedly control or change their clients' situations and past tragic experiences. This newfound understanding leads them to place a greater emphasis on the significance of religion in their own self-care practices. Their reflections and insights regarding this particular topic are further expounded upon in the subsequent meaning unit.

4.5.4.4 Interconnection between Religion and Self-care

The experiences of self-care practices in crisis work guide the participants to believe religion has a connection to self-care. Some of them regarded self-care as a part

of religious obligation. Incorporating religion in constructing the meaning of the crisis work brought the counselors to recognize the significant role of religion in their self-care practice. The religious schemas they had offered them a meaningful way to define themselves, and their clients, and the worldview that secured their sense of safety, trust, power, esteem, and intimacy (Trippany et al., 2004).

The participants managed to find the interplay between the two in their journey as professional counselors and as a person. For them, both are meaningful and interconnected to create a balanced and fulfilling life. Anju firmly stated in her reflective form that religion is fundamental to self-care practice among counselors. Her opinion was supported by Nora who mentioned having strong religion leads to proper care of oneself. Arul also supported Nora's statement by saying those who deepen their knowledge of religion the more they will practice self-care. The statements that described their views are as stated below.

“Religion can be at the core of counselors' self-care.” - Anju (reflective form)

“To me, when we have a strong hold on religion, we will be well cared for.” – Nora

“I think self-care and religion are important. The more we deeply study the religion, the more we practice self-care.” – Arul

Ram also maintained that self-care is part of Hinduism practices. His argument was supported by Athy who also claimed self-care is part of religion. Anju and Nora discussed the role of religion in self-care, highlighting its significance. Lai further underscored religion acts as a booster, supporting her self-care practices particularly in the aspects related to safety, health, and hygiene. Geena and Dil agreed with Lai's notion, noting that religion offers guidance to practice self-care and avoid self-harm. In

addition, religion plays a pivotal role in filling the emptiness in an individual's spiritual domains. Their statements are as follows.

"Self-care or self-cleansing or self-production reflects an important practice for Hindus." – Ram (reflective form)

"Self-care is a part of religious belief (too). My religion also teaches this. Take care of your health. Health is wealth. It's in the religion." – Athy

"But it is from religious belief, (then) it will go into your self-care. What(ever) you believe will become your self-talk. What you get from your religious belief, will also become your behavior." – Anju

"To me, religion plays a role in educating the soul to be a more organized person, holding onto principles and self-care." – Nora

"Based on my understanding, self-care encompasses four things. Safety, health, hygiene, and support system. So, personally, I think, these four are very important. In terms of religion anyway, religion is a support system. In my opinion, these two, religion and self-care are related. They are related. They cannot be separated. If let say we only have personal self-care without religion, it seems to lack something. It isn't complete. But if both are there, it (self-care) becomes stronger because both are interrelated." – Lai

"If one has no religious belief, then no one can guide him. So, he doesn't know how to start loving himself. Loving oneself has many categories. Don't harm yourself, don't overwork, workaholic, don't drink alcohol..."
– Dil

"If we practice self-care, we will feel happy with ourselves. But if we don't have religious beliefs, it's not going to work. It's not worth it. I'm going to

feel empty. I feel empty because I feel good physically, emotionally, and everything, but not spiritually.” – Geena

Thus, Zudi concluded that counselors must practice their religion and self-care in their lives to stay energetic.

“As a counselor, one must make self-care, as well as religion as a companion, a reference point, a place of learning. That’s how it is, so that we are always full of energy.” – Zudi

Understanding the link between religion and self-care encouraged participants to discuss how these aspects contribute to their overall functioning and effectiveness. This interplay fosters positive behaviors, helping them sustain their personal and professional lives while fulfilling their responsibilities to themselves, their clients, significant others, and to God or a Higher Power. Their insights are presented in the following description.

4.6 Empowerment of Functioning

The third theme identified in this finding is empowerment of functioning, which reflects the participants' psychological development resulting from their religious devotion and self-care practices. The interplay between religion and self-care practices contributes to the overall functioning of the participants across various dimensions, including professional, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects. This, in turn, propels them towards fulfillment, autonomy, self-determination, and personal growth (Corey, 2005; Nik Ahmad Hisham & Mustafa, 2015; Trimulyaningsih et al., 2024). The analysis revealed four subthemes that represent the experience of empowerment of functioning among the participants: 1) competent counselor, 2) perseverant person, 3) capable provider, and 4) religious devotee. The following Table 4.4 provides a summary of these subthemes and their corresponding meaning units.

Table 4.4: Subthemes and Meaning Units Emerging Under the Theme of Empowerment of Functioning

Subthemes	Meaning Units
Competent counselor	Creative in breaking the impasse
	Analytical in anticipating priorities
	Compassionate in supporting clients
Perseverant person	Openness to experience
	Positive attitude toward work
	Live in the present moment
	Resilience
Capable provider	Efficient household manager
	Functional parent
	Provider within community
Religious Devotee	Spiritual mindfulness
	Sense of purpose

4.6.1 Competent Counselor

The first subtheme in the experience of empowerment of functioning is competent counselors, which represents the professional and psychological growth of participants as they develop into capable counselors. The combination of professional experience and self-care practices helps crisis counselors enhance their skills and competencies in carrying out their professional duties (Melnikov et al., 2021). Additionally, the guidance they receive from their religion contributes significantly to their career growth. Recent scholarship has identified eight important domains that reflect competent functioning among counselors, including intervention skill competence, assessment techniques, interpersonal assessment, client conceptualization, individual differences, theoretical

orientation, treatment planning and goals, and professional ethics (Storlie et al., 2017). In this study, three characteristics of competent counselors were identified that align with this argument: 1) creative in breaking impasse, 2) analytical in anticipating priorities, and 3) compassionate in supporting clients.

The first meaning unit is creative in breaking impasse, which represents the participants' competency as counselors in overcoming impasses during intervention sessions with their clients through appropriate and effective interventions (Morrill et al., 1974). This is particularly crucial when dealing with resistant or difficult clients. According to the findings, participants demonstrated their creativity by applying various skills and techniques to navigate such situations wisely.

Specifically, Zudi and Lai shared their experience of successfully breaking an impasse with their client who was reluctant and felt difficult to open up about their problem. Similarly, Anju and Athy encountered similar situations with their clients and employed various therapeutic tools and techniques to overcome the impasse. Ying, on the other hand, reported using play therapy to help her clients, particularly children, open and express themselves. Additionally, Dil shared a case involving a rape victim who had neglected her personal hygiene and she used expressive drawing to help the client release her traumatic emotions. Azna faced the challenge of persuading a crime suspect to confess his deeds and utilized her professional skills to initiate a conversation that eventually led to the suspect accidentally confessing. Each of them has shared their intriguing experiences, which are outlined below.

“When dealing with a deadlock, it usually involves the prisoner's response.

In such cases, we will use various methods. I think in prison, I applied some techniques that are outside of training. For example, I used to have a session while walking, so as we walked, there's a lot of things that clients

can share, which they didn't want touch upon while we were sitting.” –

Zudi

“If I see a client who seems very stressed and not ready to share, I will print out a mandala for them to color. By coloring the mandala, it's like they're channeling their negative energy through it. Then, afterward, they will naturally find it easier to share their feelings. Mandala can be helpful.” – Lai

“There is a client, although she came in as a walk-in client, she had a problem talking about her issue. So, I have my cards. I make them talk. I have a set of cards. Choose from here. Choose ten first and then prioritize by choosing five of them. From these five cards, choose three that you feel describe yourself. Then she chose three. What makes these cards identify you? That is how I make my client talk.” – Anju

“The girl didn't want to talk, so we had to do therapy to make her open up. I also learned play therapy. So, we used whatever equipment that we had in SWD, and then she started feeling better. She started talking, even laughing. I started to feel like she would be okay.” – Athy

“For me, the deadlock during the session may not come about, because I had the opportunity to learn a lot of tools. So, I'm going to try to use some tools, and if it doesn't work, I will use other tools.” – Ying

“Usually, if we read journals, we might get a lot of feedback saying the rape victim has obsessive-compulsive behavior. They frequently want to maintain their hygiene, but this case is totally different. At that time, I really didn't know what to do, so I just used the method of not saying anything if you don't know. I would just ask about what she feels, thoughts,

and feelings. At the time, she didn't bathe herself and we did some expressive drawing activities to let her emotions out.” – Dil

“I, as a counselor, can't say, 'You've raped your stepdaughter, just confess.' I can't say that because I'm a counselor. I said, 'Okay sir, it's okay if you don't want to admit you did it to me because I'm a counselor. I'm not an investigating officer. I just want to have a chat with you about your everyday life. How is your relationship with your stepdaughter?' I can't immediately say I'm looking for a confession, but when this man is given the chance to talk, he will forget. He will reveal the story himself.” – Azna

Furthermore, Athy shared her insights on the topic of impasse during intervention session. She proposed that counselors often encounter deadlocks when they fail to conduct sufficient exploration with their clients. Athy herself experienced such an impasse during her early stages as a counselor. However, she successfully managed to overcome it by employing specific techniques, which she has shared below.

“I have been stuck before, but it often happened during my early days at work. That's why I will repeat asking questions to the client. Same question, but with a different sentence so I could gather more information. That's what I'm doing. For me, I believe that when our exploration is not good, we will get stuck.” – Athy

The analysis has also yielded surprising insights into how participants employ creative ideas to navigate impasses during intervention sessions. It was discovered that Nora and Reina drew upon their faith in God to generate inventive solutions for addressing their challenges. They embarked on silent conversations with the Divine, seeking inspiration to aid their clients. In supporting them, Lai highlighted that her

religious practices cultivate a profound sense of serenity, consequently elevating her creativity and empowering her to provide impactful assistance to her clients.

"Sometimes we get stuck. How am I going to help this young lady? But when we pray, oh God, I have already had no path to take. I'm sure, oh God, you must have a way. Please make it easy. After that, there will be a way." – Nora

"Sometimes when I conduct the session, I get stuck. Then at that time, I pray. God, help me. That's it. So, I just keep praying in my heart and I just carry on the session at my best." – Reina

"Religion is one of the support systems that can bring tranquility to an individual. Religion indirectly possesses a 'miracle' that can bring serenity to an individual. When I am in a state of calmness, I can get ideas or inspirations to assist my clients." – Lai (reflective form)

"For me, when my mind is calm, I can receive inspiration and ideas to help clients who are in trauma and crisis. That's why, for me, I will continue to pray, read the Heart Sutra, and engage in chanting to ensure that I attain tranquility of thought and inner peace so that I can handle cases effectively." – Lai

These findings depict the interplay between religion and professional self-care experience in shaping participants into creative counselors. Creativity enables participants to persevere when handling resistant clients or complex cases. Additionally, this creative mindset guides them in analytically identifying their clients' primary needs, as elaborated in the discussion of the second meaning unit.

The second meaning unit concerning the experience of being a competent counselor is analytical in anticipating the priority. In crisis intervention, time is often

limited, making it crucial for counselors to quickly grasp the presenting problem, focus on the main issue, and guide the client toward a pre-crisis state (Pau & Aslina, 2020). The participants' professional experience in crisis work helped them swiftly identify the client's most pressing needs. Nora emphasized the importance of early analytical anticipation and prioritization to ensure timely and appropriate interventions.

“That is why, if you want to do this, you must predict. Is it a suitable time? Should we give help at this time? We must decide. That's the anticipation because with anticipation, our emotions will also become stable. If we go in at an inappropriate time, we're going to feel scared.” – Nora

The technique of analytical anticipation was also employed by other participants to assess the priority needs of their clients. They utilized various sources of input, including observations, experiences, explorations, gathered information, and assessments. Zudi, Ram, Arul, Geena, Ying, and Nora shared their respective experiences in utilizing this technique.

“In the early days, I didn't really understand, but when I had been here for a long time and got information from experienced officers in prison, I understood it better. For example, when a prisoner is sentenced to prison, and appealed to court, but the appeal was rejected, prisoners like this we have to monitor more closely. That extreme frustration would probably trigger him to attempt suicide. Another example is sickness. They got into prison in good health, but in prison, God tested them with sickness. Cancer for example. Then, there are issues from outside, such as the wife asking for a divorce and so on. They'll become more depressed, so the possibility of him attempting suicide is there. We must be aware of such things.” –

Zudi

"I said, don't worry about that. We are not going to force you, but I don't want this kind of thing to disturb our process. I asked my friend to bring a towel and we tried to help her. I called a female counselor, and we cleaned her body. We performed first aid first. I didn't go straight to counseling because I saw my client's other needs." – Ram

"Then for those who die of suicide, their family members will face stigma, specifically to report the cause of death to obtain a death certificate. This requires another part of psychoeducation. They need to be prepared. That's because if we don't handle these issues, it's going to be a circle of suicide in the family, because of the labeling, stigma, and so on. That's what we do. I also saw the aftermath after having to do a home visit to assess the bereavement." – Arul

"After the victims of the disaster were found, of course, we went to check things out. It was just that most of the families of these victims were not ready to be interviewed. So, we respect their wishes. We were there to do what we could to help, but as for me, when the operation was completed and the victim was buried, I went to the family to conduct an intervention."

– Geena

"If the client doesn't have a job, we must zoom in on more detail. If she's divorced, what is her source of income? In this case, she had no problems, because she already had her own house. All I have to do is to inform the police. During that period, we got an IPO, so that there was no disturbance from the husband." – Nora

"I observe the client's needs too. What purpose was she referred for? Sometimes, she is referred to because the IO thinks she needs counseling

sessions because she is in a less stable emotional state. So, I try to find out what purpose they are referring to and what their needs are. Sometimes, after a counseling session, I find that this victim needs to be referred to SWD, for example, for financial assistance, so I'll take care of that for her.” – Ying

“I am here to help them, but if my approach bothers them, then I don't want to approach first. I didn't want to approach first. Let me be here. We have also prepared a pamphlet from SWD itself, which states if you need psychological support, we have Psychology Officers.” – Athy

“Because I know what we're supposed to do for the acute moment (suicidal attempt). Make sure we know where he is, make sure he's around people, make sure he doesn't have a gun, and make sure he's in a safe place.” – Anju

“When I met them, they were in a very traumatic situation, so we could not do counseling at all. It wouldn't have worked at that time. What we did was the very minimum of basic listening and some groundwork. Groundwork means we want him to turn back to the world of reality. We want him to know where he is now. We want him to know he's safe now and that no one can hurt him. Let the victims feel safe. Let the victims feel okay.” – Dil

“So, the first step, I set in my mind that I'm here to give moral support. This is during the initial stage. The moral support is in terms of asking what her basic needs are. Every day, during that first week, I never touched on her late son. There should never be any elements of counseling during that time... During the first week I was very careful of her feelings.” – Azna

In addition, Lai's experience implies the process of analytical anticipation that arose after three months when she was unable to help her immigrant client. Reflecting on her own support system, which includes her family, boyfriend, friends, and religion, Lai realized her client lacks support from her social circle as they are far away. Instead, the client still has religion as her support system, inspiring Lai to seek a suitable religious teacher to guide her client spiritually and help her overcome her traumatic experience.

"For me, religion is one of the support systems for individuals. Like the social support from others, like family members or friends, they are also support systems, right? So, for me, religion is also one of the supporting elements. The client, who stayed in a shelter, was unable to meet her family or friends. So, her support system was no longer there. Therefore, now at least she has her religion. So, she has a support system in terms of religion. Hence, in the end, I thought of helping her from a religious perspective. So, I discussed this with the authorities and requested them to find a female religious teacher to conduct Quranic recitation classes. After that, I saw progress in the case. I saw the client's mind becoming calmer. She cried less. She started interacting with other people." – Lai

Lai's experience indicates the development process of analytical ability, shaping her to be a competent counselor. In addition to their analytical skills, competent counselors also exhibit profound compassion in their support for clients. They not only discern the clients' priority needs but also assist them in addressing those needs and nurturing self-care as discussed in the next meaning unit.

The third meaning unit, which relates to the experience of being a competent counselor, is compassionate in supporting client. The most significant factor in clients'

improvement and self-growth lies in the client-counselor relationship, which is built on compassion and empathy (Fridley, 2010). This relationship helps clients redefine their experiences in positive ways and fosters transformative changes in their identity, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Behrman & Reid, 2005). In the current study, the participants demonstrated their ability to approach their clients with calmness, compassion, and empathy, regardless of their traumatic experiences. This enabled them to become facilitators for their clients to overcome their crises. Consequently, clients were able to implement self-help practices, heal their emotions, and take productive actions to overcome their issues. The participants typically provided psychological support, guided clients towards insight, offered encouragement, and shared knowledge to prevent future traumatic incidents. Anju, Athy, Dil, Ying, Geena and Ram further described how they inspire their clients' growth.

“Actually, that time, I observed that when you're seeing a client in trauma and crisis, you, the counselor, need to be the source of patience and peace for your client.” – Anju

“Okay, let's say someone said he wants to end his life, what do you need to do? First, tell the person, okay, it's overwhelming for you. Your emotions are overwhelming. What can you do about that emotion? Take a deep breath or if you like you cannot do anything for yourself, go to the nearest hospital or go to the nearest person that's with you right now. I've learned these kinds of things. I know I am not there to magically help that person, but instead, I am enabling that person to help themselves.” – Anju

“Okay, what if you're feeling depressed? How do you cope with your stress? That's what I'm teaching here. It's more about how you manage stress or unpleasant emotions.” – Athy

“And then, most importantly in the session, I wanted to know what her security plan was. What if this incident happens again? What if the perpetrator is the nearest person to her? Of course, she's not safe. So, what's the mechanism for her safety? It's because we don't want her to be a victim again.” – Dil

“Sometimes, like I told you, I must be with her. Sometimes, it is also possible that while giving a statement to the investigation officer, she might not want to tell her story. So, we need to step in to help in the recording process as well.” – Ying

“We only guide, advise, and help the client to think more rationally, so that the client knows what they need to do after this. I'm just doing my job and hope the client gets insight from what happened to her. So, I give her my best.” – Geena

“When my client comes to me, I am not only solving their problem. I'm not just giving them a helping hand or a solution to solve their problem, but I also make sure my client can move on from that kind of living situation to a better direction.” – Ram

Furthermore, Nora, Wince, Azna, and Zudi provided distinct examples of their compassion in supporting their clients. Nora encountered a female client with a baby who had been left by her husband, facing financial struggles to sustain her life with the baby. Nora supported her by recognizing her skills in cosmetic make-up, securing her a job, and finding a suitable nursery for her baby.

In an almost similar situation, Wince worked with a single mother who had four young children and was facing imprisonment due to selling pirated compact disks.

Wince helped the mother in obtaining financial support for her children. While he could

not assist the client significantly in getting released from the charge, he willingly became her reference to provide supporting evidence to the judge. Additionally, Azna guided her clients in refusing to answer questions from journalists regarding the incident that led to her son's death. Meanwhile, Zudi supported his client by sharing a motivational book to help him process his emotions, leading to insight gained after reading the book.

"Usually, I would ask, 'Oh Allah, provide a way. Oh Allah, enable this client to become self-reliant. How long are we going to assist her, right?' After that, I asked her, 'Do you have any skills?' She said, 'I'm not skilled in anything. I only know makeup.' Then I remembered there was a staff member with disabilities (OKU). However, she worked as a makeup artist at Medan MARA. I said, 'What if you work at a makeup shop? But for your child, we'll try to find someone or a daycare where you can leave your child, and then you can work there.' She agreed. At that moment, I asked the welfare officer to call right away. We got her the job immediately." – Nora

"I have a client. She got divorced from her husband. After that, she sold pirated CDs. Later, she was arrested by the police, twice. She came here in tears. I felt sorry for her. She has four children, three girls and one boy. They're still young. I told her that I could only talk to the officer to help with each child up to a hundred ringgit per person. But I also told her that if the judge asks for a reference, I said, 'You can mention my name, my position, and that I serve here. If the judge wants to call me, I can appear before the judge for explanations and so on.'" – Wince

"After that, she said, 'Ma'am, I don't like how the journalists keep asking about this incident.' She said, 'It makes me even sadder.' That was her complaint. So, there we need to provide her with moral support. I said, 'It's alright. If you don't agree or don't want to answer the journalists' questions, just let them know because that's your right.'" – Azna

"We redirect the client to other activities. For instance, when the client is feeling very sad, I often share about the book "La Tahzan", which means "Don't Be Sad." That's if they're interested in reading. That's why we need to ask them first. 'What activities do you do during your free time?' He said, 'I like reading books.' I said, 'Would you like me to recommend a book? After you read this book, we can discuss it further.' So, sometimes, this approach makes our work easier. After reading it, the client himself said, 'Actually, I gained a lot when I read this book. I should be like this or that because God has given me so much.'" – Zudi

This sharing highlights the distinct abilities of competent counselors inherent in the participants. It also underscores the incorporation of religious elements into the process of being creative, analytical, and compassionate while dealing with clients. These professional experiences also shape participants' distinct personal characters, as discussed in the second subtheme.

4.6.2 Perseverant Person

The second subtheme under the experience of empowerment of functioning is the perseverant person. This subtheme highlights the participants' functioning as individuals. Previous research highlights the concept of a fully functioning person, also

known as a self-actualized person as the goal. The self-actualized person is characterized by traits such as openness to experience, a positive attitude, living in the present, trust in inner guidance, self-determination, and autonomy (Corey, 2005; Proctor et al., 2015; Straume & Vittersø, 2017). Upon analysis, it was observed that the participants in this study inherently possess some of these characteristics. They demonstrated an openness to experience, a positive attitude toward their work, the ability to live in the present moment, and resilience. These characters shape them to be perseverant in encountering the challenges in their lives.

The first meaning unit under the experience of being a persevering person is openness to experience. Openness to experience enables participants to bravely face life challenges. Experience in navigating past challenges through effective self-care strategies and reliance on religious faith shapes their heart to be stronger. Anju and Nora shared their experience as follows:

“Then, what was on my mind before I went to bed was how I observed Mr. Siva interacting with his client. He can talk like this and that to the client. Next time I want to be that kind of counselor. I am going to be the source of calmness and peace for my clients. That's what I thought. The next day I was prepared. Working in the hospital, I must be ready because they can call you for an emergency at any time, so I was ready for it.” – Anju

“I was placed in SWD early in my career. I've learned a lot. When it comes to the RMP, the crisis case became more difficult and more dangerous in terms of security. But I'm ready because I was put into the SWD early on. I've been through a lot of things.” – Nora

Besides them, Ram, Zudi, and Arul also talked about their openness to face new challenges. Dil also has a similar attitude. She had shown high readiness to render her

service to a potential client who she knew had become a crime victim, although she did not receive any formal assignment for the task. Four of them talked about their experience in the following statements.

“As human beings, we must know how to put ourselves in a lot of different situations. I can't expect that everything will go well. That's greed. I always put myself in a position of readiness to accept new challenges.” - Ram

“To me, these skills and knowledge are progressive. At the stage I'm in now, where I've been placed in a prison setting, I feel that if I were put into certain situations in a counseling setting that I have never faced, I would like to try it because I want to challenge myself.” – Zudi

“I can do it. If I am assigned to Mecca, I can. If I am assigned to a flood, I can. A sinking ship in Sabah, I can. I'm willing and ready without any hesitation. I consider myself hungry for the challenge and experience.” – Arul

“I'm going to read the facts of the case that the investigating officer got. I will call to ask the IO if the case needs counseling or psychological support.” – Dil

“If it's a molestation case, where no medical examination has been conducted, no social welfare to attend the case, then I'll ask the IO if it's possible to arrange a visit.” – Dil

Furthermore, Wince and Reina integrated their religious belief to inspire an attitude of openness. Wince firmly adhered to the idea that every religion promotes its followers to do what is right. He mentioned that he remains composed when he acts in accordance with his religious values, even when others perceive it negatively, showing no concern in facing such challenges. Meanwhile, Reina possesses a strong faith that

every crisis in life was already predetermined, which equips her to confront such situations.

"I believe that all religions, including Christianity itself, ask us to do the right thing. That's where it might provide encouragement and a sense of peace for me to do what's right. When you do the right thing, you are not worried because you feel you're doing something right, even though the outcome might seem chaotic. But in the process of facing all of that, we become calm. We don't feel afraid because we are on the right side." –

Wince

"In terms of spirituality, it was already written from the beginning. It is written that crisis will exist, it exists to happen, has happened, and will keep happening in life. It's not always sunshine and rainbows for your whole life. Crises do exist. Even in the Bible, it's already written. There is indeed a revelation about it. So, I am prepared to face them." – Reina

Azna's perspective offers a solid conclusion. She highlighted the significance of confronting challenges and pressures for personal and professional growth and development. Additionally, she also demonstrates her openness to take on any challenges that may come with her job once she has made a commitment.

"For me, pressure is necessary in life because it's the pressure that has brought me to my current position. Thank God. This means there has been a notable improvement in my career development. Over the twenty-five years I've worked as a nurse, I don't find working with patients stressful.

I've ingrained in my mind that this is a job I chose, not something forced upon me. In other words, when we apply for jobs, we are ready to confront work situations." – Azna

The second meaning unit under the experience of being a persevering person is a positive attitude toward work. It indicates the positive perception of participants toward their work as a counselor. Zudi and Ram expressed their gratitude for being a counselor. Ram also stated that he gained job satisfaction from this profession. Nora and Azna also disclosed the satisfaction they gain from their profession while Dil and Athy mentioned they really love their job. Additionally, Anju attributed her birth to be destined role as a counselor and expressed her enthusiasm for her job, highlighting her passion for her work. Meanwhile, Ying regarded her profession as an honored job, providing space for her to extend kindness to others. Similarly, Geena viewed her job as a form of worship to God. All of their statements portray their shared sentiments and positive attitudes toward their profession.

“God has put me here and given me an opportunity to face these people and help them. So, I must help them. I must uphold my responsibility.” – Zudi

“I am thankful to be given the opportunity to be in service of helping people.” – Zudi

“Thank God, alhamdulillah, that till today I feel happy and very, very satisfied with my role as a counselor, and I can see God really chose me.” – Ram

“I am satisfied with my current job. What I learned in the past was worth it. What I asked for, Allah has given it to me.” – Nora

“Alhamdulillah, my arrangement hit the mark. I found my path. I have job satisfaction.” – Azna

“I enjoy my job. I love what I am doing. My job is very meaningful. It's wonderful.” – Dil

"I love my job very much." – Athy

"I was born to be a counselor." – Anju

"I'm crazy about my job." – Anju

"My job is a very noble one. As I told you earlier, this job gives me the opportunity to do good things." – Ying

"As a counselor, we must carry out the assigned tasks effectively. We need to be conscientious, considering our job as a form of worship so that we can execute it well." – Geena

Nevertheless, Reina continues to grapple with her work. She acknowledged that she could not confidently state her love for her job due to the challenges she encounters in her task. In addition, she emphasized that the counselor's role is significant and should not be taken lightly, indicating her strong dedication to her responsibilities.

"I cannot confidently say that I love my job. I can't say that. I'm still struggling, and I'm giving my utmost effort. This task is challenging for me. It's not a role to take lightly because we deal with people's lives and human crises. That's the nature of it. I'm struggling with this role because I believe that the counselor's role is substantial, requires serious consideration, and is not something to be taken lightly." – Reina

Maintaining a positive attitude toward their profession enables participants to persevere in their careers as counselors. They can stay resolute in delivering their service during their work hours and value their personal lives when spending time with their families and friends. This implies the third character of a perseverant person, as further discussed in the subsequent meaning unit.

Thirdly, the meaning unit that reflects the experience of being a persevering person is the ability to live in the present moment. This ability enables participants to

effectively fulfill their roles as both spouses and parents when they return home. They can successfully internalize transition between these roles, even when they are required to perform professional tasks at home. Ram, Athy, Zudi, Geena, Ying, Dil, Nora, Anju, and Azna shared their experiences in this regard.

"I have trained myself. After five o'clock, I will change my hat. So now, I am going back to wearing my hat as a husband and a father. End of story. 5 o'clock, it's done. I will throw out my work hat. I will do it automatically.

"The counselor sleeps here. I am going to see my son and wife." – Ram

"I will make sure after my work, after my session, that I go home as a mother. I don't bring my case back home." – Athy

"Saturday and Sunday are my days with my family. I rarely conduct online sessions or tele-counseling. Rarely. If there is a session, it would only be once or twice. I will make sure that my presence in the house means a lot to my family. Meaning, I will spend time with the kids and husband." – Athy

"I have a principle. From Monday to Friday, we indeed work, and we should do our work as well as possible. Saturday and Sunday are indeed times for my family." – Zudi

"When I get home, I will set aside my work, because at home I'm a mother. I will always spend that time with my family. I try not to mix up work with my personal life. Spend time with the children. Be a mother, not a counselor." – Geena

"My personal life I think is simple. There is a time for work and a time for personal life. When it is time for personal life, just enjoy it. We must enjoy it." – Ying

“I will try not to do my office work at home. I will ensure that when it's time to go back home, that my work ends there.” – Dil

“When my family affairs are settled, I can settle my work. When I have finished my work, I will close the office, go home, and start on house chores. Ensure my children are not neglected, because I have set it in my mind that they must be settled first. That doesn't mean I don't do work at all when I'm at home. It's impossible at the SWD. So how do I separate them? Go back to the concept I mentioned just now. I prioritize my family affairs first; only then will I do my work.” – Nora

“I have a coat when I come to work. I was in my imaginary coat, but when it's time to go home, I will hang it up there and go home. I don't think about it anymore.” – Anju

“I have adjusted myself to this practice. When I am in the car to go home, after I exit the office gate, I will tune my mind toward my plans for house chores, so that I can refrain from thinking about issues related to work.”

– Azna

In addition, Zudi emphasized the importance of living in the present while attending to clients during intervention sessions. This suggests that counselors should concentrate on the clients' issues, setting aside their own personal problems and insecurities.

“Even though we have problems, we don't want to appear troubled in front of our clients. Even though we might be feeling weak, we don't want to show our weakness to our clients. Despite our lack of experience, we don't want to come across as inexperienced to our clients. They come to see us because they need encouragement and support. Therefore, I need

to channel that energy toward them so that they feel capable of continuing with their lives." – Zudi

Overall, the participants' perspectives indicate that they need to embrace their present moments, whether during work hours or personal time, to the fullest. They are also required to be emotionally present for their clients, demonstrating that the clients' narratives have been heard and their emotions have been acknowledged. Furthermore, living in the present helps participants maintain boundaries, separating their work issues from their personal lives. This separation hinders them from being overly affected by their client's issues. This practice leads them to develop resilience, as further elaborated in the next meaning unit.

The final meaning unit under the experience of being a persevering person is resilience. Resilience is a process of bouncing back and adapting positively in the face of adversity (Joyce et al., 2018). Discussing resilience, Ram concisely stated in his reflective form that self-care is an important practice for all counselors to get rid of emotional disruption because of the negative impact of their sessions. Anju added that this is because self-care provides calmness, rationale, clarity in thinking, and patience. It also decreases negative countertransference and unfinished business in counselors. Wince also supported Anju's statement by stating in his own reflective form that self-care gives encouragement, calmness, and resilience to a counselor. Wince also added religion plays a role in helping individuals to practice self-care during hardship and in strengthening self-affirmation during normal situations. It also guides an individual to positively face their unfortunate situation. Azna, Dil, and Nora confirmed the claims of Ram, Anju, and Wince through their sharing in their reflective form. The statements from all of them were as quoted.

“Self-care practice is important to all counselors so that the negative effects of the prior sessions do not become an emotional disruption.” –

Ram (reflective form)

“Good self-care will provide calmness, clarity in thinking, rationality, high patience and reduced countertransference and unfinished business.”

– Anju (reflective form)

“It is important to a counselor whereby appropriate self-care will provide encouragement, calmness, and resilience in carrying out counseling services. Challenges, trials, and frustrations at work may erode the spirit of counselors in the absence of self-care practices. For those who have a religion, religion helps in self-care when in distress and provides appreciation or self-assurance when in good condition. It also becomes a positive guide when facing something unfortunate.” – Wince (reflective form)

“As a counselor in the field of sexual crimes, I will be directly exposed to the issues raised by clients due to an incident, such as a tragic murder or abuse. Practicing self-care helps me to avoid experiencing psychological impact because of direct exposure to the issues presented by the client.” –

Azna (reflective form)

“Religion makes me a more complete person. It guides me to be a person who can function rationally, can bounce back if I'm in distress, and can smile even if am in a hurt state. It is like that.” – Dil

“What makes a counselor one who can face challenges is inner strength.

My heart will speak through praying, chanting, and performing prayer so

that I can be strong and always eager to continue my career as a counselor.” – Nora (reflective form)

Further, Zudi, Arul, Athy, and Geena shared their real-setting experience of demonstrating resilience in their workplace. Zudi revealed that he consistently reminded himself to maintain positive emotions even when his colleagues are affected by negativity. He views himself as a source of strength for his colleagues, helping them overcome such emotions. Meanwhile, Arul highlighted the nature of work in healthcare settings demands emotional resilience due to the need to witness the patients' suffering and death. He emphasized that counselors should remain focused on helping their clients and not let their emotions hinder their efforts. Athy also followed a similar approach. After many years of experience, Athy can adeptly maintain her emotions while exerting efforts to alleviate the psychological impacts on her clients. Geena added that counselors should be emotionally and mentally prepared before their deployment in crisis work, as witnessing tragic deaths could trigger their emotions.

“I always remind myself that if there are fifty people in our department, and forty-nine of them are feeling down, we shouldn't feel down ourselves. Let those forty-nine individuals be sad, but we shouldn't. Sometimes, without realizing it, we might be the source of strength for others. So, why should we also become sad? Instead, we can work to improve the situation.” – Zudi

“In a hospital setting, there's no time for grief because new cases keep coming in. One day, when I was working at a hospital in Perak, there were six suicide cases in a single day. There wasn't even a moment to feel sad because new cases kept arising. Usually, if I find myself unable to conduct

a session, I'll start by taking their medical history. After that, once things have settled, I'll address the situation.” – Arul

“When I've been consistently involved with flood or fire cases, I feel like it's nothing out of the ordinary. It has become normal for me. Of course, I feel sad about what happened to them, but it doesn't affect me. I can still carry out my duties as a psychologist.” – Athy

“Even before going to a crisis site, we need to emotionally prepare ourselves. Dealing with the loss of loved ones is not easy for us to face, especially when the victims have lost their families in such circumstances. So, internally, we must be strong because we go there to help them reduce the psychological impact they're facing. So, I make sure that I am emotionally prepared.” – Geena

In summary, religious belief and the practice of self-care equip participants with the fortitude to confront challenges in both their personal and professional lives. These two elements nurture them with the courage to face new and demanding experiences, maintain a positive attitude toward their job, fully embrace the present moment, and cultivate resilience. In addition to shaping their personal characters, religion and self-care empower them to be capable providers for their families and within their community. This brings us to the third subtheme.

4.6.3 Capable Provider

The third subtheme within the overarching theme of empowerment of functioning experience is capable provider. This subtheme represents the participants' successful role as caregivers for their families and communities. Participants reported that caring

for and providing for their families brought them a sense of calmness, knowing that their loved ones, especially their children, were well taken care of. In addition to their families, the counselors also made significant contributions to their communities. To further illustrate the experience of being a capable provider, three meaning units emerged under this subtheme: 1) efficient household manager, 2) functional parent, and 3) provider within the community.

The first meaning unit within the care provider subtheme is the efficient household manager. Regardless of their gender and position as a husband or wife, participants recognized managing housework and family as part of their functional role as capable providers. While traditionally associated with women's roles, this perception has evolved as women increasingly participate in paid labor (Kim, 2013). Modern marital couples often choose to divide household responsibilities and support each other (Arsenault, 2018).

In this study, it was observed that most of the female participants reported taking on housework without mentioning the involvement of their spouses, except for Anju, who shared that she had a division of household chores with her husband. Committing to these activities brought a sense of peace of mind to the participants, knowing that their families were well-managed. These tasks included house cleaning, meal preparation, laundry, sending children to school, and taking them from school or nursery. On the other hand, the male participants reported sharing the responsibility of managing the children with their spouses, without directly mentioning their involvement in housework. This indicates the functional role they play within their family lives. Nora, Geena, Ying, Anju, Reina, and Athy further described how they manage their daily housework and family responsibilities. Meanwhile, in addition to

managing housework for her own family, Azna also needs to assist her elder sister in caring for their mother who is paralyzed due to a stroke.

“In terms of housework, I must do it, because I'm the one who will take care of the family first before work. For me, if my family is not managed, my work will also take a hit. That is why in the past when my children were small, I would take care of them. I'll be very careful in choosing a nanny who can take care of them, so it doesn't distract my focus from work.” – Nora

“When I wake up, usually, I will cook first. I cook first because I'm the one in charge of cooking and leaving food for the family. After I finish cooking, I'll attend to my cats. I also cannot leave the cats unsettled, such as not cleaning their fur in the morning. I can't. Otherwise, it will be on my mind all day.” – Nora

“Every day, what I always do is first prepare meals for my kids. I really enjoy it. I will prepare breakfast, lunch, and dinner because my house is far away from my office. I will cook as early as possible for the kids, so when I am at work, I will find it easier. Because I know when my kids come back from school, the food is there until dinner time. When I got home, they had eaten. That is my self-care. To ensure my children are adequate in terms of food.” – Geena

“On weekdays, there are no activities. We don't have enough time because my husband and children usually come home late. As for me, I must cook.” – Ying

“Morning is very rushed for me. I will prepare breakfast and everything. I know that I'm always looking at the time. Time is my benchmark. I must

get things done by this time, this time, this time, etc. Then I'll be very happy when I can send my kids to school.” – Anju

“I pick up my child from school every day. Therefore, I extend my working hours until six in the evening to meet the eight-hour work requirement. Once I'm at home, I take on the role of a mother. So, I manage the household tasks that need to be done.” – Reina

“When I get home, I don't take a shower first. I'll go clean the house first, then I need to cook. Then ensure my kids are done with their homework. In my house, we have a division of labor. I clean up the room, my kids clean the bathroom. My husband is the only person who washes the dishes and manages the clothes. This is well established.” – Anju

“I wake up in the morning and then after cleaning myself up, I will tidy up the bed, take a shower, etc. Then I will go downstairs for prayer first. I don't cook in the morning, if I did, I wouldn't have enough time to go to work. I will send my kids to my mother's house for everything. After work, I will come back, take a shower first, and only then will I fetch them home.” – Athy

“On my way back from the office, I will plan what I need to do when I get home. Usually, before I come back, I will call my daughter or husband, asking what we're going to have for dinner. Maybe, because as a woman, I have a lot of work. Besides thinking of what to eat, I must do housework and wash clothes. Things are always on my mind. Maybe it's because my mother had a mild stroke. She stays with my elder sister in the same residential area, just on a different street. Because my elder sister manages her alone, so her clothes, and my mother's clothes, I will do the laundry

for them after I get back from work. It's okay for me even if I am tired. I do not want to think about the tiredness.” – Azna

Ram and Zudi also demonstrated their commitment to managing their family affairs. Both shared insights into their daily routines and activities.

“I will change roles automatically. Now it's five o'clock, what do I have to do next? Okay, today I must buy this and that for my baby. I will try to bring myself into that role. The father's role is automatically inside me. I will try to put the things inside. I will do each one automatically. So, when we meet, I ask her those questions. Tonight, what are we going to eat? Have dinner outside or do we want to cook? I will try to bring myself into my role.” – Ram

“I'll prepare my children. On Sunday, after the maghrib prayer, they must get all their school stuff ready. School bags. I'll ask where the schoolbag is. I'm doing a check. This is the schoolbag. Now, what's already inside? Additional things like face masks, handkerchiefs, socks, and all those things must be ready because I know when my wife feels tense, she's going to have an implication on the whole household. Therefore, before going to bed on Sunday night, I will ensure their socks, school shoes, school bags, and all are ready.” – Zudi

The participants' ability to efficiently manage their households and children's affairs despite their busy working lives implies their capability as providers for their families. Beyond merely fulfilling family duties, the participants also exemplify their role in becoming functional parents in raising their children. Further details about their experiences are elaborated upon in the subsequent meaning unit.

The second aspect of the participants' experience as care providers relates to their role as parents. Functional parenting plays a crucial role in the emotional regulation and social interaction satisfaction of children (Titze et al., 2014). As parents, the participants express a high level of concern for their children's well-being. Their experience in crisis work has had a positive impact on their parenting approach. Zudi and Arul emphasize the importance of their children's social lives and actively remind them to avoid negative influences. Athy considers herself a strict mother and provides guidance to her children whenever they misbehave. Similarly, Anju also advises her children against improper behavior and reinforces positive actions through positive reflections.

“Indeed, if I was facing issues of criminals, whom we call young prisoners, under eighteen years old, I felt worried. Worried and scared, because when I did a lot of sessions, most prisoners shared that the cause or factor that they were trapped in criminal conduct was the influence of their peers. So, I always remind my kids, to make sure they are friends with good people and to not get influenced by bad things. That's my concern.” – Zudi

“I'm overprotective. If my son is staying in another house, then I will put up a CCTV, because when I work as a counselor, sometimes I see drugs in a new form. Last time, we used to worry that men might harm women, but right now, even between men, bad things can happen. Since I'm being exposed to all the negativity, overprotectiveness has to be there. That's what I did, and I told them about the do's and don'ts.” – Arul

“I'm a strict mother. When my son is naughty, I'll reprimand him.” – Athy

“So, every night before we sleep, we will share stories about whatever happened throughout the day and whatever happened to me. I make it a point, every night, to tell my kids what they did great. Today you have

managed to finish your homework on your own, that is so awesome. I make it a must to reflect on the best thing they did. The positive reflection. There could be a lot of things they messed up and I hate positive toxicity. You cannot be too positive, so I tell them. Today I realized you spoke this word, it's not good, so tomorrow let's use better words. Tomorrow let's be positive. Tomorrow let's be polite and tomorrow if you feel angry, wait until you feel you are ready to be polite and then you can talk.” – Anju

In addition to providing advice, Arul and Nora also made efforts to understand their children's needs. They employed diplomacy to explore and address their children's issues. Nora is known for providing firm justifications when she cannot fulfill her son's demands.

“My son gets on the dean's list every semester. Suddenly, he didn't want to continue and didn't want to submit a defense proposal. For me, it was a crisis, but I comforted him. I didn't scold him. If you need time, just tell me, I said. If you need an extension, just let me know. I asked him whether the tuition fee was paid or if it was a financial problem. He said no. I don't even know why.” – Arul

“My son saw his friends all had motorcycles, but I didn't buy him one. I told him I wouldn't buy a motorcycle. First, because of this, and second because of that. So, my son won't mention his desire to buy a motorcycle anymore. Behind my diplomacy, I am strict too.” – Nora

Furthermore, the participants also emphasized teaching their children good moral values and religious teachings. Reina shared that she used religious teachings to instill patience in her children. Athy and Nora taught their children about the importance of sharing and giving donations to friends whose families are facing financial difficulties.

Azna focused on training her daughter to be helpful to her sister, who is taking care of their mother. Furthermore, both Geena and Reina engaged their children in religious teachings during weekends. These are some of the ways in which the participants imparted moral and religious values to their children.

"I did (tips for kids to control their anger). I searched. I do it. It's not wrong if the tips are from Muslim counselors or whoever. For me, if the approach is suitable, such as concerning sustenance and istighfar (words of repentance), I'm okay with that. I would just replace the istighfar with another recitation so that the children could follow. It teaches children to be patient." – Reina

"And then, for my children, I teach that too. You need to be good to others. When I prepare them food, I will say, you got your best friend right? You should share it with everybody. You share. It's okay. That's how it is." – Athy

"When I educate my children, I always ask, 'In your class, are there any kids with financial constraints?' A long time ago, he would tell me, 'Mama, at my school there are two orphans.' He will come back from school and he'll tell me because since the beginning, I taught the kids that if any orphans had not paid the fees by the end of the year to let me know. So, he'll tell me, 'Mama, there is this boy, he lives with his grandma. He hasn't paid the fees yet and the teacher keeps asking him.' 'Okay, so ask your teacher for the account number and I'll pay. Don't tell the boy.' So, Alhamdulillah, my children are not reluctant to give alms." – Nora

"My weekend is Friday and Saturday, and my daughter's weekend is Saturday and Sunday. So, during her weekend, when she cooks, she will

send food to my sister (who takes care of my sick mother). My sister didn't ask for it, but I told her that if she cooks, send some to the house because I want to train my daughter so that she understands how to take care of the sick.” – Azna

“Back when the church wasn't open, we were online. We'll listen to it during mass. I think it had a very good impression because the children have learned to pray. Then we have Sunday classes for kids who are taught by religious teachers. Like Muslims, they have a religious school. We have a Christian Catholic class every weekend. We have a religious school taught by teachers. The teachers will teach them how to pray. I make sure the kids follow all the classes. It's happened once a week every weekend.”

– Geena

“I will just turn on the mass sermon in the house. Kids, let's listen to this. Everyone listens and then reads a short verse from the Bible. That's how it is for children.” – Reina

In addition, Geena, Dil, Anju, and Athy prioritize spending quality time with their young children. They actively participate in their children's activities during bonding moments.

“When I get home, I'll try to put my work aside, because when I'm at home, I'm a mother. I will always spend that time with family.” – Geena

“We have a lot of activities. Sometimes we play together, play games. Sometimes we read books together and we draw together. Sometimes we'll play Nintendo together.” – Dil

“We have a routine in our house. Now I read books because I just bought a series of books. I like to share and feel for the kids. So, I read the book.

Normally before this, my kids and I all used to sleep together in one room.”

– Anju

“I observed that I need to play two roles because my husband has less communication with the kids. That's his character, but he's very good at taking care of them. It's just that he's lacking in the communication part, so, I must communicate a lot. I'll play with them. I'm going to chase them around and the like.” – Athy

From their sharing, participants exemplify their closed engagement in supporting their children's development. They actively participate in family activities alongside their children, offer appropriate advice and moral guidance, and impart religious teachings and values. This makes their presence truly meaningful in their children's lives.

In addition to their roles within their families, the participants actively contribute to society in various ways. Membership in clubs and support groups, and engagement in volunteer work are examples of their community participation. Engaging in the community has a positive impact on the life satisfaction of individuals, including those with health problems and older adults (English, 2013; Chen & Zhang, 2022). Active participation fosters a sense of belonging, community attachment, self-control, and networking (Chen & Zhang, 2022). The participants in this study expressed their community participation through involvement in local community activities, such as joining local community groups, residents' societies, non-governmental organizations, parent-teacher societies, and workplace societies. The experiences of Zudi, Arul, Athy, Reina, Nora, Anju, Dil, and Azna highlight their community engagement.

“I am active in a residential association. At school, I'm involved in the Parents and Teachers Association. I am the chairman of the Parents and

Teachers Association. So, community activities are always there. When they conduct communal work, I will join, because, as I said just now, it is also part of our self-care.” – Zudi

“... One easy example is prayer hall activities. Among my tasks is to clean up here and there. Then, previously, I didn't know how to cook, but when I frequented the prayer hall, I learned to cook. When there is an occasion at the prayer hall, I will cook.” – Arul

“If the communal work is carried out near my residence, I will join.” – Athy

“In terms of community work, I am on the committee of my village community. I've been a member of the bureau's committee for two years. I will always be appointed to be on the committee of the welfare bureau. In church, I also have a role in a certain bureau and now as a treasurer of the church.” – Reina

“At my residence, I am the chairman of the community garden. I am also the one who will cook when we do our occasional potluck. Just me. If I'm not around, they are not going to do a potluck.” – Nora

“In the community, we have this group, Tamil Nuragam. It means the world of the mother. I'm one of the psychological advisors there.” – Anju

“I am still a member of Creative Counseling and Art Therapy in Penang. Recently, I joined the Penang Association Counseling and Psychology team to do basic self-facilitating skills training.” – Dil

“I give a lot of talks in the community. Sometimes they don't pay me. I even give free lectures.” – Dil

“In the community, I am involved as a welfare committee member for my residential association. Sometimes they ask me to give a talk about teenagers and crimes. This is my contribution to society. Sometimes, if let's say we want to conduct a program and we need some financial support, I will ask a colleague at the relevant agencies to see if they also want to run a program for the community. A collaboration. So, I will set up the audience and they will run the program.” – Azna

Additionally, the participants are actively involved in charity work and generously provide financial donations to those in need, including their clients. Zudi, Arul, and Nora shared the following statements about their charitable endeavors. Lai also reveals her donation to a temple as a gesture of gratitude, as she took numerous of printed copies of the Heart Sutra to be distributed among the Buddhist followers in the shelter house.

“Another practice I do is give charity because we know that giving charity makes our affairs easier.” – Zudi

“Usually, when I want to give some relief to others, I will give them money. Perhaps I'm unethical. Not professional in this case. For example, in my case, he told me, 'Mr. Arul, I came here, because I want to meet you. Only then can I calm down. I came here with no money.' How would you feel? Pity. Like it or not, I gave him money due to the feeling of humanity.” – Arul

“I've handled a case. She came in tears because she had no milk. No milk because she didn't have money. Many people say counselors must not give money, but for me, I have my principles. I will give when I see the person is in great need. When we did the session, she said her baby drank rice

water for a week. Imagine. How is the baby going to survive? Usually, I would give, but I would give it to educate her. We also planned on how she could become independent, find a job, and so on.” – Nora

“I went to the temple. Over there, they had printed many copies of the Heart Sutra to be given out for free. So, I made a small donation and took some of the books. I told the person in charge at the temple that I wanted to take quite a few because I intended to give them to people at the shelter home.” – Lai

Dil has her own approach to engaging in charity work. She actively supports fundraising efforts by purchasing products being sold for that purpose. Additionally, she buys products to support various businesses. Dil expressed her commitment to these actions through the following statement.

“In terms of charity, if there is a person who sells things to raise funds, sometimes I will donate. If a person is starting a business, I think we can start supporting them by making a minimum purchase to encourage their business to grow. I am more willing to spend money to support these types of people.” – Dil

In summary, participants demonstrate their capability to be providers for their families, particularly for their children and within their community. They effectively fulfill the fundamental needs of their families, establish nurturing connections with their children, and contribute their expertise, energy, and resources for the betterment of their community. Going beyond their role within personal lives and social circles, participants also exhibit their engagement in the spiritual realm, as further detailed in the next meaning unit.

4.6.4 Religious Devotee

The fourth subtheme of empowerment of functioning is religious devotee. This subtheme reflects the participants' higher level of understanding and insight into religious knowledge through their beliefs and practices transcend beyond religious teaching or common practices. The study suggests that ongoing exposure to traumatic experiences does not necessarily lead to negative changes in religious perception, as there may be discrepancies between the experiences and one's belief systems. Instead, these stress-inducing encounters compel counselors to step outside their comfort zones, adopt alternative viewpoints, and adjust their cognitive frameworks and habitual responses. These adaptive processes contribute to the development of wisdom and spiritual transformation (Le, 2008; Trimulyaningsih et al., 2024). The participants in this study demonstrated the cultivation of spiritual mindfulness and a sense of purpose as they successfully integrated religion and self-care practices into their experience in crisis work.

Firstly, the participants' commitment to self-care practices and their strong adherence to religion contribute to their spiritual mindfulness. Spiritual mindfulness is a form of awareness that encompasses the ability to connect with one's inner self and understand spiritual experiences (Jaberi et al., 2017). It also involves recognizing the personal spiritual value of life and developing the maturity to learn from life experiences (Anwar et al., 2020). Successful coping with traumatic experiences is often associated with the growth of spiritual awareness (Khursheed & Shahnawaz, 2020). In this study, the participants demonstrated an ability to perceive the wisdom behind each life event they encountered. This perception of wisdom guided them to face their experiences bravely and indicated the growth of their spiritual mindfulness. Zudi and Wince shared

their experiences of facing work-related challenges and gaining spiritual mindfulness through self-reflection and their reliance on self-care practices and religion.

"I don't think they're evil, but they may be misguided. If anything happens, they'll fight. So that's where I've been frustrated a lot of times. I've been frustrated many times. But the thing (the words of Jesus) reminds me. They are just kids. We still must teach them. So there, I saw my work just like we were planting the seeds. I watered them and put fertilizer, but you won't see the plant shooting out from the ground that day either. It will take time. But what I've delivered to them might help them in the future."

– Wince

"During the early stages, I used to be a bit emotional. When I met the prisoners, (I thought), what else is their problem? They're staying here, the food, and the beds are all there. What else do they want? A little bit emotional. Over time when the thought (positive thought) leads to good things, the emotion is automatically better. God has put me here and given me a chance to deal with these people, to help them. So, I must help them. I must hold my trust. That way the heart feels calm." – Zudi

"Thank God. I learned so many things. All walks of life can be seen clearly from prison." – Zudi

Azna's statement also reflects her spiritual mindfulness in relation to her profession. Meanwhile, Anju expressed her belief that the positive actions they performed for their clients not only bring rewards to themselves but also extend to their family members, reflecting her strong mindful understanding of the concept of karma. Additionally, Geena articulated a profound perspective regarding her work and life, emphasizing her strong faith that her diligent performance in her job would lead to

receiving God's grace. She also regarded her professional role as a form of worship, underscoring her dedication to fulfilling her responsibilities with full commitment.

"In the field of our work, if we do it right, do our best, Insyah Allah, there are a lot of rewards. In terms of those advantages, there are a lot for me (especially) in terms of our sustenance. But sustenance is not necessarily in the form of money, but many other aspects too. When I reflect on myself, I see, oh this is wisdom. This is our sustenance." – Azna

"Sometimes the bad or the good things that we do, do not necessarily come back to us. It will go to our children; it will go to our family. So, I believe when I do good things, it will come back to my kids. It will go to my husband; it'll also go to my parents." – Anju

"If I do a good job, then it's a credit for me to have God's grace. I always think so. That's why I think of this work as our worship, for our ticket one day when we're called by God. We do well with our work, and hopefully, that time, God will judge what we do." – Geena

Ram and Zudi shared a similar spiritual mindfulness with Anju, as both mentioned that the counseling services, they provided not only benefited their clients but also themselves, giving them insight to become more aware of their own lives. In addition, after receiving news of his client's death, Arul also took some time to mindfully reflect on himself. Reflecting on her client's experience, Lai also developed a sense of spiritual mindfulness, inspiring her to practice good deeds.

"Sometimes we forget. When we do counseling sessions for people, we think we are helping others but in fact, we help ourselves as well and get to know who we are. So, I enjoyed the session. It was fun. It makes me

reflect on myself too. That means, he (client) might gain his part, I'll also get my part.” – Zudi

“I would question why these people become this way, but when I hear Ustaz's lecture, I know that this is his path. What happened to him was also a trial for us to prepare ourselves.” – Zudi

“Another point is when I help a client, I'm helping myself too. It's not just for the clients. I'm trying to fix my weaknesses too.” – Ram

*“I received a call. The nurse told me, 'Mr. Arul, your patient has passed away.' That's what scared me the most. Subsequently, I recited words of repentance, pondering the future and how I would confront my mortality.”
– Arul*

“I think if that's the case, then I'd better practice doing good. Never do bad, so that my karma becomes good in the afterlife.” – Lai

Besides that, the participants also easily gained spiritual mindfulness when they themselves were facing crisis experiences. Wince and Dil shared their insights. Dil also added that mistakes are a part of the life process. Additionally, Nora viewed her profession as a journey toward personal development, prompting her to be mindful of her actions, personality traits, and life matters. Witnessing the challenges faced by her clients in losing their children or caring for disabled ones reminded Athy to be thankful for having active and healthy children, even though she occasionally felt frustrated by their naughtiness.

“Reflecting on an experience, I realize that it may have been a test from God to see how resilient I could be. I believe that this experience has prepared me for future challenges that may be even greater and that I have gained valuable skills in resilience through this process.” – Wince

“I do not lose anything, and I earn one very precious experience. Religion also teaches me that whatever happens has meaning. So, I will try to look for the positive ones. I do practice this way.” – Dil

“As I said, in our belief, for Buddhists everything is impermanent. And everything is empty. Whatever happened has a reason. We are just small dust in this universe. So sometimes when I am upset, I will think that it's no big deal, just a small matter. Life is a process, full of mistakes. I learn, I unlearn, I relearn, I move on.” – Dil

“In my opinion, the crises that have occurred within my career journey are God's way of educating me. He has taught me many things, about behavior, my profession, personality, and various other aspects. It encompasses my entire life, I feel. I've truly learned a lot from the experiences I've gone through while serving.” – Nora

“So, when my children misbehave, I do feel frustrated. Why are they behaving this way? But then I remembered, at least I still have children. I have kids compared to people who have lost children, those who have children with health issues, and disabled children. At least my kids are very active and healthy.” – Athy

In addition, Reina offered a distinct perspective, illustrating the interconnectedness of spirituality and human life. She emphasized that the skills and techniques utilized during intervention sessions are manifestations of divine wisdom bestowed upon practitioners. This suggests that these skills and techniques hold a spiritual significance, as they originate from God, a higher source of knowledge. This perspective reminds Reina to maintain her awareness of her spiritual connection to God.

“I believe that we can't separate ourselves from spirituality. We have skills like breathing techniques and others; we use them too because, in my opinion, they have also been provided by God. God has bestowed wisdom upon practitioners to develop those techniques for application and sharing. So, for me, as we practice such techniques, we shouldn't forget about God.” – Reina

In summary, participants demonstrated themselves as religious devotees by deeply connecting their personal and professional experiences with their religious beliefs, thereby fostering a sense of spiritual mindfulness. They remain vigilant about their actions, emotion, responsibilities, and overall lives, cautiously aligning them with their religious principles. The attitude of spiritual mindfulness also encourages them to remain conscious of their purpose of existence, leading us to the subsequent meaning unit.

The second meaning unit is a sense of purpose. Solid adherence to religion and self-care practices, especially spiritual self-care also guide toward a sense of purpose. Meaning-making and a sense of purpose in life are regarded by Viktor Frankl as the main functions of healthy humans (Crea & Francis, 2022). The statements from Anju, Zudi, Ying, Azna, Dil, Geena, and Nora collectively highlight how their faith in religion and self-care practices nurture their sense of purpose. Anju maintained the belief that all humans are striving toward the same ultimate direction, with religion providing a resonating path toward it, thereby making mutual support a significant endeavor. Zudi viewed religion as a guiding force that instills humans with a sense of purpose. Ying shared a similar perspective, regarding religion as a guiding backbone for her actions. Likewise, Azna identified religion as the fundamental cornerstone that underpins her work. Dil attributed religion to being a beacon of hope, aiding her in navigating

uncertainties and challenges. Geena's explanation describes the process of nurturing a sense of purpose by being in solitude and enjoying a cup of coffee, which revitalizes her and helps her find her way. Nora on the other hand, shared she was guided by her inner voice, which she believes to be divinely whispered, directing her endeavors. Their individual quotes are presented below.

"My view is that we are all, regardless of our religious differences, striving for the same ultimate reality. We choose the religion that resonates with us, but we still support and cooperate with people from other faiths." –

Anju

"Without religion, we might be wandering aimlessly. We lack a sense of purpose in life." – Zudi

"Crucially important. If we have religion, it becomes our backbone of everything we do." – Ying

"For me, religion is the real foundation. When we want to do this work no matter what the position is, if we remember the fundamentals of our religion, Insya-Allah, we will do our best." – Azna

"Religion is like a beacon of hope. It assures me that I have guidance, that I will survive, that I will cope in uncertain times." – Dil (reflective form)

"When I find myself in a psychologically uncertain state, such as feeling stressed, I prefer to isolate myself and enjoy a cup of coffee. This gives me a sense of revitalization and direction in life." – Geena (reflective form)

"Before I was about to do something, this inner speech directed me, moved me to take action." – Nora

Furthermore, Ram firmly believes that both positive and negative experiences, which bring opportunities and challenges, serve a purpose. He viewed them as avenues

for gaining additional knowledge, thereby encouraging him to focus on the positive side of his encounters. A distinct perspective centered around the concept of "*the angel of the earth*" inspires Reina to work in the pursuit of her goal. This belief drives her to align her efforts with her department's aspirations and continually seek guidance through prayer.

"I believe that everything happens according to God's will and that I have been given opportunities and challenges for a reason. I respect God's testing of me, and I view it as a chance to gain additional knowledge. So, I take everything with a positive attitude." – Ram

"When I was a first-year degree student, the dean referred to the students as 'angels of the earth'. I remember this message to this day and believe that, to achieve this goal, I must work following the requirements of the department and pray for guidance." – Reina

In summary, the incorporation of religious understanding into self-care experiences empowers the spiritual facets of the participants, enabling them to fulfill their roles as religious devotees. The participants have demonstrated a remarkable ability to grasp the profound meaning of their experiences. They also exhibit a sense of spiritual mindfulness when contemplating the underlying wisdom behind their clients' tragic experiences. This reflection serves as a catalyst for participants to engage in introspection and contemplate the inherent meaning and purpose of their existence. Furthermore, empowering spiritual functioning is intertwined with other domains of functioning, underscoring the comprehensive nature of a person's overall functioning.

4.7 Conclusion

Chapter 4 presents the emerging findings from the thematic analysis of this descriptive phenomenological study, addressing three research questions: 1) How does religion play a role in guiding self-care experiences? 2) What are the self-care experiences of Malaysian crisis counselors? 3) How do crisis counselors perceive the impact of the interplay between self-care practices and religion on their personal and professional functioning?

The chapter begins by profiling the thirteen research participants based on their demographic backgrounds. Their experiences were thematically structured based on developmental experiences, resulting in three main themes, eleven subthemes, 32 meaning units, and 24 condensed meaning units. All findings are thoroughly described, including relevant descriptive statements from each participant.

The findings indicate that religion plays a pivotal role in helping crisis counselors construct positive meanings from their clients' negative experiences, fostering a positive professional identity. Religious justification provides solace, helping counselors regulate their emotions and find adaptive ways to navigate challenges while avoiding maladaptive thoughts and behaviors. Religion also guides them in directing their self-talk towards positivity, controlling their emotions, bracketing judgment when dealing with clients' emotions and traumatic reactions, and accepting their limitations in controlling or changing their clients' past. Constructive religious schemas and reliance on God or a Higher Power enhance the counselors' perception of their ability to help clients and perform their professional duties without neglecting their personal lives. The established positive meanings inspire crisis counselors to engage in meaningful self-care activities and practices. The overall findings are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.