

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Exploring the lived experience of a phenomenon requires researchers to structure the research process in a way that preserves the purity of the experience while also allowing for empirical reporting. Proper selection of research design, approach, sample, data collection methods, and methods for data analysis determines the rigors and trustworthiness of the findings; thereby thoroughly reporting all these processes is crucial. This chapter aims to report all the processes and procedures that have been undertaken in conducting this study.

This chapter commences with a discussion of the philosophical worldview and the research paradigm, providing an overview of the nature of this study. Understanding the philosophical worldview and the research paradigm guides in determining the methodological aspects of this research including the research design, method of participant selection, data collection procedures, data analysis processes, data rigors and trustworthiness, and ethical considerations, which are subsequently presented. Providing detailed reporting of all these aspects allows for future replication.

3.2 Research Philosophical: Constructivist Worldview

In research, there are three different approaches: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The choice of which approach to employ

depends on the researcher's assumptions regarding four philosophical aspects related to ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology (Grover, 2015). Ontology refers to the concern for the natural reality of the social phenomenon being investigated, while epistemology refers to how researchers acquire knowledge about that reality. Additionally, methodology describes how researchers will investigate the phenomenon, while axiology specifies the values and ethical considerations in the research process (Saunders, 2009). The researcher's assumptions about these four research philosophies determine the research design and the specific methods for data collection, analysis, and interpretation, leading to the selection of the most suitable approach that aligns with those assumptions.

After that, researchers need to decide which philosophical paradigm is appropriate to expand their research. Developing a clear epistemology is important before deciding on the research paradigm. Epistemology encompasses how researchers acquire knowledge about the reality of a phenomenon through their perception, beliefs, awareness, theories, and methodologies they intend to employ (Žukauskas et al., 2018). The researchers select a research paradigm that aligns with their chosen epistemological ideas. There are four main philosophical paradigms namely post-positivism, constructivism, transformative, and pragmatism (Creswell, 2014). The philosophical paradigm describes the researchers' perspective, thinking, theoretical orientation, and shared beliefs that contribute to the meaning construction in interpreting research data (Kiyunja & Kuyini, 2017). It guides researchers to decide on relevant theories, instruments, and methodology for their research.

In this research, I expected to gain an understanding of the experience of crisis counselors in practicing self-care from the context and perspective that genuinely come from the participants in my study. I believe every individual participant has their unique

meaning in describing their experience, leading to multiple dimensions of meaningful perspectives. I assume an interactive engagement with the participants during the data collection process and plan to report the essence of the experiences by interacting with them in their natural settings. Considering all these assumptions, I found the constructivist worldview is the most suitable research paradigm to be employed for my study.

The constructivist worldview is rooted in an interpretive paradigm. It helps the researcher gain an understanding of the subjective world of human experience from the context and perspective of the individuals being studied (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The constructivist worldview posits that every individual has their notion of reality. As a result, they construct varied and multiple subjective meanings of their lived experience (Creswell, 2014; Grover, 2015). These multiple realities can be explored and given meaning through the human interaction that occurs between the researcher and the research participant as well as among the research participants (Grover, 2015; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Therefore, during this process, the researcher must focus on the complexity of the views instead of narrowed meaning (Creswell, 2014).

In my study, I was interested in seeking an understanding of self-care practices among Malaysian counselors who engage in crisis work by highlighting the role of religion in the construction of meaning toward self-care experiences. I also wanted to know how the interplay between self-care practices and religion would contribute to the participant's personal and professional functioning. Thus, constructivist worldviews helped me to search for the realities of the self-care phenomenon from the lens of my participants. By employing the constructivist worldview, I considered the four basic assumptions that lie under this worldview as it was proposed by Kivunja & Kuyini (2017).

The first assumption is researcher must create meaning from the obtained data through a thinking and cognitive process based on the participants' perspective. In this study, I constructed the meaning and interpretation of the self-care phenomenon among counselors through my engagement with research participants in their natural settings. I conducted my introspection to understand the studied phenomenon from the participants' perspectives. I carefully listened to their experience and was aware of their reaction to fully understand how they gave meaning to the experience. I then rechecked my interpretation with the participants to confirm it reflected what they meant.

The second assumption is there are multiple realities to describe the studied phenomenon and that the realities are socially constructed. These multiple realities can be explored and given meaning through the human interaction between the researcher and the research participant as well as among the research participants. Thus, I carefully analyzed the collected research data based on reality from the perspective and constructive meaning of every research participant before any conclusive interpretation was made. I also applied a bracketing strategy to prevent my personal assumption from interfering with my understanding of the participants' meanings of realities. I also carefully connected the realities of every participant's experience to understand the whole phenomenon, without neglecting the participants' personal unique meaning.

The third assumption is that the researchers need to utilize interviews, discourse analysis, text messages, and reflective sessions to gather research data. Hence, during the data collection process, I engaged in interactive individual interviews with research participants. The interactive interview gives me a chance to ask them questions, listen to them properly, get their clarification, and record the data. It also gives a chance for the participants to share their experiences freely. I attended to their moment-to-moment expression and reactions during the interview session to collect meaningful data from

their sharing. I also distributed a reflective form to the participants to gain more information. The reflective form also helped the participants to reflect on their experience in participating in this study.

The final assumption is the outcome of the research that represents the values of the researcher in the effort to be balanced in reporting the findings. In reporting the research findings, there is a potential for bias due to inherent human limitations. Therefore, I need to make sure that every single procedure of this research is reported, and that certain research procedures are made to validate the findings. Again, I carefully applied the bracketing strategy to separate my beliefs and values from the participants' beliefs and values thereby I could gain an understanding of the experience purely from the participants' lens. I also adhered to ethical values and considerations in conducting this research by avoiding judgmental or biased questions and body reactions.

In sum, research philosophy is fundamental to examining the nature of the reality of the studied phenomenon, knowing the reality, getting to know the phenomenon, and considering certain ethical values in the process of knowing the phenomenon. It shed light on the basic practicality of qualitative research that guides me to plan my research properly. These four aspects also guided me in selecting the most suitable research design within the qualitative approach for the current study.

3.3 Research Design

Based on the research philosophical worldview that had been discussed earlier, the qualitative approach was found to be the best-fit approach in addressing the phenomenon of self-care practices that became the concern of this study. In general, the qualitative approach is conducted to explore and understand the meaning of certain

social and human problems from an individual's or a group of people's perspectives (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative design, researchers focus on the natural settings, interest in meaning, understanding, and perspectives, emphasize the process, and perform inductive analysis and grounded theory (Woods, 2006). This nature aligns with the philosophical worldview of the constructivist paradigm that was discussed previously. Regarding the qualitative approach, I focused on the natural setting of the counselors and their meaning, understanding, and perspectives on self-care practices to perform an inductive analysis.

There are five research designs under the umbrella of the qualitative research approach, namely narrative analysis, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The current study employed a phenomenological research design to address the experience of self-care practices. The phenomenological research approach focuses on the lived experience and the constructed meaning of that experience (Laverly, 2003; Finlay 2011). It requires the researcher to go directly to the natural setting of the research's subjects to portray the essence or basic structure of the experience (Merriam, 2009). Researchers are urged "*to go to the things themselves*", witness the experience, make sense of the experience, and ignore anything outside the experience to gain an in-depth understanding of the experience (Groenewald, 2004; Finlay, 2011; Christensen et al., 2017). Unlike case study which focuses on an in-depth analysis of specific instances, detailing the dynamic process and factors at play within the real-life context, phenomenology aims to capture and describe the essence of lived experiences from the participants' perspectives (Merriam, 2009).

In general, there are two types of phenomenological research namely descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology also known as hermeneutic

phenomenology. Descriptive phenomenology refers to a phenomenological approach that seeks to disclose the essence of a phenomenon or structure of experience without relying on external theories. Interpretive phenomenology refers to a phenomenological approach that evokes lived experience by using interpretation whereby the lenses of philosophy, theory, and reflection are used to thematize and refract the lived experience (Finlay, 2011). For this study, I adopted the descriptive phenomenological approach as I wanted to disclose the essence of self-care practices experience among crisis counselors and how their transcendental beliefs in religion guide them in giving meaning to their experience.

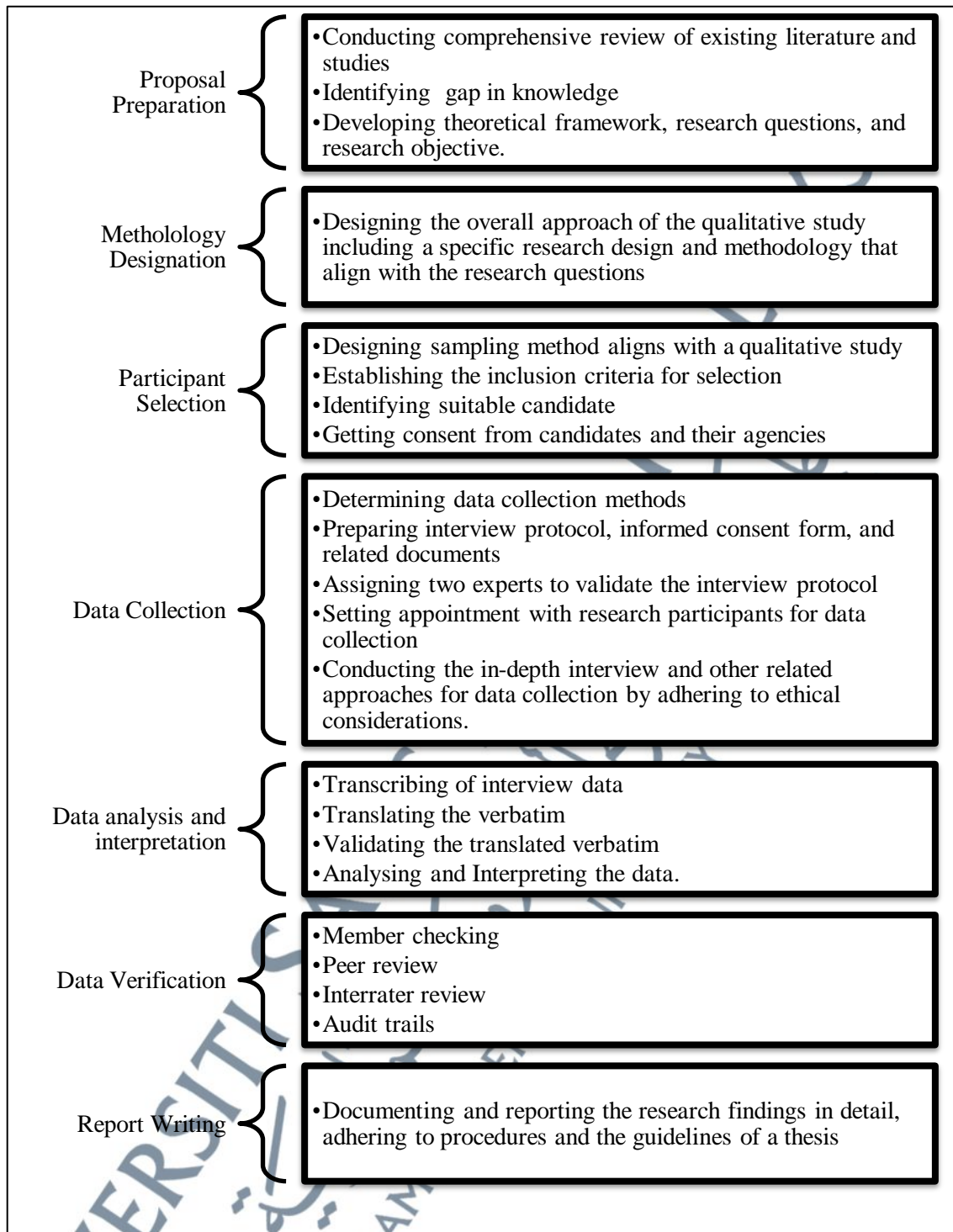
3.3.1 Descriptive Phenomenological Research Design

Descriptive phenomenology holds the basic concept of phenomenological study. It believes that human issues should not be studied as if a living being is reacting automatically to external stimuli instead of responding to them based on their perception of what these stimuli mean to them (Lavery, 2003). Therefore, researchers need to set aside their personal knowledge by applying bracketing to capture the essential pure lived experience of the targeted subjects (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Hence, I need to adhere to the bracketing concept that becomes a concern in descriptive phenomenology.

The bracketing or “epoché” concept requires researchers to suspend their preconceived knowledge regarding the participants’ experience of a phenomenon (Caple, 2018). The knowledge that emerges from outside the consciousness must be put aside to avoid individual biases and achieve a pure description of the phenomenon (Lavery, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Giorgi et al., 2017). This includes the personal knowledge, ideas, and interpretation of the researcher as well as the application of

theory and literature review in explaining the object of study (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Therefore, I need to put aside my knowledge and experience in the field and avoid making any personal interpretations of the participants' experiences. This is important to ensure the integrity and authenticity of the findings in portraying the essential lived experience of the targeted participants (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Determination of the research design guides me to resolve the research problem through the integration of research components such as collection, measurement, analysis, and interpretation of research data and reporting the findings logically and efficiently (Grover, 2015). In this study, I was guided by a research process based on the constructive view of qualitative research through the lenses of descriptive phenomenology. Therefore, I adhered to the basic process of qualitative and the specific procedures of descriptive phenomenological research as shown in Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1.



Source: Tongco (2007), Merriam (2009), Chen & Boore (2010), Creswell & Creswell (2018), McMullin (2021)

Figure 3.1: The Qualitative Research Process

Figure 3.1 indicates the process of qualitative research I conducted. There are seven main phases, each with a specific methodology for conducting the process. The phases include proposal preparation, methodology designation, participant selection, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, data verification, and report writing. The first and second phases were completed and thoroughly discussed in Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and the initial part of this chapter. The subsequent phases are described throughout this chapter. In addition to adhering to the basic process of qualitative research, I also followed the specific procedures in phenomenological research design for this study. Therefore, the research process specifically the determination of sample size, data collection process, data analysis and interpretation, and writing of finding report are conducted based on the guidelines in phenomenological research. The following Table 3.1 explains the elements of descriptive phenomenology that I adopted in this study.

Table 3.1: Adoption of Descriptive Phenomenological Procedures in Research Process

Process	Descriptive Phenomenological Procedures
Determination of Sample Size	Three participants were selected to represent a religion, with the expectation that they would provide deep insights into the studied phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009, Finlay, 2011). Initially, 12 participants were selected. One additional participant was then included to determine if any new information could be obtained despite the current data saturation.
Data Collection	Knowledge, experience, theoretical orientation, and existing understanding were set aside when conducting interview sessions with research participants, implying the bracketing attitude was imposed (Lopez & Willis, 2004)
Data Analysis and Interpretation	Five steps of data analysis and interpretation based on descriptive phenomenology were implemented (Giorgi et al., 2017). Detailed explanations were explained under the data analysis and interpretation sub-heading.

Writing of Finding Report	<p>Bracketing was employed in selecting themes, subthemes, and meaning units to ensure they did not imply terms from existing literature or theories.</p> <p>Additionally, bracketing was used to avoid any judgment, interpretation, or conclusions beyond the described experiences (Giorgi, et al. 2017)</p>
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Table 3.1 represents the procedures of descriptive phenomenology that were embedded in the qualitative research processes I conducted. The table outlines the key decisions made at each stage of the research, from sample size determination to the writing of the findings report. Further elaboration of these processes and procedures was provided in the following sub-headings to enhance clarity.

3.4 Participant Selection

This section outlines the process and the procedures undertaken for the sample selection, including the design of the sampling method, establishment of inclusion criteria for participant selection, identification of suitable candidates, and obtaining consent from potential candidates and their agencies. Throughout these processes and procedures, I adhered to the guidelines outlined in the qualitative design and the phenomenological approach.

3.4.1 Sampling Design

This study aims to understand the self-care experience of Malaysian counselors in crisis work. Therefore, the participation of Malaysian counselors from both Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia is required to collect the data. Currently, there are about 11,645 registered counselors in Malaysia based on the database on the website

of the Malaysian Board of Counselors. I was informed that the registered counselors are not necessarily undertaking professional counselors as their profession. Thus, I had to be very selective in deciding who would become my research participants. I was aware that it is important to ensure the selected participants can represent a subset of the population (Showkat & Parveen, 2017).

I also realized that randomization was not possible to ensure the selection of counselors with daily crisis work experience due to uncertainty about their current profession and work settings. In this situation, I employed non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is employed when the probability sampling mechanism of randomization cannot be utilized (Vehovar et al., 2016). There are at least six types of non-probability sampling, including quota sampling, accidental sampling, purposive sampling, expert sampling, snowball sampling, and modal instance sampling (Etikan & Bala, 2017). For this research, I chose purposive sampling. This type of sampling allows for setting up specific criteria that narrow down the population, thereby leading me to the exact targeted sample.

3.4.2 Establishment of Inclusion Criteria

In purposive sampling, the research participants are selected based on their understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The researcher selects individuals from the population based on their ability, according to the researcher's judgment, to provide rich information that aligns with the research objective and ensures data saturation (Palinkas et al., 2013; Vehovar et al., 2016; Etikan & Bala, 2017). In descriptive phenomenology, there are no specific criteria for selecting research participants as far as the participants have

experienced the phenomenon of the study, are willing to participate in a lengthy individual in-depth interview or follow-up interview, permit the researchers to record the interview and publish the research data (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher may establish additional criteria or conditions to select desirable and suitable participants to achieve the research objectives (Tongco, 2007).

In the current study, I expected to explore the experience of self-care practices among Malaysian counselors who are daily involved in crisis work. I also wanted to explore how their religion guides their experiences. Therefore, I narrowed down the target population by establishing inclusion criteria based on my judgment that the selected counselors would contribute to enriching my data and achieving data saturation while still maintaining a diverse range of characteristics. Thus, I established five inclusion criteria: 1) participants must be public service officers working as Psychology Officers, 2) they must be registered counselors under the Malaysian Board of Counselors, 3) they have working experience in public health care agencies or public social welfare agencies or police department or prison department, 4) they have at least three years of concurrent working experience in crisis work at selected settings, and 5) they are among Muslims or Christians or Hindus or Buddhists.

These criteria were established based on clear and rational justification, which were previously provided in Chapter 1 under the section on the scope of the study. Here, I will restate my justification. I chose public service officers currently working as Psychology Officers because I am confident that they serve as full-time counselors based on their job scopes as outlined in Service Circular No. 18 of 2005 and EZskim of the Public Service Department. However, I also was informed that not all public service officers are registered counselors. Therefore, I had to set the criteria to have only registered counselors. I also set the criteria of specific work settings because based on

national disaster management, Psychology Officers from public health care agencies, public social welfare agencies, and police departments are directly involved in providing crisis intervention during a national disaster. Besides that, they are also involved in crisis work daily.

Based on EZSkim of the Public Service Department (2023), Psychology Officers in healthcare facilities primarily provide crisis intervention to patients with mental health issues. In police departments, they assist crime victims and their families, including child suspects, in giving statements by offering crisis intervention. Additionally, Psychology Officers in welfare departments are responsible for delivering crisis intervention to eight vulnerable communities facing various social issues. Meanwhile, Psychology Officers from the prison departments are required to provide crisis intervention for prisoners who undergo a lot of personal crisis issues throughout their imprisonment (EZskim Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam, 2023).

In addition, I considered three years of concurrent experience in crisis work in particular settings based on the common policy in Malaysian public service to count three years of concurrent performance experience for job confirmation, job promotion, higher education scholarship, selection for advanced training, and exit policy job performance supervision. I also set the religious background to discover how their religion guides their self-care experiences. I only consider Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism because based on the 2010 consensus that specified the Malaysian population based on religion, these four religions are found to be the main religion among Malaysians. I believe the same pattern did not change much until recently. It was also found that counselors in the related work settings belong to the above-mentioned religions. None of them belong to other religions. Therefore, based

on these justifications, these inclusion criteria were used to guide my search for suitable candidates to participate in my study.

3.4.3 Identification of Suitable Candidates

The next step in sample selection is to identify suitable candidates. Initially, I wondered how many candidates I should choose to achieve data saturation. I then referred to the literature on sample size in phenomenological studies. However, there is no unanimous agreement on determining the sample size in phenomenological studies. In common practices, phenomenological researchers recruited very small samples due to the long period of the analytic process (Langdrige, 2007). Finlay (2011) states the involvement of at least three participants is enough to bring sufficient variation with typical essence to distinguish individual experience from the general experience of the phenomenon. Creswell and Poth (2016) suggest researchers recruit from 5 to 25 individuals as the research participants.

However, Smith et al. (2009) state there is no right figure to answer the question related to sample size in phenomenology. They claim it depends on the following factors: the degree of the researcher's commitment to analyze the data and report the case study, the richness of the individual's cases, and organizational constraints. Therefore, they suggest a reasonable sample size is between three to six participants. They also posit that three participants are sufficient for undergraduate and master-level students. Nonetheless, they do not specify the number of participants for the Ph.D. level. Instead, they state that conducting between four to ten interviews is sufficient.

I revisited my research questions and objectives to determine the appropriate number of participants. I was then aware that counselors who were involved in crisis

work would share a common self-care practice with a variety of meaningful experiences. However, the inclusion of religion in my study contributes to a more distinct meaningful experience that might vary counselors from one certain group of religion to another. Therefore, I decided to consider having an equally balanced number of participants based on their religious backgrounds. I considered Finlay's (2011) suggestion that in a phenomenological study, three participants can provide sufficient in-depth information. Therefore, I aimed to include at least three participants from each religion.

I started my search by sending a formal email to the Department of Psychology Management under the Public Service Department to get their help. I requested to get the list of Psychology Officers who are currently working in the work settings I chose for this study. I also explained the objectives of my study and the inclusion criteria I established for participant selection. However, the officer could only provide a list of Psychology Officers in the related setting with information about their appointment dates without clarification of their status as registered counselors. I randomly shortlisted twenty-five names and cross-checked the names on the website of the Malaysian Board of Counselors to confirm they were registered counselors.

Subsequently, twenty shortlisted candidates were contacted to obtain their consent. At first, seventeen candidates agreed to participate in this study. Nonetheless, four candidates chose to withdraw as they could not give their commitment due to certain reasons. Finally, I managed to get thirteen participants who gave their commitment to this research. I ensured at least three research participants represented each religion. The summary of the research participants from related agencies and religions is shown in the following table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Research Participants based on Agencies and Religion

Agencies	Islam	Christianity	Hinduism	Buddhism
MoH	1			
SWD	1	3	1	1
RMP	1		2	2
MPD	1			
Total	4	3	3	3
Grand Total	13			

3.5 Data Collection

The next phase involves data collection. In qualitative research, there are various methods for data collection such as observation, interview, document analysis, and visual material analysis (Creswell, 2014). For this study, I have decided to use two types of data collection: in-depth semi-structured interviews and document analysis of the participants' reflective forms. The use of a variety of data collection approaches is useful to achieve data validation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It allows data triangulation to be made, providing consistent findings to answer research questions (Yin, 2009).

However, I am aware that in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary research instrument in the data collection process. Therefore, I am responsible for deciding the way the interview session will be conducted. This concern and other related procedures of data collection are presented in the following subsections. I also kept updating my reflective journal to evaluate my biases and the whole research process I have conducted.

3.5.1 Researchers' Positionality

In qualitative research, the researcher's role is integrated into the research process and therefore researcher is regarded as the primary instrument that plays an important role in data collection and analysis (Moore, 2008; Merriam, 2009). In this role, the researcher closely engages with the research participants, exploring their narrative and lived experience of the central phenomenon of the study (Moore, 2008). The researcher is the one who plans and conducts the interview sessions and collects research data that explains the central phenomenon of the study from research participants (Mohd. Zaliridzal, 2018).

The researcher determines the relevance of the data, chooses the suitable approach to data collection, and decides how the data are used and interpreted (Moore, 2008). These arguments highlight the complex role of the researcher in the research process. It requires the researcher to have a deep understanding of the underlying ontological and epistemological position of the research (Xu & Storr, 2012). In the current study, where human experiences are the focus, humans are deemed the most suitable instrument for describing the central phenomenon, gaining in-depth understanding, and constructing meanings from the lived experience.

Therefore, as the instrument of my research, I played a role in analyzing the issue related to the phenomenon, proposing the idea of the research, identifying the location of the study, selecting the appropriate research participants, determining the data collection procedures, planning, and conducting an in-depth interview with proper attending skills, analyzing, and interpreting the data and finally writing the report of my findings. As the sole instrument, I am aware that the credibility of my research findings depends on my research skills, as noted by Stewart (2010).

Biases that are inherent in human instruments can impact my study. Therefore, Merriam (2009) emphasizes the effort of identifying and monitoring the biases instead of trying to eliminate them. The bracketing procedure, which is a crucial practice in the descriptive phenomenology approach and other research procedures, was utilized to mitigate this limitation. The first level of bracketing was the imposition of *epoché* or phenomenological attitude, which refers to refraining from explanations, scientific concepts, knowledge, beliefs, and values about the self-care phenomenon (Dörfler & Stierand, 2021). I set aside my professional experience as a Psychology Officer and a registered counselor. I also set aside the knowledge and skills related to crisis intervention that I gained through my training at a prison department, my previous posting in a police department, and my literature reading.

I also imposed the second level of bracketing, which is phenomenological psychological reduction. This required me to suspend my belief in the existence of what presents itself in the life-world (Dörfler & Stierand, 2021). As a Muslim, I bracketed my comprehension of my religion to ensure it would not interfere with my understanding of the research participants' experiences or unconsciously lead them to answer my questions the way I expected. I was also mindful of my expectations during the interview process and in conducting analysis and interpretation to avoid misunderstandings and incorrect judgments based on my preconceived beliefs as I delved deeper into comprehending the participants' experiences.

By embracing these bracketing attitudes, the study maintains fidelity to the descriptive phenomenological method, thereby improving the rigor and trustworthiness of the research findings. This approach allowed for a more authentic representation of the participants' lived experiences, free from the influence of my own preconceptions and biases. Consequently, the findings provide valuable insights into the self-care

practices of crisis counselors and the role of religion in guiding the experience, grounded in genuine experiences.

3.5.2 The In-Depth Semi-Structured Interview

As mentioned earlier, the in-depth semi-structured interview serves as one of the sources for data collection in this study. According to Merriam (2009), interviews are valuable when researchers are unable to directly observe behavior, feelings, or people's interpretation of the world around them, including past experiences that cannot be replicated. In the context of this study, the experience in self-care practices among counselors is closely linked to their past experiences in handling crisis work during catastrophic incidents, which cannot be replicated. Therefore, interviews are considered the most suitable method for gaining information, perspective, and meaning from lived experiences. Two key elements were considered before conducting the in-depth semi-structured interview: preparing the interview protocol and setting up the interview.

Before the interview session was arranged, I prepared a collection of interview protocol questions that aligned with my research objective and research question. These questions were used to guide me during the interview session. With little guidance from these questions, the interview session was regarded as a semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview is a common approach in phenomenological research (Langdrige, 2007). In a semi-structured interview, the list of questions is used to guide the session, but the wording and the sequence of the questions are more flexible (Merriam, 2009). This allows me to give a natural response to the conversation that occurs with research participants during the interview session.

The development of the interview protocol involved several processes. First, I prepared the interview protocol based on the research questions and objectives I had established. The protocol was divided into three phases: the opening question, the main question based on the research questions and objectives, and the closing question. Each question consisted of both interview questions and probing questions. I then submitted the interview protocol to my supervisor for review.

Two additional lecturers, who are experts in qualitative research from my faculty, were appointed to validate the protocol. I considered the comments and recommendations provided by my supervisor and the other two experts to improve the interview protocol. In total, there are ten interview questions and forty probing questions. The interview questions serve as the primary means of obtaining general ideas about the participants' experiences, while the probing questions are used to gather more in-depth descriptions.

Besides that, I also prepared the informed consent form and other related forms such as the profile form, transcript verification form, and reflective form. The reflective form that I created serves two purposes. First, it was used to confirm the data I obtained from the interview. Second, it serves as a precautionary step to ensure the participants are not psychologically affected by the interview session as they were required to revisit the experience of handling traumatic clients. All these forms including the interview protocol were prepared in both English and Malay language.

I then conducted a preliminary study using the interview protocol, which involved only four participants. Conducting a preliminary study helped me refine my research questions, develop appropriate methodologies, and enhance the overall feasibility of my study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). After the first interview with the first participant, I realized that the participant interpreted my interview questions differently. I also

encountered challenges when participants had difficulty recalling their self-care practice experiences, particularly routine practices they were not consciously aware of as part of their self-care.

This experience taught me to challenge my rigid understanding and adjust my expectations toward the participants. As a result, I made revisions and restructured my interview protocol before proceeding with the next interview, allowing participants more freedom to recall their experiences of crisis intervention with traumatized clients, including the moment-to-moment interactions, their reactions, thoughts, emotions, and the meaning they attributed to these experiences. The restructured interview protocol included eight interview questions, including opening, and closing questions, along with thirty-two probing questions. This revised set of interview protocols, as presented in Appendix B: Interview Protocol was then utilized for subsequent interview sessions. Table 3.2 summarizes the development progress of interview questions in the interview protocol.

Table 3.3: Summary of Interview Protocol Questions

Process	Phases	Interview Question	Probing Question	TOTAL
Early development	Opening Question	1	1	32
	Main Question	9	19	
	Closing Question	1	1	
After validation process	Opening Question	1	1	50
	Main Question	8	38	
	Closing Question	1	1	
After preliminary study	Opening Question	1		40
	Main question	6	30	
	Closing question	1	2	

Before the interview session took place, I submitted a formal letter to the organization where the research participants are currently working to obtain permission and consent for their participation in this research. In the public service sector, public service officers are prohibited from making public statements regarding government policies, programs, or decisions on any issues, or providing information or explanations regarding incidents or reports related to their department without obtaining permission from their department head Public Officers (Conduct and Discipline) Regulations, 1993). Therefore, it is crucial to secure consent from the heads of the selected departments before arranging any interview sessions with the participants.

After receiving permission, I arranged the interview sessions by contacting each research participant via phone call to set up the date and meeting point. An informed consent form and interview protocol were sent a few days before the sessions took place. The interview sessions were conducted in both face-to-face mode and video interviews, depending on the participants' locations and the restrictions of the Movement Control Order (MCO). Due to the Movement Control Order imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, I was able to conduct face-to-face interview sessions with only seven research participants. The remaining five participants were interviewed online for health and safety reasons.

Each session involved one participant at a time, lasting from one and a half to three hours. The length of the interview provided enough time for participants to share their experiences in depth, making one session sufficient for each participant. However, for the first participant, I conducted a second interview using revised protocols based on insights gained from the initial interview. Detailed information about the interview dates and modes was presented in Appendix F: Audit Trail.

3.5.3 Data Collection Procedures

This section explains the data collection procedures in detail. It encompasses the process of recording, language, pre-interview procedures, procedures during interviews, and post-interview procedures. These detailed protocols ensured that the data collection was systematic and consistent across all participants. Clear guidelines for each stage of the process helped maintain a structured and professional approach, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences.

Audio and video recording devices were utilized to record both face-to-face and online sessions with the participants' permission. All the interview sessions were conducted in the national language, Malay, which provided an open space for participants to describe their experiences in their mother tongue and use precise words from their native language. Some participants preferred to describe their experiences in English, and I accommodated their language preferences.

Before starting the interview, for both modes of interview, I briefly explained the contents of the informed consent form to the participants right before the interviews started. I informed them of their right to avoid answering any questions or to withdraw from the session at any time. I also assured them that their identity would be kept confidential. A copy of the informed consent form was presented in Appendix A: Sample of Informed Consent Form. During the interview sessions, I used appropriate attending skills to obtain rich information from my research participants.

First, I built rapport with the participants to create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere, allowing them to enjoy the sessions. According to Moustakas (1994), a phenomenological interview typically starts with social conversation or a simple activity to establish a relaxed and trusting atmosphere, enabling the research participants to provide honest and comprehensive responses. Afterward, I asked the

participants to focus on specific moments and aspects of the experience they were aware of, and then describe the overall experience.

This technique is known as funneling, a process of questioning that commences with a general question before narrowing it down to a more specific question (Minichiello et al., 2008). It helps the participants to relate the experience to their self-care practices which they cannot easily describe when they are being asked directly. I also observed their body gestures and facial expressions to gain a better understanding of their lived experiences. I responded reflectively and empathetically to deepen my understanding of their experiences.

This approach allowed for a better understanding of the participants' experiences from their perspective and facilitated deeper exploration, resulting in the collection of rich data. After the interviews had ended, I provided the participants with a reflective form to provide feedback on the overall interview sessions, consisting of seven open-ended questions. This form served two purposes: first, it provides supplementary data to deepen my understanding of the experiences that were unshared during the interview session, enhancing the robustness of the study; second, it helped identify any potential adverse effects on participants who recalled their clients' traumatic experiences during the interview. A copy of the reflective form was presented in Appendix C: Sample of Reflective Form.

In the event of such effects, appropriate interventions could be arranged. It is worth noting that throughout the study, no participants were found to have experienced any adverse psychological effects. All participants appreciated and felt honored to be included in this research. They reflected that they gained valuable meaningful experience through their participation.

3.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The next phase involves data analysis and interpretation. In this phase, several procedures and processes should be considered, including transcribing, translating, analyzing, and interpreting the data. Data from both interview and reflective forms are used in these processes. The subsequent subsections provide an explanation of these procedures and processes in detail.

3.6.1 Transcription of Interview Data

Transcription is part of qualitative research steps in data analysis used to comprehend and unpack the complexity and meanings of a phenomenon. It involves judgment regarding the level of detail, data interpretation, and data representation (Bailey, 2008; Widodo, 2014). However, transcription receives less attention in the empirical research literature and is rarely reported as part of data collection and analysis procedures (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). The lack of attention is due to the perception that transcription is merely a process of transforming the audio into a written text, which raises concerns about the trustworthiness of the data (Tilley & Powick, 2000). Transcription can be represented either verbatim, also known as integral transcription, or selective transcription (Azevedo et al., 2017). These two types indicate two transcription styles: naturalized transcription and denaturalized transcription (Bucholtz, 2000).

Naturalized transcription provides a thorough transcription of what is said and how it is said, advocating for the preservation of the distinct elements of the interview beyond the verbal content. These elements include utterances and non-verbal language.

In addition, a transcription that employs the naturalized approach may include

grammatical errors to preserve natural sound, thereby going beyond the accuracy of a standard language (Widodo, 2014).

On the other hand, denaturalized transcription prioritizes the meaning and perceptions in the verbal content of the interview, removing the idiosyncratic elements of speech as such stutters, pauses, non-verbal signals, mistakes, repetitions, and grammatical errors. This allows the transcriber to represent what is deemed closest to what the interviewees intended to portray themselves (Widodo, 2014; Azevedo et al., 2017; McMullin, 2021). The decision to choose naturalized or denaturalized transcription depends on the transcriber's subjectivity in determining how much contextual information should be included based on the research question and approach (McMullin, 2021).

McMullin (2021) further argues that it is most appropriate to employ naturalized intelligent verbatim to increase the readability of the quotes and reduce excessive repetitions or verbal fillers, while still being aware of the importance of including nonverbal cues that convey important meaning. In this study, I employed naturalized intelligent verbatim transcription, prioritizing the contextual meaning and perception of my research participants and paying less attention to the repetitive words and other involuntary voices such as coughing and pauses, unless they were deemed important for describing the context of the experience.

The process of transcription is usually time-consuming, taking between three to eight hours. However, advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies offer a cheaper and faster alternative to transcription (McMullin, 2021). In my transcription, I utilized AI voice recognition software, specifically Voicy Bot in Telegram and the Transkriptor application. I chose to do the transcription myself to avoid misinterpretation by a secondary transcriber. Nevertheless, AI voice recognition

software has limitations in processing punctuation, deciding which words to include or exclude, and denoting nonverbal cues. Therefore, I must carefully check its accuracy, fill in the missing details, correct spelling errors, and edit the context for readability.

I began the transcription process by listening to the audio recording. Next, I designed a transcription format to organize the content. Then, I uploaded the audio recording into voice recognition software to convert it into textual form. I transferred the text into the previously designed transcription format. During this step, I carefully distinguished quotes from myself and quotes from my participants. I also played the audio again to verify the accuracy of the transcription, ensure proper punctuation, correct spelling errors, remove unnecessary repetitions and voice fillers, fill in any missing words, and include nonverbal cues that I deemed necessary to convey the meaning of the experience. Finally, I reviewed the complete version of the transcription once again to ensure its readability. A sample of the transcripts can be viewed in Appendix D: Example of Interview Transcript.

3.6.2 Translation of the Verbatim

As mentioned earlier, the interview sessions were conducted in Malay. Therefore, for the written English report, I needed to translate my transcriptions. To ensure a scientifically and linguistically appropriate translation of the verbatim transcriptions and participants' reflective forms, I consulted relevant literature. I came across two variations of translating them.

The first approach suggests that researchers should have a translator perform the translation after all the data has been collected. Subsequently, a second translator will review the translation to ensure the accuracy of the meaning from the source language

in the translated language (Santos et al., 2015). This approach was also employed by Yanay-Ventura et al. (2020) when examining the motivations of young Arabs. They conducted the interviews in Arabic and immediately transcribed and translated them into Hebrew after the interview sessions.

The second approach suggests that the interview sessions be transcribed verbatim in the original language. Researchers then conduct qualitative data analysis to derive concepts, categories, and core categories from the data. Subsequently, researchers only translate the concepts and categories that emerged into the target language (Chen & Boore, 2010). The outcomes of the translation are subsequently compared and deliberated upon by two separate bilingual translators until a consensus is reached. The translated material is then translated back into the source language by a third bilingual translator (Santos et al., 2015).

In this study, I employed the second approach. However, instead of appointing two bilingual translators, I used two AI translation software, specifically Google Translation and Microsoft Translation, to translate the participants' quotes. I compared both translations and selected the one that most accurately portrayed the intended meaning of the participants. After that, I carefully amended the translation and used the same applications to back-translate it. To ensure the accuracy of my translation, I referred both the translation and back-translation to a bilingual translator.

3.6.3 Analysis and Interpretation

As far as qualitative research is concerned, I employed thematic analysis to analyze the gathered data. The thematic analysis was conducted with the aid of a software application specifically ATLAS.ti. Additionally, during the analysis, I also

adhered to the data analysis procedures based on a descriptive phenomenological research design. The terminology used in describing the process and procedures might be slightly different from commonly used in thematic analysis based on basic qualitative research. However, they are referring to the same process.

Langdrige (2007) identifies four stages to analyze the data in descriptive phenomenology: reading for overall meaning, identifying meaning units, assessing, and synthesizing the psychological significance of meaning units, and presenting structural description. In later advancement, Giorgi et al. (2017) introduced a five-step process: reading the entire transcription, assuming the attitude of scientific phenomenological reduction, breaking the description into parts by delineating psychological meaning units, transforming the participant's lifeworld expression into an expression that highlights the psychological meanings and generalizing the structure of the experience. The procedures in later advancement were applied in this study.

Step 1: Read through the transcription thoroughly. The first step in data analysis is to read through the transcription of the participants' descriptions from the beginning to the end. The transcription must be read individually for all participants. Approaching the reading process with a natural and unbiased attitude is sufficient. According to Giorgi et al. (2017), researchers need to understand how the described lived experience concludes to ensure proper analysis later. Therefore, I initially read through the transcription with a natural attitude to gain a general understanding of the participants' experiences.

Step 2: Assume an attitude of scientific phenomenological reduction. While the first step requires researchers to have a natural attitude while reading the description text, in the second stage, they are reminded to adopt a phenomenological psychological reduction attitude. This attitude is crucial for identifying experiences that relate to the

phenomena for psychological investigation and distinguishing them from objects that merely represent the consciousness of the experiencer (Langdrige, 2007; Giorgi et al., 2017). The assumption of this attitude is important to establish a phenomenological psychological perspective.

Langdrige (2007) emphasizes the need for careful execution of this process, conducting it within the context of epoché, where bracketing is imposed. For this step, I read the transcription again with a sense of discovery and engaged in a phenomenological reduction attitude, embracing the bracketing principle to describe what appears to be consciousness. I set aside my knowledge, theoretical orientation, personal experiences, values, attitudes, feelings, and thoughts when describing the participants' experiences. This was done to ensure the avoidance of any temptation to impose personal meaning. Throughout the analytical process, I cross-checked the meaning of the text with the text itself, ensuring that any misinterpretation was avoided.

Step 3: Break the description into parts. The next step involves breaking down the lengthy description into smaller parts to facilitate the analysis process. Each part is called a meaning unit. It is determined by a thorough re-reading process of the transcription (Giorgi et al., 2017). It is important to understand the meaning units within their context rather than independently. In this regard, the meaning units are considered as constituent (meaning is understood in the context) rather than elements (meaning is understood independently of the context).

This differentiation is essential in later analysis thereby the researcher will bear in mind that the discrete meaning-units arise meaning only through the context in which they occur as a sentence which later comprises in paragraph and finally in the text that provides vital information to understand the meaning (Langdrige, 2007). At this stage, I extracted any significant statements including words, phrases, or quotes that describe

the experience of self-care practices. I then defined the statement based on the corresponding meaning units or codes, reflecting the ideas, and intended meaning conveyed by the participants. Therefore, I thoroughly re-read the transcription to gain an understanding of the experiences before categorizing them into meaningful units or codes.

Step 4: Transform meaning into a psychologically sensitive approach. Once the meaning units are determined, the researcher should interpret the meaning in a psychologically sensitive manner. This process aims to express the psychological meaning of the participant's experience (Giorgi et al., 2017). Meaning units that lack psychological significance are excluded. To differentiate psychologically meaningful units from those lacking psychological meaning, the researcher should engage in multiple readings of the meaning units and utilize imaginative variation to reflect on their meaning (Langdrige, 2007).

Additionally, researchers need to stay grounded in the data and the meaning that emerges from the context. They should avoid becoming overly abstract in describing the psychological meaning or incorporating theoretical perspectives into the interpretation. To accomplish this step, I revisited the meaning units or codes that I had previously identified. I employed imaginative variation, drawing on my experiences while interacting with the participants, to psychologically define the meaning of the units. I recalled the participants' bodily gestures and movements when they shared information, imagining their experiences to understand their personal significance. Subsequently, I constructed meaningful themes and subthemes to categorize the meaning units.

Step 5: Generalize the structure of the experience. The final step involves deriving the general structure of the experience by reviewing the written transformation

of meaning. Researchers are required to synthesize the psychological meaning units by identifying the key elements of the lived experience as described by each participant. This synthesis results in a general structural description that represents the essence of the central phenomenon (Giorgi et al., 2017).

The essence of the phenomenon serves as the foundation for further discussion, incorporating relevant references from existing literature and appropriate individual structural descriptions (Langdrige, 2007). During this stage, I synthesized the psychological meaning units, themes, and subthemes that depicted common key elements of the participants' lived experiences with self-care practices in relation to religion. This process led to data saturation in terms of the general structure of the participants' experiences. Figure 3.2 provides a summary of the entire data analysis and interpretation process for this study, based on the descriptive phenomenological approach.

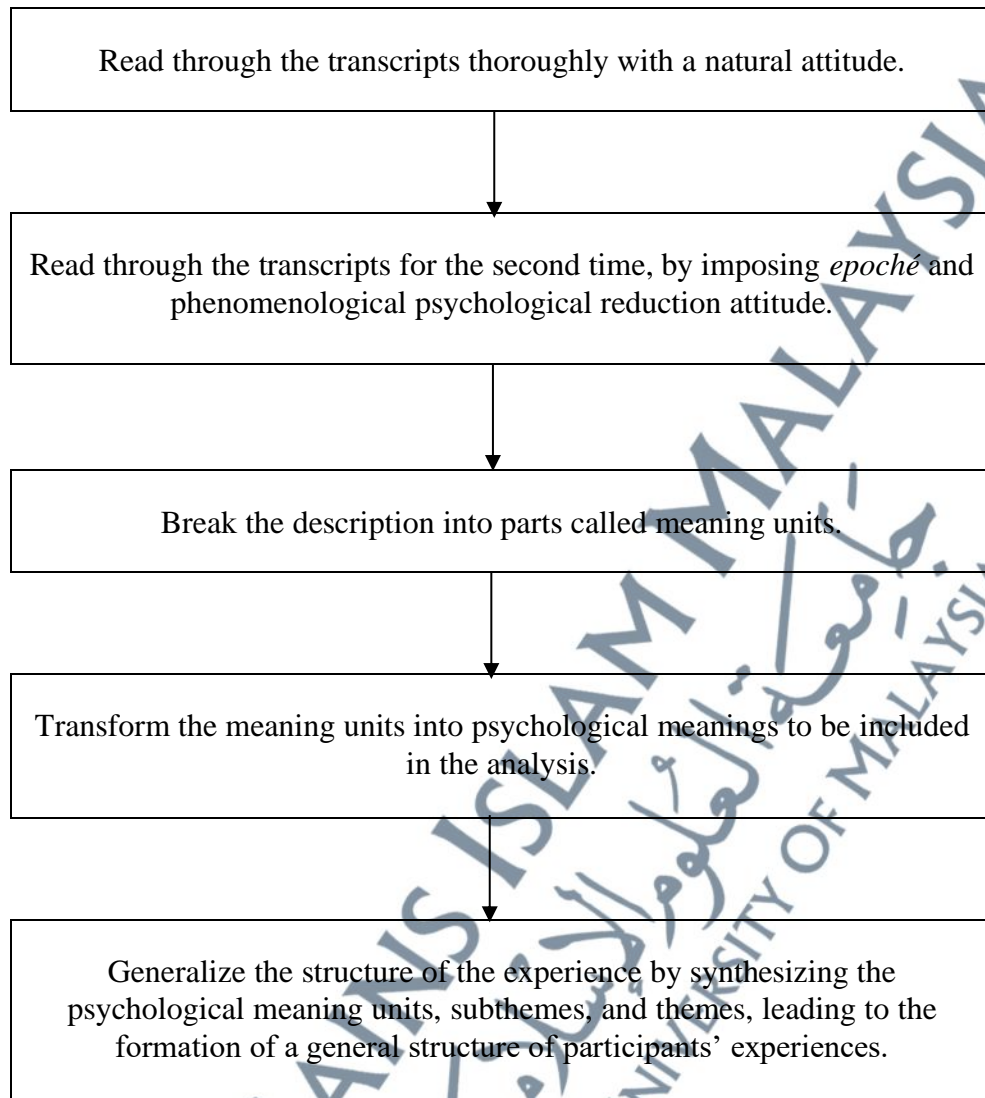


Figure 3.2: Data Analysis and Interpretation Process in Descriptive Phenomenological Study

Source: Giorgi et al., 2017

3.6.4 Data Saturation

Data saturation is achieved when certain conditions are met, including having enough information to replicate the study, no additional new information found, and further coding no longer being possible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). In thematic analysis, data saturation is commonly related to sample size, suggesting that a large and varied sample is necessary to reach data saturation (Malterud et al., 2016). However, the

determination of data saturation cannot be perceived as simple as that because the meaning of themes emerged from both the data and interpretive process of the researcher, and themes are interrelated. Likewise, the codes are also not derived in isolation (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Therefore, potential new themes could emerge after the researchers further examine and familiarize themselves with the data (Mason, 2010).

The discussion of the determination of data saturation becomes a controversial issue, leading to a more practical solution to confirm data saturation and justify that no more data collection is necessary. Malterud et al. (2016) propose the concept of information power to determine data saturation, suggesting lower sample size is needed when the existing sample holds the larger information power. To achieve information power, they provide five suggestions to consider. Firstly, a narrow study aim is preferable to a broad one. Secondly, participants with highly specific characteristics that align with the study aim should be selected, rather than those with sparse specificity. Thirdly, it is crucial to establish clear and focused dialogue during the interview session. Fourthly, specific theories should be used instead of limited theoretical perspectives. Finally, conducting an in-depth analysis of narratives is more valuable than a cross-case analysis.

Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2019) provide a set of guidelines to determine when data saturation has been achieved. These criteria include: 1) using a realist ontology as the foundation for data collection, 2) following the standard approach for data collection, 3) asking interview questions that address surface-level issues, 4) obtaining relatively concrete data, 5) recruiting homogeneous participants from a specific setting, and 6) using codes to represent broad topics with obvious meanings.

Considering I have taken the appropriate approach in sample selection and data analysis, I confirmed my data reached saturation level during the interview with the twelfth

participant, as she repeated much of the data obtained from other participants. For instance, the participant mentioned that she views clients and herself as separate individuals, establishing a psychological boundary like a previously coded theme.

However, I considered conducting the final interview session with the thirteenth participant to observe any other distinct patterns of findings. I selected a Muslim participant from a police department setting for several reasons. First, she was the only person who remained committed to the study after the other four participants chose to withdraw. Second, I anticipated that she might offer insight into Islamic perspectives on the crisis and religious practices that were not discussed by the other two Muslim participants. Third, I expected that she might provide distinct perspectives on her interactions with criminal suspect clients, and I think that these interactions resemble the nature of counseling in a prison setting. Lastly, she could potentially provide valuable information about the practice of self-care. It is worth noting that her previous experience as a nurse adds another layer to her perspective. This background leads me to believe that she could offer valuable insights into interacting with patients, a situation that parallels the work counselors do in healthcare settings.

However, after the interview, I found that she provided similar perspectives on the crisis and Islamic practices to the other Muslim participants, a standard approach in dealing with criminal suspect clients, and common practice of self-care as mentioned by all other participants. I also found her work experience in nursing gives a similar advantage to her exercise of effective self-care as the long-year work experience in the counseling setting provides an advantage to other participants. This renders further data collection unnecessary.

Besides the interview, I also analyzed the reflective form that I gave to every participant after the interview session. This form provides some additional information

that confirms the participants' experiences. The reflective form allows participants to further elaborate on their thoughts and feelings in a written format, sometimes revealing new insights or reinforcing points made during the interviews. By cross-verifying the data from the interviews and the reflective forms, I gained a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences. This process helps achieve data saturation, as consistent themes and patterns emerge across the collected data.

Towards the end, to ensure the psychological meaning units included in the analysis were saturated, I conducted a simple data saturation check. I ensured that at least six participants shared each experience. For most of the selected meaning units, I found that nine to thirteen participants shared a common experience. This approach confirms the reliability of the findings and reflects a robust representation of the participants' experiences.

3.7 Rigors and Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is utilized to capture the meaning of a phenomenon, enabling in-depth understanding to be further explored. However, qualitative data analysis often faces challenges in proving its rigor and trustworthiness. Therefore, according to Lincoln and Guba as cited in Elo et al. (2014), five aspects have been proposed to determine trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability.

Credibility, also known as internal validity, refers to the degree to which the research represents the actual meaning conveyed by the research participants (Merriam, 2009; Moon et al., 2016). In other words, it assesses the alignment of the findings with the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Stahl & King, 2020). Credibility

reflects the values and believability of the findings, which are dependent on the research being conducted in a believable manner (Houghton et al., 2013). Merriam (2009) suggests four strategies to enhance internal validity and credibility in qualitative research: triangulation, member checking (or respondent validation), adequate engagement in data collection, and peer review.

Transferability is another aspect that reflects the degree to which the findings of the study are generalizable to other contexts (Elo et al., 2014; Moon et al., 2016). It is also known as external validity in quantitative research (Merriam, 2009). Shenton (2004) argued that demonstrating the generalizability of qualitative research findings is challenging due to the small number of research participants. However, based on his literature analysis, it is possible to establish the external validity of qualitative research by highlighting the boundaries of the study before generalizing it.

These boundaries can include restrictions on the number of participating organizations, the type of individuals providing data, the number of participants, the data collection method, the number and duration of data collection sessions, and the period during which the data was collected. Thorough elaboration of these pieces of information reflects the richness of the researcher's description, contributing to the establishment of transferability (Stahl & King, 2020). The information can be documented in the audit trail.

Meanwhile, dependability refers to the consistency or stability of the research findings in terms of data collection, documentation procedures, and the level of detail in the methodology, allowing readers to evaluate the extent to which the research procedures have been followed (Moon et al., 2016). It is also known as reliability in quantitative research (Merriam, 2009). Dependability reflects the trustworthiness of the research (Stahl & King, 2020). To establish dependability, Shenton (2004) suggests that

researchers report the processes within the study in detail. This is important to enable other researchers to replicate the study in the future, even if the results may differ. Dependability can also be established through the peer review process (Stahl & King, 2020).

Another aspect is confirmability which indicates the degree to which the findings have the potential of congruence in their data accuracy, relevance, or meaning between two or more independent individual participants. It also refers to the objectivity of the research (Elo et al., 2014). In establishing objectivity in qualitative research, where the researcher plays a primary role, researchers need to acknowledge their weaknesses by recognizing beliefs that may influence decision-making in the research process and method selection.

Additionally, they should explain technical limitations and discuss preliminary theories that were not supported by research data in the research report (Shenton, 2004). Houghton et al. (2013) also address the personal contribution of researchers in developing the confirmability of the research. They considered researchers as part of the research instrument, wherein the researcher's self-awareness plays a significant role in ensuring the rigor of the research. Therefore, they recommended that researchers maintain a reflective journal highlighting their history, personal interests that brought them to the research, rationale behind their decisions, instincts, and personal challenges during the research process. Furthermore, Shenton (2004) highlights the importance of triangulation and audit trails in establishing confirmability.

Rigor and trustworthiness are important aspects of qualitative research. I have come to realize that rigor and trustworthiness play a crucial role in ensuring the validity of my research findings. Therefore, I understand the significance of giving careful attention to each step and decision I make throughout my research process. Ensuring

credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in my research will guarantee the rigor and trustworthiness of my study. I am aware that I need to use the recommended methods to establish these aspects.

Although researchers are not required to employ all the recommended methods (Stahl & James, 2020), employing at least two methods would be sufficient (Creswell & Poth, 2016). However, since I have been mindful of these methods from the very beginning of my research, I have decided to utilize four of them. The four methods I have employed to establish the rigor and trustworthiness of my research include member checking, peer review, interrater reliability coefficient, and audit trail. The information related to the timelines and dates of the process was presented in Appendix G: Establishing Rigors and Trustworthiness. I will now elaborate on the process of employing these methods.

3.7.1 Member Checking

Member checking or seeking participant feedback involves the research participants reading the transcription of their interview to confirm it is accurately recorded (Houghton et al., 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2016). The process of member checking involves presenting the research participants with the data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions of their interviews, allowing them to assess the accuracy and credibility of the information in representing their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The researcher should address any disagreements that may arise during the checking process (Candela, 2019).

I also engaged the research participants in reviewing and confirming the accuracy of their interview transcripts. I provided them with a verbatim transcription of their

interviews and asked them to review and validate the accuracy of the verbatim in reflecting on their experiences. The verbatim was sent through email. I also created a validation form for them to complete as evidence of their confirmation after the review. It helped me to ensure that I was presenting a research report that portrayed what the participants meant to say. A copy of the original form retrieved from one of the participants can be viewed in Appendix E: Transcript Review Confirmation Form.

3.7.2 Peer Review

Peer review, peer examination, peer scrutiny, and peer debriefing are interchangeable terms used to describe the process of engaging in discussions with colleagues who possess knowledge of the studied phenomenon. This process involves sharing field notes and seeking their feedback on the research process, the congruence of the findings, and the tentative interpretation (Merriam, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Stahl & King, 2020). To conduct the peer review, I selected two colleagues who have expertise in qualitative research and crisis work. I engaged them to review my research process, validate my findings, and provide feedback on my research report. I shared all the relevant documents with them, enabling them to evaluate my research process thoroughly.

3.7.3 Interrater Reliability Coefficient

Ensuring interrater reliability is an essential aspect of conducting a systematic review, including research processes, data analysis, and interpretation. Interrater reliability, also known as intercoder reliability, pertains to the extent of agreement among raters or coders in assessing the quality of rating, coding, and analysis (Zhao et

al., 2022). Cohen's kappa coefficient is a statistical measure used to determine the level of agreement between raters, represented by the symbol κ . This measure is considered more reliable than simply calculating the percentage of agreement (Mohd Zaliridzal, 2018). Cohen's kappa coefficient reliability is calculated based on a specific formula as follows.

$$\kappa = \frac{fa - fc}{n - fc}$$

Whereby κ = coefficient value
 fa = the proportion of observations in agreement
 fc = the proportion in agreement due to chance
 n = total unit tested for agreement

To establish interrater reliability, I sought the expertise of three qualitative research and crisis work experts to assess my data interpretation. They are currently lecturers from local universities. I supplied them with a form containing the identified themes, subthemes, and meaning units derived from my data analysis and interpretation. They indicated their agreement with the categorization I had established for the themes, subthemes, and meaning units. Subsequently, I calculated the reliability coefficient using the formula provided to determine the reliability coefficient. Table 3.3 represents the detailed calculation.

Table 3.4: Calculation of Cohen's Kappa Coefficient Reliability

Themes	Proportion of agreement			Total Item
	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	
Experience of self-care	158	152	161	161
Role of religion in guiding self-care	37	38	38	38
Functioning	74	79	79	81
				N=280
fa	269	269	278	
fc (280/2 =140)	140	140	140	
Cohen Kappa: $= \frac{f_a - f_c}{N - f_c}$	$\frac{269-140}{280-140}$	$\frac{269-140}{280-140}$	$\frac{278-140}{280-140}$	
Average agreement value	0.92	0.92	0.98	
Overall average agreement value for Cohen's Kappa Coefficient Reliability	$\kappa = (0.92 + 0.92 + 0.98) / 3$			
	$\kappa = 0.94$			

Table 3.3 presents the calculation for Cohen's Kappa Coefficient reliability. The *fa* value representing the sum of agreement values from each rater was calculated. The *fa* value for rater 1 and rater 2 is 269, and for rater 3, it is 278. The *fc* value was determined assuming that 50 percent of the agreement was due to chance. A total of 280 units were tested for agreement (N=280). Therefore, the *fc* value was calculated as 140, which is 50 percent of the N value representing the total value of the agreement. The result demonstrated a high level of reliability with $\kappa = 0.94$, signifying strong agreement and data reliability based on Cohen's Kappa agreement scale as presented in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.5: Indication of Cohen's Kappa Agreement Scale

Value of Kappa	Level of Agreement	% of Reliable Data
0-.20	None	0-4%
.21-.39	Minimal	4-15%
.40-.59	Weak	15-35%
.60-.79	Moderate	35-63%
.80-.90	Strong	64-81%
Above.90	Almost Perfect	82-100%

Source: Mohd Zaliridzal (2018)

3.7.4 Audit Trails

An audit trail is a documentation that records how qualitative research was conducted and how researchers arrived at conclusions based on their findings (Carcary, 2020). Audit trails are created through comprehensive documentation that includes a log of all research processes. This documentation encompasses the progress of key stages within the research process, theoretical and methodological decisions, analytical approaches, and records that reflect the evolution of the researcher's thoughts (Creswell & Poth, 2016, Carcary, 2020). Carcary (2020) categorizes audit trails into two types: physical audit trails and intellectual audit trails.

The physical audit trail involves recording the actual research stages and methodological decisions. These include research problem identification, research proposal development, literature review documentation, research framework design, arrangement of interview schedules, as well as the decision-making and management of sample selection, data collection, and data analysis. On the other hand, the intellectual audit trail captures the reflections and insights of researchers concerning various aspects, such as philosophical positions, approaches to data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and data validation.

To maintain a physical audit trail, I created multiple files to document and track the progress of my research. I structured the arrangement of the documents based on the stages of my research. Additionally, I maintain a reflective journal that captures my reflections, insights, and personal introspections related to my research process. Furthermore, I documented the ethical values and considerations that I needed to be mindful of throughout my research process.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

Merriam (2009) suggests that the validity and reliability of research heavily rely on the ethical values of the researcher. Fundamentally, qualitative researchers are instructed to obtain informed consent before collecting data, ensure participant confidentiality, and treat participants with respect. These are very straightforward guidelines for any qualitative researcher. However, when considering the phenomenological research approach, ethical challenges may become more pronounced as researchers engage with the personal and sensitive experiences of research participants (Finlay, 2011). Usher and Holmes (1997) outline three fundamental principles that must be considered to protect the rights of human subjects.

The first principle is respect for the person which indicates the right of autonomy and self-determination of the research participants should be respected. The next principle is beneficence, emphasizing that the research should aim to be beneficial and avoid causing harm to participants. The third principle is justice which concerns the fair selection of an individual to be research participants. These three principles should be ethically applied to four key aspects of phenomenological qualitative research: informed consent, confidentiality, data authenticity, and the establishment of a non-

judgmental environment (Usher & Holmes, 1997; Walker, 2007). Hence, in conducting my research, I prioritized ethical values and considerations when addressing these four aspects within my study. The subsequent discussion outlines the procedures I implemented to uphold these aspects.

3.8.1 Informed Consent

As previously mentioned, I obtained permission from both the participants and their respective organizations to include them in my research. I prepared an informed consent form that participants were required to complete to indicate their formal consent. I provided a thorough explanation of the form's content to ensure that participants had a clear understanding of what would occur during the interview session. Additionally, I provided participants with sufficient information regarding my research project. Prior to each interview, I informed the research participants about their rights. I granted them full autonomy, allowing them the freedom to discontinue the interview at any point and decide on the disclosure of information. Participants were also informed about the video and audio recording during the session to ensure their awareness and acknowledgment of the recording process. A copy of the original informed consent form can be viewed in Appendix A: Sample of Informed Consent Form.

3.8.2 Confidentiality

I also assured the participants of confidentiality and anonymity. I informed them about my responsibility to preserve their identities and work settings, ensuring hidden names are applied to identify them in writing this finding in both the thesis and article journal publication. Additionally, I afforded participants the privilege of choosing the

mode, time, and location of the interview session. This privilege gives the participants the power to control their privacy in their natural environment during the interview session.

3.8.3 Authenticity of the Data

In line with phenomenological research, I adhered to the practice of bracketing to ensure an accurate description of the real lived experiences of my research participants. This practice ensures that I describe the authentic lived experiences of my research participants faithfully. To mitigate bias during the data collection and analysis process, I suspended my personal beliefs, values, and attitudes regarding the self-care practices under study.

Before commencing data collection, I documented my personal beliefs, assumptions, and preconceptions about self-care practices and religion in my reflective journal. I also wrote down my interactive experience with my research participants every time I conducted an interview. This practice ensures that I refrain from imposing my personal knowledge, values, and attitudes when interpreting the participants' experiences. To uphold the authenticity of my data, I utilized methods such as triangulation, member checking, peer review, interrater reliability coefficient, and audit trail.

3.8.4 Non-Judgmental Environment

During the interview session, I made sure that I encouraged the participants to talk freely about their experiences. I also embraced bracketing rules to avoid being judgmental. I created a calm and friendly environment by maintaining a fine balance

between objective and empathic listening. I also tried my best to establish a sense of trust by stressing that the participants were free to express their concerns, feelings, and personal experiences without feeling judged by my response.

I also gave the participants time to calm down when it came to the sharing of sensitive incidents that might drag the participants into emotional remorse. I offered suggestions to stop sharing at least temporarily if the emotional responses were prolonged and the participants seemed unable to continue. I also provided a reflective form to the participants for them to reflect on their interview experience and for me to identify any negative psychological impact on the participant due to the sharing during the interview session so that necessary intervention can be arranged. As for now, none of them showed any sign of adverse psychological impact after they underwent the interview session.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explained in detail the research process of the current study. It starts with an explanation of the research philosophy and paradigm that underpin the direction of this research. Then, the selection of the research design was clarified. Population and sampling procedures, including the study location, selection of research participants, and determination of sample size, are also explained. In addition, the role of the researcher as the primary instrument in this study has been highlighted followed by a thorough explanation of the data collection process, data analysis, and interpretation procedures. The issue pertaining to the rigor and trustworthiness of this research has also been discussed with several approaches to establish trustworthiness.

Besides that, values and ethical considerations that should be given appropriate attention have also been declared at the end of the chapter.

