# THE RELATIONSHIP OF MASCULINITY AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS COUNSELING HELPS AMONG POLICE OFFICERS IN KELANG VALLEY

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## Abstract

The present study is a correlational research where the relationship of masculinity and attitudes towards seeking counseling help were investigated. The differences in terms of gender, ethnicity and rank with regards to the two variables mentioned earlier were also examined. Four police districts were selected randomly by using cluster sampling. Then, random sampling method was used to choose a sample of 148 police officers from these four police district offices. They comprised of 117 Malays, 16 Chinese and 15 Indians. A self-administered questionnaire was used as tool for data collection. It consisted of two scales. The Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) (O'Neil, 1986) was use to measure masculinity. The Attitude Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS) (Fisher and Turner 1970; Chai, 2000) was administered to measure the attitudes towards counseling help. Correlational analyses revealed that masculinity and attitudes towards counselling help were positively correlated but it is not significant enough. The findings also show that there is no significant difference of ethnicity, gender and rank as according to masculinity and attitude towards counseling help. However, results indicate that police officers are significantly more masculine in terms of success, power, and competition compare to a person in lower rank. Other than that, finding also s shows that police officers are significantly more positive in term of their attitude towards counseling comparing to those in lower rank. As to increase the utilisation and effectiveness of Guidance and Counseling Services offers by Royal Malaysia Police in each police contingents and districts, counselors need to focus more on the issues faced by police. At the same times various steps may have to be taken as to foster more positive attitudes towards counseling services in police.
Keywords : Masculinity, attitude towards counseling help based

## Introduction

Characteristics of mental and physical strength that is often seen among the police either male or female always linked to the nature of masculinity. As they are the one to fight crime, survive constant danger, protect the public from crime and natural disasters and remain emotionally strong in any human tragedy, masculinity become some part of their life. It actually emerges from the occupational socialization that they experience through recruitment and social isolation as a result from being a police officer. (Dellinger, 2007). For example, the studies of Adam (2011), Brown (2011), Sheperd and Rickard (2012) and Steinmayr (2012) which actually shows that gender role or masculinity do give impact on help seeking attitude. However, the similar research on masculinity and help seeking attitude is still rare in Malaysia especially with regards of police. This research would help to understand the current scenario understudied in better position especially with regard of police officers. Therefore, this study focuses the relationships between masculinity regardless the gender and attitude towards counseling among police officer as in local context.

## Masculinity

The concept of masculinity is a broad manifestation. The term masculinity can be discussed from many aspects like social, cultural, biological and communications. Chesebro and Fuse (2001) defined masculinity as profoundly and ultimately a communication concept, a socially and symbolically constructed notion, that every culture and era revisits and redefines in different ways. Smiler (2006) emphasized masculinity as dominant or hegemonic masculinity which includes directives that men be emotionally stoic, take risks, seek status, and avoid anything that might be deemed either feminine or homosexual. Adams, (2011) added the that hegemonic masculinity is include the following ideas; avoidance of anything identified as feminine, the expression of feeling, emotional vulnerability, close connection to other men, or involvement in female dominant professions.

**Help Seeking Attitude**

Attitude towards counseling is probably the most often examined topic currently in Malaysia in relation to psychological help- seeking. As nowadays, in Malaysia, counselling are much recognized as expert or professionals career, so, the researcher always paying attention on this field especially on the acceptance of certain group towards counseling. The force on how a person or individual forced to seek help from others and in this study context, seeks for counseling helps could be understand through The Information Processing Model of Psychological Help-seeking (Vogel, Wester, Larson, & Wade, 2006). This Model involves four stage decision making beginning from how an individual perceived the psychological distress as threatening until the cost, risk and benefit calculation. According to Berg, Hem, Lau, & Ekeberg, (2006) several reasons why police officers may generally reluctant to seek help are professional attitude, inherent police culture and distance position from other service personnel. Second factor is the inherent culture or the police subculture that usually that prohibits police officers to admit that they have problems. ( Berg, Hem, Lau, & Ekeberg, 2006). It has been rooted in the police culture as unspoken rules that they were expected to receive order without much talking, hesitation, questions or argument from the higher rank.

**Current Research**

There were 148 respondents that constitute police officers from four different district participated in this research. The sample was selected through cluster random sampling. They were required to answer the questionnaires that constitute three parts and two instruments that are demographic information, Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRSC) as to measure masculinity and Attitude Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS) in order to measure help seeking attitude. The objective of this study are as follows:

1.  To describe masculinity norms among police in Kelang Valley.
2.  To describe attitude towards counseling score based on gender among police in Kelang Valley
3.  To examine the difference of masculinity based on ethnic among police in Kelang Valley.
4.  To examine the difference of attitude towards counseling help based on ethnic among police in Kelang Valley.
5.  To examine the difference of masculinity score based on rank among police in Kelang Valley.
6.  To examine the difference of attitude towards counseling help based on rank among police in Kelang Valley.
7.  To examine the relationship of masculinity score and attitude towards counseling helps among police in Kelang Valley.

The discussion of the finding in according of research objectives are as the next paragraphs.

**Findings and Discussion**

Generally the descriptive statistics shows the overall level masculinity among police officers in Kelang Valley is at average level (61%). 12 respondents or eight percent at lower level and 46 (31%) score on high level. The findings reveal that police officers have the average or substantial level of masculinity. Success, power and competition sub-scale or norms had the highest number of respondents' scores. This finding shows that even though the police subculture as stressed by Dellinger (2007) as always emphasize on dominance, aggression, and lack of emotion; these criteria not necessarily act as the determinant factors on police masculinity. As discussed in early chapter, masculinity itself offers wide range of definitions even though hegemonic masculinity always took the first place in list.

The descriptive statistics also reveal that most respondents' shows negative attitudes towards counseling help but it is not significant. Statistical analysis shows that 75 (50.7%) of respondents at lower level meanwhile 73 (49.3%) at higher level. Even though the finding connotes negative direction, this figure with slight different actually indicates neutral attitudes on counseling. Further t-test analysis shows that there was no different between male and female police in term of their attitude towards counseling help. This finding is consistent with the studies

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by Berg, Hem, Lau, and Ekeberg (2006) conducted among 3,272 Norwegian police officers shows that the attitudes of police officers towards mental health services were overall, indifferent or neutral. The scholars outlined several possible reason which agreed by researcher. The resistance were said not because of mistrust or negative attitudes towards counsellors but rather concern about anonymity, cost, availability as well as the tendency to remain 'clean' records and therefore seek help from private practitioners. This finding also corroborates Loh Poh Fang (2005) that there is no significant difference in attitudes towards seeking counseling helps between 321 males and females respondents.

The relationship between ethnicity and masculinity was tested using ANOVA. The analysis reveals no significant differences for three different ethnicity (Malay, Chinese, and Indian) in term of masculinity [ $F$ (2,145) = 2.55, $p$ = .081 ]. This finding indicates that there is no particular ethnicity influence the masculinity among respondents. Meanwhile, respondents also show no significant differences in term of their attitudes towards counseling help through the result of one-way ANOVA. [ F (2,147) = 3.969, p = .021 ]. Levesque (2012) held that masculinity involves two dimensions that are social and biological.

It also could be look as the symbolic construction which reflects certain culture or people belief about male and female typical traits. Therefore, the possible reason for this finding is because of the subculture shared by police and socialization which goes beyond their significant ethnic.

The analysis using t-test shows that there are no significance differences in masculinity means for officers (m = 3.9892, SD = .57182) as compare to rank and files (m = 3.9084, SD = .83863, t (64.6) = .622;  p = .536 > 0.05). However, further analysis shows that police officers are significantly more masculine in terms of success, power, and competition comparing to a person in lower rank. Usually people expect that officers who hold higher position score higher on masculinity. This could be because regardless of the rank or position of the police officers the nature of job is yet the same. Every and each person in the force is actually a leader to another person. For example, an officer with rank as Inspector is accountable for his men that are Sub-Inspector (SI) and below. The SI as well has the responsibility upon his Sergeant Major (SM) and it is continuous. Therefore, each police officer has their own space to apply their power and autonomy.

Further analysis as to know if there is any significant difference between officers and rank and files in term of their attitude towards counseling help show that there is a significance difference through the result of t-test. Mean officers (m = 2.847, SD = .473) as compare to rank and files is (m = 2.419, SD = .600, t (55.39) = 4.178;  p = .000 < 0.05). This shows that police officers are significantly more positive towards counseling help as compare to police in lower rank. Police officer at least should have their diplomas or degree certificate before getting promoted or recruited as officer. Therefore, it could be understand that they are actually having higher education compare to rank and files. As Dellinger (2007) suggested police officers with a college education are generally more professional and ethical in their attitudes and behavior less authoritarian. Thus, it could reflect more positive acceptance and openness towards counseling.

The correlation analysis on two quantitative variables that are masculinity and attitude towards counseling help reveals a positive relationship but not significant. The positive relationship means higher masculinity score contribute to lower score of attitude towards counseling variable. However, it is not significant and negligible as according to David (1971). This finding actually corroborates with Berg, Hem, Lau and Ekeberg (2006) claim that police attitude towards mental health were overall indifferent or neutral. The resistance is not because of internal factors like masculinity norms, mistrust or negative attitudes to professional but rather concern on other external issues like availability anonymity and all the cost and risk involved.

**Conclusion**

This research study has achieved all the objectives outlined in Chapter One. It can be concluded that the level of acceptance or attitudes of police towards seeking counseling are indifferent or neutral.In terms of other findings, it can be concluded that masculinity level among police officers is at substantial rate and success, power and competition norms is the most dominant aspect of masculinity. Meanwhile, in term of other variables such as gender, ethnicity and rank, the

masculinity level as well as the attitude towards counseling helps do not differ significantly even though police officers shows more positive attitudes as compare to lower rank police.     In  term of correlation between masculinity and attitude towards counseling help, even though it show positive direction, however it was not significant as to conclude that they were inter-correlated.

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