# THE APPROACH OF REALITY THERAPY IN SOLVING FOREIGN STUDENT'S CRISIS

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## Abstract

The crisis faced by foreign students need to be addressed to ensure that the goal of completing their study is achieved successfully. Financial issue has been identified as the main problem. Hence, this study was done to explore major issues faced by foreign students throughout their life in campus. This is a qualitative study using interview sessions as a study design. The subject in this study is a 21 year-old Indonesian student who faced stress and loss of concentration in her study due to financial problem. This study revealed that the financial issue is the common theme experienced by the respondent. This is due to the relevancy that money is one of the most important things to survive in life, and it has become a 'mediator' for resources toward basic needs in life. Reality therapy and in particular the techniques of WDEP and SAMIC was employed in the counselling session to help deal with the respondent's issues. Indeed, this study highlighted the success of using Reality Therapy to help the respondent in making sound decisions to solve issues faced. It was also noted that the therapist plays an active role in helping the respondent to be aware and responsible in solving her issues.

Keywords: Financial, foreign student, reality therapy, counselling.

## INTRODUCTION

Client is a 21-year-old student and the eldest of four siblings. She has a good relationship with the family and is ambitious to excel in her studies. Client is a fulltime university student in University Technology Malaysia and has a problem in managing daily expenditures. She is sponsored by the Indonesian government however, the currency exchange rate between Rupiah converted to Ringgit Malaysia is

comparatively lower than the cost of living that she has to face in Malaysia. Consequently, this has proven to be difficult and has affected her in many ways especially in her studies.

## Background of the Study
The currency rate between Rupiah towards Ringgit Malaysia (RM) had changed, whereby it was noted that Rupiah is weaker in comparison to RM, resulting in a reduced exchange rate and lesser pocket money for the respondent. As a result, she felt that she could no longer sustain her life in campus due to the exchange rate whereby goods and services are no longer affordable. She had a problem in managing her finances. She found living expenses and cost for preparing assignments becoming hard for her to cope. Consequently, it caused the client to lose her concentration in her study worrying constantly on how to find a solution towards the problem. She had stress when thinking on how to resolve the problem of settling her study fees with the limited fund she had. She also had a problem of not wanting to rely on her parents in lending a helping hand towards her financial problem.

In Fact, the problem became intractable because the Indonesian government did not allow their students to work while pursuing their studies here, thus making her in a difficult situation to raise funds. It would be illegal and breaking the rules and ethics if she worked here. Client is stressed and trapped in an intractable situation; however, she had wisely decided to see a counsellor. Therefore, this study aims to help a client achieves mental literacy in solving financial problems faced. There are a number of hurdles and challenges making the client issues difficult to resolve. However, the application of reality therapy enabled the objectives of the study be achieved in the last counselling session. Hence, this study was done to explore major issues faced by foreign students throughout their life in campus.

## LITERATURE REVIEW
### Reality Theory Approaches
People are responsible for their own behaviour and that they cannot blame the past or outside forces and at the same time achieve a high degree of mental health. The only behaviour we can control over is our own, and no one can force us to do something we don't want to do (Glasser, 1998; Zeeman, 2006). According to Glasser (1965), behaviour involves choices and most people always have options. Reality therapy is based on choice theory as explained in Glasser's (1998, 2001, and 2003) most recent publications. Corey (2009) mentioned that choice theory explains why and how humans' function, and reality therapy provides a delivery system for helping individuals take more effective control of their lives. Choice theory posits that we are not born as a blank slate waiting to be externally motivated by forces in our environment. Basically, Reality therapy provides a comprehensive explanation of

human behaviours as well as a methodology for addressing the vicissitudes of the human condition. Human condition is always changing in the journey of life, it is because everyone has to face challenges and tests.

Reality therapy teaches clients to be strong, responsible and independent to accept the crucial situation and courage their self, becoming matured. Corey (2012) mentioned the essence of reality therapy, now taught all over the world, is that we are responsible for what we choose to do. Because all problems are in the present, reality therapy spends very little time delving into the past. Glasser believes we can only control what we are presently doing. We may be the product of our past, but we are not the victims of our past unless we so choose.

Wubbolding (2000); Wubbolding & Brickell (2017), summarized Glasser's choice theory as it applies to counselling and psychotherapy as firstly, human beings are born with five needs: belonging, power (competence, achievement, recognition, self-esteem and so on), fun or enjoyment, freedom or independence (autonomy), and survival. These needs are general and universal. Secondly, the difference between what a person wants and what one perceives one is getting is the immediate source of specific behaviours at any given moment. Thus, reality therapy rests on the principle that human behaviour springs from internal motivation, which drives the behaviour from moment to moment (Glasser, 1998). Besides that, Choice theory portrays all human behaviours are composed of doing (acting), thinking, feeling, and physiology. Behaviours are identified by the most obvious aspect of this total behaviour. The application of reality therapy spans various levels and types of clients including students in schools, colleges, and universities. According to Loyd (2005), high school students who exposed to the Choice theory principles had a beneficial long-term influence on their satisfaction with three of the four psychological needs. This finding could be useful to educators in educating students to meet their needs in acceptable and effective ways; may help reduce disruptive and increasing behavioural choices that effectively satisfy their needs.

The school counselling program, as well as the counsellors who will execute it, are important. Mason, Palmer, Duba & Jill (2009), believed that Reality therapy practitioners have the most capacity to empower student's academic achievement, career choices, and personal growth for two reasons. First, Reality therapy training recognizes the significance of personal attributes such as warmth, sincerity, congruence, understanding, acceptance, concern, openness, and respect for the individual. These characteristics benefit school counsellors in developing trust and healthy therapeutic relationships with students. Second, Reality therapy practitioners comprehend and therefore can teach students the fundamental concepts of Choice

theory, basic needs, and the quality world. This understanding will improve self-esteem, self-worth, and self-confidence.

According to Jusoh and Ahmad (2009), reality therapy is suitable in and applicable in Asian countries such as Korea, Japan and Taiwan. The counsellor uses different contexts of culture in handling reality therapy. This refers to the fact that religious factors, culture and living style will justify their importance in the application of this therapy. Wubbolding et al. (2004) also said reality therapy is practised and taught in many cultures and countries. This is due to the fact that choice theory and reality therapy are regarded to be plausible and universal, and hence can be applied to any culture. According to choice theory, all humans have basic needs, a quality world, choices, and intentional behaviour. Some universal behaviours and wants include cooking, dancing, education, folklore, gestures, language, mourning, personal naming, and property rights. So, no matter where you are in the world, your culture is likely to have some, if not all, of these behaviours and desires (Bradley, 2014). Thus, it is reasonable to apply reality therapy in this case.

Overall, the client has a lack of basic needs in her life. Nowadays, money is an essential contribution to happiness and satisfaction in life. Without money, humans cannot get most things they want. Choice theory stressed five needs of human beings that are in line with the client's crisis, namely client's lost confidence to survive her life now and in future. However, counsellor played the role of helping the client in making a wise decision for herself. The lack of survive needs is illustrated in Figure 1.0 below:

**Figure 1.0: The main factors of a client's crisis**
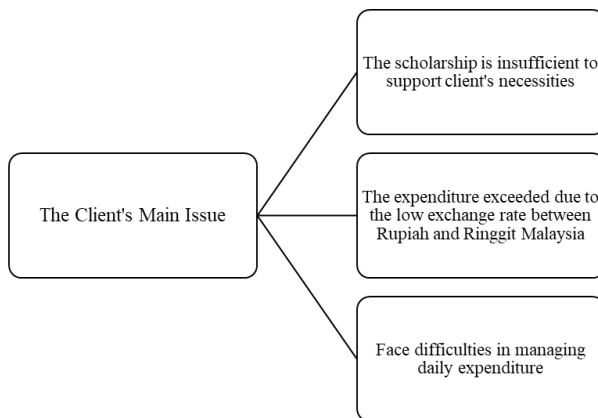
In the first phase, the counsellor listened carefully to what problem the client was facing, in order to do that, the counsellor had to be a good listener and try to get a clear picture regarding issues brought by the client. Afterwards, the counsellor chose a strategy to be applied, and the counsellor had identified therapeutic techniques to be applied to this client to achieve a solution. Reality therapy comprises WDEP (Wants, Direction and doing, Evaluation, and Planning and action) and SAMIIICCC (Simple, Attainable, Measurement, Immediate, Involved, Control by client, and Committed to, Consistent) systems to ensure client's decision making is effective. At the same time, the counsellor confronts the client to ensure the decision made will work out and be consistent. This confrontation is to help client realizing the reality and driving her to think 'here and now' without looking at the past experience.

Counsellors who use WDEP in the counselling process based on reality therapy are similar to Islamic concepts (Jusoh & Ahmad, 2009). Through the concept of WDEP, counsellors guide client in finding and setting life goals. In Islam, there are several verses of the Qur'an that mention the purpose of life and responsibilities. This is suitable with the commandment of Allah in Surah Al-Mukminun verse 115-116 which means,

*"Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned? (115) So exalted is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth; there is no deity except Him, Lord of the Noble Throne. (116)"*

This shows that human beings were created with a purpose in life. However, all deeds in this world will be held accountable in the hereafter as Allah says in surah al-Muddaththir 74:38 which means,

*"Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds. (38)"*

The SAMIIICCC technique is used to facilitate the client to achieve the set goals. This is an additional effort from the counsellor in helping the client. Efforts to facilitate the affairs of others are highly regarded by religion and will be rewarded accordingly. Rasulullah SAW explained the advantages of helping others who are in trouble, which means:

*"Whoever relieves a believer's distress of the distressful aspects of this world, Allah will rescue him from the difficulties of the Hereafter. Whoever alleviates [the situation of] one in dire straits who cannot repay his debt, Allah will alleviate his lot in both this world and in the Hereafter. Whoever conceals [the faults of] a Muslim, Allah will conceal [his faults] in this life and the Hereafter." (HR Muslim)*

**METHODOLOGY**

This is a qualitative study using interview sessions as a study design. The client was chosen based on the referral that was being made to the counselling centre in UTM. The treatment intervention planning done by the counsellor is based on the problem shared by the client, that is, stress because of lack of money while studying in Malaysia. The use of interventions emphasizes the WDEP system to help the client find solutions to her issue. The Counsellor also use the SAMIICCC system to make sure that the WDEP system applied will be effective. Plan that is truly efficacious, or at least more likely to be carried out by the client, have at least eight qualities, which can be summarized by the acronym SAMIICCC (Wubbolding, 2004):

**Table 1.0: SAMIICCC system**

| S | Simple: | The plan is uncomplicated. |
|---|---|---|
| A | Attainable: | If the plan is too difficult or too long range, the client will become discouraged and not follow through. |
| M | Measurement: | The plan is precise and exact. The client is encouraged to define a clear answer to the question, "when will you do it?" |
| I | Immediate: | The plan is carried out as soon as possible. |
| I | Involved: | The helper is involved if such involvement is appropriate. The involvement is, of course, within the bounds of ethical standards and facilitates client independence rather than dependence. |
| C | Controlled by the client: | An effective plan is not contingent on the actions of another person but is, as much as possible, within the control of the client. |
| C | Committed to: | The counsellor helps the client to pledge firmly to put the plan into action. |

| C | Consistent: | The ideal plan is repetitious. A single plan can be a start, but the most effective plan is one that is repeatable. |
|---|---|---|

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION
### Counselling Process
Counselling sessions involved the procedure of therapeutic processes. In this process, the counsellor has to explore the main issue of client. Counsellor trying to encourage the client to talk honestly regarding problems that brought the client coming forward to the session. Initiating the therapeutic process, the counsellor should be a good listener, and be more concerned to attract client sharing problems together. Therapy can be considered as a mentoring process in which the therapist is the teacher and the client is the student (Corey, 2009). In reality therapy, counsellor tries to find out what client's needs and wants are. After that, client will get a clear picture for structuring the best solutions. Corey (2009) stated the process proceeds through an exploration of client's wants, needs, and perceptions. Client explores his or her total behaviour and making his or her evaluation of how effective he or she is in getting what he or she wants.

At this initial stage, the counsellor should play a role in encouraging client to talk and be comfortable in telling her troubles. According to Harold Hackney and Sherilyn Nye (1973); Kabir (2017), in the beginning counsellor often experiences concerns about effectively opening and terminating an interview. Understanding of the process involved at these interview points can assist a counsellor in feeling comfortable with both the beginning and the ending of an interview. In opening an interview, it is important to provide conditions that encourage the client to talk.

Counselling session involves five phases of therapeutic process. The purpose of establishing phases for structuring the process of counselling is to go deeply in exploring client's problem step by step. The phases are relationship building (rapport), assessment and diagnosis, goal-setting, initiating interventions and termination. Counsellor followed these phases for the counselling session. Each phase was explained clearly in the following subtopics.

### First Phase: Relationship Building (Rapport)
In this stage, the approach of Rogerian concept is used by the counsellor to encourage client to feel comfortable sharing the problem. Rogers (1961) by Colin Feltham (1999); Renger (2021) emphasized three of these conditions, which he called congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding. Intimation of the relationship between counsellor and client is very important at this stage; it is

closely related to the effectiveness of the sessions that will be awarded at the end of the session.

At the beginning of this session, the counsellor greets client and shakes hands. Counsellor asked the client a simple question to create intimacy. Then, the counsellor started the session by introducing herself and building up reconstruction. The most important thing in the initial stage is structure. Structure reduces the anxiety of the client by describing the counselling process for the client and giving the client an opportunity to check out client's expectations. Harold Hackney and Sherilyn Nye (1973) & Ajufo (2019) stated structuring has been defined as the way the counsellor defines the nature, limits, roles, and goals within the counselling relationship. It includes comments about time limits, confidentially, possibilities and expectations, as well as observation and / or taping procedures.

For example, after introducing herself and showing the client where she might sit, the counsellor can provide some initial structure by saying:
*"We have about one hour together. I like to video-record interviews with my clients. It's easier and less interfering than taking notes. I hope that won't bother you. I'm not sure what brings you here, but whatever it is that is bothering you will be treated in strict confidentiality. You can talk about anything you wish."*

**Second Phase: Assessment and Diagnosis**
This is a stage for the counsellor to gather information to promote understanding of the client's situation and issues. The second phase is more towards exploring problems with the counsellor gathering, understanding the client's problems and encouraging client to share her problems. This technique helps clients to talk more about the real problems. Counsellor will use paraphrasing skills and reflection on each client's statement. Applying the Rogerian approach also helps counsellor to attract clients sharing problems with ease. Client is more motivated in telling the counsellor when the case is heard and considered.

**Third Phase: Goal-Setting**
The goal of reality therapy is to help client in fulfilling client's needs. Consequently, the counsellor helps client explore current behaviour and choices related to belonging, power, fun and freedom. Establishing a close relationship, a situation is created mutually defined by the client and counsellor. Client's goal in this session is to obtain solutions to problems relating to the financial crisis faced by her. Counsellor needs to ensure clearly client's goals and work together to find out the solutions. On the next level, the counsellor will help client getting a clear picture to make decisions using the WDEP system.

**Fourth Phase: Initiating Intervention**

The determination of the goals set out in this stage. Counsellor has been getting a clear picture of the real issues of the client. Client is experiencing financial difficulties to pursue her studies. However, the counsellor applies the WDEP system to help client find solutions. Wubbolding emphasized that the WDEP principles appear to be easy to practise because the vocabulary is uncomplicated. The WDEP system introduced by Wubbolding (2007) by Corey (2009) can be used to help client explore client's wants, possible things client can do, opportunities for self-evaluation, and design plans for improvement. Each of the letters refers to a cluster of strategies W (wants and needs), D (direction and doing), E (self-evaluation) and P (planning). These strategies are designed to promote change of client's behaviour, perception and cognition.

***Wants (W)***

At this stage the counsellor, using the skills asking questions to help client identifying the wants and needs of client at present. Client needs to cooperate to ensure success. Counsellor can use open and closed questions to encourage the client to open up. Some examples of questions posed by the counsellor in this phase are:

Open question

*Counsellor: "ok Fara.. please tell me, what do you want now .."*

Closed ended Question

*Counsellor: "Fara... do you agree with your desired needs?"*

***Direction and Doing (D)***

Once the client decides what the client desires, counsellor will give guidelines to client deciding to change client's old behaviour to the new behaviour. Here, client needs to reassess whether the behaviour at this time can help solve the problem or not. If not, client would be thinking of changing present behaviour to the new behaviour. Client will determine whether the new behaviour changes do help solve problems selected or not. At this stage, the counsellor needs to provide observation and monitoring of the client to make the appropriate decision. Below is an example of conversation regarding doing and direction (D).

*Client: "Now, I know how to take action after this. I'm comfortable with the direction that I'm set. I will discuss with my colleagues with regards to preparing the appeal paperwork on increasing the rate in Scholarships. After that, I will discuss with partners in finding ways to deliver this paper to the government of Indonesia".*

*Counsellor: "Are you confident with this decision?"*

*Evaluation (E)*

Here, the counsellor used the SAMIICCC approach to assist client making tough decision/planning that will be effective. That procedure of planning is often mistakenly viewed as the essence of the practice of reality therapy. Although planning is important, it is effective only if based on a client's inner self-evaluation. Counsellor will confront the client to ensure that decisions made are implemented by the client in a short time. Meanwhile, the counsellor would also ask the client on the notion of not spending money on those things with high expenses could be implemented immediately. Clients will try to think about the question raised by the counsellor and evaluate the effectiveness of it.

*Planning (P)*

At the planning stage, the client will feel more confident with the decisions taken and prepared to embark as soon as possible. The problems presented on stage need to answer the question at this point. Counsellor has a role to ensure that the client will decide when to start work and that client is motivated to resolve the problems she faced. At the same time the counsellor will strengthen the client's planning by making reflection against the client as goals in this session. It is the responsibility of the counsellor to provide follow-up sessions to see the extent of client progress and effectiveness of the decision.

**Fifth Phase: Termination**

In the termination phase, counsellor stresses upon the client to be independent and responsible thereby ensuring client's mindfulness of avoiding dependency. It would be a serious problem when client seems to be rather reliant on the counsellor. In this session, the counsellor encourages client to be resolute in making decisions and strong in facing any possible risk. At the same time, client's self-esteem to survive her life would be enhanced. On the other hand, the counsellor needs to have a review with client before ending the session. Review means the counsellor makes a reflection in session throughout. The purpose is to ensure the counsellor gets a solid understanding regarding the overview of the client statement. Progression of the goal setting would be reviewed at the next session and discuss with client to see the effectiveness of choice. Then, the counsellor had to make a conclusion and asked client about her feelings at the end of the session. The conversation below portrayed the termination stage in this session.

*Counsellor: Alright, now I will explain to you about the issue that has been discussed. Firstly, we have to focus on your financial problem. Then, you decided to take action for draft paperwork with your mutual Indonesian members. When the break of semester comes, you will arrange to submit the paperwork to the Indonesian*

*government regarding increasing the rate of scholarship. Now, Fara was seeking to settle this issue as soon as possible. That is right?*
*Client: Yes… you are right... I want to do it after this and never try to delay.*

*Counsellor: Ok…now can you express to me what you feel after we discussed your issue...?*

*Client: I'm feeling very calm and not stressed yet. Now... I can breathe easily and be confident to face the next day.*

*Counsellor: Alhamdulillah... So, I will pray for your success and hopefully I shall see you the next session to review the progress of your planning.*

*Client: Insya-Allah… I will…*

*Counsellor: Thanks for coming and nice to meet you…*

*Client: You are welcome... and nice to meet you too.*

**Strength and Contributions**
The strength of applying reality therapy is in providing a client with tools to make the changes the client desires. Central to the process of reality therapy is the planning phase which involves wants (W), doing and direction (D), evaluation (E) and planning (P). The focus is on positive steps that can be taken, not on what cannot be done. Client identifies those problems that difficulty, and these problems become the targets for change. Besides that, reality therapy has strengths to promote client's high confidence level and establishing self-esteem. One of the factors, humans always defend themselves from blaming themselves because they never realized the concept of 'here and now'. They still have not broken up the block of past experiences and the bad history in their life before. However, the introduction of reality therapy gave a quality of awareness to clients to keep looking forward rather than memorizing everything in the past. Moreover, Wubbolding (2007) by Corey (2009) asserts that reality therapy is based on universal principles, which makes the theory applicable to all people. All of us have internal needs, we all make choices, and we all seek to influence the world around us.

A contribution of reality therapy is discussed about how too often counselling fails because the counsellor has an agenda for clients. Reality therapy helps clients conduct a searching inventory of what they are doing. If a client determines that his or her present behaviour is not working, he or she is then much more likely to consider acquiring a new behavioural repertoire. An example of how this concept can be

practically applied involves working with people with addictions. Reality therapy has been effectively used in addiction treatment and recovery programs for over 30 years (Wubbolding & Brickell 2005). In many situations with these populations, it would be inappropriate to embark on long-term therapy that delves into unconscious dynamics and an intensive exploration of one's past. Reality therapy focuses on making changes in the present and is an effective, short-term approach.

**Advantages of the session**
The advantage of the session is that a client can find out the solutions regarding the issue by himself or herself. Besides that, reality therapy is also suitable for students. This is because students have the potential to understand the WDEP and SAMIICCC system clearly. The high level of thinking helps a client goes through the step-in reality therapy therapeutic smoothly. Besides that, in counselling and general problem-solving, reality therapy is very efficient in the amount of time required for therapeutic change. Client can be motivated to choose the right decision because the flow of the WDEP system is structured comprehensively.

**CONCLUSION**
The problem that foreign students face is an important issue to be discussed. This problem can create a crisis which can influence students' motivation toward their study, thus creating a negative implication in the momentum toward higher achievement in the learning process among foreign students. Reality therapy is the best solution to give courage to the students to be more independent and stronger facing challenges in their term of study. In conclusion, reality therapy is an effective approach to solve a crisis regarding the obstacles faced by foreign students in their process of study.

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