

**Peer Counselling in Higher Education –
Participants' Experiences of a Programme in Hong Kong**

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. Besides, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Table of Contents

Certificate of Authorship/Originality	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Tables	vii
Abstract.....	viii
Chapter One Introduction	1
1.1 Background of study	2
1.1.1 Young people in Hong Kong.....	2
1.1.2 Peer counselling in Hong Kong tertiary institutions	3
1.1.3 Peer counselling at Hong Kong Institute of Education	6
1.2 Objectives and research questions	9
1.3 Definition of terms	10
1.4 Methodology	12
1.5 Significance of study.....	12
1.6 Limitations of study	14
1.7 Summary	15
1.8 Overview of thesis.....	15
Chapter Two Literature Review.....	17
2.1 Theories related to peers in adolescence	17
2.1.1 Erikson's Theory of Adolescent Development	17
2.1.2 Social Learning Theory	21
2.1.3 Role Theory	23
2.1.4 Socialisation Theory	26
2.2 Peer counselling	31
2.2.1 Definition of peer counselling	31
2.2.2 Development of peer counselling.....	33
2.2.3 Roles of peer counsellors.....	35
2.2.4 Training of peer counsellors	
2.2.5 Participant perceptions of peer counselling.....	37
2.3 Benefits and challenges of peer counselling programmes	42
2.3.1 Benefits to counselees	42
2.3.2 Benefits for adjustment to a new educational setting	45
2.3.3 Benefits to peer counsellors.....	48
2.3.4 Benefits for professional counsellors	51
2.3.5 Challenges of peer counselling.....	53

2.4	Peer counselling programmes in Hong Kong	56
2.5	Summary	58
Chapter Three Methodology		60
3.1	Research design.....	60
3.2	Case study approach.....	61
3.2.1	Characteristics of case study approach	61
3.2.2	Application of case study approach in present study	63
3.3	Research questions	64
3.4	Participants.....	65
3.4.1	Peer counsellors	66
3.4.2	Counselees	67
3.5	Techniques and methods	68
3.5.1	Focus group interview	69
3.5.2	Procedure for planning and conducting focus group interview.....	70
3.5.3	Data analysis.....	73
3.6	Ethical considerations	75
3.6.1	Voluntary participation.....	76
3.6.2	Confidentiality	77
3.6.3	Pre-existing relationship	78
3.7	Issues of validity and reliability	79
3.8	Summary	81
Chapter Four Research Findings		82
4.1	Perceptions of Peer Counselling Training Programme	82
4.1.1	Peer counsellors' perceptions of Peer Counselling Training Programme	83
4.1.1.1	Views of selection process and criteria.....	83
4.1.1.2	Views of quality of training programme.....	83
4.1.1.3	Expectations of programme	85
4.1.1.4	Peer counsellors' duties	86
4.1.2	Counselees' perceptions of Peer Counselling Training Programme	88
4.1.2.1	Perceptions of peer counsellors	88
4.1.2.2	Roles perceived by counselees.....	89
4.1.2.3	Ideal characteristics of a peer counsellor	92
4.1.2.4	Expectations of programme	93
4.2	Impact of Peer Counselling Training Programme	93
4.2.1	Impact on peer counsellors	94
4.2.1.1	Personal development of peer counsellors.....	94
4.2.1.2	Professional development of peer counsellors.....	98
4.2.2	Impact on counselees.....	107

4.2.2.1	Changes in knowledge	108
4.2.2.2	Changes in skills	109
4.2.2.3	Changes in feelings	110
4.2.2.4	Changes in attitudes	110
4.2.2.5	Changes in behaviours	111
4.2.2.6	Academic gains	111
4.2.3	Impact on both peer counsellors and counsees	112
4.3	Improvement of Peer Counselling Training Programme	113
4.3.1	Challenges	114
4.3.2	Improvements	116
4.3.2.1	Improvements suggested by peer counsellors.....	116
4.3.2.2	Improvements suggested by counsees	117
4.3.3	Critical ingredients of peer programmes	118
4.4	Summary	120
Chapter Five	Discussion, Implications and Recommendations.....	121
5.1	Answering the research questions	121
5.1.1	Research question 1	121
5.1.2	Research question 2	124
5.1.3	Research question 3	128
5.2	Limitation of study	130
5.3	Implications	131
5.4	Recommendations	133
5.4.1	Recommendation for peer counselling programme.....	133
5.4.2	Recommendation for further studies	135
5.5	Conclusion.....	136
Appendices.....		138
Appendix I:	Selection criteria for Peer Counselling Training Programme.....	139
Appendix II (a):	Interview Guide (Counsees).....	140
Appendix II (b):	Interview Guide (Peer Counsellors).....	141
Appendix III:	Student Consent Form	142
Appendix IV:	Ethics Approved Letter	143
References.....		144

List of Figures

Figure 1: Flowchart of process of analysis 71

List of Tables

Table 1: Informants..... 68

Abstract

According to Conger (1991), peers play an important role in the psychological and social development of adolescents. This study focused on exploring participants' perceptions and experiences of joining a peer counselling programme, which was preceded by training, and implemented for twelve months in the Hong Kong Institute of Education. The research methodology utilised was a qualitative case study of 30 peer counsellors and 16 counsees who comprised the research cohort and who provided data in in-depth focus group interviews. Descriptive analysis was employed throughout the study, which analysed counsees and peer counsellors as separate groups. The general importance of peer counselling, the training programme, the perceived peer counsellor role and the characteristics of the ideal peer counsellor were explored to provide a holistic view of the programme. The process of interaction, the "what" and "how" phenomena of the peer counselling services, was investigated among both peer counsellors and counsees in the study.

The findings indicated that both peer counsellors and counsees had known about the existence of the Peer Counselling Training Programme. All first year counsees perceived peer counsellors' roles to be paramount. As a group they desired their ideal peer counsellors to be helpful, caring, approachable, kind and patient. The first year counsees perceived peer counsellors as their sharing partners and role models. Results showed that the Peer Counselling Training Programme also had an impact on the personal and professional development of the peer counsellors.

The findings of the study confirmed that peer counselling had effects which were significant and beneficial for all participants, both the peer counsellors and those being counselled. In light of the findings, implications of peer counselling for Hong Kong tertiary institutions, recommendations, significance of the present study as well as its limitations are discussed.