

## **The Implementation of Robert's Seven-Stage Model to Assist Crisis Victims In Malaysia**

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### **Abstract**

This article discusses the psychological support crisis interventions applied to help individuals or communities in crisis. The most frequent crises in our society include natural disasters, human-induced disasters, loss and death, and so on. Crisis will occur when individuals are forced to face problems they cannot solve. The outcome of the inadequate issue will create stress, anxiety, emotional stress and inability to function in a prolonged period. Thus, interventions from psychological aspects are crucial to ensure that clients can accept what is happening in their lives. Psychological support crisis interventions can help client to cope with crisis situations in reality. Crisis intervention gives clients the opportunity to learn about problem solving skills such as identifying, moving, and improving what's already there. To ensure that intervention can be implemented according to clients' needs, the seven-stage model of crisis intervention by Robert (1991) can be used to help them. This intervention includes seven-stage of crisis intervention, namely planning and crisis handling and biopsychosocial assessment including risk management, establishing rapports and collaborative relationships, identifying dimensions pointing out problems, exploring feelings and emotions, generating and exploring alternatives, forming and building action plans and follow-up plans and agreements. All these levels assist in the implementation of intervention according to client's needs as well as adapted to the norms of Malaysian society which can serve as a guideline for implementing psychological support in assisting crisis intervention victims.

**Keywords:** Disaster Crisis, Crisis Intervention, Psychological Support, Crisis Intervention Model.

### **Introduction**

Crisis can occur unexpectedly, most people who are affected by the crisis usually are not prepared as it can happen any time. A crisis may occur when an individual is unable to deal effectively with stressful changes in the environment, it also related with difficult situation or event where it is difficult for someone to get resources and mechanisms for solution and can be associated with situations in which there is a threat to an individual person's life, home or property and even to one's wellbeing (Silva, Siegmund & Bredemeier, 2015). Crisis victims suddenly have to face situation which they unable to handle (Dattilo& Freeman, 2010) The condition can affect a person's psychological stability. Thus, psychological support crisis intervention can indirectly help the psychological well-being of individuals who are being

affected by a crisis. In the event of a crisis, priorities are to ensure that clients are in a safe place with physiological needs such as food and water and that they are close to their families and loved ones. Based on the Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, physiological needs is the most important element in ensuring that a person can continue life as well as to motivate them to obtain further needs. Crisis is a state of restlessness, threatening and causing individuals to lose control and self-judgment (Nor Shafrin, 2007). Crisis intervention is considered a structured therapy that focuses on central issues around the crisis that will be resolved in a limited time (France, 1990). Therefore, crisis intervention needs to be implemented immediately because according Smead (1988) crisis situation it can be affect to individuals psychological equilibrium, it may be characterized by feelings of anxiety, helplessness, fear, inadequacy, confusion, agitation, and disorganization. Psychological support crisis intervention will be employed once the physiological needs are given as it is aimed to help strengthen the level of self needs in terms of the client's strength, self-confidence and self-reliance to continue life. Supports from the people around them also indirectly bring a positive impact to clients in facing a disaster situation (Brailsford & Thomley, 2015). Therefore, psychological crisis intervention indirectly assists the clients who are affected from a crisis to enhance the client's psychological well-being, it because empowerment of the client is an important thing of crisis intervention even in children (van-Oruum & Mordock, 1983).

## **Method**

An active but temporary crisis intervention and getting support into the lives of individuals or groups during the extreme periods of stress is the emotional first aid (Mitchell, 2004; Jdaitawi, 2020; Jdaitawi, Al-Mutawa, Mussallam, & Talafha, 2014). It can be implemented at any place that is suitable with the client's current situation for example in evacuation centre, on the fields or under a tree or any place that is considered suitable with the client's condition. This is mainly because in the principle of crisis intervention implementation, the methods used to offer temporary first aid to individuals who are experiencing events that affect their mental, physical, and emotional and behaviour, should be carried out immediately. A crisis usually could last within 4 to 6 weeks in which time for the solution is very limited (Gentry, 1994). The duration and number of sessions conducted during this period can vary depending on the situation the client (Myer, 2001).

### **Purpose of Crisis Intervention**

- a) Aims to address the effects of events that lead to a disturbance of the psychological stability of a person affected by a traumatic event. According to Ehly (1986) Crisis intervention is first aid for mental health. therefore through crisis intervention counselors can help crisis victims form resilience in order to function normally as usual.
- b) Help to redevelop the client's self-efficacy so that they can build concrete steps for them to manage their feelings as well as planning their actions to move on with life. The goal of a crisis helper is to identify, evaluate, and treat to help an affected individual reach functional levels as soon as possible to reduce the negative impact on the future of the individual's mental health (Stevens & Ellerbrock, 1995). An important factor in determining the occurrence of a crisis is due to the imbalance between the perceived difficulties and the importance of circumstances that threaten and require immediate action for the readiness of the customer to the problems he experienced (Caplan, 1964).
- c) Clients in crisis need immediate assistance (Norazura, Norhayati & Salleh, 2017). Therefore, through crisis intervention it will provide opportunities for personal growth and development by developing old strengths, resources and coping skills of individuals and at the same time encourage the development of new strengths, resources and skills. Individual ability to solve problem is a factor in conserving mental health and stability (Meijers, 2010). This is because, the best plan is from client himself (Gilliland & James, 1997). Crisis intervention is an active but temporary entry into the life situation of an individual or a group during a period of stress (Vasanthakohila, 2016).

### **Crisis Intervention**

Crisis victims are individuals who experience crisis events that impact their lives as well as their psychology. Crisis intervention which becomes the foundation of helping efforts also produced based on models (Myer, Lewis, & James, 2013). Psychological trauma related to the victim can cause disturbances in feelings of control, interpersonal attachment, alertness, sleep disturbances, distractions memories, and feelings of anxiety, anger, sadness, and depression (Everly, Flannery & Mitchell, 2000). Therefore, crisis victims need to be helped so that they can return to normal functioning it is can help crisis victims dealing with crisis situations or events that impact their lives. The main goal of crisis intervention is to increase client's functioning by using effective coping and problem solving (Nor Shafrin, 2018). Therefore, Crisis victim need services to quickly access appropriate interventions (James,

2003). It aims to reduce the impact of crisis events that can have a negative affect on a individuals psychology. Therefore, crisis intervention should be given during the emergency, immediate, and acute (Flannery & Everly, 2000). Crisis intervention is a helpful effort for victims who affected psychological distress return to the level of the adjustment function (Everly & Mitchell, 1999) and focuses on the client's current problems cause by crisis (Ewing, 1978). Studies conducted by Norizan (2016) identified from her qualitative research involved flood victims in Kuala Krai Kelantan showed psychological problems that are not addressed immediately will have a higher impact on the victim such as loss of enjoyment to continue life, fear and worry about future disasters as well as trauma and loss. Therefore, crisis intervention is the way of help crisis victim in proper way and more effective and preparation. Crisis intervention is first aid for psychological wellbeing it offering the immediate help for the individuals in crisis for reestablish stabilization (Aguilera, 1998). During the crisis intervention process it help identify concrete actions that can help clients make changes in their lives (Ahmad Rozelan, Adi Fahrudin & Sapora Sipon, 1997). Study from Tschacher & Jacobshagen (2002) about analysis of crisis intervention processes showed involved 40 inpatient participated in this studies. Result showed crisis intervention namely stabilize the patients such as reduced social anxiety, improved mood and emotional wellbeing. Effective counselors will expect change, even with the small changes needed to solve the problem client's abilities and strengths are central to problem solving (Rosenbaum, Hoyt, & Talmon, 1990). Therefore, crisis intervention strategies should be structured and considerate of a culturally diverse.

## **Results and Discussion**

Helper especially counsellors need to have concrete planning in managing crisis interventions so that it can help individuals who are well affected. The main principles of disaster and crisis management are commonly referred to as response, prevention, preparedness and recovery (Heath 1998; Sutton and Tierney 2006). Therefore, to ensure that interventions can be carried out smoothly and meeting the needs of clients who are facing a crisis. The seven-stage crisis intervention model by Roberts (1991), is applied as a guide to ensure a systematic and structured planning and implementation of interventions. Objective of crisis intervention considerer achieved if the victim shows decrease of the crisis symptom (Greenstone & Leviton, 2010). The following are the explanation on the levels in the seven-stage crisis

intervention model by Roberts (Brailsford, 2007). This model is suitable to be applied as a guide for a case of crisis:

- i. Plan and conduct crisis and biopsychosocial assessment. This part includes the assessment of risks of suicide, medical needs, etc. Identifying protection and persistence resources, for example, family and other support, can help.
- ii. Establishing rapport and psychological relationship to form trust and acceptance among clients who are facing a crisis, establishing the therapeutic relationship with the clients as well as building an unconditional acceptance by the clients, being genuine and avoid being judgmental.
- iii. Evaluate and identify the dimensions of the problem or crisis. Identify the issues and challenges that the clients had to go through especially those who are affected by the crisis in which it can indirectly shines a light on how to cope with the problem.
- iv. Explore feelings and emotions of clients. This stage can be carried out by listening actively and passionately and respond with supportive statements, reflections and paraphrases that can enhance the helping process.
- v. Explore the alternative ways that the clients have taken to handle the problem previously. Individual's view on the problem is seen as a source and self-persistence to help explore the potential of resources and alternatives that can help the process. This process requires creativity and suitability in managing crisis situations.
- vi. Develop an action plan. At this stage, identify individuals who can support and provide a source of reference in ensuring that the client is able to perform the solution strategy.
- vii. Follow-up plan. The importance of planning follow-ups on clients after the initial intervention is to determine the status of the clients and to ensure that clients are able to face the crisis and resolve it properly.

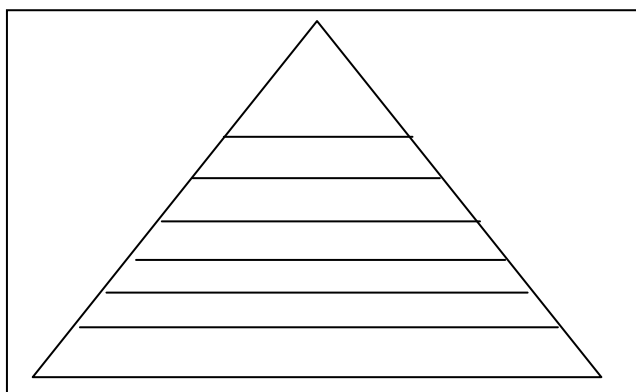


Figure 1: The Seven-Stage Crisis Intervention Model by Roberts (1991)

Every crisis occurs in different situations so the counsellors need to be prepared. Crisis intervention needs to be carried out immediately to reduce the crisis reaction and effect on individuals affected. Crisis intervention provides emotional first aid which prioritises the crisis situations. These are some principal guidelines in handling crisis intervention (Shapiro & Koocher, 1996):

- i. Make a valid assessment to identify the critical aspects as a guide to determine the intervention. If a wrong decision was made in deciding the response to the crisis, it will therefore bring risks to the clients, though the situation may be similar but each person should be treated differently. Therefore, a responder should avoid generalization. The effective way, the helper needs to take special care of victim's view on the crisis (Greenstone & Leviton, 2010)
- ii. Able to think quickly and creatively. People who are facing a crisis usually will feel lost and can't be able to visualize any options or possibilities.
- iii. Open up and always accepting client unconditionally in order to help explore options and to resolve the problem by making the affected client stronger. Individuals who are affected by the crisis usually are not able to control themselves. Therefore, they need to be assisted in coping with crisis situations.
- iv. Must be able to keep calm and remain empathetic. Empathic responding is when the therapist consistently reflects to the client both the feeling that the client is experiencing and the reason for that feeling expressed by the client (Bennet, 2018)
- v. Crisis intervention is a short-term intervention involving specific goals aiming to improve the client's behaviour in the short term.
- vi. A crisis intervention is not process-oriented rather it is action-oriented and it is focused on the situation. It helps the client to understand the impact and expectations that affect their emotions and behaviour. Further to this, clients learn about problem solving skills, resources and support which are suitable for them. It indirectly teaches them how to plan for safety as an effort to cope with the current situation and the challenges that they can expect from the crisis. Support during a crisis can mean that instead of being unable to cope, one finds some positives and love amidst the chaos (Pyanov, 2020)
- vii. The crisis characteristics include losing control and security. The loss may lead to the need in focusing on the internal control and strength and the clients external environment (Yassen & Harvey, 1998).

- viii. The objective is not about asking explorative questions but it should be focusing on the current situation. Emotional support is about helping to bring someone to higher ground so they can see their way through the difficulty (Goldsmith, 2011). Therefore, it should be given to the affected clients. This is not carried out to change the clients but mainly to stimulate the clients to identify self-resources that they can use to achieve their goals.
- ix. Taking into consideration that the crisis intervention is the first intervention that clients receive after a crisis event, the goals can always be refined in order to deal with the crisis immediately hence providing support and restore the pre-crisis functionality.
- x. Ensuring that the next of kin or family members are always by the client's side.
- xi. Willing to work and adapt to the situation, place and local communities so that the interventions can be carried out effectively. Respect to the cultural of the local communities will help helper to deliver the crisis intervention. If they fail to respect differences especially local culture, the crisis interventions may end up as a failure (Nor Shafrin, 2018). Cultural sensitivity is an ethical compulsory and it helps strengthen clinical practice (Kanel, 2012)
- xii. Viewing the client needs in a holistic way rather than separating individuals emotional and cognitive functions. It indirectly will shine a light on suitable resources and support for the victims.

## **Conclusions**

In the context of handling crisis in Malaysia, there are various forms of crisis occur involving the communities such as natural disaster crisis, loss, death, accident, etc. The seven-stage crisis intervention model by Robert (1991) serves as a guide for handling different crisis cases. It indirectly enhances self-readiness among the counsellors and psychologists who are directly involved in handling crisis cases. By using the model, the counsellors' and psychologists' actions are more structured and planned. Thus it gives a positive impact to clients who are affected by the crisis. As a result from the intervention, there is positive impact on clients' emotion and further, the clients' problem solving skills are being enhanced. In addition, clients who are facing a crisis feel that the support given to them shows that they are being appreciated and people around them care about what happened to them. This situation indirectly helps the clients gain confidence in facing the crisis in order to continue their lives. The seven-stage crisis intervention model by Robert (1991) is used as a basis to conduct the psychological support crisis intervention on crisis clients. It indirectly

assists the counsellors and psychologists to develop a structured intervention strategy while portraying their readiness in delivering services to clients in need.

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