

# Computerization Family Counseling: Is it Practical to Building The Welfare and Happiness of Muslim Families in Malaysia

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## Abstract:

Family consultation services provided by Malaysian Islamic Religious Offices have emerged as a highly beneficial and practical approach to addressing family difficulties, enhancing well-being, and achieving positive outcomes for Muslim marriages in Malaysia. These services play a vital role in nurturing healthy family relationships and ensuring the overall welfare of Muslim families within the context of religious beliefs. This research seeks to assess the practicality of these services in the current context and propose solutions to enhance overall service delivery. While family consultation holds significant potential, it is essential to address its practical challenge with a focus on its service accessibility. This research attempts to illuminate the usefulness of family consultation services provided by Malaysian Islamic Religious Offices, contributing to the ongoing discourse on its effectiveness for Muslims in the present time. The findings of this study can assist in enhancing the practicality and maximizing the benefits of family consultation services provided by the authority. By gaining insights into the strengths, limitations, and benefits and fostering positive impact, counselors can devise strategies to better meet the needs of Muslim families seeking support. Family consultation services also can continue to contribute to the overall well-being and happiness of Muslim families in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Family consultation, Welfare and Happiness, Muslim Families

## 1. Introduction

Family consultation has become a helpful strategy in various sectors, including education, psychology, and healthcare<sup>1</sup>. It entails working with families to resolve challenges, enhance well-being and create good outcomes. However, practical issues must be addressed despite its potential benefits for effective implementation of family consultation. The availability and accessibility of family consultation services is one of the crucial challenges. Many families experience challenges in participating in family consultation, such as low financial resources, lack of transportation, and time limitations. Family counselors offering family consultation may have schedule constraints and difficulties establishing a constant and convenient contact channel with families. Another practical concern is the training and skill of family consultation counselors. Professionals who provide effective family consultation must have the knowledge and abilities to connect with families, address varied needs, and navigate complex family dynamics. However, a need for more experts with the required specialized training and skills may exist, resulting in consistency in the quality of family consultation services

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provided. Furthermore, incorporating family consultation into current systems and practices might provide practical difficulties. Family consultation frequently necessitates coordination and collaboration across many professions and agencies involved in family care. Coordination issues, communication gaps, and incompatible practices across systems can all inhibit the seamless delivery of family consultation services. Addressing these practical issues is critical to ensuring the effectiveness of family consultation and maximizing its potential benefits for families. Professionals and organizations may improve the accessibility, quality, and efficacy of family consultation services by identifying and eliminating practical impediments, thereby enhancing results for families and boosting their overall well-being<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. Research Methods

In this study, the researcher used the library method to learn more about the practicality of family consultation by the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office. It introduces and compares prominent theoretical frameworks, reviews relevant empirical research that uses them, and culminates in developing a comprehensive framework for assessing organizational readiness to adopt the technology.

**Table 1:** Literary selection

Database	Search
Scopus	Layer 1
	“The practicality of family consultation” (Article title, Abstract or Researcher-specific keywords)
	Layer 2
	“The Malaysian Islamic Religious Office” (Title, Abstract or Researcher-specific keywords)

\*Internal criteria

1. No annual publication limit.
2. There is no limit on the type of study source.
3. Articles are written in Malay and English

Source: Scopus

**Table 2:** Literary selection

Database	Search
ScienceDirect	Layer 1
	“The practicality of family consultation by the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office” (Title, abstract or author-specified keywords)

\*Internal criteria

1. No annual publication limit.
2. There is no limit on the type of study source.
3. Articles are written in Malay and English

Source: ScienceDirect

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Results

Based on a research search from Scopus and ScienceDirect, there is no single related existing work or study related to the practicality of family consultation by the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office that comes from developing countries, including the Islamic world. This shows that there is a gap in the research literature on this subject in these circumstances.

**Table 3:** The number of articles that Scopus first counted<sup>3</sup>

Source	Scopus
Search date	15 July 2023
Layer 1	0
Layer 2	0
Final decision	0

The lack of related studies could be attributed to various factors, such as the narrow focus on the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office, Malaysia's cultural and religious context, and the scant amount of research on family consultation in Islamic religious settings that has been done in developing nations. It is crucial to remember that the lack of published studies does not imply that the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office's family consultation is not practical. It can simply be a sign that these subjects need additional study and attention. By examining the applicability of family consultation by the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office and its efficiency in addressing the unique requirements and issues experienced by Muslim families in Malaysia, further research initiatives can help close this gap. Such studies can offer insightful analysis and suggestions for enhancing the delivery of family consultation services within the framework of Islam.

**Table 4:** The number of articles initially identified in ScienceDirect review Source<sup>4</sup>

Source	ScienceDirect
Search date	15 July 2023
Layer 1	0
Final decision	0

The scarcity of related studies on ScienceDirect may be attributed to several issues, such as the scant study on the practical applications of family consultation within the context of Islam or the absence of documentation and publication of such works on ScienceDirect. It is crucial to recognize that the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office's family consultation services is beneficial or practical despite the lack of supporting evidence. The lack of research in this field, however, emphasizes the need for more study and research. The usefulness of the family consultation services offered by the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office, their success in meeting the needs of Muslim families, and the difficulties and opportunities within the Islamic world can all be clarified by future studies. In the context of Malaysia's Islamic religious system, such study can offer insightful information and help build best practices and guidelines for family consultation.

### 3.2 Discussion

#### 3.1. The practicality of family consultation by the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office nowadays

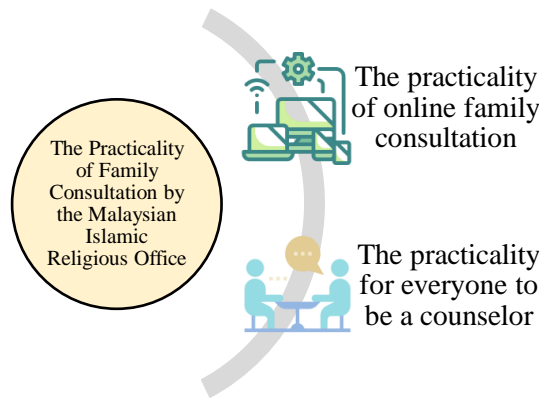
According to the Fourth Edition Chamber Dictionary, consultation is an advisory service where problems and solutions are discussed to overcome them<sup>5</sup>. This method of consultation is typically used at the State Department of Islamic Religion (JAIN) in the Family Law section. The consultation involves offering guidance and advice through discussion to address problems and find solutions. Family consultation is a process of consulting individuals who experience persistent domestic conflicts, facilitated by counselors or consultation officers<sup>6</sup>.

The researcher thinks that the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office's exploration of the feasibility of family consultation provides a great beginning point for evaluating the practicality of online family consultation and the practicality for everyone to be a counselor.

**Table 5:** Family Consultation by The Malaysian Islamic Religious Office<sup>7,8</sup>

The practicality of family consultation by the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office	Process
1. The practicality of online family consultation	A
2. The practicality for everyone to be a counselor	B

Table 5 shows the practicality of family consultation by the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office. This process refers to two practicalities covering the practicality of online consultation and the practicality for everyone to be a counselor.



**Figure 1:** The Practicality of Family Consultation by the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office<sup>9,10</sup>

Figure 1 shows the practicality of family consultation by the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office through processes A and B. This process is proposed to smooth the management of the family consultation process for the implementation of management at the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office.

**3.2. The practicality of online family consultation.**

The Malaysian Islamic Religious Offices can provide family consultation services for married couples having marital difficulties, which shows the usefulness of online family consultation. Many couples experience relationship issues and disputes that need expert advice and help. Couples can attend family consultation sessions with trained and experienced counselors specializing in Islamic teachings and principles through online family consultation services provided by Islamic Religious Offices. This research will give a general overview of the area of research into the practicality of online family consultation.

**3.2.1. Theory of TOE (Technology – Organization – Environment)**

A comprehensive framework that attempts to use this idea to describe an organization’s readiness has been described by<sup>11</sup>. This method, dubbed “Technology, Organization, Environment” (TOE,) measures preparedness to adopt and innovate the contextual aspects. Since the beginning, it has been helped analyze innovations<sup>12</sup>.

**3.2.1.1. Family consultation’s technological**

Online family consultation can use various digital tools and platforms that provide technological help to counselors. Video conferencing software, online collaboration platforms, and encrypted messaging systems are examples of tools that can help counselors and clients communicate<sup>13</sup> and share information more effectively. Online family consultation allows counselors to reach a larger client base outside their geographic area<sup>14</sup> Counselors can communicate

with clients from all around Malaysia, including rural regions, without regard for distance. This extended reach gives counselors more chances to help more individuals and families.

**3.2.1.2. Family consultation’s organizational**

Online family consultation can offer both counselors and clients ease and flexibility. Counselors can plan sessions at various times to accommodate clients’ needs and preferences<sup>15</sup> This adaptability enables counselors to manage their time better, increasing their client load and maximizing their availability. Counselors can provide a safe and private virtual environment where couples may openly share their worries and seek assistance in handling and overcoming their difficulties. The simplicity and accessibility that online family consultation provides indicate its usefulness. Couples can attend family consultation sessions from the comfort of their own homes, avoiding travel and decreasing time limitations. This adaptability enables teams to quickly receive expert assistance while minimizing disturbances to their everyday routines<sup>16</sup>

Counselors must prioritize their clients’ cultural values over their biases, ensuring ethical practice. Embracing a multicultural lens in consultation allows for better support, particularly in underserved communities. Counselors can give tailored assistance and solutions that match Islamic beliefs and teachings by understanding the couple’s unique requirements to strengthen the couple’s relationship and promote harmonious family dynamics. Furthermore, the Malaysian Islamic Religious Offices promote safe and dependable internet platforms to preserve confidentiality and privacy<sup>17</sup>

Many online systems include safe data storage and documentation<sup>18</sup> options, which makes it easier for counselors to keep track of client information, progress, and session notes. Electronic records may be easily accessed and updated, simplifying administrative work, and assuring effective client-related information management.

**3.2.1.3. Family consultation’s environmental**

Online family consultation minimizes the need for actual office space and lowers overhead expenses for counselors. They can have sessions from their desired location, so avoiding the costs of renting and maintaining a physical office. This cost-saving feature of online consultation<sup>19</sup> can be especially useful for counselors just starting or wanting to extend their services. Access to these resources can potentially improve the overall quality and efficiency of family consultation services. They can improve their knowledge and abilities in certain areas of family consultation by participating in webinars, online training courses, and virtual conferences. Online platforms provide a wealth of professional development tools that are simple to acquire and incorporate into counselors’ practices<sup>20</sup>

**Table 6:** The Theory of TOE<sup>21</sup>

The practicality of online family consultation	
1.	Family consultation’s technological
2.	Family consultation’s organizational
3.	Family consultation’s environmental

Table 6 shows the practicality of online family consultation. This process refers to the theory of TOE covering the technological in the practicality of online family consultation, the organizational in the practicality of online family consultation, and the environmental in the practicality of online family consultation.

The Practicality of Family Consultation by the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office

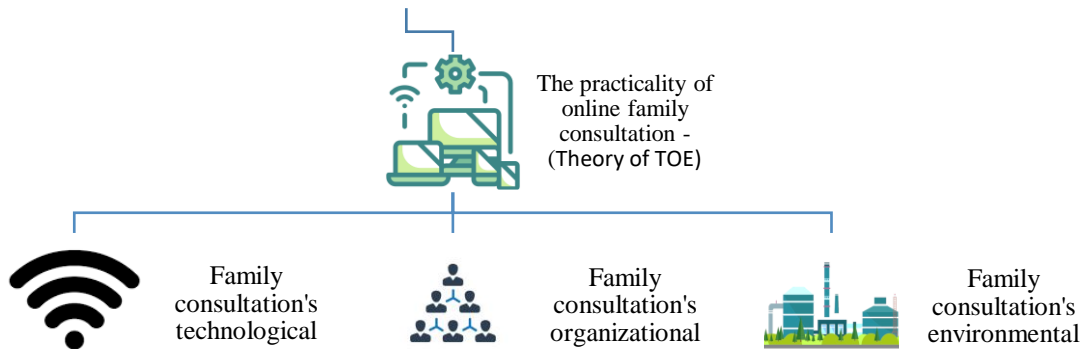


Figure 2: The Theory of TOE<sup>22</sup>

Figure 2 shows the practicality of online family consultation. This process is proposed to smooth the management of the family consultation process for the implementation of management at the Malaysian Islamic Religious Office.

### 3.3. The practicality for everyone to be a counselor

Allowing anybody to become a counselor offers new avenues for expanded access to support and assistance inside families. It creates a culture of self-help and mutual support by empowering individuals with consultation skills, allowing families to handle difficulties and improve well-being more effectively. Furthermore, it promotes a sense of strength and resilience in individuals, allowing them to contribute to their family’s emotional and psychological health actively. However, to preserve ethical standards and ensure the effectiveness of consultation treatments, sufficient training and supervision is required. While being a professional counselor may not be realistic for everyone, there are practical ways that anyone may contribute to the family consultation process and assist simplify the entire experience. Here are some practical considerations that we can construct via the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

#### 3.3.1. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) comprises three constructs. Firstly, is an attitude, explained as the extent to which an individual evaluates and assesses the action at issue<sup>23</sup> as positive or negative<sup>24</sup>. An individual’s attitude to something mediates all reactions to it<sup>25</sup>. Numerous researchers have discovered a strong correlation between attitude and behavior, highlighting the influential role attitudes play in shaping one’s actions.<sup>26,27</sup> Research has shown that attitude influences behavior but is distinct from it.<sup>28,29,30,31</sup> Attitude can indicate and serve as the main predictor of intentions<sup>32,33</sup>.

The second component, known as Subjective Norms (SN), refers to the different societal pressures and factors that drive or have an impact on a person's conduct.<sup>34</sup> The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) asserts that individuals might create views about their behavior based on the expectations of significant others or by watching these important people in action<sup>35,36</sup>.

The addition of The Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) model prompted to the development of the third construct of the Theory of Planned Behavior<sup>37</sup> (TPB). An individual’s viewpoint of difficulty or easiness in carrying out an activity is reflected in their perceived behavioral control. It includes opinions on whether the resources and opportunities required to engage in the behavior are readily available. According to the hypothesis, it may be difficult to predict behavioral intentions and subsequent conduct when volitional control is absent.<sup>38,39</sup> The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), an improvement to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which did not previously address this concern, was developed to address this issue.<sup>40</sup> Understanding people’s behavior is vital, especially in circumstances where they may not have full control because of environmental conditions. This is where the idea of perceived behavioral control (PBC) comes into play.<sup>41</sup>

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) asserts that intention is a reliable indicator of behavior (Icek, 1991). Attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are fundamental components of the theory. These components are intended to predict intention, influencing behavioral performance.<sup>42</sup>

### **3.3.1.1. Family counselor attitude**

The attitude of a family counselor is instrumental in shaping their behavior and performance.<sup>43</sup> For family consultation to be successful, establishing culturally aware relationships based on empathy and implementing empathy-based techniques is crucial<sup>44</sup>. A positive attitude toward their profession empowers family counselors<sup>45</sup> to approach their work with enthusiasm, with dedication,<sup>46</sup> and a genuine desire to support families in need. The presence of this positive attitude can greatly influence the quality of consultation services delivered.<sup>47</sup> The attitude of a counselor can also shape their beliefs regarding the effectiveness<sup>48</sup> of different consultation techniques and interventions.<sup>49</sup> When counselors have confidence in the transformative power of family consultation to foster positive change<sup>50</sup> and enhance family dynamics, they are more inclined to utilize evidence-based practices and actively pursue ongoing professional development to enhance their skills.<sup>51</sup> A positive attitude can cultivate a nurturing and empathetic atmosphere throughout consultation sessions.<sup>52</sup> When counselors genuinely prioritize the well-being of the families they assist and exhibit empathy, it fosters the development of rapport, trust, and open communication.<sup>53</sup>

Trust also is the key building block upon which successful family consultation partnerships are built, allowing them to flourish or, in sad cases, shatter.<sup>54</sup> Trust is frequently described as essential in promoting successful collaboration and interaction, which are the bedrock of united and effective partnerships. As a result, this facilitates a consultation process that is more effective and enhances the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes.<sup>55</sup> Recognizing the significance of attitude within the Theory of Planned Behavior framework, family counselors can actively cultivate a positive mindset toward their role and the meaningful influence they can have<sup>56</sup>.

#### **3.3.1.1.1. Family counselor knowledge**

Family counselors with a solid knowledge base demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of family systems<sup>57</sup>, communication dynamics, and developmental stages. This knowledge enables them to effectively navigate intricate family dynamics<sup>58</sup> and successfully tackle various challenges that may arise during the consultation process. Moreover, family counselors with extensive knowledge are inclined to have greater confidence in their capacity to apply evidence-based practices<sup>59</sup>, employ suitable assessment tools, and customize interventions to address the specific requirements of individual families. They possess a deep understanding of theories and models that are pertinent to family consultation, enabling them to utilize this knowledge to inform their decision-making and develop effective treatment plans.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, by continuously expanding their knowledge base, they can strengthen their confidence in effectively applying their skills and techniques during consultation sessions<sup>61</sup>. In summary, the knowledge of family counselors significantly influences their subjective perceived behavioral control, empowering them to offer effective and informed guidance to families seeking support.<sup>62</sup> Family counselors can enhance their knowledge by actively educating themselves about family-related subjects such as dispute resolution, parenting practices, and stress management.

#### **3.3.1.1.1.1. Active interpersonal communication skills**

Flexible communicators can adapt their communication to varied conditions. This adaptability entails avoiding fixed behavioral patterns, understanding the current circumstances<sup>63</sup>, and picking the most effective and appropriate behaviors from their repertoire.<sup>64</sup> Flexible people are skilled at making decisions because they recognize the plethora of options accessible in any given situation. Highly adaptable people communicate with others frequently, demonstrate ownership through their comments, and provide little negative feedback.<sup>65</sup> Active interpersonal communication skills are an integral part of a family counselor's knowledge repertoire. Interpersonal communication scales are based on DeVito's theory<sup>66</sup>, which includes mindfulness, cultural sensitivity, other orientation, openness, metacommunication, flexibility, expressiveness, empathy, supportiveness, equality, and interaction management.

### **3.3.1.1.2. Radiate positive views in their outlook on life.**

Family counselors consider the unique experiences and circumstances of their clients, aiming to maintain a positive and hopeful perspective while developing a more comprehensive understanding of human behavior. They may encourage individuals to join community groups<sup>67</sup>, internet forums, or support networks focusing on family difficulties. By sharing their experiences, offering emotional support, and exchanging ideas, they help create a welcoming environment for individuals and families seeking assistance.

In the field of family counselor knowledge too, researchers and scholars have shown great interest in the concept of optimism. Psychologists, along with scholars from other disciplines, have adopted similar definitions of optimism, drawing inspiration from psychological perspectives. This highlights the success of counselors in capturing the common understanding of optimism<sup>68</sup>.

In the realm of family consultation, taking care of one's well-being is recognized as essential for effectively assisting others. Family counselors engage in self-care activities,<sup>69</sup> prioritize personal growth, and seek help for their issues, recognizing the positive impact these practices can have on families and communities. Competent practitioners are distinguished not only by their technical expertise but also by their self-awareness and ability to establish meaningful helping relationships.<sup>70</sup>

### **3.3.1.2. Family counselor subjective norms**

Subjective norms refer to the perceived influence and approbation of influential others over a particular behavior. Significant people include individuals who are important in one's life, such as spouses, friends, and family<sup>71</sup>. Subjective norms pertain to the perceived influence and social pressure of important individuals on the counselor's behavior within this field.<sup>72</sup> These influential individuals can encompass colleagues, supervisors, clients, and professional networks, among others.<sup>73</sup> The subjective norms shape the counselor's understanding of the expected or accepted behaviors within their professional environment.<sup>74</sup> Family counselors can be influenced by societal norms, ethical guidelines, and professional standards, which may influence their decision-making and behavior in consultation sessions.<sup>75</sup> The subjective norms establish a social framework<sup>76</sup> that impacts the actions of family counselors, guiding their professional conduct and adherence to established norms and practices within the field of family consultation.<sup>77</sup>

### **3.3.1.3. Family counselor perceived behavioral control.**

Perceived behavioral control pertains to the family counselor's perception of their ability to effectively perform specific behaviors that are relevant to the consultation process<sup>78</sup>. This perception is shaped by multiple factors, encompassing the counselor's comprehension and awareness of family dynamics, therapeutic techniques, and intervention strategies.<sup>79</sup> The knowledge that family counselors possess, which encompasses their understanding of family dynamics, therapeutic techniques, and intervention strategies, plays a significant role in shaping their perceived behavioral control within the consultation context.<sup>80</sup>

While the notion of everyone becoming a counselor has some merit, it is critical to realize the limitations and difficulties involved. On the other hand, the practicality of everyone adopting a consultation perspective and applying fundamental consultation skills to their relationships should not be underestimated. While not everyone can be a professional counselor, everyone can make a difference by being compassionate, understanding, and supportive in their dealings with others. Together, we can foster a culture of caring and support that improves people's well-being and strengthens the fabric of our communities.



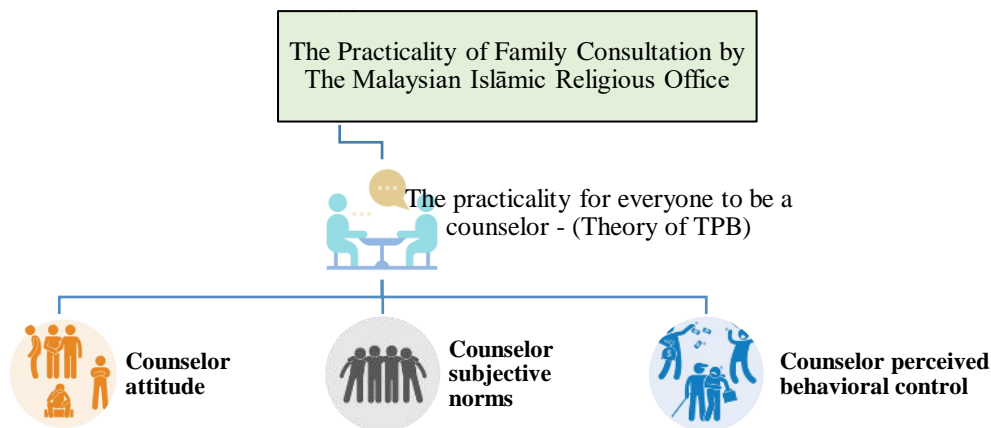
**Table 7:** The Theory of Planned Behavior<sup>81</sup>

The practicality for everyone to be a counselor	
1.	Family counselor attitude
4.	Family counselor’s subjective norms
5.	Family counselor perceived behavioral control

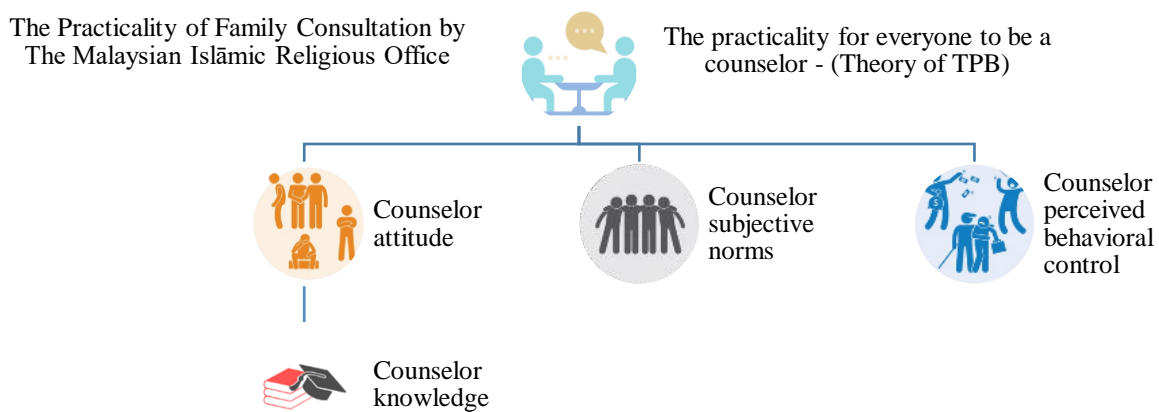
**Table 8:** The Extended Theory of Planned Behavior<sup>82,83</sup>

The practicality for everyone to be a counselor	
1.	Family counselor attitude
1.1	Family counselor knowledge
1.1.1	Active interpersonal communication skills
1.1.2	Radiate positive views in their outlook on life
2.	Family counselor’s subjective norms
3.	Family counselor perceived behavioral control.

Tables 7 and 8 show the practicality for everyone to be a counselor. This process refers to the theory of TPB covering the attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in the practicality for everyone to be a counselor.

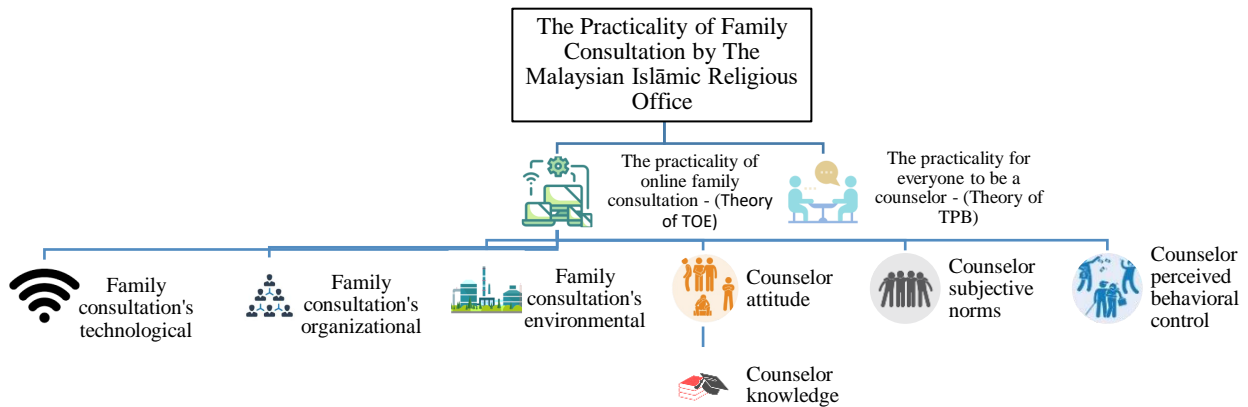


**Figure 3:** The Theory of Planned Behavior<sup>84</sup>



**Figure 4:** The Extended Theory of Planned Behavior<sup>85,86</sup>

Figure 3 and 4 show the practicality of everyone being a counselor. This process is proposed to smooth the management of the family consultation process for implementing management at the Islamic Religious Office.



**Figure 5:** The Theory of TOE and The Extended Theory of Planned Behavior for The Practicality of Family Consultation by The Malaysian Islamic Religious Office<sup>87,88,89,90</sup>

Figure 5 show the overall practicality of online family consultation and practicality of everyone being a counselor. This process is proposed to smooth the management of the family consultation process for implementing management at the Islamic Religious Office. The Islamic Religious Office can give services to people and families who need assistance more effectively and efficiently by putting these practical considerations into practice. The Islamic Religious Office can improve accessibility, reach a wider audience, and offer a more complete support system for families in need by using internet platforms and enlisting a wider spectrum of people as helpful counselors.

## 5. Conclusion

Amidst the ongoing trends of the present day, family consultation has evolved into an efficient endeavor, with a notable shift towards online platforms as a favored and advantageous approach applicable in a diverse range of technological, organizational, and environmental contexts. It is essential for counselors in this field to adopt an inclusive mindset, recognizing that all eligible individuals can offer valuable marriage or family counseling, dismissing the notion that a specific group holds a monopoly on expertise in this domain. Additionally, a sincere and thorough evaluation of counselors' effectiveness in providing counseling services becomes imperative to ensure the highest quality of assistance. In the context of Malaysian Islamic Religious Offices, embracing these contemporary methods and principles becomes crucial in avoiding obsolescence in the eyes of both the Muslim community and the Malaysian populace. Adapting to the changing landscape and acknowledging the potential of online family consultation will not only enhance the accessibility and efficiency of services but also demonstrate the responsiveness of the religious offices to the needs and expectations of the modern world.

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