

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the discussions based on the research findings. The discussions were also based on the findings from previous studies conducted locally and abroad by other researchers. This chapter also provides the research conclusion and recommendation.

This research is divided into four phases (Phase 1 – Phase 4). Phase 1 deployed the quantitative research through the administered surveys to 583 respondents and Phase 2 deployed the qualitative research through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions as well as the In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with 8 stakeholders who have been the informants from the Counseling and Psychology Department and Units, human resource personnel, representatives from the school administrators and supervisor as well as the representative from the teachers union. Findings in Phase 1 and Phase 2 were analyzed to help the researcher developed the handbook of the pilot internal Employee Assistance Services as in the Phase 3 process.

The handbook was later tested in Phase 4 to 23 respondents/participants who had volunteered to join in as the pilot clients for 3 weeks which consisted of six sessions (18 hours) of group counseling. In Phase 4, the researcher deployed both quantitative and qualitative research to identify the suggested Employee Assistance Services effectiveness and also the clients' satisfaction toward the services offered.

In this chapter, the discussions are according to the research objectives as provided in Chapter 1.

5.1 Phase 1: Quantitative Research Findings

5.1.1 Teachers' Levels of Perceptions toward Help-Seeking through Counseling Services

The respondents have shown moderate perceptions level toward help seeking through EAS. As in the result of the research findings, the perception on anticipated risk and utility attached to seeking professional counseling has been identified as a major deterrent to seeking counseling among the teachers in the selected schools. Self stigma has been identified as the second perception that comes after the teachers' perception on the anticipated risk and utility while social stigma resulted as the third perception that also showed moderately perceived among the teachers in the selected school. The emotional openness has been identified as the fourth perception which refers to the level of comfort to disclose personal information to others.

Contradictory findings were revealed from participants' perception toward anticipated risk and utility which were attached to seeking professional counseling. It was identified as a major deterrent to seeking counseling among the teachers in District G. Anticipated risk and utility is "an individual's perception of the consequences associated with self-disclosing to someone" (Vogel, Wade, & Haake,

2006). The fear of disclosing painful experiences and personal information directly might lead to negative attitudes toward the suggested internal EAS. It might be the wall in delivering the services whenever one's fear about the consequences of disclosing personal experience and information in counseling arise. It is also said that one with this perception has the most influential barrier to seeking counseling (Vogel, Wade, & Haake, 2006).

Self stigma is a reduction in an individual's self-esteem or self-worth as a consequence of that individual's self-identification as being someone in need of mental health services (Heather, 2008). Self-stigma can be a thought of as "what members of a stigmatized group may do to themselves if they internalize public stigma" (Corrigan, 2004). This has shown that people do internalize negative perceptions when dealing with mental health concerns (Link & Phelan, 2001). Help seeking is often viewed as a threat to one's self-esteem because seeking help from another is often internalized by the individuals as being inadequate or inferior and may lead the person to decide not to seek help, even when experiencing psychological distress (Heather, 2008). Self-stigma uniquely predicts attitudes toward seeking psychological help and willingness to seek counseling (Corrigan, 2004).

Despite the awareness of the relationship between perceived public stigma and the decision to seek treatment, the complex role that stigma plays in this decision-making process is not fully known. Corrigan (2004) asserted that there are two separate types of stigma affecting an individual's decision to seek treatment. The first, public stigma is the perception held by others (society) that an individual is socially unacceptable. The second, self-stigma, is the perception held by the individual that he or she is socially unacceptable, which can lead to a reduction in self-esteem or self-worth if the person seeks psychological help (Vogel et al., 2006). In other words, the negative images expressed by society toward those who seek psychological services may be internalized and lead people to perceive themselves as inferior, inadequate, or

weak (Corrigan, 2004). As a result, people higher in self-stigma may decide to forego psychological services to maintain a positive image.

Whereas the direct relationship of perceived public stigma on one's willingness to seek psychological services is well established, the role of self-stigma has only recently been addressed. Related research, however, has shown that people can internalize negative perceptions when dealing with mental health issues (Link & Phelan, 2001) and that being labeled mentally ill can lead to lower self-esteem (Link, Struening, Neese-Todd, Asmussen, & Phelan, 2001). In addition, modified labeling theory asserts that societal devaluation and discrimination toward the mentally ill could directly lead to negative consequences for people's self-esteem if they are labeled, by themselves or others, as having a mental illness or as being in need of psychological care (Link & Phelan, 2001).

Consistent to this, perceptions of stigma surrounding mental illness are related to lower self-esteem for those suffering from a mental illness (Vogel et al., 2006). Research has also shown that individuals are less likely to ask for help from nonprofessional sources, such as friends, if they fear embarrassment or if asking for help would lead them to feel inferior or incompetent (Nadler, 1991). According to Vogel et al. (2006), the role of self-stigma in predicting psychological help-seeking attitudes and willingness to seek counseling has been one of the factors of the low utilization of the mental health services.

This study also showed that self-stigma was conceptually different from other, potentially related constructs, such as self-esteem and social stigma, suggesting that self-stigma is potentially unique in the conceptualization of help-seeking behavior. This suggests that self stigma may mediate the relationship between perceived social stigma and attitudes toward seeking help as well as willingness to seek help, as public stigma's effect on one's decision to seek help may have as much or more to do with the internalization of societal messages about what it means to be mentally ill (Link &

Phelan, 2001) or to seek psychological services. This finding also supported Greenidge (2011), that self-stigma uniquely predicted attitudes toward seeking psychological help and willingness to seek counseling above previously identified factors.

The internalization can lead to shame and loss of self-esteem (Link & Phelan, 2001), and the attempt to avoid those feelings may have the most direct effect on an individual's attitudes toward and willingness to seek counseling. However, has not been empirically tested; only the direct effects of social and self-stigma on attitudes toward and willingness to seek counseling have been examined.

The social stigma resulted with the second highest mean value which on the perception test, showing a moderate perception level perceived among the participants in the educational institutes. The impact that social stigma has on individuals who need professional counseling is evident in the finding that many prefer to forgo mental health benefits, which are provided by their employers and instead opt to pay for psychological services on their own to prevent the risk of disclosure in the workplace (Greenidge, 2007). Vogel, Wade, & Haake (2006) have agreed that, "stigma associated with mental health services is the perception that a person who seeks psychological treatment is undesirable or socially unacceptable". This means, that social stigma can also barricade the need for help seeking through counseling services however it showed that the participants were not threaten by the social-stigma factor through the pilot internal Employee Assistance Services. Stigma has been defined as a mark or flaw resulting from a personal or physical characteristic that is viewed as socially unacceptable (Blaine, 2000).

The "stigma associated with seeking mental health services, therefore, is the perception that a person who seeks psychological treatment is undesirable or socially unacceptable" (Vogel, Wade, & Haake, 2006). The existence of social stigma (i.e., negative views of the person by others) surrounding mental illness and the seeking of psychological services is clear. Past research has found that the public often describes

people with a mental illness in negative terms (Angermeyer & Dietrich, 2006). For example, survey research has shown that the majority of community respondents report negative attitudes toward people with an identified disorder (Crisp, Gelder, Rix, Meltzer, & Rowlands, 2000) and tend to avoid and perceive as dangerous those who are labeled as having been previously hospitalized (Link & Phelan, 2001).

Whereas the stigma attached to being a mental health patient may not be the same as the stigma associated with being a counseling client, researchers have found that people tend to report more stigma surrounding counseling clients than non-clients. For example, people labeled as having used counseling services have been rated less favorably and treated more negatively than those who were not labeled (Greenidge, 2007). In scenario based research, individuals described as seeking assistance for depression were rated as more emotionally unstable, less interesting, and less confident than those described as seeking help for back pain and than those described as not seeking help for depression (Ben-Porath, 2002). As a result, it seems that it is not just having a disorder but seeking psychological services that are stigmatized by the public.

Given the negative perceptions of those who seek psychological services, it is not surprising that individuals hide their psychological concerns and avoid treatment to limit the harmful consequences associated with being stigmatized (Corrigan & Matthews, 2003). Consistent with this, individuals are less likely to seek help for issues that are viewed negatively by others (Greenidge, 2007). In addition, surveys of a group of the undergraduate students have found that those who endorse stigmas of the mentally ill are less likely to seek psychological help (Cooper, Corrigan, & Watson, 2003) which was similar to this research finding.

Researchers have also found that perceptions of counseling stigma predict attitudes toward seeking counseling (Komiya, Good, & Sherrod, 2000; Vogel, Wester, Wei, & Boysen, 2005) as well as willingness to seek counseling (Rochlen, Mohr, &

Hargrove, 1999). Survey research with community samples has also found that the fear of being viewed as crazy is a common barrier to seeking professional help (Greenidge, 2007) and that participants who do not seek therapy are more likely to report stigma as a treatment barrier than those who do (Greenidge, 2007). Furthermore, the stigma associated with mental illness has been linked to the early termination of treatment (Sirey et al., 2001). In all, there is clear support that awareness of the stigma associated with seeking treatment has a negative influence on people's attitudes toward seeking help and keeps many people from seeking help even when they have significant problems.

Another contradict findings was on the emotional openness level which refers to the level of comfort to disclose personal information to others. A high level of emotional openness indicates a strong ability and level of comfort with disclosing personal information with others, and more specifically with strangers (Komiya, Good, & Sherodi, 2000). A low level of emotional openness has been linked to negative attitudes towards professional counseling and consequently avoidance of mental health services. A low level of emotional openness is also associated with instigating several treatment fears in individuals who need professional counseling services (Komiya, Good, & Sherodi, 2000).

This research also discovered that female respondents were higher compared to the male respondent's participation in getting help through counseling services offered. Even the number of help-seeking through counseling services in District G showed only a slender percentage of participation, these findings supported the previous researches done by Mallinckrodt & Leong (1992), Komiya et.al, (2000), and Weckwerth & Flynn (2006) that women are more likely to provide and receive help and support through counseling services than men. It is believed this has happened due to the men's nature of socialization patterns which always inculcate men to be more independent than women. Komiya et. al, (2000) found out that women have more open attitudes to

emotions and perceive less stigma. They also reported to have more severe psychological symptoms than men.

Findings also showed that Malay teachers were the only race with the experience of joining the current counseling services provided. Research conducted by Wong (1997) had found out that opinions on mental health had been heavily impacted Chinese college students' rate on help-seeking through counseling services. Other study of Chang (2001) has indicated that East Asian cultures are less likely to seek support when needed, if compared to European American cultures.

Research findings also in line with Vogel (2007) on the age of maturity in getting help and support through mental health providers. Most women in his research had reached the age between 30-40 years old. This is similar to this research findings that 3 out of 4 respondents with the experience of joining the current counseling services provided were aged between 31-40 years old. As on educational background, findings from Yong & Miller (1992) had proved that educational level are significant predictors of help-seeking attitudes. A person with higher educational background was reported as to be more opened in receiving help through counseling and consultation.

In order to help the researcher lead the focus of data findings in Phase 1, the second part of the demographic background was based on 3 questions on their thoughts reflecting their help-seeking attitude in the existing counseling services provided by the shareholders and stakeholders.

Based on the respondents' responses toward challenges in work-life & home-life as well as challenges toward help-seeking through the counseling services, the researcher has found out that, majority of the respondents admitted on having to deal with frustration in their work-life and home-life as well as feeling stress on their work-life and home-life.

Majority of the respondents also admitted that they were not sure of the procedure to join the programmes offered by counseling unit and the type of services offered. The respondents also reportedly as admitting that the location to reach the counselors is far and they also dealt with working hour and travelling constraints. They were also afraid of other's opinion because there might be people that they know at the counselors' offices.

These findings proved that counseling suffers from one serious limitation which is, it can only help those who seek it out. Previous research suggests that over two thirds of individuals who could benefit from counseling never enter a therapist's office (Andrews, Issakidis, & Carter, 2001). To reach those who need services, the field needs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing an individual's decision to seek help (Komiya, Good, & Sherrod, 2000).

One promising avenue for developing a more complete picture of this decision making process is to study variables that influence how people perceive counseling, in terms of both its potential benefits and its potential risks (Vogel & Wester, 2003; Vogel, Wester, Wei, & Boysen, 2005). Adult attachment has been presented as one possible explanation for how individuals evaluate the potential benefits and risks of seeking help when confronted by psychological stressors (Vogel & Wei, 2005).

5.1.2 Teachers' Levels of Expectations toward Employee Assistance Services

A majority of the respondents agreed on the suggested procedures of the internal EAS, the location of the services and the suggested referral system. Based on the respondents' expectations, the type of services consists of:

- (a) Wellness Services in the local Teachers Activity Centre (TAC)
- (b) Family Relationship Consultation Service
- (c) Education & Career Development Consultation Services
- (d) Health & Nutritional Consultation Service
- (e) Self & Emotional Development Consultation Service
- (f) Sexual Related Help Service
- (g) Monetary Advisory & Consultancy Service
- (h) Substance Abuse and Drugs Addiction Help Service
- (i) Addictions Help Service (Alcoholisms & Gambling)
- (j) Industrial Relations Consultancy

As in the previous research findings, it is important to delineate what services and components combine to create the unique EAS approach to productivity problems (Micheal et. al., 2009). EAS/EAPs are defined by the Employee Assistance Professional Association (EAPA) as work-site-based programs designed to assist work organizations in addressing productivity issues and “employee clients” in identifying and resolving personal concerns (including but not limited to health, marital, family, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress or other personal issues) that may affect performance (EAPA, 2011). Although the behavioral health clinical skills are employed to this end, the key focus is on work-site problems as the trigger for case finding. The focus on performance problems, combined with self identification, positions the suggested internal EAS to intervene early on in the development of many problems.

According to Business Health Services, the EAP can assist employees with a variety of personal concerns such as; stress, marital/relationship issues, ineffective communication, healthy lifestyles, wellness, financial problems and many other services that can be related to any employee in an organization as an employee might face a situation that causes any level of distress and problems (<http://www.usuhs.edu/chr/doc/BHSSupervisorHandbook.pdf>, retrieved on 13th October 2014).

In this research, it is clearly that the respondents have chose the listed services as part of the type of services that they feel like needing in the internal Employee Assistance Services.

Majority of the respondents also agreed on the suggested meet-up location; to meet the appointed counselor based on their own accessibility which means they can either meet the counselor at the *District education office, BPsK, Putrajaya* (on-site) as well as at the local Teacher Activity Centre within their zones (off-site). They have also agreed on the procedures which to appoint the school guidance counselors as their mediators that organize and provide the Employee Assistance Services forms at school. They also agreed that the school guidance counselor will help them to mediate between them and the school administrators as well as the Employee Assistance Services coordinator if they feel uncomfortable to do so. They agreed to have both Employer-Initiated and Self-Initiated which mean the respondents can also request directly to their school administrators and the Employee Assistance Services coordinator to fix their appointment date. The respondents also preferred to have an internal Employee Assistance Services as they believed that counselors that involved in the local educational system will understand them better compared to the external counselors.

These findings are similar to Grossmark (1999) that stated, an EAP program may have ascribed status due to many factors such as location. The respondents have revealed that the current locations to meet with the counselors are not easy to be assessed and quite far away from their schools or homes. While findings from Anema (2011), also stated that in his research findings; “the stakeholders felt that, the internal EAP seemed to be more convenient for both supervisors and employees.” The three main factors were; the employees do not have to think about travelling issues and the supervisors thought that an internal program will be more accessible as the location is within the range of employees workplace. Second, the supervisors reported that if employees became familiar with the EAP consultants and the counselors, they would be more likely to utilize the program. Third, by having an internal EAP, the employees issues will be saved in the hand of the internal members and it will keep any arising problem around the house. Moreover, it will be easier for the employees to get help as soon as they want to.

In terms of the referral system, the respondents agreed that the Employee Assistance Services coordinators and counselors shall have the responsibility to making the referral arrangement on necessity basis with the school administrators as well as the third parties such as their family members, hospital or police. As in the previous research findings, the essential ingredients of an effective EAP noted by Andrew Arthur (2000) include a clear, written set of policies and procedures outlining its purpose and function, supervisor training in problem identification, education of employees and promotion of EAP services, a continuum of care-referral through follow up of each case, explicit confidentiality policy, maintaining records for evaluation, and commitment and support from the top management.

However, participation in an EAP or other treatment program is voluntary. Refusal to participate should not be used as a reason for dismissal; rather quality of performance should determine such a decision. Other methods of improvement include referral to a list of therapists and health agencies that may be covered under the

organization's health care plan. In the industrial approach to employee assistance programs, the first step in the procedure was to officially document a decline in job performance. The supervisor then confronted the employee and made a referral to EAP services. The "constructive confrontation" strategy begins with the supervisor confronting the employee, issuing a warning that work performance was suffering and encouraging the employee to seek assistance or making the referral (Walker, 2003).

5.2 Phase 2: Qualitative Research Findings

In Phase 2, the researcher has analyzed the results from the Focus Group Discussions as well as the In-Depth Interviews with eight (8) informants from differing departments and perspectives. The first concern that has been discussed among the informants was on how the EAS can be beneficial to the teachers.

The result has stated that all informants (stakeholders) from differing perspectives agreed that the implementation of the suggested EAS can be beneficial to the teachers as EAS will act proactively as an enhancement of the existing systematic platform of the workplace counseling. Employee Assistance Services has also said as a considerable idea and a rebranding of the existing services. The counselor-teacher meet-up point will be at their home-based Teachers Activity Center which is nearer to the teachers' school as to help teachers dealing with travelling issues. Norman (2002), in his research findings has stated, of equally great importance to employers, the EAP is the result of a good business decision to protect their valuable investment in human resources and to respond to the need to contain health care costs and improve worker productivity, and thus compress business expenditures associated with employee problems.

The second discussion was on whether the goal of return-on-investment can be achieved. The result has stated that all informants (stakeholders) from differing perspectives strongly agreed that the goal on return-on-investment (ROI) can be achieved by letting them experience the services provided in the EAS. Through the clients' satisfaction, the measurement of the impact of all the efforts made in their workplace wellness services can only be done. According to Panks (2001), cost benefit can be measured through outcomes such as absences, medical expenses and supervisory time spent with discipline issues. This means, the indirect outcomes such as morale, accidents, and replacement costs of employees are helpful but more difficult to measure.

The third discussion was on whether the EAS will help to improve the quality of work and life of the teachers. The result has stated that all informants (stakeholders) from differing perspectives agreed that the implementation of the suggested Employee Assistance Services can help to improve the quality of work-life and home-life of the teachers based on its offered services and programs as well as the teachers' willingness to join in as clients.

Based on the types of services offered in the EAS, all stakeholders also agreed that EAS must provide updated services, not just counseling services alone. The services shall be acting as the branch/franchise of the main branch of the main program that has been offered now (*BPsK*). The services also consist of the preventive seminars and programs on personal issues on health, monetary advices, and debts management. The services must be free, easy to be accessed, friendly, provide brief information and not burdening for the teachers to travel out far away and left their work (according to necessity). Toll-free call line was also suggested based on the current type of services offered in the EAS. The teachers and the administrators shall liable to choose the type of services that they think is the best for the situation handled.

While in-terms of suggested location, all stakeholders from differing perspectives agree that the Pusat Kegiatan Guru (PKG) or also can be called as Teacher Activity Center (TAC) can be used as the off-site counseling sessions and other suitable Employee Assistance Services. However, some modification of the PKG floor-layout might be needed as to add to more conducive rooms and to maintain the confidentiality of the sessions conducted. According to Fischer & Farina (1995), intriguing factors such as time constraint, location of the counseling services and the trust to the counselors were said to be agreed as the reasons to feel unmotivated to participate in the stress management programs. The readiness to participate is also among the factors of this issue.

Based on the suggested procedures, all stakeholders from differing perspectives agreed on the suggested procedures of the Employee Assistance Services implementation. However, there are a few concerns especially on the shortages of certified counselors in the District G. The stakeholders also agree that the teachers must have the right to see the counselors during their working hours. However, if the meet-up location is nearby to their place, the coordinator can suggest an appointment after the school's over. The stakeholders also agree on the suggested services through the Internet – emails, Facebook mails, online chats with the counselors and the toll-free call line with the suggestion of a team of trained staffs to handle it. The role of the Employee Assistance Services coordinator is very important in the access and offers of assistance process of handling the meet-up procedures, the chosen counselors, the type of services for on-site and off-site services, walk-in services as well as the referral systems.

All stakeholders agreed on the suggested referral systems. The self-referral (self-initiated) is used when a teacher recognizes that a problem exists and seeks assistance by calling the EAS coordinator directly. This may have resulted from the co-teacher, family members, friends, school administrators, school supervisors, the Teacher Union members informally suggesting the use of the EAS to the teacher. The

employer-referral (employer-initiated) is use by the school administrators and school supervisors if the job performance of a teacher shows continuing deterioration as an employee is responsible to keep the job performance at an acceptable level. The school administrators and supervisors may initiate offer of the Employee Assistance Services assistance. Prior to initiating a formal offer of assistance, the supervisor should consult with the EAS coordinator concerning the appropriateness of the offer.

Discussing on the possible challenges and the barriers of the suggested Employee Assistance Services, the main concerns mentioned by the stakeholders were mostly about the monetary and shortage of the resources. It combines the staffing issues as well as the budgeting considering the emoluments of the current staffs and needed staffs for the implementation of the Employee Assistance Services. It also involves the need for the maintenance cost and the aerobics trainer fees. Due to this, the stakeholders are very much concern about the endorsement level from the authorities as each program needed a thorough discussion and options, especially those with highly budgeting suggestion such as the gym facilities.

The toll-free lines and the Internet counseling (e-counseling) through emails, Facebook mails and online chat are the suggested services to help the teachers to have better options to avoid their unhealthy perceptions toward help-seeking through counseling. However, the stakeholder believed that to help decrease the bad perceptions toward help-seeking through counseling and wellness programs, more awareness campaigns need to be launch. The suggested location for the Employee Assistance Services is one way to reduce the teachers discomfort when they feel intimidated to see the counselor at the educational district office. *PKG* is a multipurpose center for teachers' activity and they don't have to worry about bumping with parents and other officers like they fear they will at the *PKG*.

5.3 Phase 3: Employee Assistance Services Handbook

There were many handbooks of EAPs and EAS that have been revised by the researcher before developing the suggested internal EAP handbook representing the needs based on the District G school teachers' perceptions and expectations toward the current management practices of counseling provided for them. The developing processes also involved the handbook's validations and corrections done by the subject matter experts as mentioned in Chapter III. The researcher also found out that the best place for the teachers to have an easy access of the handbook is through the Guidance and Counseling Unit at each selected sample schools. The teachers can reach, read and inquire about the handbook to the school guidance teacher or directly to their school administrator and supervisor.

This study also provided the forms that need to be revised and fill-up by all the components involve in order to help the teachers understand their rights as the helping process through the suggested internal EAS will involve documenting the observations made and also records keeping. According to John & Jack (2010), documenting observations of initial work performance problems and attempted interventions is an important component of the employee assistance program. Specific details to include in the documentation are employee's name, date, time and location of the incident, summary of supervisor's observations, involvement of witnesses, interventions and employee's response.

John & Jack (2010) added that, documentation provides evidence, objective facts, a picture over time, patterns of behaviors and support for corrective actions. Following the documentation of the employee's poor work performance, a meeting with the employee should take place. The supervisor should discuss the situation with the human resource representative prior to confronting the employee. This meeting should occur before problems become serious enough to warrant a dismissal. The

objective of the meeting is to advise the employee of poor performance and produce an agreement on the method of improvement.

This discussion was similar to the previous studies of Lee and Gray (1994) and Andrew Arthur (2000), which stated that the essential ingredients of an effective EAP noted by include a clear, written set of policies and procedures outlining its purpose and function, supervisor training in problem identification, education of employees and promotion of EAP services, a continuum of care-referral through follow up of each case, explicit confidentiality policy, maintaining records for evaluation, and commitment and support from the top management. Identifying the key issues involved the implementation of an Employee Assistance Services is very important, as the clarification of the basic objectives and policies, the type of model to be implemented and the delivery of services require the process of adaptation based on the organization and the employees needs.

Based on the handbook developed, the researcher had conducted In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with the respondents in Phase 4 to gather the feedbacks to improve the handbook in the future.

5.4 Phase 4: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Findings

In this phase, the process was divided into two stages which stage one was to identify the clients' perceptions toward help-seeking through counseling services which were recorded as pre-perceptions and post-perceptions. At this stage, the researcher studied the mean differences between each variable consisting of the participants perceptions based on self-stigma (Vogel, Wade, & Haake, 2006), emotional openness (Kahn & Hessling, 2001), social stigma (Komiya, Good, & Sherodi, 2000), and anticipated risk & utility (Vogel & Wester, 2003) while in stage two, the researcher

aimed to identify the clients' satisfactions level by conducting the Employee Satisfaction Survey toward Employee Assistance Programs (Harlow, 1998) as well as the in-depth group interview sessions.

5.4.1 Teachers' Pre and Post Perceptions toward Help Seeking through Counseling Services of the Internal EAS

Based on the findings analysed in Phase IV, participants' self-stigma, social stigma, emotional openness and anticipated risk and utility have shown to be improved after joining in the internal EAS. This has proven that there was a positive impact on the participants' perceptions before and after the internal EAS as it was statistically proven to be significant.

These findings supported the previous studies that also found out whilst the mental health services clients have some hesitation towards the services, they might shift their negative perceptions to a better level after getting to familiarize the procedures and understood the role of each components in the offered services (Major & O'Brien, 2005; Corrigan, 2004).

However, according to Vogel, Bitman, Hammer & Wade (2013), social stigma which also known as the public stigma is one of the major restraint of the perceptions that have been identified as needing to be handled wisely. Researchers and clinicians could assist those in need by helping them to interrupt the internalization of public stigma. This could be done by developing interventions that can be applied in clinical settings or by the individuals themselves (e.g., online self-help materials)—interventions that focus on strategies and techniques to combat the influence of public stigma and reduce extant self-stigma. For example, borrowing from the social psychological literature, mechanisms known to impact the ways that stigma affects the individual (i.e., expectancy confirmation, stereotype activation, identity threat

processes; Major & O'Brien, 2005) could be used to reduce self-stigma. Given the association between stigma and treatment adherence, reducing self-stigma may lead to better treatment adherence and decreased premature termination (Sirey, Bruce, Alexopoulos, Perlick, Friedman, & Meyers, 2001).

The respondents' positive improvement toward their perceptions on help-seeking through counseling also reflected the Mulla Sadra's Perception Stages. According to Afifeh Hamedi (2013), Mulla Sadra believed that the important elements which are necessary for sense perception are divided into attention and awareness. The pilot Internal Employee Assistance Services has provided the first requirement toward the respondents' sense perception by inculcating their attention and awareness before joining in the services provided. The roles of the appointed school Guidance Counselor and EAS coordinator helped to explain the respondents' rights through the Employee Assistance Services handbook and how the services provided impacted their home-life and work-life. According to Mulla Sadra, both attention and awareness are presental knowledge resulting from psychological phenomenon and has nothing to do with the body as the attention is the result of man's attention to things which presence for him while awareness is the very presence of external objects in man's minds (Afifeh Hamedi, 2013).

The imaginal and rational perceptions of the respondents were achieved based on the respondents' satisfaction toward help-seeking through counseling services of the pilot Internal EAS. According to Afifeh Hamedi (2013), Mulla Sadra defined the rational perception (also known as the intellectual perception) as the presence of the universal form of any intelligible before the mind. It means that at this stage of perception, an individual is often react by the universal principles and known facts which are abstracted and inferred from external objects and phenomenon (Khamenei, 2001 in Afifeh Hamedi, 2013).

5.4.2 Teachers' Satisfaction toward Help-Seeking through Counseling Services of the Internal Employee Assistance Services

Majority of the respondents agreed that the internal EAS was helpful and responded promptly. On the third item of the questionnaires, majority of the respondents strongly agreed that EAS was professional and understood the situation. On the fifth item of the questionnaires, majority of the respondents have also strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the results of the EAS.

The respondents strongly agreed to recommend EAS to other employees and also strongly agreed that the suggested location was convenient, services offered were relevant, procedures were well understood, using EAS does not negatively affect career and does not negatively affect home-life.

These findings supported the findings in Anema (2011) which identified the level of satisfaction of the EAPs clients in two different schemes and organizations. In his study, Anema (2011) has stated that different satisfaction rate of the EAS clients usually will be recorded based on a few factors such as the organization's support, the type of services offered, the clients' attitudes toward help-seeking through EAS as well as the awareness level towards the importance of the services offered.

5.4.3 Teachers' Opinion toward Help-Seeking through Counseling Services of the Internal Employee Assistance Services

In the second stage, in order to to identify the Teachers' Satisfaction toward Help-Seeking through Counseling Services of the Pilot Internal Employee Assistance Services, the researcher had also conducted group and face-to-face interviews with the 23 volunteered participants.

Participants coded as P7, P12, P3 and P6 strongly agreed that the offered Employee Assistance Services was helpful and promoted encouraging atmosphere to help the participants shared their feelings. Other than that, the participant also reported as admitting that the internal EAS meet-up location was near to the school and has helped to save the travelling time.

“I felt safe when I met people that share the same feelings that I have kept for some time. Through this meeting (EAS), I came to the knowledge that I wasn’t alone.”(P7)

“The coordinator was helping a lot in making me understand the point of joining Employee Assistance Services. I do think sharing our issues also meant I was helping others with the same issues as I have.” (P12)

“The meeting was set up well by the coordinator. Everybody at school thinks that I am away to attend seminar.” (P3)

“I think that the school administrator and supervisors understood the point of me getting the chance to join in such service because they know I am able to get back to school on time. This meet up place is near to my school.” (P6)

The Internal Employee Assistance Services also reported to have been responded promptly. Participants coded as P1 and P17 found out that the counselor replied and responded to the e-mail (online counseling and administrative inquiries) in a short period.

“I can *talk* to the counselor through e-mail on the same day after I felt bad from my day of school and the counselor responded in the same hour.” (P1)

“With the technology around us, Employee Assistance Services has helped me a lot to save up cost. For instance, I can ask about the schedules of the counseling sessions through phone or emails directly to the coordinator.” (P17)

The participants coded as P12 and P4 has been recorded to admit that the Employee Assistance Services offered professional services. They can refer to the Internal EAS handbook that has been provided at the School Guidance and Counseling Unit before joining in as client. The appointed EAS counselors also acted professionally by maintaining the confidentiality and acted based on the written guidelines and procedures.

“We have been referring to the handbook and have always been punctual during the sessions so that I can reach school safely and on time.” (P12)

“I saw the counselor wrote something on the paper but I did not see the files he carried written with any name on it. Maybe, it is to maintain everything confidential so people would not know my name.” (P4)

Participants coded as P4, P19, P8, P22 agreed that the Employee Assistance Services understood the situation.

“The counselor did not ‘lecture’ me with advices. He let me passed my turn during some sessions until I was able to speak up my mind. I felt comfortable with his professionalism.”(P4)

“It is convenient for me to meet the counselor at a place near to my home. I have small children and need to prepare them for nursery before I go to work every day.”(P19)

“Employee Assistance Services forms and handbook are to be kept at the school guidance counselor office so it is easy for teachers to read about its services and terms. Teachers can also choose directly on the services just by reading the handbook.”(P8)

“The counselor planned a good activity for my group. I feel comfortable to play games among my group members but at the same time starting to realize that the counselor is helping me slowly to take his points.”(P22)

Participants were also recorded to be satisfied with the results of joining in the Employee Assistance Services.

“Yes. I felt happy and welcome.”(P21)

“Punctuality and professionalism are the two main qualities that Employee Assistance Services have.” (P5)

“I feel warm accepted and can directly connect to the discussion.” (P18)

“Before joining Employee Assistance Services, I always thought that counseling is meant for those who are mentally ill. Apparently, it also meant helping each other by trusting and supporting.” (P6)

Participants also recorded as saying that they will recommend Employee Assistance Services to others. The proposed internal EAP offered on-site and off-site meet-up locations and in certain services, they can also involve their family members to join in as clients. With these two basic characteristics of the proposed services, the participants agreed that they were satisfied on the proposed internal EAS as a free help services.

“It’s free and we can choose to meet up whether at the counselor office or the counselor comes to meet us here, right? So,why not?” (P8)

“I was told that I can also involve my spouse and children in the services. I would like it if I can get the counselor to meet my teenage daughter and my husband. They need to understand each other’s role. I am feeling tired to be their middle person.” (P17)

“I will recommend the services to my colleagues. They might accept it the same way I just did.” (P19)

These findings were in line with the national survey in the United States, where teachers were asked about their perceptions of the professional school counselor role as defined by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2005). Teachers believed that school counselors should engage in and were engaged in a variety of tasks endorsed as appropriate or inappropriate by ASCA.

Findings also supported Clark and Amatea (2004) which indicated that teacher expectations and knowledge of counselor performance impacted the counseling program, as teachers influence the perceptions of principals, students, and parents. They found that participants believed that communication and collaboration between school counselors and teachers were the most important tasks for school counselors, followed by large group counseling. Fewer than half of teachers believed that individual or small-group counseling was important.

As on the suggested location and services of this study, findings have proven that participants agreed that the Teachers’ Activity Centre was comfortable and easier to access compared to the counselors’ current offices. The suggested location also decreased the participants’ transportation and travelling issues. These findings supported Fischer & Farina (1995), which found out intriguing factors such as time constraint, location of the counseling services and the trust to the counselors were said to be agreed as the reason to feel unmotivated to participate in the stress management programs.

5.5 Limitation

There are a few limitations that might have encountered in this research even the researcher had put the best of effort to minimize them. According to Shuttleworth (2009), the primary issue to keep in mind is regarding the researcher bias or also referred to as experimental bias which is unavoidable. One of the more common types of research bias occurs when subjects are selected, or self selected, that are more likely to generate positive results resulting in respondents and participants selection bias. The respondents who completed the surveys may have been influenced by factors such as rapport with the researcher, counselor experience, and a desire to be helpful. The study was limited by the fact that there was only one program coordinator and two counselors who represented the EAS and who was strongly identified with the program. It is possible that respondents were rating the coordinator effectiveness more so than the effectiveness of the EAS which could be construed as a programmatic halo effect. As noted by Graziano and Raulin (2006), any uncontrolled experimenter and/or subjects effects may compromise the credibility of research.

This research was unable to test the toll-free hotline services and Facebook email offered in the proposed handbook of the Internal Employee Assistance Services as the constraint of resources. According to the Employee & Family Resources (2012) also known as the EFR, the qualified EAS counselors shall be available by telephone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The counselors spend the time necessary with the member listening to their concerns, offering emotional support, and helping them to develop a plan to respond to their concerns. When the member is in need of services beyond the telephone consultation, the EAS counselor makes referrals to appropriate resources in the member's community, including connecting them with the additional no-cost services offered through the EAS.

As *Zone K* in District G was selected, the researcher also faced limited access to use the facilities of the *PKGs* in other zones in the district. This was based on the permission that the researcher and the counselors were only given access to reach the schools and teachers located in *Zone K* for the purpose of this research.

During the group administered data collection in Phase 1, the researcher also experienced challenges to conduct the sessions. This was due to the limited access and time given by a few school administrators. The researcher was somehow, able to work based on the understanding of the school culture that mostly busy with different schedules of programs and activities throughout the year. Therefore, the chosen timeline to conduct the group administered data collections were done mostly during the year end schools' meetings and through the help from the schools' counseling units. This way, the researcher was able to collect more than 70% feedbacks from the actual number of respondents.

This research was conducted among full-time primary and secondary national daily school teachers and school administrators in District G as it is one of the districts with highly reported demand of teachers' transfers and redeployments in Selangor. This research only involved the counselors from District G education office, Selangor State Education Department as well as *BPsK*,. Putrajaya. The research excluded part-time and temporary teachers as well as the non-academic staffs in these schools. Only national daily schools in District G are considered as the source of potential respondents in this research despite of the schools' locations, types, and differences in the culture of administration in each school. By means, this research is excluding all the religious and boarding schools existed in the District G.

5.6 Contribution of the Study

The intent of this research is to add a greater body of knowledge by providing an in-depth understanding of the teachers' perceptions toward help seeking through counseling services as part of the occupational stress management method. From there, this study aimed to develop an Internal EAS handbook by perceiving suitable criteria from the focus group as well as combining the teachers' expectations toward Employee Assistance Services. This study has also identified the effectiveness of the pilot Internal EAS handbook that was tested among the school teachers in District G.

This study has successfully provides an Internal EAS Handbook based on the findings gathered among teachers in District G. Therefore, it is hopefully that the handbook can be part of the existing counseling services handbooks offered to the teachers as an enhancement effort. Employee Assistance Services are well-known and has been established as one of the elements in the Human Resources Development and Management field for many years. By having this handbook, it is important to understand that help-seeking not merely be through counseling services alone but teachers also can choose other services as well such as consultation and preventive programs through gym physical activities, health and also nutritional consultation. This handbook has been presented and will be submitted to the *BPsK*, Putrajaya, Counseling and Psychology Department, Selangor State Education Department and Counseling Unit of the education office in District G.

The scales used in Phase 1 and Phase 4 which to identify the teachers' perceptions toward help-seeking through counseling services were originated in English Language and were translated and adapted into a Malaysian version with the consent of the authors and developers. One of the scales translated, Self-Stigma of Seeking Help (SSOSH) developed by Vogel, Wade, & Haake (2006) can be downloaded through <https://selfstigma.psych.iastate.edu/SSOSH> and has been used by a few researchers in Malaysia and Brunei for its Malay Language version.

This research also attempts to assess the Internal EAS as a medium to help teachers dealing with the occupational stress and helping them to manage a better perspective in their occupation. This area of research is very significant as very few documented studies on occupational stress management specifically through EAS have been conducted especially in teaching profession in this country. Most of the previous studies conducted were focusing on identifying the workload and factors of stress among the teachers in the context of Malaysia's education system (Tan, 1996; Punanesvaran, 2000; Zakiah, 2003; Siti Mardziah, 2006; Abdull, Abd. Rahim & Mohammad Yazi, 2006; Kamaruzaman, 2007; Tajulashikin, Fazura & Mohd. Borhan, 2013; Norashid & Hamzah, 2014).

Despite varying levels of impairment that might existed in life, working individuals with behavioral health conditions, depressive and anxiety disorders, and other related difficulties will continue to actively participate in the workforce (Sanderson & Andrews, 2006), making the worksite as an ideal setting for increasing access to appropriate treatment. The research participants have demonstrated their interest in EAS as a way of addressing their thoughts and to seek help from the services offered through this study. Therefore, it shows that EAS has uniquely positioned to provide relatively barrier-free preventive services and screening, early identification, short-term counseling, referral to specialty treatment, and other behavioral health related interventions for the privately insured population as mentioned by Merrick (2007).

5.7 Implication and Recommendation

There are a few concerns that the researcher was able to identify and experienced throughout the implementation of this study. The shortages of the certified counselors in the District G might be the main reason why the counseling unit was not able to provide certain of its offered services. The shortage of counselors in District G has been repeatedly mentioned in the conducted discussions in this research as one major deterrent of staffing issues which sometimes lead to longer waiting time for the meet-up sessions. Due to this, the researcher would like to recommend that all counseling and guidance teachers in schools are to be offered for their career advancement and given their opportunity to become a licensed counselor.

The Teacher Activity Center (TAC) or also known as *Pusat Kegiatan Guru (PKG)* can be used as the location of the off-site counseling session and other suitable Employee Assistance Services offered. Through this research, the participants responded as feeling comfortable to be having the sessions at the PKG. However, the counselors have to travel out from their offices. Therefore, betterment in their job scope can be proposed if this criteria is to be implemented.

As for the gym facilities and aerobics training through the proposed Wellness Center at the *PKG*, the researcher would like to recommend some allocation for the equipments and trainers expertise. Based on the volunteered participants' feedback after experienced the facilities in *BPsK*, Putrajaya, the impact shown was positive hence the location is quite a distance from their schools.

The researcher was also responsible as the coordinator of the pilot Internal EAS in this research. As the preparation, the researcher has to attend meetings with the external EAS provider to study the role and responsibility of the coordinator as well as the discipline and work ethics that needed to be practiced. The coordinator roles and responsibilities have been specified in the handbook provided in this research together with other parties that might involve in the future. Therefore, professional courses for coordinators of the proposed Internal EAS can be obtained from the local Employee Assistance Services or Employee Assistance Programs provider as bound by the Employee Assistance Programs Association (EAPA).

In today's world wide educational system, different clients' organizations are using different managed care arrangements. The researcher thinks that future research studies are needed in order to evaluate the attitudes of clients toward using the EAS as their primary provider. This study will help to clarify the levels of service delivery and services that will be needed to be extended or developed for employees and their family members in the future.

As dealing with the limitation of funding resources in this research, the researcher was not able to apply one of the main criteria in the Employee Assistance Services which is the toll-free line. However, based on the research findings, the participants of the pilot Internal Employee Assistance Services did not show any discomfort by calling through the pay-line. Based on this finding, the researcher would also like to recommend for this service to be studied in the future research for a better understanding and improvement.

Through conducting this research, it is hopefully will contribute to the occupational stress management studies and its' challenges in this country specifically regarding to the teaching profession as a source of knowledge in other researches of its kind in the future. It is important to learn from comments and critics, if any, and be widely open to accept opinions from others. Hence, it will enhance the existing

counseling services as the occupational stress management method through the suggested structure of developing an Internal EAS for the school teachers.

5.8 Conclusion

Employees are the most important asset in the organizations (Gabcanova, 2011). They are not only offering their skills and talents; they also bring ideas, commitment, creativity, and innovation. However, employees are only human. Sometimes their personal problems can affect their job at the workplace. It also can be the other way around which means the workplace problems might follow them back into their personal life. They may be suffering from any stage of stress due to challenges they need to deal in both work-life and home-life say it marital issues, health problems as well as constraints in fulfilling work demands and responsibilities

In conclusion, the researcher would like to summarize and provide the major findings of the study. These results would be hopefully helpful in order to increase the accessibility of services to clients of the proposed Internal Employee Assistance Services in the needing events and would lead to help improve understanding involving the employee-employer rights, working relations, and schools' productivity.

Based on the research findings in Phase 1, the respondents consisting of 583 teachers in the District G, Selangor had shown moderate perceptions of the self-stigma, social stigma, emotional openness as well as anticipated risk & utility towards help-seeking through the existing counseling services. From all the total research respondents in Phase 1, only 4 respondents admitting to have the experience of seeing the counselors from the listed services.

The second stage in Phase 1 also discovered that the respondents had strongly agreed on the types of services suggested in the Employee Assistance Services and also agreed on the suggested procedures, the meet up location and referral system as part as the enhancement toward the current counseling practices and the scenario they are dealing with in case if they need to see the counselors or joining in the offered services such as the preventive talks or seminars.

From the findings in Phase 2, the researcher had conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI) with 8 stakeholders from differing departments and perspectives. The stakeholders had suggested the Internal Employee Assistance Services as the most suitable characteristics to be tested in this research with the enhancement of the type of services, procedures, meet-up locations, and also the referral system. The stakeholders also discussed the possible challenges and barriers of the current practices of the counseling services as well as the proposed Internal Employee Assistance Services.

In Phase 3, the researcher had suggested the Internal Employee Assistance Services handbook by adopting and adapting the key components and characteristics based on the existing EAPs and EAS handbooks and the EAPA Guidelines (2010), the expectations of 583 teachers chosen as the respondents in District G, Selangor toward help-seeking through Employee Assistance Services and also the findings from Phase 2 from the FGD and IDI sessions with the stakeholders.

Finally in Phase 4, the quantitative and qualitative research was conducted as the participants' pre and post-perceptions toward help-seeking through counseling services were tested. The major findings of the test have proven to be statistically significant and highly improved participants' self-stigma and social stigma. Participants' emotional openness and anticipated risk & utility have also proven to be positively impacted and statistically highly significant. The percentage values of the EAS satisfaction among the participants also found to be positively high. The

researcher had found out that the proposed Internal Employee Assistance Services effectively improved the 23 participants' perceptions toward help-seeking through counseling services and also agreed that they were satisfied with the proposed handbook and services offered, as the components and characteristics were based on their expectations.

In this research, the respondents' perceptions toward help seeking through professional counseling services were observed and studied based on the understanding of the Mulla Sadra Perception Stages (Afifeh Hamed, 2013). The respondents' perceptions reflected the most common sense, imaginal, and the rational perception toward help-seeking through the services in the pilot Employee Assistance Services. This research also proved that the pilot Internal Employee Assistance Services has provided the first requirement toward the respondents' sense perception by inculcating their attention and awareness before joining in the services provided. The appointed school Guidance Counselor and EAS coordinator roles as the mediators has helped to explain the respondents' rights through the Employee Assistance Services handbook and how the services provided impacted their home-life and work-life.

The respondents' expectations toward help-seeking through counseling services were based on Tamara (1999) General Employee Assistance Services Structure and the Internal Employee Assistance Services. The chosen and suggested structure was based on the research findings in Phase 1 and Phase 2. The suggested structure was made concerning the source through which to offer employee assistance services that ultimately revolves around the organization's own resources – existing counselors, locations and developed counseling services modules. The Employee Assistance Services handbook was developed to guide and inculcate awareness among the organization's members involved in the help-seeking process through the services provided.