TERTIARY EDUCATORS' MENTAL HEALTH AND LIKELIHOOD OF SEEKING FOR COUNSELING HELP

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Abstract

This study was aimed to describe more regarding Malaysia tertiary educators and their mental health. This was a descriptive study and there were inferential information being provided in current study. Four selected faculties; mental health scoring was obtained by 12-items General Health Questionnaire. Demography statuses, perceptions, experiences and likelihood of seeking for counseling help, and the mental health among educators in were discussed. There were perceptions found to have significant relationships with GHQ; perceived stress, job satisfaction, and effectiveness of career counseling, and there was significant difference between mental health scores for Hard science and Social science. New findings could be useful to develop plans for increasing mental health among educators in the university.

Keywords : GHQ-12; perceived stress, job satisfaction, Hard science, Social science

Introduction

Datuk Dr. Azmi Shapie, the Director of Medical Development of Health Ministry Malaysia, stated statistics in 2009, there were 11.2% of the population of 16 years old and above found suffering from mental illnesses. There were 324,344 individual treated as psychiatric outpatients in government hospital for year 2007 and, in the year 2008, the numbers increased to 379,010 cases. Numbers of inpatients were, 21,852 for year 2007, and 21,217 for year 2008. There was a study being conducted by Nor Sheereen Zulkeyfly and Rozumah Baharudin (2010) in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) which assessed psychological health of students, and researcher would like to conduct a study among educators in the university. Those studies had drawn attentions of researcher of current study to study on another party in education system— the educators.

There were few variables studied with GHQ in this study, they were demography, perceptions, experiences and likelihood of seeking for counseling help, and mental health and GHQ was designed to detect diagnosable psychiatric disorders (McDowell, 2006). There studies being conducted on those variables, for example, a longitudinal study (a 17 years cohort study of 30,000 people) found, lower income predicted higher levels of psychological distress (Wood, Boyce, Moore, & Brown, 2011); younger age had the highest prevalence of psychiatric morbidity within demographic characteristics, and this result were showed in some study (Mohamad Jafar Modabernia, et al., 2008); women scored 74% higher than men for meeting DSM-IV criteria for internalizing disorder (Needham & Hiil, 2010); depressive symptoms increase in women who married with age (Jang, Kawachi, Chang, Boo, Shin, Lee, & Cho, 2009); among those who were employed, the senior professionals had highest unadjusted psychiatric morbidity (Amoran, Lawoyin & Oni, 2005).

Perceptions wise, self-enhancement were showing better mental health and self-effacement showed relatively poorer mental health status (Miki, 2000); WHO (2004), mental health has a reciprocal relationship with well-being and productivity; the higher perceived stress, the higher psychological distress the individual has (Babak Moeini, Froug Shafii, Alireza Hidarnia, Gholam Reza Babaii, Behrooz Birashk, & Hamid Allahverdipour, 2008); job satisfaction was strongly associated with mental or psychological problems like burnout, depression, low self-esteem and anxiety compare to physical problems (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005); Atodo (2008) stated that, there was a very weak negative relationship between students' perception of effectiveness of guidance and counseling, and their academic performance.

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Methodology

Participants

Total of 122 educators (54 male, 68 female) from four faculties (two hard sciences and two social sciences faculties) were participated in the study. Clustered random sampling was used in this paper, and those faculties selected randomly. All the participants was from the same university—UPM.

Materials

A three pages questionnaire was given to each of the educators. There were two parts in the set of questionnaire, Part A, two pages; this was the part educators asked to respond on the questions about their demographic statuses which included monthly income, age, gender, period of employment, and marital status. In the same part, educators asked to rate their perceptions such as their perceived job productivity, job satisfaction, stress, stressor and the effectiveness of career counseling. Last part of part A, respondents were asked about their experiences, likelihood of seeking for counseling help, and the awareness of the counseling for employees in UPM. Part B was GHQ-12 which assessing mental health. The higher the score indicate lesser mental health.

Procedure

All educators in all the selected faculties were invited to participate in the study. After getting the approval letters from all four faculties, questionnaires were distributed to all faculties, and the administrators in the departments in those faculties distributed and collected the questionnaires from their staffs. First collection, the return rate was quite low from certain faculties; therefore, researcher of current study went to those faculties and tried to knock on each door of educator in order to collect more data.

Results

The results of current study reported descriptive results such as, GHQ scores for each demography status like gender, male GHQ mean score ($\bar{x}$ =10.07, Sd.= 6.17); meanwhile, female GHQ mean score ($\bar{x}$ = 8.91, Sd.= 5.48); age, lower age group (age 25 to 42) score GHQ ($\bar{x}$ = 9.12, Sd. =5.08), was similar with GHQ score for higher age (age 43 to 59) group ($\bar{x}$ = 9.56, Sd.= 6.74); monthly income, lower monthly income group (RM 2500 to RM 5250) scored similar to higher income group (RM 5251 to RM 18, 000) which was mean score 9.05 (Sd.=5.36) and 9.73 (Sd.= 6.16); period of being employed in UPM, Shorter period group's scores ($\bar{x}$ = 9.72, Sd.= 5.93) was slightly higher than longer period group's mean scores ($\bar{x}$ = 8.18, Sd.= 5.95). Inferential tests were run too to identify if there is any relationships between perceptions and GHQ. Result showed (Table 1), there were significant relationships between stress and one's mental health, rs =.-.436, p< .05)

Table 1 : Educators' Perceptions Regarding Selves and GHQ

Variable	GHQ Scores	
	r-value	p-value
Productivity	.038	.678
Stress	-.436**	.000
Satisfaction	-.153*	.046
Career Counseling	-.216*	.017

** Correction is significant at the 0.01 level
* Correction is significant at the 0.05 level

Next inferential test was t-test which used to test on if there is any difference between two fields of sciences (Hard and Social sciences), and the result showed (Table 2), there was significant difference between the two fields of sciences in terms of the mental health levels, t(120)= -2.959, p= .004, and Hard science faculties ($\bar{x}$ =11.432) showed lower mental health compare to Social science faculties ($\bar{x}$ =8.295).

Table 2 : t-test for Social science and Hard science

Variable	F	Sig.(2-tailed)	df	t	SD
Lavene's Test	.671				
t-test		.004	120		
Social Science				-2.959	5.35035
Hard Science				-2.856	6.07855

Discussion

The result offered more information about educators and their mental health levels which fulfilled one of the objectives of current study. Besides all the descriptive information, there were inferential test being run in order to expend the usefulness of those result in the study. Relationship between self-perceived stress and GHQ was found significantwhich was similar with previous study, the higher individual perceived their stress, the higher psychological distress the individual has (Babak Moeini, Froug Shafii, Alireza Hidarnia, Gholam Reza Babaii, Behrooz Birashk, & Hamid Allahverdipour, 2008). Again the result supported stress was strongly correlated with mental health.

Another result suggested, Hard science scored higher in GHQ compare to Social science which indicated that Social science had better mental health compare to Hard science. Difference of the two sciences could be due to the different working natures of those fields of studies, for example, hard science might involve more experiments and those experiments might expose educators in more working hazards, and those working hazard could had created certain levels of stress towards educators in hard sciences.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, the information findings might provide more ideas about mental health of tertiary educators which might be helpful in conceptualize problems from their working culture perspectives.   One of the satisfactory result found in this study was, the difference found in between two fields of sciences which had not been studied before; some findings which were not congruent with previous studies, they could be new findings that we could further study on. Although there were limitations in current paper, such as it provided more heavily on descriptive information compare with inferential information.

Lastly, it was very important that this study can have the cooperation from different parties; especially all the faculties which allowed this to be done. With the help from authorize party who allowed researcher of current study to use the instrument, this study cannot be completed with least expenses. With great hope here, this study could benefits different parties in different aspects, in different levels.

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