



Issues and Challenges of Experienced Counselors to Obtain Counseling Services in Malaysia

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Abstract. Counseling services are usually provided by counselors to specific target groups such as students, parents, and the community. However, the aim of this study is to look at the challenges of counselors themselves to obtain counseling services. This study is a qualitative study in the form of semi-structured interviews among eight counselors with more than 10 years of experience. The scope of the study revolved around exploring the challenges of obtaining counseling services. Data were analyzed by using the thematic analysis method that has been recommended by Braun and Clark (2006). The findings of the study found that the challenge for counselors to obtain counseling services is perception and stigma, the counselor's personal attitude, and the counselor's way of thinking. Discussion and implications of the study are also discussed in this study.

Keywords: Counselor, Perceptions, Challenges, Attitudes, and Ways of Thinking



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Introduction

Counseling services become a major agenda when individuals are faced with psychological problems related to human behavior and psychological issues. Counselors are responsible for helping individuals to identify their goals and potential solutions to any issues or problems caused by psychological instability, improve self-concept as well as promote behavioral change and optimal mental health (American Counseling Association, 2016). However, counselors as ordinary human beings also did not escape from dealing with life issues like other human beings. So, the question is, to what extent will counselors get counseling services?

According to Vogel and Wester (2009), the attitude to seek counseling services also contributes to the challenges that individuals desire to seek help from counselors. In addition, there are also other factors such as stress and the factor of wanting to keep something secret from the knowledge of others becomes an attraction to seek counseling services (Cramer, 1999; Deane & Chamberlain, 1994; Rusnani, Loh, & Asmah, 2008). It can also contribute to the willingness of the individual or counselor to seek the help of counseling services.

Moreover, perception or stigma also causes individuals to refuse to seek counseling services (Drapalski, Lucksted, Perrin, Aakre, Brown, DeForge, & Boyd, 2013). According to Corrigan (2004), there are two types of perceptions that often cause individuals not to be interested in counseling services, namely community perception, and self-perception. The community's perception is through the community's negative interpretation of counseling services from counselors. While self-perception is a negative self-perception to seek