

# **‘29.2 PCT OF MALAYSIANS AGED 16 TO 19 FROM POOR FAMILIES HAVE MENTAL ILLNESS’**

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KUCHING: The Health Research and National Morbidity survey done by Ministry Of Health Malaysia last year reported that 29.2 per cent of Malaysians between the age of 16 and 19 years from low income families had mental illness.

Minister of Welfare, Women and Community Well-Being Datuk Fatimah Abdullah, who revealed this, also said the country recorded an increase of 11.2 per cent in mental health problems since 2006.

“Mental illness and its problems that affect our lives and the lives of many are caused by many factors; namely economic crisis, being out of job, stress, environment, imbalanced psychological needs, lack of awareness and lack of education of mental illness,” she said.

“These may seem like a very simple thing but mental illness does make a real difference in our family and the community as a whole .If we do not socialise, share and explore the world around us, we can feel unfilled and unhappy,” she added.

Fatimah revealed these facts before she officially closed the International Seminar on Professional Counselling 2016 (International ProCoun’ 16) at Hilton Hotel here yesterday.

She said that it is important to get professional counselling to address the problem.

“My ministry, the state government and its agencies and also NGOs in this country support such seminar so that experts can converge together to find ways, ideas and new knowledge and skills to manage these mental health problems,” she said.

She lamented that Sarawak lagged behind in the number of counsellors to tackle such problems.

Fatimah also revealed that the World Health Organisation indicated that 450 million persons in the world had mental disorder, with one of four people struggling with mental problems.

“13 percent of this mental problem is caused by neurology problem and substance abuse while 4.3 percent have second stage depression,” she pointed out.

Meanwhile, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Mohamad Kadim Suaidi, whose university was co-organiser of the conference, said the seminar was a good platform for knowledge and experience sharing among the academics, practitioners, students and individuals.

He was pleased to note that the seminar was attended by 247 participants from Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malta and Ireland and also international students studying in Malaysia.

Present were International Counselling Association of Malaysia (Perkama International) president Datuk Dr Abdul Halim Mohd Hussin, Mental Association of Sarawak deputy chairman Dr Gan Chee Kuan,

Psychology Division of Public Service Department acting director Civil Servant and Psychological Association of Malaysia president Dr Abdul Jalil Hassan.

The theme of the seminar was 'I Care, YOU Care and WE Care'.