

Determinants of Subjective Well-Being Among Guidance and Counseling Teachers (GACTs) in Malaysia: Challenges and Recommendations

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Abstract: This paper explores the determinants of subjective well-being among guidance and counseling teachers (GACTs) in Malaysia, focusing on personal attributes, professional conditions, and socio-cultural influences. The study highlights the impact of emotional intelligence, workload management, social support systems, and financial stability on the well-being and professional effectiveness of GACTs. Recommendations for policy reforms, enhanced mental health support, and improved work environments are proposed to foster a more resilient and motivated educational workforce, ultimately benefiting student outcomes and the broader educational system.

Keywords: educational policy, emotional intelligence, financial stability, GACTs, guidance and counseling teachers, mental health, social support, subjective well-being, workload management.

I. OVERVIEW

Subjective well-being is a complex concept that includes various aspects such as overall life satisfaction, experiencing positive emotions, and the lack of negative emotions (Tov, 2018). Maintaining high standards is crucial for guidance and counseling teachers (GACTs) in Malaysia, as they play an important part in addressing students' academic, career, and personal development needs (Zakaria *et al.*, 2017). This paper explores the factors contributing to an individual's subjective well-being in this context, highlighting the significance of personal characteristics, work conditions, and socio-cultural factors. Gaining insight into these factors enables the implementation of efficient strategies to promote the well-being of these educators, ultimately benefiting the wider educational ecosystem. The research aims to provide comprehensive insights into improving the subjective well-being of GACTs by focussing on personal characteristics, workplace environments, and cultural contexts. This, in turn, will enhance their effectiveness and have a positive impact on student outcomes.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Detailed secondary research on Malaysian guidance and counseling teachers (GACTs) and their subjective well-being yielded useful findings. We now know more about GACTs' well-being, counseling services, and student achievement. This comprehensive review emphasises the importance of these connections in reaching reliable conclusions and the importance of policy interventions and school involvement in improving GACTs. The literature recommends integrating data from multiple sources to support GACT advancement. It also highlights research gaps that could lead to future studies on subjective well-being and GACTs. This comprehensive overview synthesises current knowledge, laying the groundwork for future research and practical implementation. It is a valuable resource for academics, policymakers, and practitioners working to improve GACT efficiency by addressing subjective well-being in Malaysia.

III. METHODOLOGY

The primary focus of this conceptual paper was to perform a literature review on the topic of guidance and counseling teachers (GACTs) and determinants of subjective well-being in Malaysia, specifically within the Malaysian context. Employing a systematic approach, the research team meticulously analysed various databases, such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ResearchGate. Key search terms included "GACTs," "guidance and counseling teachers," "determinant," "life satisfaction," "negative emotions," "positive emotions," and "subjective well-being," which significantly influenced the investigation's outcomes.

IV. DEFINITION AND IMPORTANCE OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

Subjective well-being includes life satisfaction, positive emotions, and negative emotions, which people self-assess (Rao, 2022). High subjective well-being improves empathy, patience, and resilience, which helps guidance and counseling teachers (GACTs) support students, according to Ruggeri *et al.* (2020). Life satisfaction is a cognitive assessment of living well, including personal and professional fulfilment. Joy, pride, and enthusiasm improve school climate and relationships with students and colleagues. Negative emotions like stress, anxiety, and frustration can hinder them (Rodell & Judge, 2009). High life satisfaction and positive emotions can mitigate negative emotions, improving job performance. Understanding these dynamics allows targeted interventions like professional development, mental health services, and peer support to support GACTs, creating a resilient and proficient educational environment. This comprehensive approach improves the school environment and student outcomes because emotionally resilient GACTs can better guide and counsel students.

A. Life satisfaction

Joo & Lee (2017) found that guidance and counseling teachers (GACTs) with high life satisfaction are more motivated, engaged, and effective in their jobs, building strong relationships with peers and students to improve the school environment and student development. Satisfied GACTs are more resilient to job demands, creating supportive environments that improve academic performance, emotional well-being, and school experience. They promote empathy and altruism through personalised support and innovative methods due to their deep sense of purpose and fulfilment. They also have a good work-life balance (Liboreiro *et al.*, 2019), providing good advice without burnout. GACTs with lower life satisfaction may struggle with dedication and effectiveness, affecting school culture and student outcomes. GACTs' role in student growth and well-being requires addressing life satisfaction factors (Diener, 1984; DiMaria *et al.*, 2020).

B. Positive Emotions

Diener *et al.* (2020) state that positive emotions like joy, gratitude, and pride are essential for well-being and have a major impact on education, especially for guidance and counseling teachers. Effective counseling requires creativity, problem-solving, and resilience, which these emotions boost. Positive GACTs use proactive strategies to create a warm, empathetic environment where students can seek support and share concerns. Positive emotions boost student self-esteem, reduce anxiety, and improve school climate, according to Bono & Ilies (2006). Positive emotions help GACTs stay balanced and grow professionally and personally. Emotional well-being affects academic performance and life satisfaction, but Diener *et al.* (2020) advise against focussing on positive emotions. Drigas & Papoutsi (2020) stress the importance of managing growth-related anxiety, stress, and depression. Overemphasising positive emotions can overlook emotional regulation. GACTs should acknowledge all emotions and help students manage them to build emotional intelligence and resilience. A holistic approach to positive and negative emotions improves GACTs' well-being and performance and helps students develop the emotional skills they need for academic success and life satisfaction (Richards, 2022; Harpaz *et al.*, 2024).

C. Negative Emotions

Anxiety, depression, and anger negatively affect guidance and counseling teachers' well-being and effectiveness. Negative emotions can impair GACTs' ability to provide effective services, undermining their composure and empathy, which are essential for supporting students with personal and academic challenges (Bleasdale *et al.*, 2020). The emotional turmoil can create a less nurturing environment, affecting students' welfare and academic success. High levels of negative affect make it hard for GACTs to handle their roles' emotional demands, causing stress and burnout that hinders their professional duties and innovative problem-solving. Negative emotions also strain relationships with coworkers, students, and parents, compounding professional issues. These emotions can decrease GACTs' ability to create a supportive school

environment, lower their self-esteem, and increase anxiety, according to Wang (2021). To combat this, GACTs need stress management and coping resources. Mindfulness, exercise, and emotional intelligence training can reduce negative emotions (Iacoviello & Charney, 2020). GACTs should have access to peer support groups and professional counseling in schools to manage emotional issues. Positive affirmations and gratitude journaling boost resilience and job satisfaction. Creating a nurturing school environment with work-life balance and open communication policies can also reduce negative emotions. Schools can ensure GACTs' efficacy and positive impact on students by addressing these emotions and providing resources.

D. Importance of Subjective Well-Being for GACTs

Kansky (2017) states that subjective well-being improves mental and physical health, job performance, and life satisfaction. High subjective well-being reduces stress, anxiety, and depression, leading to a healthier, more balanced life. This optimism boosts their professional performance, creating a productive work environment and personal satisfaction. Guidance and counseling teachers (GACTs) must have high subjective well-being (Missun & Omar, 2024). These educators help students overcome challenges and grow academically and personally. High subjective well-being, or GACTs, allows people to provide empathetic and effective guidance, creating a supportive and nurturing educational environment. This helps students overcome academic and personal challenges. Prioritising and improving GACTs' subjective well-being improves students' educational experience.

V. KEY DETERMINANTS OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING IN GACTS

According to Soutter *et al.* (2014), the overall effectiveness and satisfaction of guidance and counseling teachers (GACTs) in Malaysia are influenced by a complex interplay of personal, socio-cultural, and economic factors. This is the case in Malaysia. Emotional intelligence, personality traits such as optimism, resilience, and adaptability, as well as physical health, all play a significant role in assisting GACTs in managing the stress and requirements of their occupation. This is true on an individual level as well. GACTs are able to effectively manage their own emotions, comprehend and address the emotional needs of their students, and cultivate strong interpersonal connections and relationships when they possess a high level of emotional intelligence.

According to Adelman & Taylor (2002), these characteristics are essential for establishing and maintaining a more positive and productive environment in the workplace. GACTs, on the other hand, have characteristics of personality such as resiliency and adaptability, which equip them with the mental and emotional resources they need to effectively manage the complexities and challenges that come with their responsibilities. Even in the face of adversity, they are able to maintain a sense of purpose and satisfaction because of the characteristics that they possess. According to Jones & Pijanowski (2023), maintaining one's physical well-being is crucial because it serves as the basis for effectively managing stress, for maintaining energy levels, and for effectively interacting with students.

In the external context in which GACTs operate, socio-cultural factors, such as cultural perceptions of mental health, the presence and effectiveness of social support systems, and community dynamics, have a significant impact (Mohamed *et al.*, 2020). These factors include the presence of social support systems. It is possible that these factors will either strengthen or weaken the support systems that GACTs rely on, which will consequently have an effect on their ability to provide students with guidance and counseling of a high quality. For GACTs to be able to handle the demands of their jobs, maintain a healthy work-life balance, and reduce feelings of isolation, they need to have strong social support networks. These networks include those that come from family, friends, and colleagues. There is a significant relationship between the cultural attitudes towards mental health and the behaviours of individuals who are struggling with mental health issues. The cultural attitudes that are held regarding mental health also have a significant impact; in settings where mental health is openly discussed and supported, GACTs are more likely to seek assistance and access resources, which ultimately leads to an improvement in their overall well-being and effectiveness.

Important economic factors that have an equal impact on the subjective well-being of GACTs include financial stability, employment security, and the presence of professional growth opportunities (Parsons *et al.*, 2020). One of the most important economic factors is the presence of professional growth opportunities. Not only does having financial stability reduce the anxiety that is associated with economic unpredictability, but it also makes it possible for GACTs to concentrate more on their professional obligations without being distracted by concerns about their financial situation. It is possible for GACTs to experience a significant increase in job satisfaction if they have access to a sufficient quantity of resources, such as opportunities for educational advancement and instructional materials. This is due to the fact that it

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enables them to carry out their responsibilities with increased efficiency and self-assurance. The implementation of economic policies that guarantee competitive remuneration, extensive perks, and robust pension schemes significantly improves the overall welfare of GACTs. This is because these policies provide the financial stability that is necessary for long-term job satisfaction and professional advancement.

According to Blustein (2013), by enacting supportive policies, providing opportunities for ongoing professional development, and strengthening social support networks, an all-encompassing strategy that addresses personal, socio-cultural, and economic factors can significantly improve the well-being of GACTs. In addition to improving the well-being of the instructors on a personal level, this all-encompassing approach also helps to cultivate an educational environment that is more encouraging, productive, and resilient. The capacity of GACTs to have a positive influence on student outcomes grows as they experience higher levels of job satisfaction and well-being. As a result, they are able to make a significant contribution to the overall success of the educational system in Malaysia. Educational institutions and policymakers have the ability to cultivate a more nurturing and streamlined educational system by giving top priority to the welfare of GACTs, which stands for students with gifted and academically talented abilities. This will ultimately result in improved academic achievement, improved student assistance, and a more united and vibrant learning atmosphere.

VI. CHALLENGES

Bakar (2020) states that guidance and counseling teachers (GACTs) in Malaysia face various significant challenges that have a profound impact on their well-being and professional efficacy. These challenges stem from a combination of factors, such as excessive workloads, increased societal expectations, restricted access to essential resources, and underlying systemic problems within the wider education sector. GACTs are frequently assigned a wide range of duties encompassing academic assistance, emotional counseling, and personal growth for students. This often results in physical and emotional fatigue, leaving little time for self-care or recovery. The lack of recognition and institutional support exacerbates the situation, leading to a sense of undervaluation and demotivation among many GACTs. Exacerbating these problems is the insufficient availability of vital resources, including current teaching materials, cutting-edge technology, and ongoing professional development opportunities, all of which are essential for sustaining their productivity and proficiency. The education system's structural deficiencies, such as ineffective policies and inadequate financial investment, worsen these challenges by restricting the availability of the necessary tools and support systems that GACTs require to effectively carry out their roles. The presence of these systemic problems leads to a widespread feeling of being overwhelmed and undervalued among GACTs, as they are frequently expected to fulfil extensive requirements with limited assistance. In order to tackle these intricate difficulties, it is crucial to enact comprehensive policy changes that prioritise the adoption of competitive remuneration packages that accurately reflect the demanding and multifaceted responsibilities of GACTs.

Additionally, it is necessary to allocate sufficient resources to ensure that schools are adequately equipped to support both teachers and students. It is important to provide easy access to continuous professional development opportunities so that GACTs can effectively adapt to the changing demands of their profession and improve their skills and effectiveness. Furthermore, it is imperative to allocate more resources to education in order to tackle the underlying deficiencies that contribute to the challenges experienced by GACTs. This will guarantee that they have the required resources and support systems, including mental health services, which are crucial for effectively managing the pressures associated with their responsibilities. Ultimately, it is imperative to enhance societal acknowledgement of the crucial contributions made by GACTs in order to enhance their job contentment and overall welfare. This will aid in establishing a cultural milieu that appreciates and sustains the psychological well-being and career advancement of educators. By implementing these strategies, educational institutions and policymakers can establish a more conducive and caring environment that not only improves the efficiency and welfare of GACTs but also results in better outcomes for both educators and students.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The subjective well-being of guidance and counseling teachers (GACTs) in Malaysia is crucial for their professional efficacy, overall life satisfaction, and the academic achievement of the students they assist. Given the crucial importance of GACTs in promoting students' academic, emotional, and personal growth, it is essential for educational institutions and policymakers to prioritise their well-being by implementing comprehensive mental health policies that include emotional intelligence training, stress reduction programs, and regular mental health assessments. The policies should be formulated to provide GACTs with the necessary tools and strategies to effectively handle the emotional and psychological demands

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of their roles. This will improve their resilience and ability to support students. Furthermore, ensuring the efficient allocation of tasks and adequate allocation of resources is crucial in reducing stress and avoiding burnout, enabling GACTs to concentrate on their primary duties more effectively and with greater contentment. By implementing measures to prevent excessive workload and providing GACTs with essential resources and assistance, educational institutions can effectively alleviate the factors that contribute to occupational stress. Establishing a nurturing work environment, distinguished by mentorship initiatives, peer support networks, and a favourable workplace ambiance, additionally bolsters the welfare of GACTs by cultivating a feeling of camaraderie, cooperation, and reciprocal regard. The presence of this nurturing atmosphere not only enhances the psychological and emotional well-being of GACTs but also enhances their capacity to carry out their responsibilities proficiently, ultimately resulting in improved educational results. Financial stability is a crucial aspect of GACTs' overall well-being. Competitive compensation packages and comprehensive benefits play a significant role in reducing financial stress, allowing GACTs to focus on their professional responsibilities without being distracted by economic worries. When GACTs feel financially secure and receive support from their institutions, they are more likely to have higher job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment to their roles. This, in turn, has a positive impact on the students they serve. Thus, educational institutions can foster a nurturing environment that promotes the well-being of GACTs and enhances the overall success and development of students by prioritising mental health support, workload management, a supportive work environment, and financial stability. This approach ensures that GACTs are adequately prepared and motivated to fulfil their important responsibilities to the best of their abilities.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The well-being of Malaysian guidance and counseling teachers (GACTs) is crucial to their professional performance and well-being. By understanding and addressing mental health, workload management, support systems, work environment, and financial stability, educational institutions and policymakers can create a GACT-friendly environment. Thus, this will benefit students and the educational system. Higher subjective well-being in education leads to greater satisfaction and happiness, which improves student assistance. This can improve academic performance and school climate. Creating comprehensive policies, providing ongoing professional development, and building strong support systems are essential for building a supportive and effective educational workforce. The well-being of GACTs is crucial to the success of Malaysia's educational system. Analysing the factors that affect an individual's subjective happiness and implementing effective strategies can greatly improve GACT welfare and Malaysia's education quality. This comprehensive GACT support strategy will create a more resilient, efficient, and motivated teaching workforce. This is crucial for educational success and development.

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