

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Education Ministry of Malaysia started implementing the full-time counseling scheme in secondary schools in the beginning of 1996. The implementation was done in stages in view of the acute shortage of trained counselors to be posted to the schools. The ministry's effort is laudable in view of the urgent need for such a service in the schools.

However, after about three years, it has been observed that a sizeable number of counselors who were appointed resigned from their post. According to a spokesperson of the Schools Division, Ministry of Education, Malaysia, there were also some who were asked to relinquish their post due to attitudinal problems. This has been a setback to the ministry's plan to provide every secondary school in the country with at least a trained counselor. Based on observation as well as direct feedback from practicing counselors, there are far too many issues to be addressed to arrest the situation. Nevertheless, it is believed that the psychological make-up of the counselors themselves is the major determining factor in ensuring the success of the counseling service in schools. Being trained counselors, they are good at enhancing their clients' psychological well-being. It will be interesting to investigate if the counselors themselves are self-enhancing. Do they practice what they preach? Those who don't, probably are a stressed lot and their job performance may be jeopardized. Those who do, are probably coping well despite the stressful working conditions and energy sapping commitments.

It is a norm for any new scheme to experience the so called teething problems at the initial stage. The general luke-warm acceptance of the scheme in the school is one of them. This could be due to the fact that the effect of counseling is not immediately felt or seen. However, this does not mean that the problems could be left alone to resolve by themselves. If left unattended, these problems will escalate and further jeopardize the noble intention of implementing the service.

Being a new phenomenon in the country, no research study has been conducted to look into the predicaments of this pioneer group of school counselors. This has prompted this study to look into their personal psychological wellness, namely, resilience, which forms the main area of inquiry in this study

### **Statement Of The Problem**

Cunanan and Bernstein (1994) found that, in the United States, the school community generally is still unclear of the counselor's role. The administrators, teachers and especially parents with special interest feel their agenda ought to be met by the counseling program or activities planned by the counselor. This tends to lead to confusion and criticism when their interests are not met. The role confusion plus case loads and other demands are testing the counselor's professionalism. The situation in Malaysian schools is even more acute in this early stage of implementing the full-time counseling service.

The American School Counselor Association developed and adopted its role statement which gives due recognition and support to the implementation of comprehensive developmental counseling programs at all educational levels. School counselors are responsible for creating and organizing programs for students to develop their educational, social, career, and personal growth as well as to become responsible and productive citizens. Though the Malaysian School Counselor Association is yet to be institutionalized, the mission statement of the school counseling service in Malaysia is similar to that of its American counterpart. In essence, the Malaysian school counseling service plays an important role in achieving the National Education Philosophy and also in living up to the challenges of Vision 2020 by developing human resources to the optimum right from the school level. This can be attained through the implementation of well-planned, high quality and effective programs (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1993).

The school counselor is required to assist students, teachers, parents, and administrators in the school's total educational program. Generally, there are three recognized helping processes practised by counselors. First is counseling, which is a complex helping process in which a counselor creates a trusting and confidential working relationship. The focus is on problem solving, decision making, and discovering personal meaning related to learning and development. Second is consultation, which is a cooperative process in which the counselor-consultant assists others to think through problems and to develop skills that make them more effective in working with students.

Third is coordination, which is a leadership process in which the counselor helps organize and manage the school's counseling program and related services.

In a comprehensive developmental counseling program, school counselors organize their work by carrying out the following activities: Individual counseling, small group counseling, large group guidance, consultation, and coordination.

Individual counseling is a personal and private interaction between a counselor and a student in which they work together on an issue or topic of interest. A face-to-face, one-to-one meeting provides a student maximum privacy for free exploration of ideas, feelings, and behaviors. The relationship is built on mutual trust and respect and is guided by the counseling code of ethics.

Small group counseling involves a counselor working with two or more students together. The group size ranges from five to eight members. The group discussion can be relatively unstructured or based on structured learning activities enabling members to learn from one another through sharing of ideas, giving and receiving feedback, practising certain skills, creating and achieving awareness and so on. The discussion can be problem-centered or growth-centered.

Large group guidance is adopted to provide help to large number of students through cooperative learning method. The larger group may be divided into smaller groups under the supervision of a counselor or teacher. The guidance and counseling

program is composed of organized objectives and activities. The activities are delivered by teachers or counselors in classrooms or advisory groups. Counselors develop and present special guidance modules which give attention to particular developmental issues or areas of concern in their respective schools and they help prepare teachers to deliver part of the guidance and counseling program.

Consultation is another activity, where the counselor, as a consultant, helps people to be more effective in working with others. Consultation helps individuals, in this case, mainly teachers and parents, to think through problems and concerns, acquire more knowledge and new skills to become more objective and self-confident. This can take place in individual or group discussion, or through self-development activities.

Coordination is the activity of managing various indirect services which benefit students. The counselor acts as a liaison between school and relevant agencies. This involves collection and dissemination of data and information like conducting a student needs assessment, soliciting aid in cash or kind for the needy students and so on.

The Ministry of Education in Malaysia issued an official guideline to all secondary schools outlining the guidance and counseling curriculum and counselors' roles and duties (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1996). The curriculum covers four main areas, namely academic, career, psychosocial wellness, and family. There are 22 roles and duties outlined clearly for each counselor to carry out through guidance, counseling, consultation and coordination. When compared to the roles of the school

counselor outlined by Cunanan and Bernstein (1994), these seem to be quite similar between what are required of American and Malaysian school counselors. However, the working environments are different in terms of professional networking for support and development, complementary support services, and counselor-student ratio.

The general feeling among the counselors is that there are far too much content to cover and too many activities to carry out despite their teaching duties being taken away. The level of expectations of the teachers and administrators differ from school to school. Some are more receptive and supportive of the counselor's initiatives while others are apathetic and/or unsupportive. Comparatively it is easier and more comforting and thus more productive to work in a supportive environment. The school environment is definitely an influencing factor with regards to a counselor's job performance and satisfaction which in turn has a close relationship with his self-esteem and psychological wellness. However, it is hypothesized that regardless of the environment, it is the counselor's psychological wellness that matters most to make things happen and work well. There are counselors who have been doing a splendid job despite the odds stacked against them. Conversely, there are counselors who have been performing mediocly despite their conducive working environment. The issue is whether the counselors themselves are aware of their level of psychological well being while caring for others'. What do they have in them to cope with the workload and not get overwhelmed or stressed?

In a counseling relationship, it is expected that the counselor is fresh, ready and in 'top form' to receive clients. The client, and probably the counselor himself too, may be oblivious of the pressures that have been mounting which deplete the counselor's ability to respond fully. According to Vestermark and Johnson (1970), the pressures may come from many sources like added responsibilities, less time to relax, tight schedules, which result in a general quickening tempo of life.

Despite the full-time counseling scheme, some counselors are still being asked to carry out teaching duties and get involved in several professional committees outside the realm of counseling. As the only trained counselor in the school with limited resources, he may be acutely aware of the need to see more clients and at the same time realize the personal problems facing his clients are increasing in depth. This is a similar situation described by Kottler (1993).

As professionals dedicated to the improvement of the lives of others, counselors must continually maintain their professional vitality and avoid depleted caring. Since counseling is a one-way caring process of emphatic attachments, active involvements, and felt separations, it can be a constant strain. In addition, Skovholt, Grier, and Hanson (2001) also identified seven hazards of counseling that can contribute to counselor burnout. The hazards are:

1. Clients have an unsolvable problem that must be solved. When we are stuck in such a situation, where neither approach nor avoidance works for "solving"

the problem, the result is often a feeling of low self-efficacy and high despair. It is always hard for counselors to have a quick impact on this kind of situation.

2. All clients are not resourceful. There is a tendency for counselors to want clients who have resources that will fuel the success of the helping effort. This way, there is improvement, and the counselor, feeling competent, can bask in the positive change. But, most clients do not have the basic resources for success, and many continually struggle with basic tasks.
3. There is a readiness gap between them and us. As counselors, as in other helping professions, we often worry about our under-commitment, disinterest, and burnout but over-commitment is also an issue. Readiness for counseling as described by Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross (1992), is ultimately about matching our commitment and readiness to work at change with the client's commitment and readiness. This commitment and readiness match can be difficult for the counselors to decide the "dosage".
4. Our inability to say no. This concerns the tension between good intentions and the feeling of turning one's back on human need. These two pulls on the heart and mind of the counselor are extremely difficult to reconcile, especially for the novice who are uncertain about how hard to work in the helping role.
5. Constant empathy, interpersonal sensitivity, and one-way caring. Counselors are successful if they can relate well to others via their expert people skills. This takes tremendous effort, and the relationship with the client, while perhaps collaborative, is not reciprocal. The counselor must concentrate, be



involved, and work until he is often emotionally exhausted, or at least depleted.

6. Elusive measures of success. In complex, often complex helping relationships, it is difficult to measure success. Even when counselor and client agree on counseling goals, both can feel uncertain about how to describe what was learned, achieved, or changed. This is worsened by the school's expectation to see immediate success.
7. Normative failure. We accept the fact that the patients of specialist doctors sometimes die, but this profound understanding of the reality of professional success and failures escapes from our own professional self-concept. Somehow we believe that we will succeed in helping our clients change and grow. Yet, we often find that our determination, work and competence are not enough. This means that, the counselor must develop the capacity to accept the lack of success, or the normative failure, as a component of counseling. Such a realization, acceptance and incorporation into one's professional self-concept is important for long-term, high quality professional functioning.

Despite all these overwhelming demands, hazards, duties and responsibilities, the expectation of the counselor's fitness and competency remains a constant. Therefore, the counselor must be sensitively aware of his own needs and psychological deficits as 'preached' to his clients. According to Vestermark and Johnson (1970), self-monitoring and self-renewal are two related processes that helping professionals need to engage themselves in so that they will not be overwhelmed by the pressures of work. To achieve

this, the counselor needs to be alert of and responsive to subtle signs of fatigue. He needs to focus on areas of depletion and analyze the complexities surrounding his self-monitoring process and consider ways of achieving renewal. Skovholt, Grier, and Hanson (2001) also addressed this issue regarding counselor professional and personal sustenance in relation to their professional longevity.

As Kottler (1993) pointed out, the counseling process flows in two directions obviously influencing the client but also affecting the personal life of the counselor. The impact can be for better or for worse making the counseling profession one of the most spiritually fulfilling as well as emotionally most draining human endeavors. Some counselors flourish as a result of their work by learning from those they try to help. On the other hand, some counselors become depleted and despondent to the extent of being cynical, indifferent or stale.

Many helping professionals understand that they jeopardize their own emotional well-being when they intimately encounter the pain of others. The experience of any practitioner would attest to the emotional as well as the intellectual strains of living constantly with clients' crises, confusion, and intense suffering. That is the major risk in living with the anguish of others and in being so close to others' torments. Sometimes they become desensitized by human emotion and experience an overdose of feeling and turn themselves off. At other times, they overreact to personal incidents as a result of lingering dissonance created during sessions (Kottler).

In the medical profession, the physicians take careful steps to protect themselves from the infection, disease, and suffering of their patients. Rubber gloves, surgical masks, probing stainless steel instruments keep germs at arm's length. But sometimes, there is a seepage of pain when one allows himself to feel too much while treating the patient. In counseling sessions, the frequency of seepage is much higher because the counselor's presence and being with the client is the main instrument of cure. The counselor may try to insulate himself, but leaks occur inevitably due to the non-possessive warmth, caring, and empathy exuded to the client to stimulate change (Kottler).

This situation is compounded by the fact that, in the school counseling context, the counselor makes a big commitment because the counseling relationship may last years until the student leaves school. No matter how the client behaves, for better or worse, the counselor feels an obligation to be available, understanding and compassionate. There will be moments of special closeness and hardship. Regardless of what is going on in his personal life, the counselor needs to make himself available to the client. Week after week, the counselor has to listen to the client's stories, which may be pessimistic, negative and psychopathological in nature. Is it possible for the counselor to remain profoundly unaffected under such circumstances? It is quite impossible because clients' words are haunting and their silent screams are deafening at times (Kottler).

A primary issue in counseling is the role of the counselor as a person in the therapeutic relationship (Corey and Corey, 1993). Most of the time, counselors ask their

clients to look honestly at themselves to choose how they want to change. On the other hand, are counselors themselves open enough to subject their own lives to the same scrutiny? With extensive theoretical and practical knowledge, counselors are well versed in promoting growth and change in their clients. Do they themselves promote growth and change in their own lives? Are they good models of growth and change to inspire their clients to do the same? In their effort to enhance their clients' psychological well being, are counselors aware of and continuously enhancing their state of psychological well-being? This research aims to seek answers to these questions by using the resiliency index as the indicator of counselors' psychological well being.

In view of the risks and vulnerability of counselors as presented in the preceding paragraphs, it is not surprising that many school counselors are a stressed lot and unable to perform as expected. Probably only the psychologically resilient counselors can survive the occupational hazards and demands in counseling. A psychologically resilient counselor is seen as one who has a strong self-concept and is open to continual personal and professional growth by taking risks through self-monitoring and self-renewal despite encountering setbacks. These factors differentiate them from counselors who are not resilient. This research attempts to identify them and establish their resiliency profile.

In summary, the job demands, expectations, hazards, and risks are constantly impinging on the counselors' psychological well being. Under such stressful working conditions, it is their ability to exercise self-care, in ways of practising resiliency skills that enable them to soldier on. Their competence in these skills determines their level of

resiliency. This helps to distinguish the resilient counselors from the non-resilient. Their resiliency profiles are then compiled. The basic conceptual framework of this study is shown in Figure 1 below.

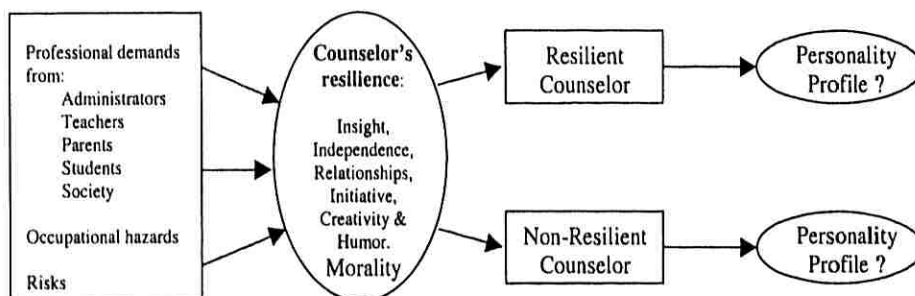


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the research

### Objectives Of The Study

People react to life's difficulties differently. Those with excellent mental health are resilient, agile, hardy, and thrive under pressure (Al Siebert, 1996). They have stress-resistant personalities and learn valuable lessons from rough experiences. They are also able to rebound from setbacks and come out stronger than before.

When hurt or distressed, mentally healthy people are able to find a way of having things turn out well. They feel self-reliant and have a good learning and coping reaction

rather than the victimizing and blaming reaction that is common these days (Al Siebert, 1996).

There is a paucity of research on the personal psychological well being of helping professionals. The full-time counseling scheme in Malaysian schools is a new phenomenon, thus there is a need to look into the psychological wellness of the counselors who are working under tremendous stress, risks, and uncertainties. The onus is on the counselor to perform no matter what his work environment is like. It is believed that only the psychologically resilient counselors could continue to serve and perform satisfactorily under stressful circumstances. How resilient are school counselors in Malaysia? Who are these resilient counselors? The main focus of this research is to seek answers to these main research questions.

Through their extensive research and study on self-resilience, Wolin and Wolin (1993) have provided a solid understanding of human resiliency and the way it develops. There are certain qualities inherent in people who are resilient. Besides identifying resilient counselors, the research is interested to study and profile their personal characteristics or qualities which form the protective factors contributing to their personal resilience and professional competence. Which of these factors best predict counselor resilience?

Resilient people are found to have a high self-efficacy level and a low burnout rating (Rutter, 1990). The research is also interested to find out if counselors' resilience

are significantly correlated with self-efficacy and burnout. This could also in a way validate resilience as an indicator of counselors' effectiveness and efficiency. Specifically, this study is set out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To measure Malaysian school counselor resilience.
2. To identify resilient counselors among Malaysian school counselors.
3. To establish a resiliency profile of school counselors in Malaysia based on the seven variables in Resiliency Attitudinal Scale (RAS).
4. To examine the effect of school environment on counselor resilience.
5. To investigate the influence of academic and professional qualifications on counselor resilience.
6. To identify the predictors of counselor resilience.
7. To examine the relationship between counselor resilience, self-efficacy and burnout.

### **Research Questions**

According to Wolin and Wolin (1993), to survive and thrive under stressful situations, one needs to be resilient. To be resilient is to be able to empower oneself in utilizing one's inner resources and also resources in one's environment to confront the demands placed upon him. The resources can be tapped to regain one's equilibrium as promptly as possible when thrown off-balance. In view of the stressful situations faced by

school counselors in Malaysia, this research set out to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. How resilient are Malaysian school counselors?
2. What proportion of school counselors in Malaysia, are resilient and who are they?
3. What is the resiliency profile of school counselors in Malaysia?
4. Is counselor resilience affected by school environment in which the counselors served in terms of:
  - a. boarding and day schools.
  - b. rural and urban schools.
  - c. Boys', girls' and co-educational schools.
  - d. technical, religious, Chinese, and normal national schools.
  - e. academically low, average and high performing schools.
5. Do counselors' academic and professional qualifications influence their resilience in terms of:
  - a. counselors with different academic qualifications?
  - b. counselors who are graduate and non-graduate?
  - c. counselors with different professional counseling qualifications?
  - d. counselors with and without a professional counseling degree?
  - e. counselors with and without prior working experience?
  - f. counselors who are experienced and inexperienced?
6. What are the variables that predict Malaysian school counselor resilience?



7. Is counselor resilience significantly related to
  - a. counselor self-efficacy?
  - b. Counselor burnout scale?

## Hypotheses

Resilience has been a construct overlooked in counselor training programs in Malaysia. Counselors are typically not given enough warning about the hazards of the profession. Corey, Corey, and Callanan (1993) found that many counselors-in-training look forward to a profession in which they can help others, and in return, feel a deep sense of self-satisfaction. They are not told that the commitment of self-exploration and to inspire this search in clients is fraught with difficulties. In view of this neglect, counselors more often than not, are left to themselves to seek and develop their own personal buffers or protective factors against occupational demands and risks. Considering the varied backgrounds of school counselors in Malaysia, it is hypothesized that:

1. There is no significant difference in resilience between counselors in boarding and day school.
2. There is no significant difference in resilience between counselors in rural and urban schools.
3. There is no significant difference in resilience between counselors in boys, girls, and co-education schools.

4. There is no significant difference in resilience between counselors in technical, religious, Chinese, and normal national schools.
5. There is no significant difference in resilience between counselors in academically low, average and high performing schools.
6. There is no significant difference in resilience between counselors of different academic qualifications.
7. There is no significant difference in resilience between graduate and non-graduate counselors.
8. There is no significant difference in resilience between counselors of different professional counseling qualifications.
9. There is no significant difference in resilience between counselors with and without a counseling degree.
10. There is no significant difference in resilience between counselors with and without prior working experience.
11. There is no significant difference in resilience between experienced and inexperienced counselors.

### **Operational Definition Of Terms**

There are a number of terms that need to be defined as used in this research. Generally these terms adhere quite closely to the definitions used by Wolin & Wolin (1993).

## **Resilience**

In this research, resilience is taken to mean the ability to absorb high level of disruptive change while displaying minimal dysfunctional behavior. Although resilient people face no less of a change than others when they engage change, they tend to regain their equilibrium faster, maintain a high level of productivity, are physically and emotionally healthier, and generally tend to rebound from the demands of change even stronger than before. The seven clusters of strength or resiliencies identified by Wolin and Wolin (1993) namely; Insight, Independence, Relationships, Initiative, Creativity, Humor, and Morality are tapped in this research.

## **Resiliency Index**

Resiliency index is a computed value of resilience based on the scores of the 72 items in the Resiliency Attitudes Scale (Biscoe, 1994) used to measure resilience. It is derived by multiplying the total score by 10 and then divide it by 36. The items were constructed based on the seven resiliencies identified by Wolin and Wolin (1993).

## **School Counselors**

In this research, school counselor means trained personnel who have been appointed as full-time school counselors by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. The appointees must possess at least a certificate in counseling awarded after at least a three-month in-service intensive course at Teacher Training Colleges. However, the majority of the counselors have either a post-graduate diploma, a bachelor's degree and/or a master's degree in counseling. It is the ministry's aspiration to upgrade counselors with certificate

qualification to a bachelor's degree. This exercise has been on-going since the implementation of the full-time counseling service. Besides that, the counselors have been encouraged to be registered with the Malaysian Board of Counselor, the governing body of counseling in Malaysia. This is to be in compliance with the newly introduced Malaysian Counselor Act (Act 580) where only registered counselors with a Certificate of Counseling Practice are allowed to practice counseling.

### **Experienced / Non-experienced Counselors**

The full-time counseling service in secondary schools started in 1996. Prior to that, teachers who were appointed to run the service did counseling on a part-time basis. In this study, the counselors have an average of 6.8 years experience in counseling. However, their average experience as full-time counselors is 2.4 years. Based on these, counselors who have an experience of 5 years and above are considered as "experienced counselors" in this study. Those with less than 5 years of experience are considered as "non-experienced".

### **Urban/Rural Schools**

This categorization of schools in Malaysia is based mainly on the location of the schools. Schools that are located within the jurisdiction of any city or town council are considered as urban schools. Those which are located outside the coverage of any city or town council, are considered as rural schools. In view of the rapid urbanization process, many rural schools have since been re-categorized as urban schools. In this study, the status was based on the schools' categorization at the time of data collection.

### **Non-performing/Performing Schools**

The 1999 Malaysian Certificate of Education (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*) results was used as the criterion to categorize the schools. The passing rate ranged from 29.63% to 100% with a mean of 72.35 and a standard deviation of 15.00. Schools which scored below the mean were categorized as non-performing and those which scored a passing rate of 72.35 and above were considered a performing schools. There were 339 non-performing schools and 276 performing schools in this study.

### **Low/Average/High Performing Schools**

For this categorization of schools, the mean and standard deviation of the 1999 *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* results were used. Schools which scored one standard deviation below the mean, that is 57.35%, were considered as low performing and there were 83 of them. Schools which scored one standard deviation higher than the mean, that is 87.35%, were considered as high performing and there were 96 of them. Those which scored between 57.35% and 87.35% were considered as average. There were 436 schools in this category.

### **Resiliency Profile**

In this research, profile refers to a descriptive summary of the characteristics of resilient counselors as measured by RAS. Research on children shows that they were able to learn to watch out for themselves despite having disturbed or incompetent parents and grow strong in the process (Wolin and Wolin, 1993). Thus, resilience is a strength most of us can develop and practise. Over time, the capacity to rise above adversity by

developing skills will expand and ripen into lasting strengths in one's self. Flach (1988), and Al Siebert (1996) have established personal qualities or strengths that are inherent and contributory to one's resilience. The qualities established by them are similar but have been combined and collated differently. In this research, the resilient personality profile is based on the seven personal strengths known as the seven resiliencies established by Wolin and Wolin (1993). The profile will be determined by the magnitude of each of the seven resileincy indices derived from RAS. The seven resiliencies are Insight, Independence, Relationships, Initiative, Creativity, Humor , and Morality.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is a general set of expectations that a person possesses based on past experiences that affect his/her expectations of success in new situations (Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs, and Rogers, 1982). A person's general self-efficacy is task specific self-efficacy that is generalized to other situations. People with histories of numerous successes in diverse situations are theorized to have positive general self-efficacy expectancies in a greater variety of situations than individuals with less successful experiences (Sherer et al, 1982). Schunk (1991) expanded the definition to mean an individual's personal opinion or self-perception of performance capabilities based on prior outcomes, attributions, ability, present circumstances, perceived similarity, effort required and persuader credibility. Similarly, according to Bandura (1995), self-efficacy is a context-specific assessment of competence to perform a specific task or a range of tasks in a given domain. In this study, self-efficacy is taken to mean an individual's general judgement and confidence to successfully perform given tasks.

## **Burnout**

Burnout is the gradual process by which a person, in responding to prolonged stress and physical, mental, and emotional strain, detaches from work and meaningful relationships. The result is lowered productivity, cynicism, confusion, a feeling of being drained, having nothing more to give (Gorkin, 2002). Similarly, in this research, burnout is referred to the stage of exhaustion in which a person uses increasingly ineffective ways in a desperate attempt to bring the stress under control. This happens when a person fails to see a way out of a miserable situation of unrelenting demands and pressures over a seemingly interminable period of time.

## **Significance Of The Study**

Resilience refers to the individual's ability to adjust and adapt to the changes, demands, and disappointments that come up in the course of life (Joseph, 1994). It is defined as the ability to bounce back from a bad or difficult situation. School counselors need resilience, besides counseling knowledge, skills and experience, to keep them functioning when confronted with setbacks, misfortune and challenges while carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Despite the demanding and hazardous nature of professional school counseling, the onus is on the counselor to perform their duties and responsibilities well. Thus the focus is on what and how they do with the resources they have within their job environments. The psychological wellness or the personal strength known as resilience, as the main enabling tool, could help counselors manage adversity and adjust well to the changes demand of them by their job circumstances.

Unfortunately, this important construct of resilience has not been given any emphasis in the counselor training or counselor education programme be it abroad or in Malaysia. The focus has always been on the helpees and not the helpers themselves who are just as vulnerable to demands and pitfalls in life. It is ironic that the helping professionals or care providers are altruistically concerned and care for others to the extent of being self-neglected. They are good at promoting others' well being, whether they take care of, and keep on, promoting their own well being is an interesting area to explore. The effectiveness and efficiency of school counselors could be related to this phenomenon. Instead of dwelling into the negative concept of at-risk counselors whose problems need to be addressed, it is the positive concept of resilience that will be focused to nurture their internal resilience as a protective shield to the prevalent threats. There may be times that they are down but with resilience they are not out, they will bounce back. This is one important aspect of personal development that needs to be inculcated among counselors.

Being the first research that studies counselor resiliency in Malaysia, the findings will contribute greatly to school counselor development in Malaysia. Since there isn't any baseline data on counselor resilience, this research will be able to provide them. Among the objectives of this research is to identify resilient school counselors and their level of resiliency. The finding will serve as an indicator of the proportion of resilient counselors we have in Malaysian schools. This will also indicate the counselors' competence in dealing with threats, challenges and adversity.



The compilations of the resiliency profiles of counselors will serve as models of resiliency. The magnitude of the seven resiliency components in each profile provides a descriptive summary of the counselors' resilience. This will enable the development of resilience by tapping on the counselors' strength and improving on their weaknesses.

School environment has a strong influence on counselor psychological well being and performance. Even though the working environment is not the main focus of this research, the findings on the differences in counselor resilience according to school categorization may serve as a base to identify and enhance the protective factors within the schools.

The findings on the comparisons of counselor resilience with regards to their academic qualifications will impact on counselor selection and training. Likewise, their age difference, working experience, and counseling experience.

The identification of predictors of resilience from the study will enable a cursory gauge of Malaysian school counselor resilience. The prediction equation of resilience obtained from Stepwise Multiple Regression may also be utilized to measure counselor resilience for specific purposes in counselor education programs.

The focus of most articles in professional journal reports is on solving psychological problems instead of promoting mental health. This is due to the fact that

human service workers are driven by theories steeped in psychopathology, theories and research that pay little attention to strengths and resilient qualities (Benard, 1994). In this research, the pessimistic expectation towards counselors is reversed in order to identify the protective factors that contribute to counselor resilience. The identified factors will then be inculcated and promoted especially in counselor training programs to enhance their continuous competence. This will boost counselors' resilience, which will in turn benefit not only to the counselors themselves, the emerging counseling profession and more so, to the students they serve.

Counselors are trained to empower their client to make the best decision he could himself. Empowerment is defined not as giving power to the client, but enabling him to seize power from within for himself. Most, if not all counselors are adept at empowering their clients. But are they good at empowering themselves? It is believed that counselors need continuous self-empowerment, to draw on their personal strength and resources from within to live up to their job demands and challenges. This is especially so in Malaysian school environment where the professional support system is still not in place. Further more, there is not much that a counselor can do directly to change his complex job environment. He is expected to fit himself in irrespective of the environment. Empowering the counselors to engage in self-empowerment from time to time is really of great importance for them to succeed and enjoy their work.

Another significance of this research is the availability of the Bahasa Melayu version of Resiliency Attitudes Scale as an instrument to measure resilience which serves as an indicator of one's psychological well being.

### **Limitations Of The Study**

Risk and protective factors in the school environment are not dealt in or taken into consideration in this research. Likewise, the family support system, which plays an important role in fostering an individual's resilience, has not been dealt with in this research.

Since the full-time counselor service is newly implemented, the majority of the subjects are probably still enthusiastic and committed to serve. At the time of data collection, their resiliency levels may not be as accurate as it should be depending on the frequency and severity of setbacks they have encountered so far. Thus, the data could be skewed.

Researches on resilience are usually longitudinal in nature, which enable the researcher to profile the subjects' resiliencies. The present research utilizes Resiliencies Attitudes Scales (RAS) as its main instrument to assess resilience and to obtain the subjects' profile. Data collection through interviews has been proposed by Al Siebert (1996) as a more accurate way of assessing resilience. In view of the big sample size

involved in this research, it is too colossal a demand to meet in terms of time, manpower and financial consideration. The next best alternative way is to gather data through a questionnaire with RAS as its main component.

Time, and the related issue of change play major roles in understanding resilience. First, resilience has usually been applied to individuals who display successful later adaptation despite earlier risk. When examined in this manner, resilience can be identified only through longitudinal research studies. Second, resilience is not a fixed trait but may change over time depending on changes in risk and protective variables. There is no guarantee that a person classified as resilient at one point in time will continue to demonstrate successful adaptation from then on. However, effort needs to be garnered to ensure a continuous increase in counselor resilience.

The data of this study were based on school counselors throughout Malaysia. Its generalizability, therefore, is confined to school counselors in Malaysia only.