

## Exploring Help Seeking Attitude among Muslim Students in a School with a Dual Education System in Brunei Darussalam

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**Abstract :** The lack of normalization of mental health as a conversational topic is becoming increasingly evident in certain cultures. The fact that students underutilize mental health services in schools can be attributed to the presence of various barriers that impede their willingness to seek for help. Stigma surrounding mental health services continue to be the most prevalent barrier for help seeking behavior. Alternative barriers have emerged that are both personal and public in nature that can have a substantial impact on students' preference to seek for help in schools. A sequential explanatory study was carried out among 256 Muslim students in a school with dual education system in exploring both their Self-Stigma of Seeking Help (SSOSH) and Mental Health Help-Seeking Attitude (MHSA). In addition, 12 students were interviewed in a focus group setting to explore further the phenomena of help seeking approach by students to understand the initial quantitative analysis. Preliminary findings indicated that the students' level of self-stigma was only moderate, but they had a favorable attitude towards counselling help. There was no significant difference on gender for both variables; however, the lower the self-stigma, the higher the mental help-seeking attitude for this current study, which is a common trend of relationship between the two variables. The interview revealed that, apart from public stigma, the absence of a qualified counsellor, a lack of ethical principles of counselling, a confidentiality issue, and the emotional openness of the students were identified as other barriers to their help-seeking attitudes. This paper also discussed the recommendation made by students in addressing barriers to counselling and facilitating their counselling needs for the improvement of students' mental and academic well-being. Additionally, this research offers the most recent data about mental health in the context of schools with a dual education system in Brunei Darussalam. It is hoped to serve as a guide for policy makers to consider the provision of mental health services that is more appealing to the students' mental and academic well-being.

**Keywords :** mental health help-seeking attitude (MHSA), public stigma, school counselling, self-stigma, self-stigma of seeking help (SSOSH), well-being.

**Conference Title :** ICP 2023 : International Conference on Psychology

**Conference Location :** Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

**Conference Dates :** August 17-18, 2023