



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***MODELLING ACADEMIC HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR AMONG LOW
ACADEMIC ACHIEVING STUDENTS IN A MALAYSIAN
PRIVATE UNIVERSITY***

MARIANI BINTI OMAR

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PRIVATE UNIVERSITY**

By

MARIANI BINTI OMAR

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

June 2017

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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MARIANI BINTI OMAR

June 2017

Chairman : Mansor Bin Abu Talib, PhD
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Modelling academic help-seeking behaviour is the essential forming factors that may influence academic success. However, in the context of academic help-seeking behaviour, there are many factors which influenced students' low-achieving. The purpose of the study examined the correlation between the predictor variables of social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being and mediator variables of psychological distress, help-seeking attitude, and moderator variable of gender, with criterion variable of academic help-seeking behaviour, was constructed. The study utilized the Cramer model of help-seeking as a theoretical model in providing a significant basis for explaining and predicting academic help-seeking behaviour among low achievement University of Kuala Lumpur's (UniKL) students.

Four hundred students aged between 18 to 24 years from four institutions of UniKL were included in the samples. Stratified random sampling methods are used to select samples in the study. This quantitative study uses correlation design. Respondents answered the questionnaires of Social Supports Scale (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988), Self-Concealment Scale (Larson & Chastain, 1990), Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) by Paloutzian and Ellison (1982), Kessler's Psychological Distress Scale (K10; Kessler & Mroczek, 1994), and Help-seeking Attitude scale (Fischer & Farina, 1995).

Results of the study of the structural equation modelling indicated that low achieving UniKL's students have lower level academic help-seeking behaviour. Spiritual well-being was the strongest predictor of academic help-seeking among low achievement UniKL's students. This academic help-seeking behaviour is influenced by spiritual well-being which has been cultivated among students.

Conversely, psychological distress and help seeking attitude mediate the effect of academic help-seeking behaviour on social support and self-concealment, especially among low achievement UniKL's students. The findings of the study proposed that social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, and help-seeking attitude were valuable and explained 75% of the variance in academic help seeking behaviour. The findings of the study also showed the standardized beta coefficients for all dot, not equal zero when regression against low academic achievement students. The study concluded that the implication on the importance of spiritual well-being and spiritual well-being as a highly influencing factor towards academic help-seeking behaviour.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PEMODELAN TINGKAH LAKU MENDAPATKAN PERTOLONGAN
AKADEMIK DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR PENCAPAIAN RENDAH DI
UNIVERSITI SWASTA MALAYSIA**

Oleh

MARIANI BINTI OMAR

Jun 2017

Pengerusi : Mansor Bin Abu Talib, PhD
Fakulti : Ekologi Manusia

Pembentukan model tingkah laku mendapatkan pertolongan akademik merupakan pembentukan model penting yang boleh mempengaruhi kejayaan akademik. Walau bagaimanapun, dalam konteks tingkah laku mendapatkan bantuan akademik, banyak faktor yang boleh mempengaruhinya dalam kalangan pelajar pencapaian rendah. Tujuan kajian ini adalah mengenal pasti hubungan antara pemboleh ubah peramal seperti sokongan sosial, penyembunyian diri, kesejahteraan spiritual dan pemboleh ubah pengantara seperti kesusahan psikologi dan tingkah laku mencari bantuan dan pemboleh ubah moderator seperti jantina dengan pemboleh ubah bersandar iaitu sikap mendapatkan bantuan akademik telah dikonstrakkan. Kajian ini menggunakan model Cramer untuk menyediakan teoretikal model yang signifikan sebagai asas yang kukuh untuk menjelaskan dan meramalkan tingkah mencari pertolongan akademik dalam kalangan pelajar UniKL pencapaian rendah.

Empat ratus pelajar berusia antara 18 hingga 24 tahun dari empat institusi di UniKL dimasukkan ke dalam sampel. Kaedah persampelan rawak berkelompok secara berstrata digunakan untuk memilih sampel kajian. Kajian kuantitatif ini menggunakan reka bentuk korelasi. Responden telah menjawab soal selidik *Social Supports Scale* (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988), *Self-Concealment Scale* (Larson & Chastain, 1990), *Spiritual Well-Being Scale* (SWBS) by Paloutzian and Ellison (1982), *Kessler's Psychological Distress Scale* (K10; Kessler & Mroczek, 1994), dan *Help-seeking Attitude scale* (Fischer & Farina, 1995).

Dapatan kajian berkaitan dengan model penstrukturan equation menunjukkan bahawa tingkah mencari bantuan akademik dalam kalangan pelajar UniKL

pencapaian rendah adalah pada tahap rendah. Kesejahteraan spiritual merupakan peramal yang paling kuat untuk tingkah laku mencari bantuan akademik dalam kalangan pelajar pencapaian rendah. Tingkah laku mencari bantuan dipengaruhi oleh kesejahteraan spiritual yang telah dididik dalam kalangan pelajar. Sebaliknya kesusahan psikologi dan sikap mencari bantuan telah menjadi pengantara terhadap tingkah laku mencari bantuan akademik terutamanya dalam kalangan pelajar UniKL yang pencapaian rendah. Dapatan kajian mencadangkan bahawa sokongan sosial, penyembunyian diri, kesejahteraan spiritual, kesusahan psikologi dan sikap mencari bantuan adalah sangat penting dan ia menjelaskan 75% pemboleh ubah dalam tingkah laku mendapatkan bantuan akademik. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa pekali regresi beta standard coefficients untuk semua tidak sama sifar dalam kalangan pelajar pencapaian rendah. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa implikasinya terhadap kepentingan kesejahteraan spiritual dan ia sebagai faktor yang sangat mempengaruhi tingkah laku mendapatkan bantuan akademik.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 20 June 2017 to conduct the final examination of Mariani binti Omar on her thesis entitled "Modelling Academic Help-Seeking Behavior among Low Academic Achieving Students in a Malaysian Private University" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATT	Attitudes
SS	Social supports
PD	Psychological Distress
SC	Self Concealment
SWB	Spiritual Well Being
AHSB	Academic Help Seeking Behaviour
UniKL	University Kuala Lumpur
RQ	Research Question
<i>IKM</i>	<i>Institute Kemahiran Mara</i>
<i>ILP</i>	<i>Institute Latihan Perindustrian</i>
<i>IKBN</i>	<i>Institute Kemahiran Belia Negara</i>
SPM	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i>
SPVM	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Vokasional Malaysia</i>
CFA	Confirmatory Fit Index
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CR	Construct Reliability
DF	Degree of Freedom
GOF	Goodness of Index
NFI	Normed Fit Index
PNFI	Parsimony Normed Fit Index
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The leading chapter presents the background of the study on help-seeking behaviour from previous studies around the world and in Malaysia. Subsequently, related issues to the topic are presented in problem statement section. Next, research questions, research objectives, research hypotheses, significance of the study, conceptual and operational definitions of terminology are presented. Finally, the study presented the theoretical background which is the foundation for developing the research conceptual framework.

1.1 Background of the study

Malaysia is unique country as it represents one of the ASEAN countries as well as established nations. The role of education in Malaysia is essential in the process of formal education in tertiary learning institutions as part of the nation's human capital development. Initially, the reserves in training and education produce the necessary employees. Enhancing education concentration through better start and quality demographic shifts affect overall human capital development in terms of supply and demand for labor (Tullao and Cabuay, 2015).

The formation of highly skilled technicians, engineers, and professionals with an increasing number of employees will benefit from human capital development from 1.77 million workers in 2014 to 2.8 million by 2020. The population in the higher levels of human capital development, the formation of highly skilled technicians, engineers, and professionals are made through a more advanced level of education. Lifelong learning is vital in enabling Malaysians to continuously refurbish and uplift themselves to meet ever-changing labor market demands. It involves Malaysians aged 18 years and over, who have gone out of formal education.

In 2015, the Government launched the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) or MEB (HE), outlining a wide-ranging transformation program for the higher education system. As stated by the MEB, the Government aims to advance system outcomes on the dimensions of access, quality, equity, unity, and efficiency. Indeed, the perspective of student outcomes, through this vision is to develop holistic graduates, entrepreneurship, and balance with relevant knowledge and skills (ethics), ethics and morals to meet the growing needs of the Malaysian economy and to be internationally competitive.

Help services especially related to counseling was officially introduced in Malaysia, formerly, in Malaysian schools, in the sixties. There are more than 50 years of history, the counseling profession in Malaysia has grown rapidly over the past few years and the number of counselors and help centers has increased. In order to improve the accountability of counseling services, the Counselors Act was approved by the Government in 1998 and national registration for professional helpers was introduced in 1999. However, regardless of the development of counseling services, in schools, colleges and universities, many students with personal, psychological and mental health problems still unwilling to refer professional psychological help as a way of solving their problems (Salim & Mohd Jaladin, 2005). Indeed, attitudes have been found to be very significant to the actual search (Cramer, 1999), better understanding of student attitudes may impact the way counseling services are designed and transmitted at colleges and universities in Malaysia.

Help seeking is an important process in self-regulated learning especially in the case of academic achievement. It may influence learning with intelligent tutoring systems, because many learning processes provide help, often at the student's request. The academic help seeking is an agent that gives in context, real-time feedback on students' help-seeking behaviour during their learning in the university. The key goals of help seeking develop students to become better self-regulated learners and assist them in achieving better domain-level learning outcomes. In a classroom study, feedback on help seeking supports students to use on-demand help more purposely, to achieve better learning outcomes, even after the feedback is no longer available. The work made some contributions, including the creation of acknowledge-engineered, rule-based, executable model of help seeking that can drive tutoring. The review of the theoretical analysis of the recent empirical literature on help seeking with academic achievement provides methodological suggestions. Although we do not view on-demand, principle-based help during the problem solving as being as important as researchers once did. However, the study considers it as helpful under certain circumstances and recommends it to be part of academic help seeking behaviour. The study views that the goal of helping students to become better self-regulated learners is one of the grand challenges in help seeking behaviour research today.

Moreover, recognized academic competency and other factors such as faculty, peers, parents, society, culture, religion, and personal change influence help-seeking (Payakachat et al., 2013). Also, the higher institutions recommended having an academic terminate rate at less than 10%. The university qualifications criteria are set to warrant the education surroundings to provide students with sufficient opportunities to master the coursework. Thus, students' achievement of the educational goal via grade point average (GPA) is one of the indicators in university criteria. In this regard, such demand of academic success is a sustainable corroboration in the graduate student's professional career development. However, the current issue is the association of academic help-seeking behaviour with student's academic success.

The rate of help-seeking behaviour among university students in Asian countries including Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, China, Japan and Taiwan is meagre (Aida et al., 2014; Setiawan, 2006; Payakachat et al., 2013; Masuda & Latzman, 2012; Zhi-hong, 2010). Furthermore, the professional help-seeking among university students seems to have a slow start in Malaysia compared to other Asian countries, namely Singapore, Indonesia, China, Hong Kong (China), and Japan. Few studies revealed a small percentage of the students seeking help from mental health specialists (Takamura et al., 2008; Sato, 2010). In China, research on help-seeking focused more on psychological disorders and has frequently been considered as personality insufficiencies and moral hindrances to stigmatization (Chen & Mak, 2008; Liou, 2004). Moreover, studies on help-seeking among Chinese college students found that students do not actively involved in help-seeking behaviours regardless of the severe need for professional health services (Chang, 2007). Additionally, the circumstances of Asian international students to pursue help are related to incorporating cognitive and cultural predictors (Yakunina & Weigold, 2011).

However, research focusing on academic help-seeking behaviour is still limited. Studies on psychological distress showed association on help-seeking behaviour (Chang, 2007), as well as the role of social support and psychological distress, social support, academic stress, and significant experience (Dixon & Chung, 2008). Furthermore, self-concealment has also influenced help-seeking attitude and the link of gender, gender roles and related to help experiences (Turkum, 2005). In another perspective, emotional openness has a relationship between students' attitude and psychological help-seeking. The relationship between spiritual well-being and adjustment have influenced academic achievement (Norwati & Nur Syahidah, 2012). What is more, spiritual well-being and mental health as resilient factors that affect individuals to cope with physiology, physical and psychological changes through adolescence successfully (Nurizan et al., 2012). In this regard, the *Amalan Spiritual dengan Pencapaian Akademik Pelajar* discovered several points which surround such scenario (Salasiah et al., 2012). These past findings provoke the researcher for more clarification and confirmation on the contribution of a student who needs to engage with academic help-seeking behaviour in a learning context.

Moreover, help-seeking studies in Indonesia focused more on factors that prevent help-seeking (Setiawan, 2006), where the researchers found that students preferred seeking help from family members and friends rather than professional experts to solve their problems. Additionally, studies in Malaysia also focused on both college and university students' help-seeking attitude. Preliminary studies related to the attitude of help seeking among Malaysian college students and universities were conducted by Reiko (2008) and Salim (2010). The studies focused on people's knowledge and attitude towards psychology and mental health. The findings show that the majority of respondents (90%) lack knowledge of psychology and mental health problems. The findings showed that the level of knowledge of the respondents is not related to the level of their attitude. Interestingly, the study found that the level

of student knowledge in both psychology and mental health is much better than the general public.

Previous studies revealed that Malaysian researchers focused more on attitude towards mental health, counselling and psychological aspects. However, past research findings showed limited studies on academic and professional help in Asian countries compared to European countries and America. Thus, help-seeking attitude seems necessary to improve the body of knowledge by further research in academic help-seeking behaviour to provide intervention program to increase the willingness to seek help among Malaysian adolescents. It becomes a necessity as nowadays; adolescents experience major stress from personal problems, academic success pressure, career prominence, and social problems. Meanwhile, help-seeking is one of the aids that helps students in dealing with their day-to-day problems. Undeniably, university students are continuously faced with personal issues, relationship concerns, and the loss of social support and seeking formal help is the last choice among students. Failure to ask for help is the factor leading students to the inability to understand the changes in the process of the students' academic, emotional, and social adjustments (Aris & Mariam, 2010). Obviously, there is still much to be done to improve the status of help-seeking behaviour in Malaysia. Therefore, academic help-seeking behaviour requires enhancing awareness in professional helpers and it has many potential contributions to help university students, especially among low-achieving undergraduate students.

There are few investigations on the positive association between psychological stress and academic achievement (Aida et al., 2014). Aida et al., (2014) revealed that Malaysian university students had the highest rate of not involving in academic help-seeking behaviour. Whenever the students are not able to solve their psychological distress, they should actively seek help from others whom they know could assist them in. Therefore help-seeking has led to typical social interaction behaviours between parties. Also, there are some issues of students enrolled in university but did not complete the coursework. The previous studies concluded that the withdrawals of students from studies are due to low academic performances and students' dismissal.

The findings of the studies as reported by the Digest of Education Statistics (2011) indicated that among students who entered university, 57% of students started a degree in a four-year duration in 2001 but only finished their bachelor's degree by 2007, which is about six years later. Apart from improving the curriculum, students have also struggled through academic workload and consistent progress to complete their degree program (Makara & Karabenick, 2013). The development of students' academic performance has placed pressure for reformation process of education itself. In respect of tertiary education level, the students need to adapt to academic demands, thus increasing the stress level compared to secondary education level (Seigner, 2009; Pong et al., 2010). The combination of two groups of students, namely the students who completed their study on time and the unsuccessful students who failed to finish their degree, was the most prevalent in the study. A

student's academic success is an important influence on help-seeking behaviour in university but has not been investigated well among typically low-achieving students measured by grade point average (GPA) in academic courses. Therefore, it is essential to understand how academic help-seeking behaviour has a significant impact on all students, especially among low-achieving students.

Furthermore, a wide range of academic help-seeking behaviour could be dealt with including depression, learning disabilities, students' personal beliefs, and teacher's instructional approaches and flexibility. Additionally, most past studies recommended that academic help-seeking behaviour is related to inspiration, target performance, teaching process, and personalities of helpers. However, students who require academic help do not always seek it because doing so may be undesirably regarded as their incapability to be successful without support. However, studies about academic help-seeking behaviour and ways in which factors that influences it to promote students with an understanding of help-seeking behaviour itself. Undeniably, a further discussion on the matter is necessary to affect academic achievement of the students.

Past studies indicated two categories of academic help-seeking in learning namely avoidant help-seeking and adaptive help-seeking. Avoidant help-seeking refers to cases whereby a learner avoids asking for help even though he or she needs it most. The adaptive help-seeking, on the other hand, is actively looking for the solution to the problems. Students who have high motivation and confidence in learning are among those who accept the importance of help-seeking (Chang, 2007). The help-seeking behaviour links to mental health issues and the services provided by professional help (Connor et al., 2014). The scenario stipulates that academic help-seeking behaviour is necessary for adolescents because of their involvement in different levels of problems in academic learning, academic achievement, career choices, and life goal options (Zaid et al., 2007). Moreover, psychological distress among students could come from attending the challenging tutorial, lectures, and seminars.

A characteristic of academic help-seeking behaviour about an academic achievement refers to a student's evaluation of the competency to complete the academic task successfully (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Students with high academic achievement tend to be more confident in their abilities and habitually seek necessary help. In contrast, students with low academic achievement tend to have negative belief in the search for help and are also reluctant to ask for help.

Currently, there has been an increasing number of academic studies about help-seeking behaviour and mental health among Malaysian college and university students (Suradi, 2010), particularly on psychological help-seeking attitudes. However, research on these types of variables and academic help-

seeking behaviour is limited. One of the significant factors related to academic help-seeking is social support (Asim et al., 2015; Jung, 2015). There is limited academic literature about the relationship between social support and self-concealment, mainly because most of the studies on social support to date have focused on psychological help-seeking and attitudes (Asim et al., 2015). Social support is a complicated matter; however, it is a significant predictor of students' help-seeking behaviour (Aida et al., 2014). Notably, the social structural element comprises informal and formal supports that are related to an individual's social network. Accordingly, the current study aims to expand the social support referred to supportive family members, friends and significant others among low-achieving students. The literature review shows the value of social support as an influencing factor for academic help-seeking behaviour. Additionally, the literature review illustrates the lack of research regarding academic help-seeking behaviour and social support, which is vital for improvement of student's academic achievement.

There are numerous evidences on the associations among psychological distresses, help-seeking attitude and academic help-seeking behaviour. However, limited research focused on psychological distress and help-seeking attitude as a mediator, thus creating a gap in the literature (Asim et al., 2015; Maria et al., 2014). Hence, this study aims to expand the knowledge of psychological distress and help-seeking attitude as mediator variables.

There is a wide investigation on the relationship between academic help-seeking and psychological distress (Shamsuddin et al., 2013; Yusoff et al., 2013), where the studies found that most of the students are not willing to seek help from educators or any professional psychological help. The findings of the studies revealed the needs for a better understanding of academic help-seeking behaviour as this may prove beneficial to institutions striving to improve their students' academic performances and achievements. At the same time, it can provide the knowledge of academic help-seeking behaviour to help educators, where they could now embark on motivating students to learn effectively. Previous studies have proven that academic help-seeking behaviour has been an enabler for better academic excellence. However, students' academic help-seeking behaviour is a complicated situation that depends on students' worldviews, social standards, classroom aims, and educator's instructional methods, openness, and flexibility. According to Holt (2014), the level of students' development is related to the experience with attachment and academic adjustment. Students who experience high psychological distress are more likely to seek help from the right source. Therefore, the current study is valuable in clarifying the association between psychological distress and academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students and the factors influencing these relationships.

Earlier studies have also proven the connection between help-seeking behaviour and social support through family members, friends, and significant others (Tuisku et al., 2006). The sources of help-seeking behaviour come from formal helpers such as counselors, educators, health specialists, societal and

spiritual personnel, and youth programs. The effective help-seeking behaviour, which relates to interest and enjoyment, has always been linked to parental expectations and parental attachment (Shah et al., 2010). Despite that, not all academic help-seeking behaviour are driven by regular assessments, the vast academic prospectus, concern about their future and academic achievement (Holt, 2014). There are still many arguments on how much academic stressor may lead to psychological stress and consequently to academic help-seeking behaviour is necessary for the classroom teaching. The academic stressor can be a factor for academic help-seeking behaviour on how social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, and help-seeking attitude, which is essential for the enhancement of help-seeking model. The Help-seeking Model by Cramer (1999) provides a conceptual framework on how academic help-seeking behaviour works among low-achieving UniKL students. This study aims to expand the help-seeking model on academic help-seeking behaviour and hopes to clarify the relationships between social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, and help-seeking attitude with academic help-seeking behaviour.

Recently, there has been an increasing amount of studies about help-seeking behaviour and psychological disorders among Malaysian university students (Shamsuddin et al. 2013). However, the research on academic help-seeking behaviour is still limited. One of the significant factors associated with help-seeking behaviour and could play an important role to prevent help-seeking behaviour is self-concealment (Larson, Robert, Chastain, William & Ruthie, 2015). However, there is limited academic research about the association between self-concealment and academic help-seeking behaviour, mainly because most of the studies on self-concealment to date concentrated on depression and stress (Larson et al., 2015). Self-concealment characterizes a broad orientation towards personal aspect, a feature that comprises major challenging inner behaviours such as a sense of low self-esteem, social anxiety, high mood monitoring, and low mood labelling. Particularly, an individual who self-conceal is committed to external behaviours such as lack of seeking help, lack of social support, and preference for isolation. The literature shows that self-concealment is an influencing factor for seeking help on mental health, but not specifically towards academic help-seeking behaviour. Also, the literature review demonstrates the absence of research regarding academic help-seeking and self-concealment, which is essential and dynamic to the improvement of student academic success. There is still a gap in the literature (Larson et al., 2015), in which according to numerous evidence, on the correlations between social support, self-concealment, psychological distress, and help-seeking attitude. However, such variables are not the focus of that particular study.

Academic help-seeking behaviour is a strong factor in predicting a student's academic performance and academic success. In seeking to understand academic help-seeking behaviour, matters in respect of advice and academic support services are vital in leading to students' satisfaction and well-being. In this regard, the researcher needs to understand and examine how students achieve a balanced sense of emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual well-

being. In fact, the majority of the students tend not to seek help more often. The goal of academic success is to maximise students' chances of achieving academic success at the university. An understanding of students' help-seeking behaviour is, in fact, develops the seeking help as one of the ways for students to sustain their academic achievement. Such situation is because getting help is the way in which the students participate to solve their problems and get their self-actualization (Suradi & Jaladin, 2005). What is more, help-seeking gives students the opportunity to identify their problems and understand the problems correctly. As students identified their needs and willingness to see the counselor to discuss their problems, the emotional and efficient involvement of independence influence the students in the process of achieving a good academic performance. In other studies, Vaez and Laflamme (2008) and Stallman and Shochet (2009) claimed that high psychological distress and mental health problems could seriously influence poor academic performance.

Additionally, the previous research findings concluded that an understanding of help-seeking behaviour could be used to develop better academic achievement among university students. Many researchers have recommended the adeptness of psychological help services in dealing with a diversity of interventions that have been recognized in an academic setting. However, there are also negative beliefs of seeking help, negative help-seeking attitude, and having no experience in deciding to ask for help from psychological support service in campus (Biddle et al., 2007). In particular, the key findings supported the hypothesis that help-seeking observations, help-seeking attitudes, and distress have been broadly investigated in association to psychological help-seeking. Salim (2010) in his study supported the existing issue of help-seeking attitudes among Malaysian college and university students, where it showed a deficient percentage of help-seeking, especially from the correct and formal foundations. The right foundations of help come from counsellors, lecturers, health professionals, social workers, religious personnel and youth programmes (Aida et al., 2010). The results showed on help-seeking behaviours should be able to give a reference on how to increase individuals' readiness to seek help when it could benefit them.

The focus of this study is the development of help-seeking behaviour for a more efficient learning process among low-achieving students at UniKL. In particular, based on a literature review of studies among university students, there are problems with academic help-seeking behaviour in the outcome. The model of help-seeking can support in developing for help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving students at UniKL.

All in all, there is a need for a research of the academic help-seeking behaviour in UniKL, Malaysia. Based on the university life, the students are struggling with their academic performance and academic success. Most of the students manage to complete the study program on time, but some students are not lucky enough to succeed in their academics at the university (Counselling Report, 2014). Therefore, in preparing today's students to succeed in life for

tomorrow, offering courses and workshops that address and promote academic success is necessary. Thus, the present study is designed to explore factors influencing university students and to examine the relationships between social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, and help-seeking attitude with help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving students at UniKL.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the low rate of help-seeking behaviour among university students in Malaysia (Aida et al., 2014, Mansor, 2010), an academic study has a significant role to play in clarifying academic help-seeking behaviour towards students' academic success. According to research by Salem (2010), about 60% of Malaysian university students are in doubt to seek help from professional helpers. A large number of statistics shows that help-seeking behaviour is related to social support, self-disclosure and self-concealment, and spiritual well-being of students. Notably, recent evidence suggests that help-seeking behaviour has decreased among undergraduate students due to their reluctance to share problems with helpers as they are not interested in disclosing their problems and revealing their personal information.

University students could be involved in different levels of difficulties of academic pressure and academic achievement. Some students who enrolled in university programmes complete their studies on time. However, some students fail to complete the first year, and some have taken longer than the required period to complete the study programs. Additionally, as reported by the counselling units, there are a large number of low-achieving students clarified as under termination for the study programs. Encouraging students through academic help-seeking behaviour means empowering them to take responsibility of their academics and giving them the information they need to seek proper help. Undeniably, positive attitude towards academic help-seeking behaviour can provide a powerful action in promoting interest and curiosity to succeed academically. However, to date, limited studies have been conducted on academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving undergraduates in Malaysia. Therefore, the current study attempts to address this gap by investigating the academic help-seeking behaviour among undergraduate students UniKL. Furthermore, this study recognizes factors influencing academic help-seeking behaviour that will be useful to determine the students' help-seeking behaviour.

Although research has revealed that overall use of academic help-seeking behaviour can lead to student engagement and well-being, the contribution of academic help-seeking behaviour is still unclear. Present research does not have yet to fully discover the possibility of academic help-seeking behaviour outside a single classroom, nor has it discovered the opportunity to help services available to students in most university campuses as academically help-seeking. Furthermore, Vogel et al. (2007) stated that the majority of university students do not seek help. Therefore, there is an immediate need for

research to develop knowledge so that higher education experts can address the unique requirements of a more diverse student population. A thorough understanding of factors and limitations to academic help-seeking behaviour may prove beneficial to institutions that strive to enhance their students' academic performances and achievements.

Moreover, research has revealed that an overall academic help-seeking behaviour can influence students' academic achievement (Shamsuddin et al. 2013; Yusoff et al. 2013), but for well-being, it is still not clear about its contribution of students' academic help-seeking behaviour to student academic achievement. For example, social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress and help-seeking attitude influence academic help-seeking behaviour. However, there are also possibilities that academic help-seeking behaviour has little contribution to cope with distress, which may, in turn, improve self-regulation. It is still not clear about the contribution of academic help-seeking behaviour to academic success (Keklik, 2009). There is also a possibility that social support has little contribution to academic help-seeking behaviour (Setiawan, 2006). Psychological distress was reported to be a predator for help-seeking behaviour (Cramer, 1999). Conversely, psychological distress can promote academic help-seeking behaviour which in turn leads to less anxiety, the consequence potential and attitudes on decisions to seek professional help (Vogel et al., 2005). These inconsistent findings have provoked the present researcher to clarify further and confirm the contribution of each needs to academic help-seeking behaviour. This study showed that various factors could influence student's academic help-seeking behaviour.

Even though it has been more than 50 years since the official introduction of counselling in Malaysia, the service provided is not fully utilised to assist students' problems. The scenario is due to students who do not seek help from professionals as a way to solve their problems (Salim, 2010). Higher distress levels are higher in females compared to male students as females have a probable serious mental illness such as coping with stress (77.9%), study problems (66.0%), and depression (59.8%). However, males' probable serious mental illness includes coping with stress (54.9%), depression (49.7%), study problems (49.4%), and body image problems (32.9%). Sometimes, university students are under distress when having trouble for not doing well in the examination. There are about 15% of medical students who were discovered to be depressed (Aida et al., 2014) and are interested in seeking help from family and other professionals.

Since there is no comprehensive knowledge on the engagement of low-achieving students with academic help-seeking behaviour, this implication has led to the present study which is to address one's actual academic help-seeking behaviour that is related to social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, and help-seeking attitude.

Based on the arguments above, this study hopes to fill in the gap in the Cramer Help-seeking Model as well as to contribute to the existing model. Such aim of contribution was specifically designed to address the need to contribute to the model of help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving students at UniKL. Undeniably, the Cramer's (1999) Help-seeking Model as a theoretical framework has elaborated the specific purpose of the research in meeting the research objectives.

1.3 Research Questions

The study is designed to answer four formulated research questions. In this regard, the researcher has noted an underutilization of academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students as the research questions of this study. The significant aspect of assisting this group is by understanding their academic help-seeking behaviours. This research endeavours to answer the following core questions:

1. What are the relationships between social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, help-seeking attitude and academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students?
2. To what extent does the gender moderate the relationships between social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, help-seeking attitude and academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students?
3. To what extent do the mediating roles of psychological distress and help-seeking attitude work between social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being and academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students?
4. What is the sole predictor (social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, help-seeking attitude) of academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students?

1.4 Research Objective

1. To determine the relationships between social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, help-seeking attitude, and academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students.
2. To determine the moderating role of gender on the relationships between social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, help-seeking attitude, and academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students.
3. To examine the mediating roles of psychological distress and help-seeking attitude between social support, self-concealment and spiritual well-being with academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students.

4. To determine the sole predictor (social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, help-seeking attitude) of academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

Objective 1:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive relationship between social support and psychological distress among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive relationship between psychological distress and self-concealment among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive relationship between social support and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant positive relationship between spiritual well-being and psychological distress among low-achieving UniKL students.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant positive relationship between social support and help-seeking attitude among low-achieving UniKL students.

Hypothesis 6: There is a significant positive relationship between self-concealment and help-seeking attitude among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 7: There is a significant positive relationship between spiritual well-being and help-seeking attitude among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 8: There is a significant negative relationship between self-concealment and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL's low achievement UniKL's.

Hypothesis 9: There is a significant positive relationship between spiritual well-being and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 10: There is a significant positive relationship between psychological distress and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 11: There is a significant positive relationship between help-seeking attitude and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Objective 2:

Hypothesis 12: Gender moderates the relationship between exogenous variables (social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, help-seeking attitude) and endogenous variable (academic help-seeking behaviour) among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 12-1: Gender moderates the relationship between social support and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 12-2: Gender moderates the relationship between self-concealment and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 12-3: Gender moderates the relationship between spiritual well-being and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 12-4: Gender moderates the relationship between psychological distress and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 12-5: Gender moderates the relationship between help-seeking attitude and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Objective 3:

Hypothesis 13-1: Psychological distress mediates the relationship between social support and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 13-2: Psychological distress mediates the relationship between self-concealment and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 13-3: Psychological distress mediates the relationship between spiritual well-being and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 14-1: Help-seeking attitude mediates the relationship between social support and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 14-2: Help-seeking attitude mediates the relationship between self-concealment and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Hypothesis 14-3: Help-seeking attitude mediates the relationship between spiritual well-being and academic help-seeking behaviour among UniKL low-achieving students.

Objective 4:

Hypothesis 15: The homogeneous beta coefficients for selected variables do not equal to zero when regressed against the group of UniKL low-achieving students.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is necessary and relevant based on its related contributions. The findings of the study will add great values theoretically and methodologically to the body of knowledge. With regards to theoretical perspective, the study provided a theoretical model of academic help-seeking behaviour. This theoretical model reveals an explanation of causal relationships among the independent variables (social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress and help-seeking attitude). Findings on academic help-seeking behaviour can be used for remedial and practical purposes to improve academic help-seeking behaviour for academic success. However, academic help-seeking behaviour alone will not be able to contribute to student help-seeking behaviour without the help of social supports from educators, families, and friends. The goals of this study are to fill in the gaps in the previous research and contribute to constructing a foundation for future research in students' help-seeking behaviours.

Early research provided encouraging results for social support to help teaching and learning process. There is no intention to claim that the current findings can be generalized to other population since it involved selected sample of students from UniKL. This university could not represent the entire range of universities in Malaysia. However, the results of the study may imply the pedagogical approach of educators in universities. Furthermore, data from the feedback of academic help-seeking behaviour that were evaluated by students would provide information for UniKL educators on the foundation of students' academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students. This group of students were motivated and engaged in academic help-seeking behaviour (Rogers et al., 2010), and their achievement levels rise when students use help-seeking. Furthermore, academic help-seeking behaviour becomes necessary due to the recent rapid evolution in individual ownership of academic achievement. Therefore, this study will not only provide information about how students are currently using informal help services for educational purposes inside and outside of the classroom, but also how students would view a more formal use of help services for educational purposes. The social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, and attitude of students will help educators to evaluate and improve their teaching courses and workshops that address and promote academic success. Besides,

the study provided information on weaknesses and strengths of developing skills in academics regarding implementation and instructions in their outreaching efforts to help low-achieving students. The awareness of factors that can impact help-seeking behaviour will help counsellors to improve the help services and intervention programs. By knowing the factors that influence academic help-seeking behaviour, counsellors can plan some early preparation to overcome the negative attitude towards perceived counselling services. Hence, knowing about students' help-seeking behaviours will be of help to both university educators and university counsellors in understanding students' help-seeking behaviours and could plan for the betterment of help services.

Finally, from the methodological perspective, the present study employed structural equation modelling (SEM) as the primary analytic tool to study the causal relationships between variables in the Cramer (1999) Help-seeking Model and student's academic help-seeking behaviour by adding new variables namely spiritual well-being in the model. SEM allows the researcher to investigate further on the contribution of the dimensions of social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, help-seeking attitude and student's academic help-seeking behaviour in the context of academic achievement. However, the researcher needs to address the limitation of this study.

1.7 Definition of Terminology

Conceptual and operational definitions of terminology for this study are as follows:

Social support

Conceptual: Social support refers to the help resources available from other people to increase the well-being of the receiver (Shumaker & Brownwell, 1984, p 13).

Operational: In this study, Social support is measured using Multi-dimensional Perceived Social Support Scale (MPSSS), which consists of 12 items designed to assess social support from family, friends, and significant other. MPSSS has three subscales, and each subscale has four items where a high score indicates greater in multi-dimensional perceived social support, and a low score indicates smaller in multi-dimensional social support.

Self-Concealment

Conceptual: Self-concealment refers to a choice made on purpose to withhold a sad or bad experience about them from other people. A self-concealment associate to one's predisposed rejection to reveal information on distress to others (Cramer, 1999, p. 381).

Operational: Self-concealment is measured using the Self-Concealment Scale (SCS). The scale comprises of ten items that measure the individual's possibility to conceal distressing personal information. The high score indicates that the respondent has a great ability to conceal personal information. On the other hand, a low score shows that the respondent has less ability to conceal personal information.

Spiritual well-being

Conceptual: Spiritual well-being means an intuition of peace and gratification of one's relationship with the spiritual aspects of life. It is a permanent carrying out actions and activities to cultivate growth. Therefore, a spiritual well-being moves individual along a path towards a goal. The goal is varies referring to as salvation, liberation or union with God (Kneel & Emmons, 2006).

Operational: Spiritual well-being is measured using the total score of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS). The scale has ten items where a high score indicates respondents' satisfaction with an expression of great spiritual well-being. However, a low score indicates respondents' dissatisfaction in an overall spiritual well-being.

Psychological Distress

Conceptual: Psychological Distress means exceptional discomfort emotional condition felt by a person in reaction to a particular stressor that could hurt him, either in short-term or eternally (Ridner, 2004, p.539).

Operational: Psychological distress is measured using the Psychological Distress Scale (PDS). The scale has ten items that assess non-specific psychological distress. A high score indicates the higher level of psychological distress. A low score indicates a low level of psychological distress.

Help Seeking Attitude

Conceptual: Help seeking attitude refers to the possibility to seek or to refuse professional help throughout a personal crisis or stay on to psychological discomfort extension (Fischer & Turner, 1970, p. 79).

Operational: Help seeking attitude is measured using the Attitude toward Seeking Help Scale (ATHS). The subscale consists of ten items on the need for professional help, stigma toward psychological help, openness regarding the problem and confidence in getting help. A high score indicates the higher level in respondents' attitude toward seeking help. A low score indicates the low level in respondents' attitude toward seeking help.

Academic Help Seeking Behaviour

Conceptual: Academic help-seeking behaviour refers to any action or activity carried out by an adolescent who perceives as needing personal, psychological, effective support, health or social services, with the intention of meeting these requirements in a helpful way Barker (2007, pg. 2).

Operational: Academic help-seeking behaviour is measured using the academic help-seeking behaviour scale (AHSBS). The scale consists of three subscales with 30 items, where a high score indicates respondents' higher level of academic help seeking behaviour. A low score in academic help-seeking behaviour indicates low of academic help seeking behaviour.

Low achievement

Conceptual: Low achievement refers to the result of Grade Point Average (GPA) data obtained from transcripts as a key variable factor. GPA explained as one's achievement in academic where academic help seeking does directly influence academic achievement.

Operational: Low academic achiever refers to students who obtained a Grade Point Average of 2.5 and below 2.0.

1.8 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The present research framework depended on theoretical background, which is strongly supported by empirical research to allow an in-depth understanding of the predictors of academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving diploma and undergraduate students. The conceptual framework of the study also illustrated the role of self-concealment and spiritual well-being as chosen mediators between exogenous and endogenous variables.

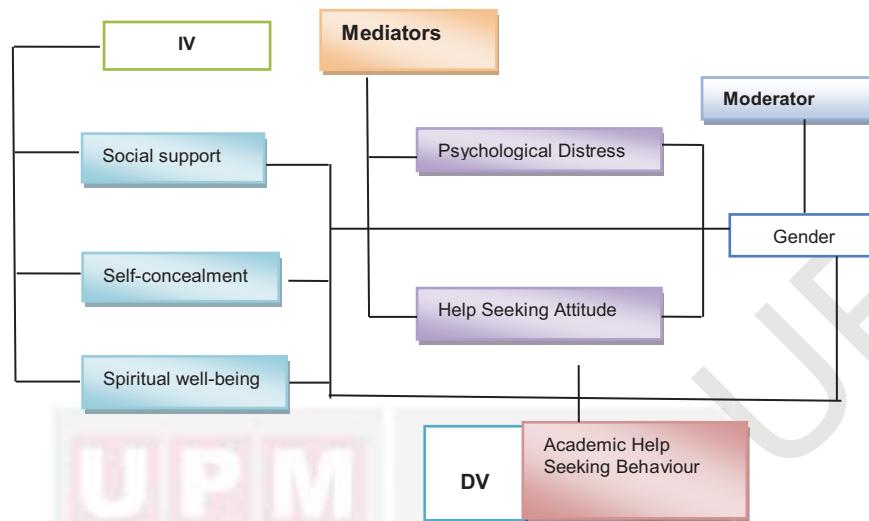
The variables were mentioned earlier in this study's research objectives. The first purpose of the study aims to investigate the relationships between social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, help-seeking attitude with academic help-seeking behaviour among low academic achievers at UniKL. The second research objective pursues to examine the role of the moderating role of gender on the relationships between social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, help-seeking attitude, and academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students. The third research objective pursues to examine the mediating roles of psychological distress and help-seeking attitude between social support, self-concealment and spiritual well-being with academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students. The fourth research objective pursues to determine the sole predictor (social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress, help-seeking attitude) of academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving UniKL students.

Also, the variables in the study were selected based on theories and past studies. The independent variables include social support, self-concealment and spiritual well-being, the mediating variables include psychological distress and help seeking-attitude and the moderating variable include gender (See Figure 1.2). The framework of the study is backed up by Cramer's (1999) help-seeking model, and Liao et al. (2005). In this study, researcher incorporated Cramer's Help-seeking Model as the research's help-seeking theory.

According to Cramer's help-seeking theory, the positive help-seeking behaviour is an outcome of the high level of help-seeking attitude, social support and psychological distress. Cramer stated that individuals who are experiencing high levels of stress tend to have a positive attitude towards seeking help. Therefore, this theory explains the direct relationships between social support, self-concealment, spiritual well-being, psychological distress and help-seeking behaviour. The proposed framework suggested that social support and psychological distress indirectly influence help-seeking behaviour.

The instruments were introduced to clarify the impact of psychological distress and help-seeking attitude as mediators. Individuals with high psychological distress have higher tendency to carry on positive help-seeking attitude during stressful situation as they perceive it as negative or distressing (Masri, 2010). Indeed, individuals with positive help-seeking attitude are prone to seek help to reduce psychological distress and get social support from others. Also, individuals with negative help-seeking attitude and are under psychological distress while not getting any social support are less likely to seek help (Holt, 2014). Furthermore, help-seeking attitude mediates the relationships between social support and academic achievement; therefore, they are less likely willing to ask for help (Hess, 2011; Zhang & Wang, 2013). Consequently, the study was designed to understand the role of psychological distress and help-seeking attitude as mediators between social support, self-concealment and spiritual well-being about academic help-seeking behaviour. Also, gender was proposed in the model to moderate the relationship between study variables. Chapter 2 explains the supporting prior empirical findings.

This study aims to expand, develop, and test help-seeking behaviour by integrating help-seeking theory and help-seeking model to have an in-depth understanding of the variables' impact on academic help-seeking behaviour among low-achieving students.



Note: IV= Independent variable; DV= Dependent variable

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework for present study

1.9 Organization of the Dissertation

The researcher has designed the study in five chapters.

Chapter 1: The first chapter explains the prevalence of help-seeking behaviour among adolescents, especially university students aged between 18 to 24 years and the correlation between study variables with academic help-seeking behaviour. Furthermore, this chapter explains the background of the study, problem statement, research questions and research objectives, significant of the study, research hypotheses, and theoretical framework.

Chapter 2: The chapter reviews and discusses academic help-seeking behaviour based on different psychological perspectives.

Chapter 3: This chapter includes the research framework, research design, research setting, sampling procedure, instrument measure, pilot study, data collection procedure, data analysis, data preparation, and measurement model.

Chapter 4: This chapter discusses the respondents' demographic profiles and data analysed based on Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) including structural model, mediating and moderating models.

Chapter 5: This chapter explains the summary of research findings, conclusion, limitations, and suggestions for a future research study.

1.10 Summary of Chapter

This chapter discussed the background of the study, problem statement, research questions, and the description of terminology. In addition, this chapter presented the theoretical background and conceptual framework that justifies the correlations between studies variable.



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