HOW DOES ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY REDUCE BURNOUT AMONG ACADEMICIANS FROM MALAYSIAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES? A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of burnout among academicians in Malaysian Research Universities (RUs) is a growing concern in contemporary times. The confluence of high job demands, and limited job resources has contributed to heightened levels of burnout among this population. Recognizing the urgency of addressing this issue, the present study conducts a systematic review to examine the effectiveness of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) in reducing burnout levels among academicians in RUs in Malaysia. Through a comprehensive analysis of relevant literature, a limited number of studies meeting the inclusion criteria were identified and reviewed. The findings of the study demonstrate that ACT holds promise as an effective intervention for decreasing burnout levels

among academicians, while simultaneously enhancing psychological flexibility. The implications of this study extend to both scholars and experts invested in mitigating the pervasiveness of burnout among academicians in Malaysian RUs, offering valuable insights for the development of targeted interventions and strategies.

Keywords: Burnout, academicians, Malaysian research universities, acceptance and commitment therapy, job demands.

INTRODUCTION

Research Universities (RUs) in Malaysia, namely Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), have been recognized as exceptional centers for education and research by the Malaysian Cabinet on October 11, 2006 (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2017). Additionally, USM attained the prestigious APEX (Accelerated Programme for Excellence) status on September 3, 2008, granted by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MOHE), entailing a fast-track development program to elevate USM into a world-class institution (Dzulkifli, 2016). The APEX initiative at USM is reported to be in its second phase, spanning from 2014 to 2019, indicating an ongoing effort to transform USM into an APEX university (Dzulkifli, 2016).

The establishment of RUs in Malaysia has presented academicians with challenging demands, requiring them to excel professionally and meet promotion criteria. However, it appears that some RUs have set Key Performance Index (KPI) targets that are exceedingly difficult to achieve. For instance, Azman et al. (2014) highlighted that UM, one of the leading RUs in Malaysia, has established rigorous promotion criteria and academic accomplishment targets benchmarked against global RUs in Asia and other regions. In relation to these demanding promotion criteria, Arma and Ismail (2016) found that the research component poses the most significant stress among Malaysian RUs, as conducting research can be financially burdensome and requires additional time outside regular office hours. Consequently, there is an observable movement of academicians, particularly from RUs to non-RUs, due to the inflexible promotion process (Md. Yunus & Pang, 2015).

Although empirical evidence regarding the extent of brain drain within Malaysian universities is lacking, the media has reported contentious statements on this issue. On May 20, 2014, the Star Online reported instances of medical lecturers leaving public universities, with thirty-eight medical lecturers resigning from USM in the past six months, and twenty-one clinical lecturers leaving UM in 2013, primarily due to issues of excessive workload (Florence et al., 2014). The report further suggests that these lecturers are drawn to better salaries and reduced workloads in private schools and hospitals.

In addition, academic staff in RUs experience elevated levels of stress due to the competitive nature of maintaining their RU status. The Malaysian Research Assessment (MyRa) has established specific goals for academicians in RUs, which serve as criteria for retaining the RU status of these institutions. Consequently, promotion standards become more stringent, and KPIs set for academicians become increasingly demanding in RUs with higher standards (Bilal & Ahmed, 2017). This challenging promotion environment has been associated with the occurrence of burnout, as academicians perceive limited career progression opportunities within the university (Bilal & Ahmed, 2017).

Numerous empirical investigations have consistently demonstrated that individuals working in academic settings are more prone to experiencing burnout compared to their non-academic counterparts, leading to heightened psychological distress and diminished job satisfaction (Mohamed et al., 2021). Specifically, within the context of burnout in Malaysian RUs, the demands associated with job responsibilities exert a substantial influence on the perception of burnout, which, in turn, significantly impacts the in-role and extra-role performance of academics (Mayang et al., 2020, Akhtar et al., 2022). Furthermore, within the realm of RUs in Malaysia, it has been identified that career growth serves as the most prominent stressor, followed by the pressures associated with research and teaching (Arma & Ismail, 2016). Similarly, a study conducted by Azizah et al. (2016) aimed to assess the prevalence of occupational stress among academics within a Malaysian RU. The findings revealed that occupational stress was prevalent among 24.8 percent of the sampled population, with various demographic characteristics emerging as predictors of such stress.

Furthermore, the burnout levels among academicians in Malaysian RUs have escalated further due to the shift from a school-oriented

system to virtual platforms for teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ahmad et al., 2020; Juliana et al., 2021a; Juliana et al., 2021b). The rapid changes in the teaching and learning process have presented various challenges, including limited applications for online teaching, inadequate technological infrastructure, and poor internet connectivity (Sufian et al., 2020). As a result, academicians in Malaysian RUs have experienced heightened levels of burnout as they navigate the adaptation to new teaching methods while fulfilling their existing job responsibilities (Juliana et al., 2021b). Thus, there is an urgent need to address the well-being of academicians in Malaysian RUs. The present study employs Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) as an intervention to address burnout issues among academicians in RUs who experience significant levels of burnout.

ACT is a third-wave cognitive-behavioral intervention rooted in Relational Frame Theory, which provides a behavioral understanding of language (Luoma et al., 2007). There are notable conceptual distinctions between ACT and "standard" cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). While CBT interventions typically focus on modifying the content or frequency of distressing thoughts, ACT emphasizes enhancing individuals' ability to engage in behaviors aligned with their personally chosen values, despite experiencing unpleasant cognitive or emotional states. This ability is referred to as "Psychological Flexibility." The ACT model posits that six processes contribute to increasing Psychological Flexibility: willingness/ acceptance, cognitive defusion, self-as-context, present moment contact, values identification, and committed action. The processes underlying Psychological Flexibility can be categorized into three dyads, as outlined in Table 1, capturing key aspects of the ACT model.

Table 1

The categorization of psychological flexibility into three dyads and the corresponding six processes of ACT

Dyad-level	Process-level	Explanation
Psychological flexibility		
Being open	Acceptance	The voluntary and open acceptance of internal experiences, such as emotions, thoughts, and memories, even if they are unpleasant

<div align="right">(continued)</div>

Dyad-level	Process-level	Explanation
	Defusion	Creating psychological distance from one's internal experiences and sense of self
Noticing	Self-as-context	Recognizing that one's true self extends beyond internal experiences, viewing them as separate from one's core identity
	Present moment awareness	Engaging with the present moment, both internally and externally, to access a wider range of potentially rewarding opportunities
Being active	Values identification	Identifying abstract aspirations and ideals that guide decision-making and motivate individuals to pursue actions that bring them a sense of vitality
	Committed actions	Making the conscious choice to take concrete actions aligned with one's values, regardless of any discomforting internal experiences

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

The field of teaching and research imposes significant demands on academicians, necessitating their full intellectual and emotional commitment (Watts & Robertson, 2011). As a consequence, academicians often experience higher levels of burnout compared to the general working population (Guthrie et al., 2017). In Malaysia, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) encouraged RUs in 2017 to spearhead grand challenge programs and sustainable development goals that directly benefit society. Collaborative projects focusing on water and food security, health and well-being, and climate change were initiated by Malaysian RUs in collaboration with other higher learning institutions. The primary objectives of these projects were to facilitate knowledge absorption, diversify research financing sources, and address societal needs (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2017). Consequently, academicians now face additional pressures as they juggle their responsibilities in consultancy services, managing a larger number of graduates, and focusing on publications and patent innovations.

Furthermore, Arma and Ismail (2016) asserted that the five RUs in Malaysia engage in intense competition to safeguard their RU status and rankings. This rivalry not only generates stress for RU management but also places significant demands on the academicians themselves (Arma & Ismail, 2016). The 2022 Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings disclose the global rankings of UM, UPM, UKM, USM, and UTM as 65, 143, 144, 147, and 191, respectively (Quacquarelli Symonds, 2021). Given the fierce competition among Malaysian universities, particularly RUs, academicians from these institutions are more susceptible to burnout. They are expected to meet KPIs with the ultimate aim of positioning all Malaysian RUs among the top 100 universities worldwide. Additionally, the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) implemented in 2007 indirectly imposes stress on all Malaysian academicians by striving to have at least three universities ranked in the top 100 and one university ranked in the top 50 globally renowned universities by 2020. However, according to the 2022 QS world university rankings, only UM is listed among the top 100 universities, with no Malaysian university securing a spot among the top 50 globally prominent universities. Consequently, Malaysian RU academicians face heightened vulnerability to burnout as they strive to meet the requirements set forth by the NHESP.

Moreover, Malaysian RU academicians harbor deep concerns regarding the citation count of their research papers, as it plays a pivotal role in determining their impact factor and evaluating the impact of their research (Kendall, 2018). The impact factor is calculated based on the number of citations received by a specific group of papers from a university in a given year. Kendall (2018) presented the average citation counts for all five Malaysian RUs over the past five years, as depicted in Table 2. These figures were derived from SciVal, a widely utilized tool accessible to all RUs in Malaysia. The analysis reveals a significant decline in the average number of citations received by research papers from all five Malaysian RUs over the past five years. Consequently, the impact factor of these RUs has also declined, exerting additional pressure on academicians to enhance the impact of their research papers.

Table 2

The Average Number of Citations in Malaysian Research Universities

Research University	Overall Citations	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
UM	8.4	2.6	6.5	9.6	11.7	12.1
USM	5.1	1.4	4.0	5.0	6.4	8.7
UPM	4.9	1.4	3.3	5.2	6.6	7.8
UTM	4.7	1.4	3.4	5.2	6.0	7.6
UKM	4.6	1.5	3.3	5.8	5.6	6.6

However, a notable gap exists in the literature regarding the burnout experiences of Malaysian RU academicians (Henny et al., 2014; Teoh & Kee, 2018; Teoh & Kee, 2019; Teoh & Kee, 2020; Teoh, 2021a; Teoh, 2021b). Recognizing this gap, Teoh (2020) sought to address it by investigating burnout levels among Malaysian RUs. His findings revealed that Malaysian RU academicians generally experience above-average levels of burnout. In light of these findings, the present study proposes the utilization of ACT to address burnout among Malaysian RU academicians, as previous research has demonstrated its effectiveness in managing burnout in various populations (Hayes et al., 2004; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Lloyd et al., 2013; Frögéli et al., 2019; Puolakanaho et al., 2020; Reeve et al., 2021). However, it is worth noting that ACT is not commonly practiced in educational settings in Malaysia (Teoh & Yaakob, 2021). Consequently, the present study conducts a systematic review to examine the effectiveness of ACT in reducing burnout levels among academicians in Malaysian RUs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Burnout

Researchers concur that burnout does not occur suddenly, but rather develops gradually over a prolonged period of time (Teoh et al., 2021a; Teoh et al., 2021b; Teoh et al., 2021c). Burisch (2006) identified excessive job demands and the depletion of resources as key factors triggering burnout. The onset of burnout typically begins with emotional exhaustion, whereby individuals experiencing high levels

of emotional exhaustion tend to withdraw from their work, colleagues, and clients. This withdrawal often leads to depersonalization and a cynical attitude towards work (Taris et al., 2005). Emotional exhaustion is believed to be a precursor to depersonalization in burnout (Maslach et al., 2001), although some authors argue that exhaustion and depersonalization occur simultaneously rather than having distinct antecedents (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Demerouti et al. (2001) proposed two processes underlying the development of burnout. The first process involves job demands that frequently overload individuals, leading to exhaustion. The second process pertains to a lack of job resources, which refers to insufficient intrinsic or extrinsic motivators to enhance employee motivation and facilitate performance improvement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). When job resources fail to adequately meet job demands, withdrawal behaviors from work are expected to occur. These withdrawal behaviors contribute to disengagement, characterized by distancing oneself from work and harboring negative attitudes towards work content and overall job involvement (Demerouti et al., 2001).

While there is general agreement that burnout follows a progression of stages, there is little consensus on the specific stages involved (Burisch, 2006). Some researchers propose different orders of stages (Korunka et al., 2010). However, Korunka et al. (2010) outlined the fundamental aspects of burnout that can be summarized in the following stages:

Stage 1: Heavy Workload, Job Stress, and Expectations
- Job demands surpass the available resources.
- Job expectations are not met.

Stage 2: Physical and Emotional Exhaustion
- Prolonged fatigue, requiring extra energy to fulfill job responsibilities.
- Experience of sleep disturbances, headaches, and other physical discomfort.
- Emotional weariness even at the mere thought of work.

Stage 3: Depersonalization, Cynicism, and Indifference
- Apathetic feelings, depression, and boredom.
- Develop a negative outlook toward the job, colleagues, and clients/service recipients/patients.
- Withdrawal from job-related tasks and reduced effort.

Stage 4: Despair, Helplessness, and Aversion
- Feelings of strong aversion towards oneself, others, and everything.
- Experience of guilt and feelings of inadequacy.

Irrespective of the various conceptualizations of the burnout process, it is crucial to recognize the early signs of burnout to prevent its progression into a chronic condition. While burnout is not limited to any specific occupational field, the literature consistently highlights a higher prevalence of burnout among professions that involve working closely with people, such as educators, healthcare workers, social workers, and law enforcement officers (Henny et al., 2014). When comparing the prevalence of burnout across different occupational sectors in the Netherlands and the United States, the education sector has consistently been identified as the occupation with the highest levels of emotional exhaustion (Elliott & Crosswell, 2001; Blanchard et al., 2010; Backteman-Erlanson et al., 2012). Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the levels of burnout among academicians in Malaysian RUs.

Burnout among Academicians

Teoh's (2020) research has shown that Malaysian academicians in RUs experience significant levels of burnout. The study included a total of 686 academicians from different RUs, with varying proportions from each university. The findings revealed that these academicians reported an above-average level of burnout, which was attributed to high job demands and low job resources. This aligns with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which suggests that individuals are more likely to experience burnout when they face excessive job demands without sufficient resources (Hobfoll, 1989).

While there is limited research specifically focused on burnout among Malaysian RU academicians (Henny et al., 2014; Teoh, 2020), there is a substantial body of literature examining burnout predictors among Malaysian academicians in general. Age has been identified as a significant factor, with younger academicians, particularly those between 31 and 40 years old, reporting higher levels of burnout (Chen et al., 2014; Khan et al., 2015). This finding is consistent with previous

studies that highlight the challenges faced by young academicians in terms of career advancement and recognition compared to their senior counterparts (Blix et al., 1994; Kokkinos, 2007).

Gender differences have also been observed, with female academicians being four times more likely to experience burnout compared to their male counterparts (Henny et al., 2014). This is consistent with previous research highlighting the additional stressors faced by women who often juggle caregiving responsibilities at home alongside their academic roles (Acker, 2003; Lackritz, 2004; Teoh & Kee, 2022). Perception and experiences of work-related stress also differ between male and female academicians, with females often reporting higher emotional exhaustion (Adekola, 2010; Archibong et al., 2010).

Another noteworthy finding is that non-Malay academicians in Malaysia are more prone to burnout compared to Malay academicians, although the underlying reasons for this disparity remain unclear (Arma & Ismail, 2016; Smith et al., 2005). Furthermore, clinical academicians, particularly those in the health and medical research cluster, have been found to experience higher levels of burnout, which may be attributed to the demands of patient care and the intermingling of clinical and academic responsibilities (Henny et al., 2014; Johns & Ossoff, 2005; Shanafelt et al., 2009).

Teaching experience has also emerged as a relevant factor, with academicians who have less than six years of teaching experience being four times more likely to experience burnout (Henny et al., 2014). This aligns with studies indicating that more experienced academicians have developed better coping strategies to manage job stressors, making them less vulnerable to burnout (Fadlelmula, 2014; Khan et al., 2015). Meanwhile, academic rank has also been identified as a significant predictor of burnout, with junior ranks, such as associate lecturers and lecturers, being associated with higher levels of burnout compared to higher ranks (Chen et al., 2014; Khan et al., 2015; Safaria et al., 2011). Factors contributing to this disparity include higher teaching loads and research demands placed on junior academicians, inadequate salary, and limited opportunities for career advancement (Ghorpade et al., 2007; Kokkinos, 2007; Safaria et al., 2011).

In light of these past findings, it is evident that Malaysian academicians experience burnout under various circumstances. This underscores the importance of addressing burnout issues among Malaysian academicians, particularly those in the RU setting who play a significant role in enhancing Malaysia's reputation globally.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

The ACT model, proposed by Hayes et al. (2006), outlines six processes that work together to enhance psychological flexibility and reduce burnout. These processes include acceptance, contact with the present moment, values, committed action, self as context, and defusion. In ACT, individuals are encouraged to embrace negative thoughts and emotions instead of attempting to change or remove them. Instead, the focus is shifted towards cultivating more positive thoughts and engaging in actions that align with one's values. The process of contacting with the present moment involves non-judgmentally observing and fully experiencing the present without trying to control the outcome. Values serve as a compass, guiding individuals towards actions that align with their core beliefs and sense of purpose. Committed action emphasizes taking new steps consistent with one's values and long-term goals, emphasizing the importance of moving forward despite negative thoughts or challenging experiences. The concept of self as context suggests that a person's true identity is not solely defined by their past experiences but by their underlying personality and capacity for understanding. Lastly, defusion techniques aim to change how one responds to thoughts and feelings, enabling individuals to detach from unhelpful patterns of thinking.

In an enhanced version of ACT known as the ACT triflex, the six processes are grouped into three dyads: "being open" (acceptance and defusion), "noticing" (contact with the present moment and self as context), and "being active" (values and committed actions) (Harris, 2009). The ACT triflex approach emphasizes being open to life stressors, observing the present moment, and taking active steps toward valued goals (Stoddard & Afari, 2014). In the present study, the ACT triflex technique is employed to address burnout levels among academicians in Malaysian RUs, providing a comprehensive approach to enhance their well-being.

METHODOLOGY

To ensure a comprehensive coverage of relevant journal articles, a systematic search was conducted across various databases. The search process was completed on October 31, 2021, with no specific deadline set for further searching, allowing for an extensive exploration of the available literature. The search strategy focused on three key categories: population (academicians or teachers), intervention (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy or ACT), and outcome (burnout), aiming to enhance the effectiveness of the search strategy and capture a wide range of relevant articles.

However, the systematic search was further refined by focusing specifically on the outcome of burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Developed by Maslach and Jackson in 1981, the MBI is a self-report questionnaire that assesses work-related burnout symptoms. It consists of 22 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (every day). The MBI encompasses three subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Higher scores in each subscale indicate a higher level of burnout in that specific area.

The emotional exhaustion subscale, comprising 9 items, measures feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. The depersonalization subscale, consisting of 5 items, assesses negative and cynical feelings towards students or colleagues. The reduced personal accomplishment subscale, composed of 8 items, evaluates one's perception of competence. Cut-off scores for high burnout levels in each subscale have been suggested by Maslach and Jackson (1981). However, Brinkborg et al. (2011) proposed interpreting the MBI scores as a whole, categorizing scores as low, moderate, or high burnout levels.

The psychometric properties of the MBI have been supported by past studies, demonstrating its convergent validity, discriminant validity, internal consistency, and test-retest reliability (Maslach et al., 1996; Thorsen et al., 2011). Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the MBI have been reported as 0.83 and 0.84 for pre- and post-assessments, respectively, with test-retest reliabilities ranging from 0.50 to 0.82 (Brinkborg et al., 2011). Convergent and discriminant validity have

also been established through previous research (Koeske & Koeske, 1989; Maslach et al., 1996; Thorsen et al., 2011).

Given the focus of the current study on high levels of burnout within the population, the total set of MBI scores is of primary interest during the screening process. These scores not only serve as a criterion for determining the suitability of the literature during the search process but also form the main focus during the interpretation of the literature. This allows for an examination of the effectiveness of ACT-based interventions in addressing high levels of burnout.

During the initial search, duplicate articles were identified and removed to avoid redundancy. The remaining articles underwent a rigorous screening process, where the titles and abstracts were carefully examined to assess their relevance to the study. Only those articles that appeared to be closely related to the research topic were selected for further evaluation. The full texts of the selected articles were then obtained and thoroughly examined to determine their eligibility for inclusion in the present study.

To ensure consistency and adherence to the research objectives, a set of inclusion criteria was applied to the selected articles. Firstly, the articles had to be written in the English language to facilitate comprehension and analysis. Additionally, the target population of the studies had to focus on academicians or teachers, as these were the specific groups of interest for the research. Furthermore, the selected articles needed to include ACT as the intervention method, as this was the primary focus of the study. Lastly, the articles had to examine burnout as the outcome measure to align with the research objectives. On the other hand, articles with a background in community work were deliberately excluded from the study to maintain a specific focus on the academic context.

Following the rigorous screening and application of the inclusion criteria, only two articles remained that met all the specified criteria. These articles were considered highly relevant and formed the foundation for the subsequent discussion of the findings in the present study. The inclusion of these two articles ensures that the review provides a comprehensive analysis of the available literature on the application of ACT interventions for burnout among academicians.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The systematic review of previous research on ACT and burnout reveals a consistent procedure followed in ACT-based interventions. These interventions utilize the MBI as the primary assessment tool to collect data on burnout levels before, during, and after the intervention. The MBI consists of three subscales, namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, which offer valuable insights into burnout symptoms and enable the tracking of client progress throughout the intervention process.

During the treatment phase, the main intervention employed is the ACT triflex technique. ACT, a behavioral therapy approach, aims to help individuals reduce avoidance of distressing thoughts, feelings, and sensations. The ACT triflex technique is specifically designed to assist clients in effectively addressing the job-related stressors that contribute to their burnout. The intervention consists of six counseling sessions held weekly on Wednesdays, with each session lasting between 75 to 90 minutes. To ensure accurate reference and review, all counseling sessions are recorded with the client's consent.

The initial counseling session focuses on introducing psychological counseling to the client and explaining the informed consent process. Emphasis is placed on confidentiality and privacy to create a safe environment for the client to share their concerns. The structure of the counseling sessions is clearly outlined, ensuring that the client comprehends the counseling process. Building rapport and establishing a therapeutic relationship are prioritized during this session, as the success of the treatment greatly depends on the strength of the counselor-client relationship.

Subsequent counseling sessions involve exploring the client's concerns in-depth and providing psychoeducation on burnout. The counselor helps the client identify avoidance behaviors related to job stressors and collaboratively works with them to address specific issues. Goal setting becomes a central focus, encompassing discussions on significant job stressors, thoughts, emotions, behaviors, valued goals, and potential corrective actions aligned with the principles of ACT.

In the fourth and fifth sessions, the ACT triflex technique is implemented. The client is guided towards recognizing unhelpful

thoughts and embracing challenges without letting those experiences define their identity. Mindfulness psychoeducation is introduced, incorporating practices such as body and breath meditation. The client is encouraged to identify personal qualities they wish to express through their daily behavior and to overcome barriers to action. Homework assignments are provided, encouraging acceptance of job stressors, mindfulness in observing present thoughts and emotions, and proactive steps towards achieving their desired life.

During the fifth session, the client's progress in overcoming job stressors is evaluated, and the ACT triflex techniques are further applied to enhance positive outcomes. The final counseling session involves reflection on the progress made throughout the treatment and the changes experienced by the client. The counselor reinforces the new coping strategies developed by the client to effectively manage job stressors. The sessions conclude with a discussion in which the client provides feedback on the treatment.

While research on the application of ACT-based interventions for burnout in Malaysia is limited, studies conducted in Western countries and existing literature demonstrate the potential effectiveness of this approach. To address this gap, this study proposes the implementation of ACT-based interventions in the Malaysian higher education industry, specifically targeting burnout among academicians and educators. This endeavor not only aims to reduce burnout levels but also contributes to the enhancement of local counseling practices through the incorporation of ACT principles.

In conclusion, this study employs a systematic approach, utilizing the MBI as the primary assessment tool and the ACT triflex technique as the main intervention. The counseling sessions follow a structured format, emphasizing psychoeducation, goal setting, and the application of ACT principles. Although research on ACT-based interventions for burnout in Malaysia is limited, previous studies and existing literature provide support for the potential effectiveness of this approach. By implementing ACT-based interventions in the Malaysian higher education industry, this study aims to contribute to the understanding and treatment of burnout among academicians, providing valuable insights for counseling practice and future research endeavors.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Currently, academicians from Malaysian RUs are experiencing significant burnout due to excessive job demands. To alleviate burnout levels and promote the well-being of Malaysian RU academicians, the implementation of ACT-based interventions is suggested as a promising approach. However, there is a lack of studies on ACT-based interventions for reducing burnout in Malaysia, particularly in the educational context. Therefore, this study aims to explore the potential of ACT-based interventions in reducing burnout among academicians from Malaysian RUs and other industrial settings. By implementing these interventions, we can address psychological issues in Malaysia and contribute to the enrichment of local counseling practices.

The findings of this study hold valuable implications for various stakeholders, including upcoming researchers, mental health practitioners, academicians, RU management, community educators, and social workers. These findings can serve as a reference point for future research endeavors and practical applications of ACT-based interventions in the Malaysian context. By tailoring these interventions to suit the local context, it is possible to update and expand the existing body of literature on counseling practices incorporating ACT-based interventions. Moreover, the present study serves as a wake-up call for researchers and practitioners to address the burnout issues specifically among academicians from Malaysian RUs. As Malaysian RUs strive to achieve their missions and visions, it is crucial to promptly address psychological issues such as burnout to ensure the well-being and productivity of academicians are safeguarded.

Furthermore, the utilization of ACT-based interventions has the potential to bring about positive outcomes not only for academicians but also for the overall educational landscape in Malaysia. By addressing burnout and promoting psychological well-being among academicians, the quality of education and research can be enhanced. Moreover, the incorporation of ACT-based interventions in academic settings can foster a healthier and more supportive work environment, leading to increased job satisfaction and productivity. This, in turn, can contribute to the overall growth and development of the Malaysian education sector.

In summary, the present study highlights the urgent need to address burnout among academicians from Malaysian RUs through the

implementation of ACT-based interventions. By conducting further research and practical applications in this area, the local counseling practice literature can be expanded, and a valuable contribution can be made to the well-being of academicians and the educational landscape in Malaysia. It is crucial for stakeholders to recognize the importance of tackling burnout issues and prioritize the implementation of effective interventions to ensure the long-term success and fulfillment of academicians in their professional roles.

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