

Good mental health crucial: Minister

OTTEY PETER

KOTA KINABALU: Mental illness can contribute to great economic waste at various levels such as individual, family unit, organisation, as well as at the national level, said State Education and Innovation Minister, Datuk Dr Yusof Yacob.

He said economic loss can be due to the direct and indirect costs of health, absenteeism, reduced productivity at work and decreased overall income which can result with reduction in national economic output.

"Employers should be more concerned and attentive towards managing mental health problems at the workplace as well as addressing other aspects of work in order to reduce absenteeism, increase productivity and benefit from associated economic gains.

"Psychological wellbeing, should be made a goal for everyone to positively contribute to the nation's development," he said when officiating the 2nd International Conference on Psychology, Counselling & Education (ICPCE) held at Canselor Hall, University Malaysia Sabah (UMS) here, Thursday.

Yusof said stress might be more prevalent in this era of Industrial Revolution 4.0 and with that, comes the significance of maintaining mental health wellness.

He said the needs for professionals who are able to understand and manage mental health problems are becoming more apparent, making platforms such as the conference a significant and impactful event for the exchange of knowledge in this field of study.

"Mental health has gained the attention of professionals, researchers, practitioners, and people in general. As such, the field of psychology, the study of behaviour and mind, is becoming more

critical in today's world," he said.

Meanwhile, ICPCE 2019 Chairperson, Dr Noor Hassline Mohamed said every university in the country should provide good and sufficient facilities for the disabled people.

She said that many of the disabled people want to further their studies in universities but due to the bad perception on them, they have been denied access.

"There is one case of an academician who ban a disabled student to attend his class. The academician said that the student is not fit to study as he has disability.

"I think this kind of issue should not be happening because before the student can enrol in the university, he has to undergo medical check-up. If the doctor said it is alright for the student to further his or her study, why should we denied them the right to education?"

Noor believed that the structures that will advance equality for disadvantaged members of society should be in place.

She said in order to provide support for those with disabilities to get access to education, the professional collaboration of a multidisciplinary team of psychology, social work, counselling and education experts is needed to ensure that their work is comprehensive and unbiased for this purpose.

PSYCHREG, United Kingdom, UMS and the International Conference in Psychology, Counselling and Education (ISPCE) have joined forces to organise the event to disseminate innovative research and best practices in psychology, counselling and education from Oct 31-Nov 2.

ICPCE 2019 is held in partnership with the University of Edinburgh (UK), Anglia Ruskin University and Vasile Alecsandri University of Bacau (Romania).



Yusof (seated centre) posing with the participants from various countries.

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