

## Psynnova IBMT module as an intervention against changes in the behaviour of low-performing civil servants in Malaysia

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### Abstract

This study discusses the effectiveness of the Psynnova i-Behaviour Modification Technique module on the behavioural change of low-performing civil servants in Malaysia. The low-performing staffs are those who scored below 60% on Annual Performance Assessment Report (LNPT) in 2015. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of the module on behavioural change through five dimensions among low-performing officers in the civil service. Additionally, the objective of this study is also to identify the five-dimensional levels of cognitive and rationality, emotional stability, adaptability and alignment of behaviour, social skill development and the psycho-spiritual level improvement before and after the intervention. This study will be conducted using a quasi-experimental method of one group pre- & post-test. Therefore, this study has succeeded in obtaining high validity results and can be used in the study of behavioural change of the low-performing officers in the civil service.

**Keywords:** Counselling, psychology, behavioural changes, work performance, public services, five dimensions, face validity, content validity.

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## 1. Introduction

Today's workers need counselling, whether they work for government or private sectors and even self-employed. The important need for its function and role can never be denied (Mansur, 1998). Furthermore, in this new millennium, employees at various stages at both the top management, intermediate or lower levels face various problems at work. Among the common problems faced by employees are stress problems, employer and employee relationships, declining worker performance, low self-esteem and failure in communication (Mustaffa, 2002). Thus, these are the problems that require a worker to seek counselling help in the organisation. In other words, a form of counselling therapy needs to be effectively implemented to treat the workers who are experiencing these problems.

As we all know, counselling is generally defined as a process that aims to help individuals adapt themselves to the environment (Parker, Symanski & Patterson, 2004). The purpose is to enable them to fully cooperate in all aspects of life in a community. The counsellors involved in this recovery counselling must possess special knowledge and skills and have the necessary attitudes to collaborate in professional relationships with individuals who experience disability in order to achieve their personal, social, psychological and vocational goals (Zuhda, 2014). In general, there are two categories of counselling that can be used to address the worker problem, which is related to personal and career. Due to this situation, organisational counselling is needed and very important.

Among the functions and needs of counselling that should be emphasised on employees in the organisational sector are the treatment methods of diagnosing workers' problems, treatment of giving employees the opportunity to express feelings, treatments to help employees think maturely and not emotionally controlled, advice treatment, support and calming of employees treatment, enhancing communication within the organisation and employee motivational training. Hence, the function of the organisation's counselling services in the 21st century plays a very important role in improving the quality of workers in total (Mustaffa, 2002). In Malaysia, counselling services in organisations exist on the employer's awareness of the importance of protecting and promoting high-value human resources. Boje (2001) states that managers and supervisors' relationship with other workers must be treated like adults, considered as partners and respect them as they are a very important asset in the organisation.

However, in determining their achievement in service, these employees will be evaluated in terms of their behaviour and contribution to the organisation through Annual Performance Value Report every year from which they will see their performance and this will also determine the salary increment. In Malaysia, the assessment is viewed here. Accordingly, there are also employees who do not show good performance and need to be attended by various parties including the organisation itself as well as the Public Service Department (PSD). Then the Exit Policy Implementation Service Circular for Low-Performance Officers July 2015 is established. The circular aims to inform the Government's decision to introduce an exit policy and its implementation method for low-performing officers in the Public Service. And from that, PSD takes an important role in helping to monitor these officers, and the Psychological Management Division has set up a Programme Guidelines as a reference for the intervention of such officials. From there, they will be called upon in the counselling sessions at the department, and they will be present in the screening tests that are health tests, development, finance and counselling tests. Thereafter they will attend an intervention programme that is appropriate to the Psychological Officer intervention panel's statement according to guidelines set by the department. Employees under 60% will be monitored for 3 months after attending the department's programme and if there is still no change in the Annual Assessment Value Report marks the next year, they will be included in the Psynnova Integrated Behaviour Modification Technique except for health cases.

### **1.1. Problem statements**

The workplace counselling psychology service is a form of intervention that pays attention to the physical and mental aspects of the worker which can support productivity improvement initiatives in the organisation. The early history of this service focusses on addressing interpersonal problems among individual worker. Nowadays, the evolution of this service is growing wider to become a mental and physical welfare support system for workers. For example, the Employee Assistant Programme (EAP) provides activities such as supervisory training or training to manage changes (Carroll, 1996). In addition, the service also plays an important role in the performance management systems (Husain & Rosli, 2002).

Accordingly, in line with the government's intention to prioritise human capital development, public sector human resource managers should implement improvements in their affairs by applying the psychological and counselling aspects. Human capital development is a development that focusses on human beings. Its main goal is to increase and advance the individual for future returns (Hamat & Nordin, 2012). Through such approach, human factors as the capital can be enhanced to the optimum level. Psychological and counselling approaches are the actions that must be taken in order to develop human capital that emphasises the following aspects that are development, prevention and recovery. The recovery aspect emphasises the counselling psychology services application that helps improve the individual's potential. In addition, it also explores the barriers found in individuals that hinder them from giving meaningful and outstanding contributions. Next, its role is to help individuals face problems in their workplace and daily life.

Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson (2000) argue that meaningful employment is closely linked to the behaviour of the individuals at their workplace. Negative interests and job challenges are the biggest challenges that cause them to decide to quit or not coming to work. Hence, the concept of spirituality is emphasised and self-concept is preferred over the workplace challenges which have a positive impact on the employee behaviour. That individual employee should be helped to understand the effects of his or her behaviour on himself, his colleagues and the organisation so that he or she is immediately aware of and act to change such negative behaviour. If an employee has a work-intent that is in agreement with the organisation and has the potential to succeed, he or she can be helped by giving him appropriate training. If this service is carried out seriously and systematically, each employee, whether problematic or not can gain benefit from counselling psychology services. This service, within an organisation is not restricted to only problematic workers, but also for those who want information, purpose or just to share their story (Mustaffa, 2002).

The performance of an organisation depends largely on the behaviour of the employees in that organisation. However, if viewed from the perspective of the existing employees, those who are deemed to be of good quality are they who made good contribution compared to those who are of lesser quality (Ismail, 2011) (*Jurnal Psikologi*, June 2011). According to Shea (2002) the level of job satisfaction among Malaysian workers on the whole, declined since 2000 after workers reached the age of 35–44 years old. Riggio (2003) says that the behaviour of the employee itself can affect the level of job satisfaction within the organisation. The existence of turnover such as absent of work and truancy often happens. Ismail's (2011) study, at a university in Sabah, found that there is a link between job satisfaction and unproductive behaviour.

As of 2015, a total of 557 civil servants across Malaysia are categorised as non-performing officers from various aspects, i.e., attending counselling, development, health and also low performance officers. In 2015 alone, 179 public officers scoring below 75% in the Annual Performance Assessment Report (LNPT) are listed as low performing officers. This prompts the PSD to create an Exit Policy, a separating policy that screens the officials with performance under this target. As a follow-up action, the need to create a form of intervention to help them restore their performance in terms of behaviour and thinking has been devised.

In line with that, the government's initiative has outlined that all ministries and departments are provided with several psychological officers who can assist those with problems whether they are referred or come voluntarily to undergo counselling psychological intervention. Through the Service Circulars No. 1/1999, the PSD has recommended to the Head of Department to set up a counselling unit and appoint counselling officers to assist the human resource management of a department. Meanwhile, Service Circular Letter No. 4/1998 has also been issued by the PSD to provide guidance on managing problematic and low-performing staffs through counselling service approaches to employees of a department. The PSD has also issued a Service Circular No. 18/2005, Psychology Application Guide in Human Resource Management emphasising the use of psychological and counselling elements in human resource management from the time of entry into work until the retirement. Counselling psychology services continue to grow as a highly relevant profession in developing human resources with the unification of counsellor scheme services as a Counselling Appointment Scheme from 1 January 2007. To date, psychological and counselling services have gone for more than 22 years since it was introduced in the public sector from 1 January 1992.

Counselling psychological intervention in Malaysia is indispensable. Hence, the field of counselling psychology in the organisation is increasingly adopted with the presence of psychological officer positions at the departmental level, the ministry and also in private agencies. In addition, the existence of this service is very important as it is one of the branches of EAPs within the organisation. Cheng (2012) in his study of counselling at work argues that counselling at work can play an important role in developing a friendly and caring organisational culture. In addition, it states that counselling interaction in the workplace is very important. Discussions can create awareness about how counselling at work can help both staff and organisational development to address job and life challenges. This study also discusses the workplace and life balance that may contribute to a healthy workplace as well as community. Furthermore, Kirk and Brown (2003) through their study of EAPs, provide counselling and consultancy services that focus on the prevention and recovery of personal problems experienced by employees or their family members. EAPs are now regarded as one of the main vehicles for job stress management and will grow rapidly to become a provider of a comprehensive wellness programme at the workplace.

These officers will be directly included in a programme organised by PSD Psychology Management Division. The counselling psychology module is the core of the implementation of this module. A 5-day four-night programme named Psynnova Programme will use the Psynnova iBMT Module as a guide in operating the programme. But since the module is implemented in the public service, it is internal and a study has never been done to evaluate it. However, these questions indicate the existence of gaps in counselling services for these low-performing officers in the context that the dimensions involved in the module have not been evaluated especially the dimensions of cognitive and rationality, emotional stability, adjustment and alignment of behaviour and social skills development. Since local research data on psychological and counselling interventions to low-performing officers is very limited, counsellors serving in the ministries and departments which directly involved with them need to understand transparently about the use of such modules to address the problems of these low-performing clients. Nevertheless, before the Psynnova Module is conducted for low performance officers, there has been a programme implemented for the same target group namely Self Transformation Programme using the Low-Performance Officer Module for 3 days and two nights but the programme is not as detailed as the module built by BPPs which has been carried out in detail using the Reality Therapy Theory pioneered by William Glasser.

Therefore, the use of appropriate and accurate questionnaires is essential to be the manual for the intervention programme conducted by all ministries.

## 2. Literature review

Workplace counselling refers to developing employee competency in order to succeed in corporate life. It will be blind to expect the supervisor to be fully trained as a functioning counsellor. In fact, many problems are created because supervisors fail to recognise their limitations as counsellors. They sometimes investigate too deeply (Lewis & Lewis, 1986).

In Malaysia, workplace counselling aims to provide support for workers' physical and mental well-being. This effort will have the effect of increasing the productivity and performance of the workforce and as a result, the Company will gain more benefit. Good response about the Company is obtained because the workplace counselling can be seen as a manifestation of corporate, legal and ethical responsibilities. Employees will respect the company when they are viewed as potential assets that should be optimally developed. In practice, the concepts mentioned earlier seem to differ. A survey conducted on 26 small- and medium-sized companies in Java, which manages various fields, found that most companies have provided optimum efforts at workplace counselling (Husain & Rosli, 2002).

Meanwhile, in term of work conflicts, a study conducted by Rusni and Aida (2015) found that work conflicts among public servants are largely influenced by the family factor especially in terms of working hours, responsibilities in performing work and behaviour while working. Seventeen percent or 13 out of 533 people have family and work conflict. While 30% of the 229 respondents are experiencing family-work conflict and require coping skills to handle them. Here we can conclude that conflicts occurred is closely linked with the burden of job responsibilities resulting in civil servants being tired, feeling unhappy and depressed. Conflict of work behaviour affects the family when productive behaviour in the workplace such as problem solving abilities, managing and administering abilities cannot be utilised in the daily life situation. It can be concluded that, the conflict in the office can interfere with the worker's performance and it creates an inability to show good performance.

Outside of the country, many Labour Assistant Programmes (LAPs) are being held to improve the skills of their employees through counselling and social work programmes, organisational development and helping services to solve family conflicts. According to Myers (1992), an increase in problematic workers in the industry will affect the productivity of that industry. The LAPs programme is a programme conducted by employers outside the organisation or within the organisation to address workers problem as well as provide treatment and rehabilitation to problematic workers. The programme also provides preventative programmes while reducing burdens or problems faced by workers.

In addition, studies related to validity and reliability has been carried out abroad as well as in Malaysia. Among these are the eLearning Style Evaluation Validity and Reliability Version 8.1 Using Rash Measurement Model by Rosseni Din based on the Perceptual Learning Style Inventory (Reid, 1984) and modified according to the cultural suitability and conditions of learning. There are 30 items in section D which are divided into six constructs and they measure student learning styles in institutions of higher learning. Two hundred and ninety-two questionnaires are analysed and obtained the validity value of 0.82, which shows that all items can directly be used to measure student learning styles at institutions of higher learning. Moreover, Abdullah (2010) conducted a study on the reliability of career aptitude inventory to measure an individual's career inclination based on Holland's Career Selection Theory (1973). A total of 50 individuals are randomly selected to be the respondents of this study. This inventory has part A, Demography and Part B which has 180 items divided into six parts representing personalities i.e., realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional. Based on the findings, the Alpha Cronbach reliability coefficient is very high at 0.91 and all 180 items in the inventory have a high coefficient value of 0.90 and above. This shows that the inventory has a high validity coefficient value and eligible for use.

The selected literature is reviewed based on past studies related to workplace counselling that involves behaviour changes and also related to the validity and reliability of the inventory used in the study.

### 3. Methodology

This experimental study aimed to see the behavioural change of employees using the Identity-Wellbeing Improvement Questionnaire (IWIQ). It also describes the formation of questionnaire through two phases namely the face validity and the content validity.

#### 3.1. Research design

The research design used is pre-test and post-test experiments to one target group. This is because this target group does not require comparisons between other groups as these interventions are only carried out to one target group conducted on a timely basis determined by the researchers according to the Time Series approach. Single case experiment is best suited to study behaviour changes especially in the field of psychology in order to see behavioural changes such as in social strengthening. Single Case Designs also use some procedures to control the experiments in quantitative studies (Meredith, Gall & Walter, 2002).

The Time Series approach means there are some standard techniques used such as estimates and programme runs according to trends and have a clear time cycle and known periods and there is a series of observation time (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). This pre- and post-test test design involves observation or measurement taken before and after treatment. It involves repetitive measurements or observations over a period of time before and after treatment. This intervention study will use the one group pre- and post-test method (Frankel & Wallen, 2016). In one group pre- and post-test design, one group is measured or observed not only after being given the same treatment before and after the intervention.

This study has a series of observation time period of 6 months after the intervention is conducted. However, the researcher will carry out an observation period of 3 months after the intervention as the duration of the study is limited. This study will undergo an observation and circulation of questionnaire once before the intervention and again after the implementation of the programme which means a set of tests is distributed before the programme and a set of tests is distributed after the intervention programme. It is shown in Table 1 below.

Experimental process is carried out in accordance with the procedures set by the researcher together with the administration (PSD) so that problems can be minimised throughout the intervention programme. During the process of Psynnova Programme, various activities are arranged for 5 days and four nights, or 40 hours of slots. This research questionnaire is circulated two times as shown in the table below. In this approach, at least one set of test tool that is a questionnaire is distributed before and after the programme. The expected questionnaires distribution is as follows;

**Table 1. Distribution of pre and post questionnaires to participants of the IBMT Psynnova Programme**

Pre-test	X	Post-test
	Expected month	
O1		O2
April–May	May–October	August–November
Distribution of questionnaire 1	Intervention	Distribution of questionnaire 2

The date of the questionnaire for O2 is based on the date of the Psynnova Programme conducted by their ministry that is the observation period after 3 months of the programme.

The questionnaire that will be distributed in this study has also undergone significant phases before its use in which researchers measure the content validity of the questionnaire. This is to gain the confidence of readers and other researchers on the instruments. Yaghmaie (2003) stated that the content validity can be determined through three things that are literature, population representing the respondents and experts. In the context of determining the validity of the instrument, five experts are appointed to obtain the validity of the questionnaire before it is distributed to the respondents. The validity value of this questionnaire is 0.745. Wilson, Pan and Schumsky (2012) use CVR 0.75 and above, indicating that the acceptance is high and can be used as each item is understood and conveys the meaning of each sub-construct. This descriptive study aims to obtain the validity of the SSPBM questionnaire. Therefore, this section describes the study process that is face validity and content validity analysis. There are two validity methods that are carried out that is: i) the face validity and ii) the content validity. Face validity is carried out on the questionnaire to examine the sentence structure, language accuracy and the terms used in detail by two psychologists and two respondents of the same position with the actual respondents. The language experts in this field have reviewed and provided suggestions for improving the language, sentence structure and understanding of the terms used in SSPTP. Improvements are made to the items that are less clear so that the meaning can be delivered more accurately based on the stated subscale definition for it to be easily understood by the respondents.

Whereas, to test the validity of the content of IWIQs, it goes through verification of experts panel in which five persons are appointed as experts. According to Zamanzadeh, Ghahramanian, Rassouli, Abbaszadeh & Alavi-majd (2018) at least 5–10 people are to be appointed to make the content validity.

### **3.2. Research tools**

The instrument used for this study is IWIQ. To obtain the validity, there are two tools used in this study: i) IWI questionnaire for face validity and ii) modified questionnaire after undergoing the face validity and in accordance with the procedure for obtaining the Expert Validity for the content validity.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. IWIQ face validity findings**

The findings of the IWIQ's validity are good. In this regard, to strengthen the term accuracy and the language understanding, the questionnaire is first administered to a group of officers in a ministry to get their feedback in terms of language comprehension. Then, the questionnaires are reviewed by four people, two are field experts and two others have the same job as the future respondents. This improvement is made so that the language and the terms used are accurate to the subscale meaning and appropriate to the target group. After the face validity is performed by some officers, it is found that they clearly understand what is meant by each subscale and the meaning of each item in the subscale.

The face validity findings of the IWIQ are good.

### **4.2. IWIQ content validity study**

Six experts evaluate the IWIQ to achieve the content validity value as shown below:

**Table 2. The contents validity value of the IWIQ based on expert evaluation (n = 5)**

<b>Scale and subscale of dimension of behavioural changes</b>	<b>Alpha Cronbach value</b>	<b>Item</b>
Total	0.745	56
Emotional stability	0.742	8
Psycho-spiritual improvement	0.766	17

Social skills development	0.796	6
Cognitive and rational improvement	0.746	11
Alignment and adjustment of behaviour	0.804	14

The expert panel assessment for IWIQ found that the minimum and maximum values for each sub-scale of the questionnaire value is greater than 0.75. The lowest value is for the behavioural change sub-scale is Emotional Stability (0.742) and the highest value is the behavioural alignment and adjustment sub-scale (0.804). Based on the average score, the researcher found that the validity coefficient for the IWIQ instrument is 0.745. This means that the content of IWIQ questionnaire is able to measure behavioural change.

## 5. Discussion

The initiative to devise this study is to see the effectiveness of psychological counselling interventions using the IBMT Psynnova Module implemented against low-performing Malaysian civil servants. Low performance means those who have an Annual Performance Score Report below 60%. They are rated by the head who has the officers and staff under his supervision and responsible for managing the human resources as best as possible. Manpower management, not only includes in terms of enhancing knowledge, skills and motivation, but also includes managing low-performing officers.

From the observations of the PSD, the departmental heads take the easy way to solve the problem of low-performing officers by asking that officers to be transferred to another department or placed them in group posts. In addition, there are situations where the officer is said to be low or problematic, but the Annual Performance Evaluation Report (LNPT) does not illustrate the situation, and some have even achieved high performance and are eligible for promotion. This condition if left as it be, will affect the image and productivity of the Department.

In addition to the corrective action after the occurrence of the problem, the action should include preventive measures before it takes place. This includes creating an enviable atmosphere/work environment, organising activities that can create a sense of community and family like sports, religious activities and childcare.

According to Muhamad (2000), in the book entitled *Kelakuan Organisasi* (Organisational Behaviour) states that Rogers emphasises that self-image is the key determinant for personal conduct and adaptation. It comes from the phenomenon of experience faced by an individual. It also affects the attitude and behaviour of that individual. Low-performing officers, according to the definition of Service Circular No. 4 1998—The Guidelines on Managing Low-Performing Officers and Problematic Officers, mean officers who are unable to contribute towards the achievement of the Department's objectives and especially those who fail to achieve the prescribed annual work targets together based on the level and position of the officers. Such officers are said to be unproductive, 'non-performer' and have no serious attitude, lack of effort and sometimes have low knowledge and skills and have personal and interpersonal relationships problems with management, colleagues or staff subordinate.

In this study, researchers emphasised behavioural change in low performing officers that is those who earn fewer than 60% of LNPT score. The increasing number of problematic employees is getting more alarming. According to statistics released by the PSD until 2015, a total of 557 officers who have been involved in various problems and have also been undertaking a rehabilitation process, namely counselling programmes conducted by PSD Psychology Management Division.

Accordingly, the Exit Policy Exercise for Low Performing Officers in Public Services—Public Service Circular No. 7, 2015 is implemented, in which the programme is executed from 2015. A total of 269 employees are currently undergoing the IBMT Psynnova Programme and the rest are attending counselling, development and health programmes. However, for the year 2017, there has been a



decline in most ministries and this is seen positively by the psychologist in-charge of this low performing officer. So far, five ministries have been identified as having low performing officers and carrying out programmes using the Psynnova Module. Only 70 people will be involved in this study. The implementation of this programme is expected to help restore the behaviours, attitudes and thinking of those involved. However, there is still a need to see the effectiveness of this module and to review the activities as well as to see the behavioural change through the five dimensions which are the main focus of individual development in the module that are:

- i. cognitive improvement;
- ii. emotional stability;
- iii. adjustment and alignment of behaviour;
- iv. social skills development and
- v. psycho-spiritual level improvement.

The issue to be raised here is whether the module used in the Psynnova programme is capable to alter the attitudes and behaviours of these low performing officers or not. Therefore, the questionnaire is an important instrument for this study and it focusses on the five sub-scales in the Psynnova module to see behavioural changes after 3 months of intervention. This study has never been studied academically and has not been used in any study other than an internal study to see these behavioural changes. Since researchers want to use them academically, they need to follow the correct phases to obtain validity before using them in the field. All items created in each subscale are related to the subscale and represent the subscale meaning and it is clear. All of these subscales are actually from the reality theory used entirely in the Psynnova module. These five dimensions are also combined through several theories to form the best approach to induce behavioural changes and identified through the pre- and post-test to those respondents.

## 6. Study implications

The implication of this study focusses on the effectiveness of the module on behavioural change of the low-performing officers. Although their number has dropped this year, and only 70 people have been identified, it still can have an unhealthy impact on the public service. The findings of this study indicate that this questionnaire is able to assess the behavioural changes through the five subscales (dimensions) used in the Psynnova Module. As for the implications of the civil service, the problems faced by today's workers are crucial as it will affect their performance assessed by the First and the Second Evaluator. These officers will certainly be sent to the counselling unit to get counselling services to help them look and give awareness on what they are currently face which disturbs their work processes in the office. Therefore, the five sub-scales studied are closely related to their environment as well as impacting their services. Therefore, this questionnaire can be used as a measurement tool for basic assessment to see their actual situation before and after the intervention to see whether there is an increase or reduction in terms of the change in the five subscales. Accordingly, this approach should be developed and applied by all relevant ministries and departments.

Hence, the implication of the study is to prepare the IWIQ theoretically and practically for the counselling unit in particular, the field of psychology and counselling as well as the practice of counselling in the public service in general. In addition, it will also complement the psychologist's assessment of behavioural change of the low-performing employees.

## 7. Suggestions

Based on the findings, some suggestions are presented, namely:

1. This study can help to see the behavioural change of the employee through the Psynnova module used in the programme in which the respondents are comprised of low performing employees.
2. This study can also guide the human resources division to assist counselling units in managing the low performing officers before they are subjected to any disciplinary action.
3. Based on the validity and reliability of IWIQ for applications to officers in the civil service, it is recommended to carry out another study to prove the effectiveness of IWIQ such as correlation studies with other questionnaires, doing test and re-test study, factor analysis etc.
4. Based on the effectiveness of the IWIQ in assessing behavioural changes of the officers and as a manual of intervention on behavioural change, it is recommended to conduct an experimental study of low performing officers using this IWIQ among public service officers in Malaysia.

## 8. Conclusion

The planning of this study is expected to be a catalyst for more studies related to recovery counselling on behaviour in the organisation against low-performing officers in order to see more positive changes in their behaviour after undergoing any counselling programme and that they can contribute excellently as a glorious public servant.

Additionally, this study also explains the importance of counselling services in today's organisations in improving the quality of the employees as a whole. Whereas Kirk and Brown (2003) have also stated that low quality services in the public sector can be overcome if civil servants are more efficient, focussed on customers, transparent and have high accountability. All these required criteria are closely related to the level of public servants' commitment. In order to maintain in-service quality, civil servants must be mentally and physically supported in order to improve their commitment in providing services in all levels of positions whether they are at the support or managerial level.

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