Self Disclosure Counsel in Revealing Psychological Problems
(Study On Online Counseling Service Counselives)

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ABSTRACT

People with psychological problems generally find it difficult to express themselves and have poor communication skills. This research focuses on the counselor's self-disclosure in revealing his psychological problems in online counseling services. The research used a qualitative approach with descriptive research type. Data collection techniques using interviews, observation, documentation, and literature study. This research uses the concept of self-disclosure as well as the theory of the Johari Window and Communication Privacy Management. The results showed that the main factors that influence the counselee's self-disclosure are listeners and channels. The counselee's trust in the listener and the response given by the listener is the counselee's consideration. The channel factor in the form of a disinhibition effect affects the counselor's self-disclosure in online counseling services. The supporting factors for self-disclosure were found, namely the topic. The reasons for the counselor's self-disclosure include the tendency of dangerous psychological problems, physical pain, complaints, emotional support, asking for help, and psychological control. The counselor tends to get positive effects from self-disclosure such as catharsis, self-knowledge, and self-acceptance. The effects felt different for each individual, a negative effect was found in the form of vulnerability.

Keywords: self-disclosure; counselee; psychological problems; online counseling services

INTRODUCTION

Mental health or mental health contributes to the health and development of individuals. Psychological problems such as excessive anxiety, stress, depression, addictive behavior, sleep disorders and other behavioral problems have a tendency to become mental health disorders or dangerous mental disorders. In Indonesia, health problems have become a serious disease burden. Based on the 2018 Riskesdas results report, it is known that the prevalence of emotional mental disorders, namely conditions that indicate a person is experiencing psychological changes which may be a normal condition, but can also be a pathological condition in the Indonesian population, has a percentage of 9.8%. (Indonesian Ministry of Health 2021)
Topics regarding psychological problems are taboo topics to discuss. HatiPlong CEO, Farah Djalal explained that negative stigma in society still influences most people to go to a psychologist (Kurniawan and Sulistyarini 2016; Priyantini, Nursalam, and Sukartini 2021). This can make self-disclosure difficult for people who have psychological problems.

In general, self-disclosure can be defined as a type of communication in which an individual reveals information about himself that he usually hides. (DeVito 2018, 2019) For someone who has psychological problems, there will be bad consequences if there is no self-disclosure, for example being reluctant to communicate the problems they are experiencing through counseling and closing themselves off when experiencing psychological problems. However, individuals with psychological problems generally have vulnerabilities and complex considerations when deciding whether to disclose themselves regarding the problems they are experiencing.

The high prevalence of mental health problems including psychological and emotional causes many mental health survivors to need professional help (psychologists/counselors) in dealing with these problems. The emergence of online counseling services can help individuals with psychological problems. In research conducted by Arjadi et.al, it was revealed that 73.3% of participants from the general adult population in Indonesia stated that they were open to using online psychological interventions as a substitute for face-to-face psychological interventions for treating depression.(Arjadi, Nauta, and Bockting 2018) Currently, online counseling services in Indonesia are quite diverse. For example, Riliv, Halodoc, Klee, Ibunda.id, and others. The media used in online counseling can be text messages, telephone and video calls.

In the counseling process with a counselor, there is an act of self-disclosure by the counselee through interpersonal communication between the counselee and the counselor. However, one of the problems with self-disclosure in online counseling is that there is a certain fear. In Indonesia, mental health problems are often associated with a negative stigma. This is because Indonesian people have low awareness/knowledge of mental health problems. Therefore, individuals as owners of information will of course consider a number of things and be careful when disclosing themselves regarding the psychological problems they are experiencing.

This is the background that this research was conducted in Indonesia by interviewing clients consisting of clients domiciled in Bali, West Java, South Kalimantan, DI Yogyakarta and Central Java. So researchers are interested in raising the research title "Consider Self-Disclosure
in Disclosing Psychological Problems (Study of Online Counseling Service Counselors in Indonesia). The aim of the research is to find out how clients express their psychological problems in online counseling services. The concept of self-disclosure analyzed includes factors and reasons that influence self-disclosure as well as post-self-disclosure effects.

**RESEARCH METHODS**

The research uses a qualitative approach with a quasi-qualitative research type. In this case, the researcher describes how self-disclosure is carried out by the counselee in expressing his psychological problems. The researchers analyzed and described the influencing factors, the reasons that encouraged them and the perceived effects on counselees' self-disclosure in online counseling services.

The research object in this research is Counselee self-disclosure in disclosing psychological problems in online counseling services.

The type of data in this research is a general description of the research object. Data sources in this research include primary data obtained by researchers in the form of interviews with key informants and supporters. Meanwhile, researchers obtained secondary data through books, journals, news and online publications.

Data collection techniques used include semistructured interviews, literature study, observation and documentation. The qualitative data analysis technique applied in this research went through stages in the form of data reduction, data presentation as well as drawing conclusions and verification.

In this research, counselees provided counseling services online is a key informant, with criteria including:

a. Male or female.

b. Have done online counseling at least 2 times.

c. Disclose yourself about psychological problems in online counseling services.

Whereas, supporting informants are clinical psychologists and psychology academics.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The research was conducted on online counseling service counselees in Indonesia, namely informants CA, ZG, ZOE, D and AFA. The researchers found that the counselees lived in West Java, Bali, DI Yogyakarta, Central Java and South Kalimantan. Online counseling services used by clients include Riliv, Ibunda.id, KLEE, Halodoc and Kalm. Interviews were also conducted with supporting informants, namely Ni Made Putri Ariyanti M.Psi. as a Clinical Psychologist at one of the online counseling services and Rahmi Fauzia, MA, Psi. as a psychology academic at Lambung Mangkurat University.

Informant Profile

CA informant is a 23 year old woman. Based on CA's statement, he was diagnosed with anxiety and a traumatic disorder. Anxiety causes excessive feelings of worry, anxiety or fear that interfere with daily activities.

Informant ZG is a 20 year old female teenager. Based on ZG's account, he was diagnosed with Mood Disorder. He experiences depressive moods such as sadness, emptiness, and loss of hope. ZG said that he had wanted to try self-harm and thought about ending his life.

ZOE's informant is a 29 year old woman. The psychological problems he experienced affected his performance at work. In fact, this causes psychosomatics where physical symptoms arise as a result of thoughts and emotions. At that time he experienced shortness of breath, disturbed sleep, felt cramped and stuffy when in his bedroom even though the room provided enough space.

Informant D is a 25 year old man. Based on D's information, the psychological problems he experienced led him to be diagnosed by a psychiatrist, namely mild depression. His body and mind do not function well so it is difficult to do things. He always felt tired and had no energy.

The AFA informant is a 22 year old man. He experiences mood swings. In fact, he has done self-harm or injured himself. Thoughts of self-harm continued to emerge during his depressive period.
Factor Which Influences Counselees' Self-Disclosure in Disclosing Psychological Problems in Online Counseling Services

The process of self-disclosure does not happen easily, especially if it is related to someone's problems. According to DeVito (DeVito 2018, 2019) Factors that can influence self-disclosure include: individual character, cultural background, gender, listener character, and topic and channel. Based on interviews obtained from seven research informants including key informants and supporters, it was found that not all of the factors mentioned by DeVito influenced the counselee's self-disclosure process in online counseling services. However, several factors were found that influenced self-disclosure by counselees in online counseling services in disclosing their psychological problems.

First, in the self-disclosure carried out by the counselee in the online counseling service, the counselee will select and determine the audience. In this case, the listener is the main consideration in influencing the counselee's self-disclosure. Who the information regarding the individual is given to is important, therefore the counselee has trust in the listener. The counselee chooses a listener, namely a counselor/psychologist with preferences that suit him. These preferences include many things such as age, experience, gender, educational background, satisfaction indicators and others.

Not only from the perspective of the counselee's trust in the listener, researchers assume that the counselee tends to consider the listener's response. Initially, informants will consider what response they get when they reveal themselves. After that, the counselee will consider whether or not they can continue the disclosure. For example, for informant D, his experience of conducting online counseling twice with listeners and different responses led him to different self-disclosures.

Second, the channels used by clients can influence self-disclosure. In this research, counselees explained that they could disclose themselves via text messages, telephone calls or video calls. Each counselee has reasons for using the media he chooses. Clients seem to feel freer and express themselves more openly. Researchers found a disinhibition effect in the counselee's self-disclosure process in online counseling services. Joinson (2007) explains the disinhibition effect that simply put, people seem to reveal high levels of personal information when interacting on the Internet.(Dino et al. 2023; Joinson 2007)

Several informants indicated that part of the disinhibition effect was anonymity. Where, the client assumes that the counselor cannot easily find out who he really is. The counselee
assumes that the counselor or psychologist only knows what the counselee tells about himself, this makes it easier for the counselee to open up when carrying out the online counseling process. Then, a disinhibition effect in the form of invisibility was discovered. In this research, the counselor or psychologist as a listener cannot physically see or hear the counselee's self-disclosure directly, this provides a more open space for the counselee. Counselees don't need to worry about other people's appearance or voice either. Likewise, informant ZOE explained that he did not need to think about facial expressions and the psychologist's view of him.

Third, the topic can influence the counselee's self-disclosure. Topics that lead to painful things may affect their self-disclosure and tend to be difficult to express. However, based on the results of the interview, the researcher believes that the topic cannot be the main factor influencing the counselee's self-disclosure but rather the topic is a secondary factor in the self-disclosure process in this research. For some informants, topics that were personal and sensitive for the counselee were difficult. As the process of self-disclosure was carried out, the researcher saw that the counselee was able to open up as the stages of self-disclosure were carried out slowly. However, others indicated that sensitive or personal topics related to psychological problems did not affect their self-disclosure during online counseling. This happens because the level of self-disclosure is different for each individual.

Meanwhile, cultural background and stigma which tend to be negative on mental health in Indonesia, gender and individual character of counselees who are found to have introverted tendencies do not influence counselees' self-disclosure. In this case, the counselee does not really consider cultural background factors in the self-disclosure process that occurs in online counseling services. However, negative stigma regarding this matter is often heard in their environment. Regarding the personality type of the counselee, the researcher saw that this did not indicate a tendency for the counselee to become more open or more closed. As explained above, even though clients actually have introverted tendencies in their daily lives, their psychological problems require self-disclosure. In essence, both women and men will open up more easily when self-disclosure feels right for them given the situation at hand.
Individual and Relational Reasons that Drive Counselees' Self-Disclosure in Disclosing Psychological Problems in Online Counseling Services

Based on the results of research regarding the reasons for counselees' self-disclosure in disclosing psychological problems, it was found that the counselees' self-disclosure process could be linked to West et. al's reasons for self-disclosure (2010) and Settle (2018). The research results show that counselees have certain reasons for disclosing themselves regarding the psychological problems they experience in online counseling services. It was found that the counselees' reasons for self-disclosure regarding their psychological problems in online counseling services were individual reasons that were continuous with relational reasons.

Psychological problems that tend to become serious mental problems are the reasons that encourage the counselee's self-disclosure. This causes negative feelings, inability to overcome problems, loneliness and other disturbing psychological conditions. In fact, for some informants, their psychological problems gave rise to thoughts of hurting or injuring themselves. Likewise with the AFA informant where this problem caused him to do self-harm, he deliberately hurt or injured himself because of negative impulses or thoughts.

The next reason is that physical health is disturbed due to the psychological problems experienced. Jourard (1958) explains that self-disclosure can improve an individual's physical health and failure to self-disclose can lead to poor health. (West, Turner, and Zhao 2010) The physical pain felt by informant ZOE, namely shortness of breath and other psychological disorders that had an impact on his physical body, prompted him to self-disclose.

Not only is the psychological condition better, researchers found another reason for the client's psychological control. The counselee explained that the reason behind him doing counseling was to be able to control his psychological condition. When the client has mental defenses, he can control his psychological condition. All the counselees also emphasized that the reason they opened themselves up in online counseling was to get an idea of themselves.

Then, researchers saw that the reason that encouraged counselees to carry out self-disclosure in online counseling services was to find a place to complain. Initially, clients tend to close themselves off and keep their feelings hidden. In fact, several others faced confusion about telling this and several others stated that they did not have friends to tell the story to. In this case, Rahmi (psychological academic) explained that individuals with psychological problems need a "trash can" to throw away their thoughts, feelings and problems.
Based on the research results, relational reasons for counselees disclosing themselves in online counseling services were found. The client wants emotional support and help from a counselor/psychologist. This cannot be achieved when there is no close relationship between the counselee and counselor. In one study by Blanquicett et al. (2007) explained that in the doctor-patient relationship, communication is important to restore the patient's condition and has an impact on the extent to which the doctor provides medical advice. One of them, CA Informant, realized that he needed professional help. The client's closeness to the psychologist in the counseling service will provide the opportunity to get the right advice.

**Positive and Negative Effects of Counselee Self-Disclosure in Disclosing Psychological Problems in Online Counseling Services**

This research shows that the effects experienced by counselees after self-disclosure can be different for each individual. The effect of counselees' self-disclosure in disclosing psychological problems in online counseling services can be related to Farber's concept (2006) regarding the effects of self-disclosure on psychotherapy.

Counselees have a tendency to get positive effects in the form of feelings of relief (catharsis), knowing themselves, and self-acceptance. From the research results, four out of five informants, namely counselees, admitted that they felt relieved and calm after the self-disclosure process in online counseling services. The client's self-disclosure provides relief from thoughts and feelings that were previously burdensome. Researchers see that there is a cathartic effect in the counselee's self-disclosure. The cathartic effect is the emotional cleansing of long-repressed feelings or even recent traumatic events.

On the other hand, not only was there a relief effect, researchers found that clients gained insight. The results of the research show that the counselee's self-disclosure leads him to knowledge of the description of his condition and insight into himself. However, the researcher saw that after disclosing themselves, the counselees received suggestions, solutions, and an overview of their condition. The description of this condition leads to the causes and factors behind the client's psychological condition and other sides of the client's self that are generally unknown to the client themselves.

Farber (2006) revealed that clients often hope that regardless of what they have thought or felt or done, the counselor will reassure them that they are okay. Researchers saw that counselees
were able to acknowledge and accept parts of themselves, especially their psychological conditions including feelings, behavior and thoughts after disclosing themselves in online counseling services.

In contrast to one of the informants, namely ZOE, he felt vulnerable after revealing himself to an online counseling service. Self-disclosure for ZOE informants has a negative tendency compared to positive aspects. ZOE felt no significant effect after revealing herself.

Before disclosing himself through online counseling, informant ZOE thought that the psychological problems he was experiencing were trivial to other people. Vulnerability emerged after he disclosed himself in an online counseling service, he believed that the problem he was experiencing was trivial. Researchers see that the effect felt by the counselee depends on the situation of the counselee's self-disclosure and the listener's response.

Counselee Self-Disclosure in Disclosing Psychological Problems in Online Counseling Services

Counselee self-disclosure in online counseling services is a quite complex topic. Where, as we know, people with psychological problems generally have communication disorders. This was explained by Rahmi (a psychology academic) that communication skills are abilities that involve cognitive aspects, therefore someone who experiences psychological disorders or problems will have poor communication skills.

However, the research results showed that all informants tried to open themselves when communicating with counselors/psychologists in online counseling services. The key informants, namely the counselees, tend to open up as they are even though they have their own personal boundaries. In this case, the counselee discloses personal information such as expressing feelings, psychological and physical symptoms experienced, traumatic experiences, relationships with family and sharing information about daily life related to the counselee's psychological problems.

Table 1.
Recapitulation of Counselee Self-Disclosure in Disclosing Psychological Problems in Online Counseling Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Informant 1</th>
<th>Informant 2</th>
<th>Informant 3</th>
<th>Informant 4</th>
<th>Informant 5</th>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initials/Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Communication Media</th>
<th>Self-Disclosure Topics</th>
<th>What the Counselee Shows/Speaks</th>
<th>Things that the Counselee Doesn't Show/ Say</th>
<th>What Counselee Knows After Self-Disclosure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>C.A</td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Phone Call</td>
<td>Psychological Problems</td>
<td>1) Personal Identity (Name, Age, Gender)</td>
<td>1) Face</td>
<td>1) Problem Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>ZG</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Video Call</td>
<td>Psychological Problems</td>
<td>1) Personal Identity (Name, Age, Gender)</td>
<td>2) Sound</td>
<td>2) Problem Solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>ZOE</td>
<td>29 years</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Text Message</td>
<td>Psychological Problems</td>
<td>1) Personal Identity (Name, Age, Gender)</td>
<td>3) Life</td>
<td>3) Insight and Knowledge About Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Text Message</td>
<td>Psychological Problems</td>
<td>1) Self concept</td>
<td>1) Problem Solution</td>
<td>1) Insight and Knowledge About Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>AFA</td>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Text Message</td>
<td>Psychological Problems</td>
<td>1) Self concept</td>
<td>2) Insight and Knowledge About Self</td>
<td>2) Problem Solution</td>
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</tbody>
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<th>3) Suggestions</th>
<th>3) Suggestions</th>
<th>Experience</th>
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Discussion

Johari Window in Counselor Self-Disclosure

In this research, it was found that there were windows in the Johari Window (Luft and Ingham 1961; Oliver and Duncan 2019) which increases and decreases with the counselee's self-disclosure in online counseling services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Self</th>
<th>Blind Self</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hidden Self</td>
<td>Unknown Self</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Johari Window Figure Counselee Online Counseling Service
(Source: Researcher, 2024)

This figure is the ideal figure for Johari Window. It can be seen that the Open Self window has a larger space than other windows. As time goes by and when the client's personal information is shared, this window will get bigger compared to other windows. Counselees speak, understand and listen to feedback given by the counselor.

The Blind Self window shrinks as the Open Self enlarges. Initially, what the counselor knows is not known by the counselee. As they reveal themselves, the counselee who was previously unaware and did not know this becomes aware after receiving feedback from the listener. It's like the client gaining insight into himself that he couldn't see before.

Hidden Self is any personal information that you feel reluctant to reveal. This information includes feelings, past experiences, fears, secrets and others. In research on clients in online counseling services, the Hidden Self gets smaller as the Open Self window gets bigger. When the counselee opens himself up and states that he has a psychological problem or expresses feelings, thoughts and behavior that were previously confidential to the counselor, this window will shrink.
Unknown Self is a window where the individual and other people do not know the information. For example, in this study, initially the counselees and counselees did not know the causes of their psychological problems such as shortness of breath, sleep disturbances, the desire to hurt themselves, and others. In this case, psychologists or counselors as listeners in counseling services have a very important role based on the feedback they provide. The client can find out the possible causes or factors of the psychological problems they are experiencing after self-disclosure. This makes the Unknown Self shrink as the open self grows with the client's knowledge and insight regarding their psychological problems.

Counselee Communication Privacy Management in Online Counseling Services

In this research, self-disclosure carried out by informants through online-based communication channels was carried out in stages. The counselee will generally share superficial things about himself until he decides to reveal something personal or sensitive.

Touching on how information is distributed, in the process of self-disclosure carried out by counselees in online counseling services, researchers see that there is control by counselees in providing quite personal information about themselves. This control is also different for each individual, the researchers even saw that the counselees in this case had different ways of disclosing personal information (privacy). The counselee has the right to decide who can be a co-owner of the information provided. Counselees consider counselors/psychologists who suit their preferences.

Initially, clients tend to bury and store information related to their psychological problems as a personal boundary, until finally they decide to reveal it to a counselor/psychologist in an online counseling service. Based on the research results, counselees can be more comfortable carrying out self-disclosure with communication between two people. Collective privacy boundaries also emerge with the existence of dyadic boundaries, where communication regarding the counselee's self-disclosure in online counseling services only occurs between two people, namely the counselee and the counselor.

Researchers found that there were at least two criteria for privacy regulations by clients, namely context and risk-benefit ratio. In context criteria, clients with psychological problems who initially struggle to cope on their own, eventually share what they need with the consoler. Counselees also have privacy rules in the communication media they choose. Like the ZOE
informant who only provided information via text messages so that he could not be seen physically or audibly, this was done to protect his identity more deeply. The reason that makes clients use communication privacy management is a feeling of comfort with the vulnerability they are experiencing.

In risk-benefit, the counselee has a collective boundary with the counselor as a previously agreed limit of trust. In this case, the counseling service has provided terms and conditions regarding user data. This means that the client has trust in the counselor as a co-owner of the information. However, clients also consider the risks and benefits of self-disclosure.

CONCLUSION

The counselee's self-disclosure process in online counseling services is influenced by several factors. The main factors that influence this process are listeners and channels. The supporting factors are topics, where painful topics are generally difficult for clients with psychological problems to express. The reasons that encourage clients to carry out self-disclosure in online counseling services include individual and relational reasons. These reasons include, the psychological problems experienced tend to become dangerous mental problems, physical pain, complaints, emotional support, asking for help, and psychological control. The effect of the counselee's self-disclosure tends to have a positive aspect after the self-disclosure takes place. Positive effects include feelings of relief (catharsis), knowing yourself, and self-acceptance. A negative effect was also found on one of the informants in the form of vulnerability after self-disclosure. The response given by the counselor is one of the causes of the counselee experiencing positive or negative effects. Counselees' self-disclosure in expressing their psychological problems in online counseling services creates an ideal picture of awareness and self-concept. The open self window in the Johari window theory enlarges while the hidden self, blind self and unknown self windows decrease. This happens because the counselee expresses himself so that he gets feedback and conclusions together with the counselor or psychologist and reaches his own conclusions.
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