

IMPLEMENTATION OF CYBER COUNSELING FOR INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE COUNSELING

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Abstract. In the digital era, the need for easily accessible counseling services is increasing, especially for individuals facing geographic and mobility limitations. This study aims to explore the implementation of cyber counseling as an alternative to increase the accessibility of counseling services. The method used is a literature study by analyzing relevant scientific articles, reports, and academic sources related to cyber counseling and access to mental health services. Data sources were obtained from the Google Scholar database with a publication range of 1988–2024, using the keywords "cyber counseling services", "global cyber counseling era", and "cyber counseling in schools". Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the analysis indicate that cyber counseling has great potential in expanding access to counseling services, especially for groups who have difficulty accessing face-to-face services. However, its implementation still faces challenges, particularly related to data privacy and security, as well as counselor readiness and competence in utilizing technology effectively. These findings emphasize the need for more serious attention to technical and ethical aspects so that cyber counseling can be implemented optimally and sustainably.

Keywords: Cyber Counseling, Accessibility, Guidance and Counseling

Abstrak. Di era digital, kebutuhan terhadap layanan konseling yang mudah diakses semakin meningkat, terutama bagi individu yang menghadapi keterbatasan geografis dan mobilitas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi implementasi konseling cyber sebagai alternatif dalam meningkatkan aksesibilitas layanan konseling. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi literatur dengan menganalisis artikel ilmiah, laporan, dan sumber akademik yang relevan terkait konseling dunia maya dan akses layanan kesehatan mental. Sumber data diperoleh dari basis data Google Scholar dengan rentang publikasi tahun 1988–2024, menggunakan kata kunci "cyber counseling services", "global cyber counseling era", dan "cyber counseling in schools". Analisis data dilakukan secara kualitatif melalui tahap reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa konseling cyber memiliki potensi besar dalam memperluas akses layanan konseling, khususnya bagi kelompok yang sulit menjangkau layanan tatap muka. Namun, implementasinya masih menghadapi tantangan, terutama terkait privasi dan keamanan data, serta kesiapan dan kompetensi konselor dalam memanfaatkan teknologi secara efektif. Temuan ini menegaskan perlunya perhatian yang lebih serius terhadap aspek teknis dan etika agar konseling cyber dapat diterapkan secara optimal dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Cyber Counseling, Aksesibilitas, Bimbingan dan Konseling

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the development of information and communication technology has changed various aspects of life, including the field of guidance and counseling. Cyber counseling, or online counseling, has emerged as an innovation that offers a solution to improve the accessibility of counseling services. This concept allows individuals to obtain psychological assistance without having to meet counselors directly, thereby providing convenience for those who have limitations in time, distance, or reluctance to attend counseling sessions in person (Wibowo, 2016). Current social and economic conditions show that many individuals experience psychological pressure due to work demands, complex social life, and various personal problems. According to Haryati (2020), the need for counseling services continues to increase along with the complexity of problems faced by society. In this context, cyber counseling offers a more flexible and accessible alternative for individuals who need psychological support.

This phenomenon is reinforced by data showing that internet use among adolescents and young adults continues to increase. A survey showed that 93% of adolescents use the internet, with 38% spending between one and five hours online each week (Nakhma'ussolikah, 2017). These conditions indicate that digital platforms have become an integral part of daily life, especially among groups that are potential users of counseling services. Therefore, cyber counseling platforms can be used as a strategic means to reach individuals who may not have access to traditional counseling services due to geographical, time, or social constraints.

Although cyber counseling offers many advantages, such as convenience and flexibility in scheduling sessions, there are challenges that need to be addressed. One of the main challenges is the issue of client privacy and data security. Counselors must ensure that clients' personal information is properly protected throughout the online counseling process (Hughes, 2000). In addition, limited technological understanding among some counselors can hinder the effectiveness of this service (Jerizal & Hanung, 2017). Social stigma related to seeking psychological help also remains a significant barrier, as many individuals feel embarrassed or afraid of being perceived as weak when admitting the need for counseling (Daryanto, 2004).

Previous studies have generally discussed cyber counseling from the perspective of its benefits, challenges, or ethical considerations. However, many of these studies examine the topic in a fragmented manner, focusing either on technological aspects, counselor readiness, or client acceptance separately (Elleven & Allen, 2004). Limited attention has been given to a comprehensive analysis that integrates accessibility issues, technological readiness, ethical considerations, and social context within the broader framework of digital mental health

services. This gap indicates the need for a study that synthesizes these dimensions to provide a more holistic understanding of cyber counseling implementation.

Based on this research gap, the novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach to examining cyber counseling as a solution for improving the accessibility of counseling services. This study does not merely describe the existence or advantages of cyber counseling, but systematically analyzes its implementation by considering accessibility, technological competence of counselors, ethical challenges, and social acceptance simultaneously. By doing so, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically, by enriching the literature on cyber counseling implementation, and practically, by providing insights that can support the development of more effective and ethical cyber counseling practices in the digital era.

METHOD

This study employed a literature review method, also referred to as a bibliographic study, which aims to identify, examine, and synthesize relevant theories and findings related to cyber counseling. The literature review was conducted by collecting scientific journal articles and scholarly books from various national and international sources. The primary database used in this study was Google Scholar, which was selected due to its broad coverage of peer-reviewed academic publications. The data used in this study consisted of journal articles published between 1988 and 2024. The article search was carried out using specific keywords, namely “cyber counseling services,” “global era of cyber counseling,” and “cyber counseling in schools.” These keywords were chosen to capture studies that discuss cyber counseling from conceptual, practical, and educational perspectives. In addition to journal articles, relevant books related to cyber counseling and guidance and counseling were also used as supporting sources to strengthen the theoretical foundation of the study.

This research can be categorized as naturalistic research because it is conducted based on existing literature and real conditions without any intervention or manipulation of variables. In this context, the approach is aligned with qualitative research principles that emphasize meaning, interpretation, and contextual understanding, as described by Metode Penelitian Kualitatif. The use of reliable and credible sources, such as peer-reviewed journals and scholarly books, was prioritized to ensure the validity of the data analyzed. Data analysis in this study followed the qualitative analysis procedures proposed by Qualitative Data Analysis, which consist of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction was conducted by selecting and focusing on literature that was directly relevant to the research objectives, particularly studies discussing accessibility, implementation, and

challenges of cyber counseling. Data presentation involved organizing the selected findings into thematic categories to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by synthesizing patterns and relationships identified across the literature, allowing the study to provide a comprehensive understanding of cyber counseling as a solution to improve the accessibility of counseling services.

RESULTS

In the digital era, the continuous development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including the field of guidance and counseling. Cyber counseling, or online counseling, has emerged as an innovative solution to improve the accessibility of counseling services for individuals who need psychological support. By utilizing digital platforms, cyber counseling enables clients to connect with counselors without geographical and time limitations, thereby providing convenience for those who may not be able to access traditional counseling services. Mental health problems have increasingly become a concern in modern society. According to Haryati (2020), many individuals experience psychological pressure due to the increasingly complex demands of life. In this context, the need for easily accessible counseling services has become very important. Cyber counseling offers a flexible and practical alternative for individuals who may be reluctant to attend face-to-face counseling for various reasons, such as time constraints or social anxiety (Ifdil & Ardi, 2013).

One of the main advantages of cyber counseling is its ability to reach individuals in remote or difficult-to-access areas. In Indonesia, many regions still have limited access to mental health services; therefore, cyber counseling can serve as a solution to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities to obtain assistance (Budiman, 2019). By utilizing digital technology, students, children, and adults can access guidance and counseling services without having to come directly to a counseling room, which often becomes an obstacle for them (Kirana, 2019).

Cyber counseling has several advantages compared to traditional counseling methods. First, time flexibility is an important aspect, as clients can choose the most suitable time without being strictly bound by the counselor's working hours (Amani, 2018). This is highly beneficial for students or workers who have busy schedules. Second, the anonymity offered by cyber counseling can increase clients' comfort in disclosing personal problems. Many individuals find it easier to express their feelings and thoughts in a digital environment than in direct interaction (Elleven & Allen, 2004), especially those who feel anxious or embarrassed to speak face to face. Third, cyber counseling enables a broader service reach. Counselors can reach

clients from various backgrounds and locations without physical limitations (Centore & Milacci, 2008). Thus, this service can help reduce the gap in access to mental health services.

Although cyber counseling offers many benefits, it also faces several challenges that need attention. One of the main challenges is the issue of privacy and client data security. In the digital world, the protection of personal information is very important. Counselors must ensure that client data are properly protected throughout the online counseling process (Hughes, 2000). In addition, the limited technological understanding among some counselors can hinder the effectiveness of this service (Jerizal & Hanung, 2017). Another challenge is the social stigma that remains attached to individuals who seek psychological help. Many people feel embarrassed or afraid of being perceived as weak if they admit that they need counseling (Daryanto, 2004), which may reduce participation in cyber counseling programs.

Cyber counseling has great potential to expand access to counseling services. By utilizing communication technologies such as video calls and chat, counselors can reach clients from various backgrounds without geographical limitations (Surya, 1988). This is particularly important for individuals who live in remote areas or have mobility limitations. In addition, cyber counseling can help reduce transportation costs and the time required to attend face-to-face sessions. Through this online service, individuals can more easily obtain psychological support anytime and anywhere (Kirana, 2019). Therefore, the development of cyber counseling is highly relevant to efforts to improve public mental health. One of the main objectives of implementing cyber counseling is to improve access to counseling services. In many areas, especially remote regions, access to counseling services remains very limited. Many individuals who need these services are unable to obtain them because of long distances or the absence of nearby service providers. With cyber counseling, geographical barriers can be reduced, enabling individuals from various locations to receive the assistance they need through online counseling services.

DISCUSSION

Cyber Counseling Concept

Cyber counseling is a counseling service conducted online by utilizing various technological platforms, such as instant messaging applications, video conferencing, and email. This service allows counselors and clients to interact without limitations of time and place, thereby increasing flexibility in the counseling process (Pasmawati, 2016). According to Sutijono (2018), cyber counseling is highly effective for students who are unable to meet

directly with counselors at school, as they can still receive the emotional and psychological support they need.

Cyber counseling is a form of psychological counseling service delivered through electronic media, such as video conferencing, chat, or email. In online counseling, counselors and clients can interact either in real time or asynchronously, depending on their preferences and needs. The main advantages of cyber counseling are its high flexibility and accessibility. Clients can access counseling services from anywhere and at any time, as long as they have a device connected to the internet. Cyber counseling can also be understood as a counseling service based on internet communication technology. Its forms include counseling through email, chat, video calls, or other applications that enable interaction without direct face-to-face meetings. One of the main benefits of this service is ease of access for clients, as it reduces physical and geographical barriers. According to Barak (2008), cyber counseling offers several advantages, such as comfort, confidentiality, and flexibility in scheduling counseling sessions. Clients can choose a time that suits their schedule and access the service from a comfortable place, such as their home or workplace. In addition, this service can be accessed by individuals who have difficulty meeting directly with counselors due to physical limitations or time constraints.

In Rahmi's research (2024), the experimental group showed a significant decrease in academic anxiety compared to the control group. However, the direct implementation of this service requires more time and considerable effort. Through cyber counseling, sessions based on techniques such as Dance Therapy can be recorded or conducted synchronously, making the service more efficient and easier to implement on a wider scale.

Benefits of Cyber Counseling

Cyber counseling provides better accessibility for individuals who have difficulty visiting counselors directly, especially those who live in remote areas or have physical limitations (Haryati, 2020). Through this service, individuals can obtain assistance anytime and anywhere. One of the main advantages of cyber counseling is the increased sense of privacy for clients. Many individuals feel more comfortable sharing personal problems online than in face-to-face sessions (Riganti, 2020). The use of platforms such as Microsoft Teams or WhatsApp allows clients to feel safer and more open in expressing their problems. Cyber counseling also offers efficiency in terms of time and cost. This service eliminates the need to travel to a counseling location, thereby saving time and transportation costs (Petrus & Sudibyo, 2017). This benefit became especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, when public mobility was limited.

Challenges in the Implementation of Cyber Counseling

Although cyber counseling offers many benefits, its implementation also faces several challenges. One of the major challenges is data security and confidentiality. Counseling is a service that relies heavily on trust between clients and counselors; therefore, the confidentiality of information must be strictly maintained. The use of digital technology creates risks of data leakage and privacy violations, which can damage the counseling relationship and reduce service effectiveness (Rosenfield, 2020). In addition, limitations in nonverbal communication also become a challenge in cyber counseling. In face-to-face counseling, counselors can observe facial expressions, body language, and other nonverbal cues that help them understand the client's condition more deeply. However, in sessions conducted through chat or video calls, some of this information may be missed. To address this issue, counselors need to be more careful in interpreting the meaning of text messages and exploring information more deeply through verbal communication (Rothbaum, 2021).

Another challenge is technological limitation. Not all individuals have access to adequate technological devices or stable internet connections. Some students may not have a smartphone or computer required to participate in online counseling sessions (Syuhada et al., 2022). For this reason, educational institutions need to provide supporting facilities, such as device loans or internet quota assistance. Counselors' technical skills also play an important role in the success of cyber counseling. Counselors need to receive training so they can utilize information technology optimally in providing services (McLeod, 2006). Data confidentiality remains a central issue in this service. Counselors must ensure that clients' personal information is protected from misuse (Suardi, 2008). The use of a secure data management system is essential to ensure the protection of client information.

CONCLUSION

Cyber counseling has significant potential to improve access to counseling services and address various challenges in mental health support. By overcoming existing obstacles and implementing appropriate strategies, cyber counseling can serve as one of the solutions for addressing mental health problems in the community. The implementation of cyber counseling is an innovative step to expand access to counseling services in the digital era. Although this service faces several challenges, the benefits it offers are considerable. With support from educational institutions and the improvement of counselors' technical skills, cyber counseling can become an effective solution to meet the counseling needs of modern society.

Cyber counseling is also an innovative solution that can improve access to counseling services for individuals in need, especially those who live in remote areas or face stigma related to mental health services. Although challenges related to privacy and limitations in nonverbal communication remain, opportunities for the development of cyber counseling, such as the use of artificial intelligence technology and collaboration with educational institutions, provide new possibilities for more efficient and effective counseling services. With the proper use of technology, cyber counseling can become a valuable tool for improving community mental well-being more inclusively.

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