

## Readiness of Peer Counsellors to Provide Video-based and Text-based Online Counselling

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**Abstract :** Peer counsellors have an important role in the prevention and treatment of mental health problems. Following the rapid development of technology, counselling conducted by peer counsellors can be carried out through online counselling with video and text based. The study aimed to determine the readiness of peer counsellors in conducting online counselling through video and text media. There were 11 participants who were given intensive training on the basics of counselling and roleplay in counselling with video and text. Pretest and posttest were conducted to determine the readiness in conducting online counselling. The results of data analysis by t-test showed that the training provided significant changes in the readiness of peer counsellors in conducting counselling with video-based (Sig = 0.01 < 0.05), while the training provided did not provide significant changes in the readiness of peer counsellors in conducting online counselling text-based (Sig = 0.095 > 0.05). This shows that the training can influence the readiness of peer counsellors in conducting counselling via video. On the other hand, the training did not influence the readiness of peer counsellors in conducting counselling text-based. Further research can be conducted on effective training to improve the readiness of peer counsellors in conducting counselling text-based.

### INTRODUCTION

The number of mental health professionals in Indonesia is still experiencing imbalances. According to information from the Indonesian Clinical Psychologists Association (2023), there are 3,809 verified clinical psychologist members, who are dispersed among 34 provinces, with Java accounting for more than 70% of them. Despite having more than 272 million people, Indonesia has less than 1,500 psychiatrists, making the number of mental health specialists still extremely low. The nation's mental health workforce is insufficient in 2021, and there aren't enough qualified specialists on hand to offer comprehensive care for mental health issues (Kemenkes, 2021). The lack of professionals is accompanied by the difficulty of accessing mental health facilities and the cost of professional services that are not

affordable for all people in Indonesia. In addition, health facilities that provide mental health professionals are mostly located in cities that are far from the reach of Indonesians in rural areas (Satria, 2021).

Due to this condition, there is an increased need for trained professionals in the field of mental health who can serve the entire community. Peer counseling training is one such method. Peer counseling entails a counselor acting in tandem with clients who are still in the same age bracket. A peer counsellor, according to Rogacion (Salmiati et al., 2018), is a person who offers services to regular people who are the same age and share similar life experiences, such as work, problems faced, or similar interests.

Peer counseling, according to Tindal & Grey (Salmiati et al., 2018), is a type of counseling given by one person to another

person of a similar age or level of maturity. In this scenario, a person with fundamental counseling abilities serves as an intermediary to assist in resolving or providing advice on issues facing other people their own age. Adolescents frequently work as peer counselors in schools and colleges. Since most adolescents feel more at ease discussing personal issues with their peers than with their parents or other adults, peer counseling is thought to be crucial. For a variety of reasons, including the similarity of their experiences and thought processes and the knowledge that they won't receive criticism or advice that seems to place the blame, they feel more at ease discussing issues with peers than with parents or teachers (Astiti, 2019). Face-to-face communication is a common method for peer counseling, in which clients tell the peer counsellor their personal stories.

The internet and the advancement of technology have altered how people interact and communicate. The occurrence of a pandemic that forces everyone indoors and prevents direct communication has increased the use of the internet. Additionally, this modification has an effect on counseling services, particularly peer counseling. Online techniques can be used as an alternative to find and offer emotional support to students with learning difficulties (Ardi & Ifdil, 2013; Fahyuni et al., 2021). Awareness of mental illness is expanding. Online platforms now make it simple and convenient for people to get peer support and counseling thanks to technological advancements (Felgenhauer et al., 2021; Fukkink, 2011). Online peer counseling via video or text/chat is one of the new opportunities made possible by the increasing use of technology and the internet for mental health services (Kraus, 2011).

For those in need of mental health support, video-based online peer counseling offers a number of advantages, some of which include: 1) Face-to-face interaction despite being in different places; 2) Nonverbal communication, which includes gestures and facial expressions and is a significant component of human communication; 3) Flexibility and Ease of Access because it is available at any time and

from any location as long as there is a strong internet connection; 4) Ongoing Support, which allows for multiple sessions of counseling and strengthens the bond between the client and peer counsellor while also offering ongoing assistance (Kraus, 2011; Wong et al., 2018).

Online peer counseling via text or chat has a number of advantages, including: 1) With anonymity and privacy, clients can feel more at ease discussing private or delicate matters without worrying that others will find out, 2) Accessibility and Flexibility: As long as a person has internet access, peer counseling via chat offers flexibility of time and location, 3) More Prepared: Clients who use chat have more time to consider their questions and responses and can write out their feelings in detail. 4) Easier Communication: Some people might find it easier and more comfortable to express themselves in writing than in person; 5) Preserved Records: Text messages allow the client and counselor to keep a record of their correspondence. This is advantageous because the counselee can retain the guidance provided and track the development and shifts in their emotions or thoughts over time (Nagel & Anthony, 2011).

Peer counseling, whether traditional or online, is essentially an effort to continue the counseling between the counsellor and the counselee. As a result, those who will serve as peer counselors must possess particular skills that can be learned through training. Peer counselors should have a variety of skills, including the capacity to listen, the capacity to assist and make decisions, and the capacity to deal with counseling (Bett, 2013; L Arnold, 2014). An important asset in offering counseling services is peer counselors' readiness to conduct counseling. Counselors need assistance in the form of peer counseling training to ensure their readiness. According to Salmiati et al. (2018), Peer Counsellor Training (PCT) significantly reduces bullying behavior in Public Junior High School, Pangkep Regency. Additionally supporting this is research by Astiti (2019), that peer counselling has proven to be effective in resolving problems faced by students. Peer

counseling has the potential to help adolescents listen to one another and share experiences in order to change their attitudes toward addiction to online video games (Prasetyawan & Prasetyawan, 2016). After receiving training in conducting video calls and text-based online counseling, the aim of this study is to determine the readiness of peer counselling after being given a training intervention in conducting video call-based and text-based online counselling.

## METHOD

This study used a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the effectiveness of peer counselling training on peer counsellors' readiness to conduct video and text-based online counselling. This design was chosen because it aims to control a number of variables while maintaining situational realism (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The total participants in this study were 11 people who fulfilled the following criteria: a) Having an educational qualification in psychology or counselling guidance of at least semester 6, b) Aged between 18 to 30 years old, c) Willing to participate in training activities from beginning to end. Participant selection was carried out through a purposive sampling process, a non-probability method for selecting participants based on certain criteria (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The intervention was peer counselling training using an online method using video conference media. The training materials included basic counselling concepts, basic counselling techniques, and counselling roleplay using video and text media. The total duration of the training was 8 hours with implementation over 3 days, facilitated by experienced facilitators with qualifications, namely master's students of professional psychology and psychologists who graduated from the master of professional psychology. Self-report with pre- and post-tests, facilitator observation, chat transcript documents, and video recordings were the data collection techniques used. In order to compare pre-test and post-test results,

quantitative analysis using the t-test was used, as well as descriptive analysis based on the outcomes of the data collection process.

## RESULTS

The results of data analysis by t-test showed that the training provided provided significant changes to the readiness of peer counsellors in conducting video-based counselling with  $\text{Sig} = 0.01 < 0.05$ , while the training provided did not provide significant changes to the readiness of peer counsellors in conducting text-based counselling ( $\text{Sig} = 0.095 > 0.05$ ). These results can be seen in table 1.

Table 1: Results of pre-test and post-test differences

	Pre-test	Post-test	Mean	Sig
Video-based counselling	15.55	19.45	-3.909	0.001
Chat-based counselling	16.36	18.00	-1.636	0.095

Based on these results, the mean of video-based counselling from pre-test is 15.55 and post-test is 19.45 there is a difference of -3.909 while for chat-based counselling the mean is 16.36 in pre-test and post-test is 18.00 which results in a difference of -1.636. There is a greater mean difference of video-based counselling compared to chat-based counselling.

## DISCUSSION

Peer counselling plays an important role in promoting mental health. This is due to the exchange of information between counsellors and counselees who often have similar experiences and are relatively close in age, which can facilitate deeper understanding in their dialogue (Salsabila et al., 2020). Currently, peer counselling can also be done through online media through video and chat-based. Based on the results of data analysis that has been carried out using the t-test, it is found that training

provides a significant change in the readiness of peer counsellors in conducting video-based counselling (Sig = 0.01 < 0.05).

Peer counselors are more qualified to provide online counseling that uses video. This might be as a result of the visual features that video media provide, which enable more dynamic interactions and encourage non-verbal expression (DeVito, 2013). According to some counselors' responses, video-based media would enable them to more clearly observe the client's emotional and nonverbal changes and give immediate feedback. Because of the two's immediate interaction, this is viewed favorably. Video-based counseling does, however, have some drawbacks. For example, counsellors who are unfamiliar with video media may feel self-conscious and uncomfortable showing their faces and speaking with clients directly. Additionally, during counseling, outside factors like a bad signal, a malfunctioning device, and the conditions during counselling are also limitations in video-based counselling.

In contrast, the results of the analysis on peer counsellors' readiness to conduct text-based online counselling (Sig = 0.095 > 0.05) did not show significant results. The training provided was not able to prepare peer counsellors for counselling situations that only involve text communication. In text-based counselling, there are challenges such as the lack of non-verbal context and the potential for misunderstanding (Barak & Grohol, 2011). Text-based counselling does not allow counsellors to see body language, facial expressions, and voice intonation (Turvey & Coleman, 2018). In text-based counselling, counsellors have the challenge of interpreting information from situations described through text by the counsellor (Haxell, 2019). Although text-based counselling via chat can be conducted in an asynchronous mode, the possibility of latency between questions and responses can make the interaction less effective (Doley-Cohen & Barak, 2013).

On the other hand, using text-based online peer counseling has the benefit of allowing clients to express their emotions in detail and is more flexible in terms of time and location for

peer counsellors. Text-based counseling gives the counselor more time to reflect and respond to the client. Because there isn't a strong emotional bond between the counselor and the client, it is still insufficient. Therefore, taking responsibility for the started chat-based counseling requires commitment and involvement from peer counselors. While helping clients, peer counselors are expected to continue to be supervised by more seasoned supervisors (Fukkink, 2011).

A further issue with online peer counselling is that in online counselling it is not always the case that each party has adequate devices or internet connectivity to support online counselling, which can affect the quality of the session (Smith et al., 2020). One research participant mentioned that she did not even recommend text-based counselling, although she stated that there are advantages to text-based online counselling. Another significant issue relating to online counseling is security and ethics, where peer counselors must be mindful of client anonymity and data confidentiality. People today share a lot of stories thanks to the widespread use of social media. Peer counsellors must be reminded, though, that the confidentiality and security of the client must be upheld in order for them to uphold their ethical obligations to be professionals in maintaining the stories shared during counseling (Maheu et al., 2018).

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Peer counselors' preparedness for conducting video-based online counseling has changed significantly from that of text-based counseling. The peer counselors' readiness to conduct video-based counseling may change as a result of the training. It is hoped that future research will include more respondents with a wider range of characteristics, such as the age of peer counsellors and a more diverse educational background outside of psychology or counseling guidance, as this study has limitations due to the small number of respondents. Additionally, it is

anticipated that the training module will be reviewed and adjusted in the future, particularly to increase the readiness of text-based online counseling.

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