The Significance of Positive Perceptions of Counseling in Willingness to Seek Counseling Help: An Indonesian Study

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Abstract

This paper describes a study designed to investigate the relationships between perceptions relevant to counseling and willingness to seek counseling. A total of 1,279 undergraduates who came from an urban area in Indonesia volunteered to participate in the questionnaire survey. Results show that those who were potentially highly likely and those who were less likely to seek counseling showed significant differences in most of the areas of perceptions of counseling. Generally, the potential high seekers had better perceptions of counseling than the potential low seekers. The study suggests that those with more positive perceptions are more disposed to seek counseling. Widespread and accurate information about counseling is recommended to improve students' willingness to seek counseling.

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Many studies have found that a counselor is not a preferred helper among students (see Benedict et al., 1977; Cook et al., 1984; Dubow et al., 1990; Gibson et al., 1992; Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Raviv et al., 2000; Lin, 2001; Rudowicz & Au, 2001; Setiawan, 2004). Numerous studies have been carried out to identify factors that influence the decision to seek counseling. According to Fischer, Winer, & Abramowitz (1983), there are three broad categories of factors influencing individuals to seek psychological help or not. Those categories are personal, socio-cultural, and agency factors. Personal factors include things relating to personal characteristics and situations. Socio-cultural factors refer to cultural values or certain social group's characteristics. Factors relating to counseling services, such as the service, counselors, or other administrative issues, are grouped into agency factors.

Personal Factors

A study conducted by Dubow, Lovko and Kausch (1990) in a semi rural, industrial, midwestern community found that the perception of self-ability to handle problems was a discouraging factor. Supporting this, Kuhl, Jarkon-Horlick and Morrissey (1997) point out in their study, which was mostly among Caucasians, that self-sufficiency is one of the factors that hinder willingness to seek help from a mental health professional. Furthermore, Surf and Lynch (1999) showed in their study among young people from the UK that the sense of powerlessness in relation to difficulties prevented individuals from seeking counseling. The study also showed that adopting denial as a coping style also prevented individuals from seeking counseling. This result is also supported by a study conducted by Seiffge-Krenke (1989).

Some people might develop a reluctant attitude to discussing personal difficulties with others. In their study, Surf and Lynch (1999) also found this attitude as stopping people from seeking counseling. Other studies also came to the results that the availability and the use of other helpers were the reasons for not seeking a counseling service (Bosmajian & Mattson, 1980; Goodman, Sewell, & Jampol, 1984; Sherbourne, 1988; Kuhl et al., 1997). Another personal factor that inhibits people from seeking counseling is the lack of time (West et al., 1991; Kuhl et al., 1997).

Socio-Cultural Factors

Numerous studies have found that embarrassment, threat to self-esteem, and perception of stigma related to counseling also influence the decision to seek help (Williams & Williams, 1983; Stefl & Prosperi, 1985; Sibicky & Dovidio, 1986; Komiya et al., 2000; Ey et al., 2000). The findings were confirmed by Deane and Chamberlain (1994) as well as Surf and Lynch (1999). Sue and Sue (1987) have pointed out that stigma and shame in talking about personal problems are frequently found in Asian-American people and serve as discouraging factors against making use of counseling.

The study of Komiya et al. (2000) has found that fear of emotion also potentially contributes to individuals' reluctance to seek professional psychological assistance. For people from certain cultures, external expression of emotion and the internal experiencing of strong emotions could produce uncomfortable feelings (Komiya et al., 2000). Studies by Sue and Sue (1990), Narikiyo and Kameoka (1992), Sue (1994), Lin and Yi (1997), Kim, Atkinson and Yang (1999) have found that emotional control is valued and the expression of emotion is undesirable in traditional Hispanic and Asian cultures.

Collectivism which is more frequently found in Asian countries (Hofstede, 1997) might also be a discouraging factor from seeking counseling (Nadler, 1983). In a collectivist society, the family has a strong influence in the individual's life. Individuals are also expected to secure the image for the family. Therefore, individuals are concerned about the consequences of their behavior on their family (Tata & Leong, 1994). This condition might inhibit individuals in a collectivist society to seek help from somebody outside the family.

The preference for counselors' gender might also influence the decision to seek counseling help. People from certain cultural backgrounds might have preferences for the counselor's

gender. In their study among Native American students, Haviland, Horswill, O'Connell, and Dynneson (1983) found that the students had preferences for the counselors' gender, and this influenced their decision to seek counseling. Similar results were found in a study by Atkinson, Wampold, Lowe, Matthews, and Ahn (1998) among Asian American students. Giles and Dryden (1991) found the overall preference for female therapists in their study among subjects in the UK.

Counselors' religion may also influence the decision to seek counseling. Studies by Belaire and Young (2002) found that the majority of the participants had preference for counselors' religion. Furthermore, racial or ethnic background of counselors may also influence an individual's decision to seek counseling help. Dissimilarity of racial backgrounds between clients and counselors might also discourage the willingness to seek counseling. Previous studies show that ethnic similarity is one of the preferred counselor characteristics (Atkinson et al., 1989; Leong et al., 1995). Jenkins (1999) points out that ethnic dissimilarity could be a barrier to seeking help for people from ethnic minorities.

Agency Factors

Numerous studies have found that the lack of knowledge of counseling can prevent individuals from seeking counseling (West et al., 1991; Surf & Lynch, 1999; Bradley, 2000; North, 2002). Included in this category is the lack of knowledge of the benefits of counseling, problems appropriate for counseling and also the counseling process. Perceptions of the usefulness of counseling and the capacity of counselors to help contribute to the decision to seek help were also found to contribute to the decision to seek counseling help (Parker et al., 1986; Puchkoff & Lewin, 1987; Seiffge-Krenke, 1989).

In addition to the competence of counselors, previous studies have found that the perception of the personal quality of counselors also determines seeking help (Grayson et al., 1998; Surf & Lynch, 1999; Howieson & Semple, 2000). For some people, concerns for counseling fees are also a barrier in seeking counseling (Stefl & Prosperi, 1985; Leaf et al., 1987; Waehler & Hardin, 1994), especially because they are uncertain about the total cost (Merton et al., 1983).

Having reviewed factors that influence the decision to seek counseling help, the researcher found that the majority of the studies were conducted in a western context. Only few studies were carried out in Asian or an Eastern context, so that limited information is available to explain whether those factors are relevant in the Indonesian context. In her study, Setiawan (2004) found that Indonesian students had a low level of willingness to seek counseling. Therefore, a study is needed that investigates the factors influencing the willingness to seek counseling in the Indonesian context. As counseling is not very popular in Indonesia, students might have certain perceptions of counseling that discourage them from seeking help. This study aims to investigate whether Indonesian undergraduates' perceptions that are relevant to counseling relate to their willingness to seek counseling. To achieve this aim, the research would like to see the differences of perceptions of counseling between the potential high seekers (PHS) and the potential low seekers of counseling (PLS).

Method

Participants

The total respondents participated in the study were 1,279. They were undergraduate students from two private universities in an urban area in Indonesia. They studied Electrical Engineering, Computer Science or Industrial Engineering. The three study programs were chosen randomly from study programs available at both universities. The mean age of participants was 19.7. In terms of gender distribution in the sample, 66.2% were male students and 33.8% were female. In regard to ethnicity, the participants consisted of 77.9% Chinese Indonesians and 18% native Indonesians; 4.1% had other ethnicities. With respect to year of study, 26.8% of the participants were in their first year, 30.3% of the participants in the second

year, 23.1% of the participants in the third year, and 19.9% of the participants were in their fourth year and onwards.

Data Collection Method

The study adopted a quantitative approach, which used two kinds of questionnaires for data collection, including perceptions relevant to counseling and willingness to seek counseling.

Perceptions relevant to counseling. The questionnaire of perceptions relevant to counseling aims to investigate all perceptions or assumptions that respondents may have that are relevant to seeking counseling. The questionnaire consisted of 44 items that were constructed based on literature review and pilot work regarding factors that influence the help-seeking of counseling. The items were grouped into three aspects including personal, socio-cultural, and agency aspects.

In personal aspects, items investigated how they perceive themselves regarding these topics: the ability to solve own problems, sense of powerlessness in relation to the difficulties, denial of problems, reluctance to discuss personal difficulties with others, the availability of other sources of help, and time availability. Items constructed in socio-cultural aspects investigated how respondents perceive themselves in relation to the following topics: stigma related to counseling, emotional discomfort, collectivism, preference related to the counselor's ethnic background, preference related to the counselor's religion, preference related to the counselor's gender. In agency aspects, items examined were the perceptions relating to the usefulness of counseling, problems that are appropriate for counseling, knowledge about the counseling process, theory/practicality of counseling, social norm in counseling versus reality, control of one's own life, confidentiality, the personal qualities of the counselor, the competence of the counselor, and counseling fees.

In each item, respondents were asked to rate 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) to indicate the degree of their agreement with the item statement. The split-half reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.998 ($p < 0.001$).

Willingness to seek counseling. The questionnaire aims to investigate how willing the respondents are to seek professional counseling when they have serious problems in their lives. The questionnaire consisted of 14 items. In each item the respondents were asked to imagine experiencing a serious problem in a specific area of concern. They were then asked to rate these items on a 4-point scale (1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high), showing the degree of likelihood that they will seek professional counseling outside the university in such a situation.

The areas of concern presented in the questionnaire were based on the categorization of client concerns by the Association for University College and Counseling (AUCC, n.d.) and factor analysis of problem checklist scales (Zalaquett & McManus, 1996). Therefore, the areas of concern presented in the questionnaire can be assumed as representing the concerns that students might have during their academic career at university. The areas of concern included academics, transitions, welfare, parental relationships, romantic relationships, other relationships, loss, physical health, self, depression or mood change, anxiety, compulsive behavior, and abuse. The split-half reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.949 ($p < 0.001$).

Data analyses. Research data showed that the level of undergraduates' willingness to seek professional counseling outside the university was generally low. The mean score of willingness was 1.8, whereas the median score was 1.79, and the mode score was 1.0. These descriptive data mean that the range of difference in willingness was very small. In order to examine the relationship between perceptions of counseling and the willingness to seek professional counseling outside the university, the researcher compared the perceptions of counseling between the two ends of the scale of willingness to seek counseling. In other words, the researcher compared the perceptions of counseling between the potential low seeker group (PLS) and potential high seeker group (PHS). The statistical test used in the comparison was the

Mann-Whitney U test. The relationship will be assumed when there is a significant difference of perception of counseling between two groups.

Before selecting the members of the low seeker group and high seeker group, the average score of willingness to seek professional counseling outside the respondent's university was calculated. Then the values of percentile 20 and 80 were used as the standard to define low seekers and high seekers, respectively. Students whose average score was lower than the value of percentile 20 were selected into low seeker group (PLS). There were 264 students included in this group. Those whose average score was higher than the value of percentile 80 were selected into high seeker group (PHS). The total of students selected in this group was 241.

Results

Personal Aspects

In personal aspects, six topics were examined through twelve items. Following the comparisons of perceptions relevant to counseling between potential low seekers (PLS) and potential high seekers (PHS) of professional counseling outside the university using the U-Mann Whitney test, only three topics were significant, and only four out of twelve items were significant. The significant topics were ability to solve own problems, denial of problems, and time availability. The topics that were not significant included sense of powerlessness in relation to difficulties, reluctance to discuss personal difficulties with others, and the availability of other sources of help.

The results of the comparisons between the potential high seekers and the potential low seekers are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparisons of Perceptions of Counseling between Potentially Low and Potentially High Seekers of Counseling: Personal Aspects

Aspects and Items	Mean		SD		Z
	PLS	PHS	PLS	PHS	
Ability to solve own problems					
I am normally able to solve my problems without seeking help from others.	<u>2.5</u>	2.3	0.7	0.7	-2.933**
Sometimes, I feel the need to discuss my problems with a counselor ®.	<u>2.5</u>	2.0	0.7	0.6	-7.889***
Sense of powerlessness in relation to the difficulties					
There is always a way of dealing with problems ®.	1.5	1.5	0.5	0.5	-0.333 (NS)
Nothing can be done to help me deal with my problems.	1.8	1.8	0.7	0.6	-1.056 (NS)
Denial of problems					
Problems will resolve themselves without seeking any help.	<u>2.0</u>	1.9	0.7	0.6	-2.494*
Problems need to be dealt with rather than ignored ®.	1.3	1.3	0.5	0.5	-0.028 (NS)
Reluctance to discuss personal difficulties with others					
It is better to keep my problems to myself rather than to discuss them with others.	2.1	2.0	0.7	0.7	-1.401 (NS)
I do not mind discussing my personal problems with others when necessary ®.	1.9	1.8	0.6	0.6	-1.651 (NS)
The availability of other sources of help					
I have friends who can help me deal with personal problems.	3.0	3.1	0.6	0.6	-1.563(NS)
I have family members who are able to help me deal with my personal problems.	3.0	2.9	0.7	0.7	-0.622 (NS)
People who are close to me cannot help me deal with my personal problems ®.	3.0	3.0	0.7	0.6	-0.988 (NS)
Time availability					
I do not have the time to go for counseling even if I need it ®.	2.4	<u>2.6</u>	0.7	0.6	-4.161***

PLS = Potential low seekers of professional counseling outside the university
PHS = Potential high seekers of professional counseling outside the university
Underlined mean score = significantly higher mean score
*   p < 0.05
**   p < 0.01
*** p < 0.001
NS Non significant

Results show that in terms of the perception of ability to solve own problems, those who were less likely to seek counseling reported a higher ability to solve their own problems without any help. Those who were less likely to seek counseling perceived themselves as denying problems more frequently than those who were more likely to seek counseling. On the other hand, those who were more likely to seek counseling perceived themselves more often as having time to seek counseling than those who were less likely to seek counseling.

Socio-Cultural Aspects

In socio-cultural aspects, six topics were examined through 13 items. Five out of those six topics were significant and only eight out of 13 items were significant. The non-significant topic

was preference related to counselor's ethnic background. The results of the comparisons between potentially high seekers and potentially low seekers are shown in the following table.

Table 2

Comparisons of Perceptions of Counseling between Potentially Low and Potentially High Seekers of Counseling: Socio-Cultural Aspects

Aspects and Items	Mean		SD		
	PLS	PHS	PLS	PHS	Z
Stigma, threat to self-esteem					
No B1-10					
Seeking counseling is something that is embarrassing.	2.0	1.8	0.6	0.6	-3.799***
Seeking counseling does not necessarily mean having serious mental health problems ®.	1.8	1.8	0.7	0.7	-0.576 (NS)
No B1-23					
Seeking help from counselors means having no close friend to talk to.	1.9	1.7	0.7	0.6	-2.726**
Seeking counseling will not cause embarrassment to my family ®.	2.0	1.8	0.6	0.5	-2.772**
No B1-40					
If I seek counseling, I will try to keep it as a secret from my friends.	2.8	2.8	0.7	0.7	-0.328 (NS)
Emotional discomfort					
No B1-07					
Having counseling will make me relive my bad experiences and/or feelings.	2.5	2.5	0.7	0.7	-0.112 (NS)
I will feel comfortable in expressing my emotions to a counselor if necessary ®.	2.4	2.1	0.6	0.5	-4.994***
Collectivism					
No B1-20					
It is not appropriate to discuss one's personal problems with people outside the family.	2.0	2.0	0.7	0.6	-0.462 (NS)
No B1-24					
It is more important to hear what my parents say about my problems instead of what counselors may say.	2.7	2.6	0.7	0.6	-2.504 (*)
Some problems can be better discussed with a counselor than with family members ®.	2.3	2.0	0.7	0.7	-4.712***
Preference related to the counselor's ethnic background If I seek counseling, the counselor's ethnic background does not matter ®.	2.0	2.0	0.7	0.8	-0.659 (NS)
Preference related to the counselor's religion If I seek counseling, I do not care about the religious background of the counselor ®.	2.3	2.1	0.9	0.8	-2.298*
Preference related to the counselor's gender When I seek counseling, the counselor's gender does not matter ®.	2.1	1.9	0.7	0.8	-1.983*

PLS = Potential low seekers of professional counseling outside the university
PHS = Potential high seekers of professional counseling outside the university
Underlined mean score = significantly higher mean score
* p < 0.05** p < 0.01*** p < 0.001 NS Non significant

Compared to those who were less likely to seek professional counseling outside the university, those who were more likely to seek counseling were lower in perceiving stigma related to counseling, as well as in perceiving that seeking counseling is embarrassing. They also

showed less discomfort in expressing their emotions to a counselor, and they reported less preference in terms of counselors' religion or gender. On the contrary, those who were less likely to seek counseling perceived that sharing and discussing their problems with family members were more important than with counselors.

Agency Aspects

In agency aspects, ten topics were examined through 19 items. Nine topics were significant, and only 15 out of 19 items were significant. The comparisons that were not significantly different between two groups concerned knowledge of the counseling process. The results of the comparisons between potentially high seekers and potentially low seekers are shown in the following table.

Table 3

Comparisons of Perceptions of Counseling between Potentially Low and Potentially High Seekers of Counseling: Agency Aspects

Aspects and Items	Mean		SD		Z
	PLS	PHS	PLS	PHS	
Usefulness of counseling					
Counseling will enable me to see my problems more clearly.	2.9	3.1	0.6	0.5	-3.906***
Counseling will only make my problems more complicated ®.	2.9	3.0	0.5	0.5	-3.014**
Counseling is not always able to help me deal with my problems ®.	2.0	2.1	0.5	0.5	-2.648**
Problems appropriate for counseling					
Counseling is needed only by those with serious mental health problems ®.	2.7	2.9	0.8	0.7	-3.230***
Somebody with simple problems can also benefit from counseling.	3.0	3.1	0.6	0.4	-3.599***
Knowledge about the counseling process					
I do not have any ideas what to do during the counseling session ®.	2.3	2.4	0.6	0.6	-0.854 (NS)
I do not know the process during a counseling session ®.	2.0	2.1	0.7	0.6	-1.665 (NS)
Theoretical versus practical issues					
The approach that counselors use will be too theoretical to suit reality.	2.8	2.7	0.7	0.6	-2.584**
Social norm versus reality					
I think counselors will only place importance on social norms without considering my life pressures.	2.5	2.3	0.7	0.7	-2.945**
Control of one's own life					
I still can make my own decision though I have counseling ®.	1.5	1.7	0.5	0.6	-2.042*
If I go for counseling, the counselor will keep controlling my life.	2.1	2.2	0.7	0.7	-0.805 (NS)
Confidentiality					
I am confident that counselors will not disclose my problems to others without my consent.	3.0	3.2	0.7	0.7	-2.236*
I am not sure that counselors will keep my personal information confidential ®.	2.7	2.8	0.7	0.7	-1.032 (NS)
Personal qualities of counselors					
Generally, counselors are genuinely concerned to help their clients.	2.8	3.0	0.6	0.6	-4.057***
I am confident that counselors will be able to understand young people's ways of thinking.	2.7	2.9	0.7	0.6	-3.558***
Seeking help from counselors involves risk of being looked down on by the counselors ®.	2.8	2.9	0.6	0.7	-2.054*
Competence of counselors					
I am confident that counselors have the competence to help the clients in dealing with their respective problems.	2.8	3.0	0.6	0.5	-3.590 (NS)
Counseling fees					
Counseling normally costs a lot of money.	2.9	2.6	0.8	0.7	-3.562 (NS)
If I need counseling, the counseling fee does not matter ®.	2.7	2.5	0.7	0.7	-2.756**

PLS = Potential low seekers of professional counseling outside the university

PHS = Potential high seekers of professional counseling outside the university
Underlined mean score = significantly higher mean score
*   p < 0.05**   p < 0.01*** p < 0.001   NS Non significant

Compared to PLS, PHS had better perceptions of the usefulness of counseling, not only for those with mental illnesses. PHS also had better perceptions in terms of the personal qualities and competence of counselors. Furthermore, PHS reported higher perception of confidentiality in counseling. Compared to PHS, PLS showed higher degree in perceiving that counseling is more theoretical than practical and that counseling puts higher importance on social norms than real concerns of clients. PLS showed more concerns of counseling fees. PLS scored a significantly lower degree in perceiving that counseling leads to the loss of control of one's life.

As shown in Table 1, 2, and 3, PLS and PHS were significantly different in 27 out of 44 items of perceptions presented in the questionnaire. However, due to the large sample size, statistical significance was very likely with a very small effect. Therefore, the effect size on the statistical tests should also be considered when looking at the results.

Discussion

This study drew comparisons of perceptions relevant to counseling between potential high seekers and potential low seekers of counseling. Most of the comparisons showed a significant difference between the two groups. However, as stated earlier, due to the large number of respondents in this study, a small difference between the mean scores could lead to a statistical significance. Therefore, in order to see the relationship between perceptions relevant to counseling and willingness to seek counseling, it might be better to look at the results of comparisons between PHS and PLS which achieved the highest level of significance ($p \leq 0.001$). Those results are as follows:

- Compared to those who were less likely to seek counseling, potentially high seekers scored higher in perceiving the need to discuss their problems with a counselor.
- Compared to those who were less likely to seek counseling, potentially high seekers scored higher in perceiving themselves to have time to attend counseling.
- Compared to those who were less likely to seek counseling, potentially high seekers scored higher in perceiving that some problems were better discussed with a counselor than with a family member.
- Compared to those who were less likely to seek counseling, potentially high seekers scored higher in perceiving that counseling is useful in helping them see problems clearly.
- Compared to those who were less likely to seek counseling, potentially high seekers scored higher in perceiving that counseling is useful not only to those with very serious problems.
- Compared to those who were less likely to seek counseling, potentially high seekers scored higher in perceiving that counselors are genuine, understand young people's ways of thinking, and are competent.
- Compared to those who were more likely to seek counseling, potentially low seekers scored higher in perceiving that counseling is embarrassing.
- Compared to those who were more likely to seek counseling, potentially low seekers scored higher in anticipating emotional discomfort in expressing emotions to counselors.
- Compared to those who were more likely to seek counseling, potentially low seekers scored higher in perceiving counseling as more costly financially.

Potential low seekers scored higher in perceiving that counseling is embarrassing as well as in anticipating emotional discomfort in expressing emotions to counselors. These uncomfortable feelings might be related to the nature of Indonesian society as a collectivist one. As stated earlier, in a collectivist society, individuals are expected to secure the image for the family. Furthermore, Hofstede (1997) also describes collectivist societies as shame cultures. The infringement does not only lead to shame and loss of face for the actor, but also his/her family.

Therefore, stigma and emotional discomfort related to counseling can prevent Indonesian people from seeking counseling.

Compared to potential low seekers, potential high seekers trusted counselors more in terms of their personal and professional qualities. Thus, a lack of trust hindered participants from seeking counseling. This situation might also be explained by the fact that counselors are seen as outsiders. The perception that counselors were unfamiliar people led students to distrust them. Students did not believe that counselors, whom they perceived as outsiders, would be able to understand their situation fully, and that they genuinely want to help them.

Potential low seekers scored higher in perceiving counseling as more costly financially. This result showed that monetary concern was a discouraging factor. This result could be understood given that the majority of the participants were still economically dependent on their parents. Additionally, the economic condition of the country also contributes to this problem as the people still struggle with their basic needs (van Beek, 2002).

Those who had positive perceptions of counseling, especially regarding the usefulness of counseling and who had the understanding that counseling can be useful not only to those with serious problems, showed a higher level of willingness to seek counseling. These results show that various efforts should be taken to promote students' understanding the nature of counseling, in order to increase their willingness to seek counseling help.

Although most of the comparisons showed a significant difference between the two groups, five out of 22 topics of perceptions that are relevant to counseling showed no significant difference between the two groups. These five topics were as follows: sense of powerlessness in relation to the difficulties, reluctance to discuss personal difficulties with others, the availability of other sources of help, preference of counselors' ethnic background, and knowledge of the counseling process.

Results indicated that both potentially high and low seekers did not have a sense of powerlessness in relation to the difficulties, were not reluctant to discuss their personal difficulties with others and have other sources of help available. These results suggest that there is no relationship between sense of powerlessness in relation to the difficulties, reluctance to discuss personal difficulties with others, the availability of other sources of help, and willingness to seek counseling.

The data showed that the two groups reported a low level of both, preference in terms of counselors' ethnic background and knowledge of the counseling process. The results suggest that there is no relationship between the individual's knowledge of the counseling process, their preference of counselors' ethnic backgrounds, and the level of willingness to seek counseling. It seems that preferences for counselors' religion and gender are more influential in the decision to seek counseling. These suggest that ethnic background of counselors is not as important as their religion and gender backgrounds.

These findings are not consistent with the study conducted by Surf and Lynch (1999). They found that a sense of powerlessness in relation to the difficulties influenced the willingness to seek counseling. Surf and Lynch (1999) also found that the attitude towards the idea of discussing personal difficulties with others influenced the willingness to seek counseling. Results of the current study were also not in parallel to the findings of Bosmajian and Mattson (1980), Goodman et al. (1984), Sherbourne (1988), Kuhl et al. (1997), which showed that the availability and the use of other social support such as family and friends are the reasons for under-utilization of a counseling service. It seems that cultural values in a collectivist country like Indonesia influence people to be more open to discuss their personal difficulties and to be more caring to friends and family members, irrespective of their willingness to seek counseling.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The potential high seekers of professional counseling outside the university generally perceive counseling more positively than the potential low seekers of professional counseling

outside the university. Therefore, efforts to improve students' perceptions relevant to counseling are very important, so that they are more willing to seek counseling help. Students should have more information about the usefulness of counseling, so that they understand that the time and money they spend for counseling is worthwhile. Students should also be given information regarding problems that can be helped in counseling. With correct information regarding counseling, it is expected that students have better perceptions so that they will no longer think that counseling is embarrassing and stigmatic. Information about counseling as a source of help should also be disseminated widely amongst Indonesian wider society. With a better understanding, it is expected that people in wider society would be more acceptant of counseling. With this understanding, the family of students can also encourage students to seek counseling help if needed.

In relation to the efforts to help students have better/correct perceptions of counseling, the distribution of written information such as brochures is not enough. Counselors are encouraged to present and give explanations in person as it would be more effective in changing the misperceptions of counseling (Gelso & McKenzie, 1973).

Given that students' concerns about the counseling fee also relate to willingness to seek counseling, it is advisable that counseling centers adjust their service fee according to students' economic condition. Counselors should also improve their personal qualities, since these also relate to students' willingness to seek counseling. In relation to this, counselors should improve their understanding towards students' life. Counselors should also enhance their genuineness, care, and respects towards students. The positive personal qualities of counselors do not only need to be demonstrated in a counseling session, but also in everyday life, so that students can be encouraged to seek counselors for help.

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