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*Symposium: Critical Perspectives on
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Willingness to seek counselling, and factors that facilitate and inhibit the seeking of counselling in Indonesian undergraduate students

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ABSTRACT *This paper describes a study designed to investigate Indonesian undergraduates' attitudes to counselling. It focuses on the results derived from data analyses of a questionnaire measuring the level of willingness to seek counselling, factors inhibiting and facilitating the seeking of counselling in Indonesian students. The exploration was differentiated into professional counselling outside the university and the university counselling services. The self-administered questionnaire was distributed among 1,279 students. The results indicated that the level of willingness to seek counselling was low. The use of social networks was the most important discouraging factor. Wide dissemination of information about counselling services, efforts to enhance confidentiality in counselling and counsellors' understanding of students' world and ways of thinking were strongly suggested to encourage students to seek counselling.*

Introduction

Being at a university brings opportunities for young people to achieve their personal growth, but at the same time this involves a threat to their emotional well-being (Wittenberg, 2001). New knowledge and experience in the university challenge students' existing level of development. At the same time the learning process in the university also brings a risk of temporary loss of balance which can result in psychological distress (Rickinson, 1998). With the aim to help students cope with their personal problems and to help them work towards personal development, some universities provide a counselling service for their students. Previous studies showed that counselling has a positive impact on retention through addressing some underlying developmental themes (Rickinson, 1998; Rickinson & Rutherford, 1995). It was found that students attending counselling appeared to be better equipped to adjust to the social and academic demands of the university environment. However, many studies (for example, Benedict *et al.*, 1977; Boldero & Fallon,

1995; Cook *et al.*, 1984; Dubow *et al.*, 1990; Gibson *et al.*, 1992; Gonzales, 2001; Lin, 2001; Oliver *et al.*, 1999; Raviv *et al.*, 2000; Rudowicz & Au, 2001; Skuy *et al.*, 1985) have found that counselling help is not a popular choice among students. The studies have consistently found that family members and friends are those mostly selected for help.

A number of research studies have been carried out to investigate factors which influence the decision to seek counselling help including discouraging and encouraging factors (see, for example, Dubow *et al.*, 1990; Ey *et al.*, 2000; Kuhl *et al.*, 1997; North, 2002; Surf & Lynch, 1999; West *et al.*, 1991). Many different factors have been found to be involved in the decision to seek counselling. In general, these can be grouped into three broad categories (Fischer *et al.*, 1983):

- personal factors (including personal characteristics and situations);
- socio-cultural (including cultural values or a certain social group's characteristics); and
- agency factors (including factors relating to counselling services such as the service, counsellors, or other administrative issues).

Included in personal factors, the perception of self-ability to handle problems or the feeling of self-sufficiency was found to be one of inhibitory factors (Dubow *et al.*, 1990; Kuhl *et al.*, 1997). A sense of powerlessness in relation to difficulties, denial as the coping style, a reluctant attitude to discussing personal difficulties with others, and a lack of time were also found to prevent people from seeking counselling (Kuhl *et al.*, 1997; Seiffge-Krenke, 1989; Surf & Lynch, 1999; West *et al.*, 1991). Additionally, other studies reported the availability and the use of other social support such as family and friends as the reasons for under-utilisation of a counselling service (Bosmajian & Mattson, 1980; Goodman *et al.*, 1984; Kuhl *et al.*, 1997; Sherbourne, 1988).

The second group is related to socio-cultural factors. One of the cultural values that might prevent people from seeking counselling is collectivism which is more prevalent in Asian countries than in European countries (Hofstede, 1997; Lin & Yi, 1997; Nadler, 1983). Collectivism refers to societies in which 'people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty' (Hofstede, 1997, p. 51). Individuals in a collectivist culture are more emotionally dependent on their social group and concerned about the consequence of their behaviour to their family (Hofstede, 1984, 1997; Tata & Leong, 1994). Embarrassment, threat to self-esteem, and perception of stigma related to counselling also influence the decision to seek help (Ey *et al.*, 2000; Komiya *et al.*, 2000; Sibicky & Dovidio, 1986; Stefl & Proserpi, 1985; Williams & Williams, 1983). Sue and Sue (1987) reported that stigma and shame in talking about personal problems were strongly found in Asian-American people and served as discouraging factors against making use of counselling. A study by Komiya *et al.* (2000) showed that the external expression of emotion and the internal experiencing of strong emotions involved in counselling

could produce uncomfortable feelings, especially in certain cultural groups such as some Asian cultures.

Previous studies have focused on counsellors' gender as the factor influencing the decision to seek counselling (Atkinson *et al.*, 1998; Giles & Dryden, 1991; Haviland *et al.*, 1983; Soliman, 1993). However, they differ with respect to findings about the preference for counsellors' gender. Furthermore, counsellors' religion may influence the decision to seek counselling (see Belaire & Young, 2002). Dissimilarity of racial background between clients and counsellors might also discourage clients to seek counselling (Jenkins, 1999). Atkinson *et al.* (1989) and Leong *et al.* (1995) reported that ethnic similarity was one of the preferred counsellor characteristics.

Included in agency factors, a lack of knowledge and understanding about counselling and the objectives and benefits of it were reported in previous studies as preventing people from seeking counselling (Bradley, 2000; North, 2002; Surf & Lynch, 1999; West *et al.*, 1991). Some studies found that concerns over confidentiality in counselling were an important barrier to seeking help (Dubow *et al.*, 1990; Marks *et al.*, 1983; West *et al.*, 1991). In addition to a lack of knowledge about counselling, previous studies also suggested that a lack of knowledge about service details such as the existence of a counselling service, the kinds of service provided, or where to find the service were inhibitory factors (Hodgson *et al.*, 1985; Kuhl *et al.*, 1997; Offer *et al.*, 1991).

Also included in agency factors, some studies reported that the perceptions of the usefulness of counselling and the capacity of counsellors to help contributed to the decision to seek help (Parker *et al.*, 1986; Puchkoff & Lewin, 1987; Seiffge-Krenke, 1989). Other studies focused on the perception of the personal quality of counsellors as a determinant in seeking help (Grayson *et al.*, 1998a). Previous studies also showed that unfamiliarity with the counsellor prevented the initiation of seeking counselling (Lin, 2001; North, 2002; West *et al.*, 1991).

In addition to concerns related to counsellors' characteristics, there are also other inhibitory factors which related to the management and administration aspects of counselling services. Concern for monetary cost, a long waiting time and the lack of availability of counsellors were also found as a barrier to seeking help (Hicks & Hickman, 1994; Hodgson *et al.*, 1985; Leaf *et al.*, 1987; Stefl & Prospero, 1985; Wahler & Hardin, 1994).

Like universities in many other countries, some universities in Indonesia provide a counselling service for their students. Counselling is a Western model 'imported' into the Indonesian education system to help and support students through their academic life. However, having reviewed previous work, the author found that there is still little empirical research into Indonesian students' attitudes to counselling. Most research has been carried out in Western contexts or among certain non-Western cultural groups in Western countries. There is a very limited number of research studies conducted in Indonesia. It is still not known whether the discouraging factors that have been identified in other contexts serve as barriers for Indonesian students. Arguably, findings from research carried out in other cultural environments could not be automatically applied in the Indonesian context (Leong *et al.*, 1985).

With the intention of filling the gaps in the existing knowledge, the current study aimed to investigate Indonesian undergraduates' attitudes to counselling. Specifically it focused on these following objectives:

- to assess Indonesian undergraduates' level of willingness to seek counselling;
- to identify factors which discourage them from seeking counselling; and
- to identify factors which encourage them to seek counselling.

Without doubt, this study would inform the implications for the development of counselling service practice in Indonesia.

Additionally, most previous studies investigated willingness to seek counselling or attitude to counselling either in a general context or in the context of the university counselling service. The current study examined the level of willingness to seek counselling in two separate settings to allow a comparison between them. By investigating these separately, it would give a deeper understanding regarding students' attitude towards the two types of counselling services, which would provide more information about ways of improving counselling services in each context.

Method

A multi-method design was adopted in this study. This involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches; however, they were relatively independent until the interpretation stage (Niglas, 2000). Participants in this study were undergraduates and university counsellors in Indonesia. In order to allow the presentation of the results in detail, this article will focus on the method and findings under the quantitative approach. The report of research using the qualitative approach will be presented in separate articles.

Participants

A total of 1,279 undergraduates (846 male, 432 female, one unreported) volunteered to participate in the questionnaire survey. Ages ranged from 17 to 26, with a mean age of 19.7. The students were from the study programmes of electrical engineering, computer science, and industrial engineering in two private universities which are situated in an urban area in Indonesia and have student counselling provision.

Instrument

The Willingness to Seek Counselling Questionnaire was developed for this research purpose and distributed in lecture rooms. The questionnaire was divided into willingness to seek professional counselling outside the university (WSPCO) and willingness to seek the university's counselling service (WSUCS). Each section consisted of three parts. The first part aimed to assess the level of willingness to seek counselling. The second part was designed to identify factors discouraging students

from seeking counselling. The third part was to investigate factors which might encourage students to seek counselling.

The review of the relevant literature, pre-pilot work, peer assessment, questionnaire testing and pilot study were carried out in the process of designing the questionnaire. In the pre-pilot work, an open-ended questionnaire was given to 18 Indonesian students, eight Indonesian lecturers, and two British university counsellors to elicit responses about sources of help commonly used by students, their perceptions of counselling, and discouraging and encouraging factors in relation to seeking counselling. The draft of the questionnaire was then evaluated by nine experienced researchers in the School of Education, the University of Nottingham. After translating it into Indonesian, the questionnaire was tested among 17 Indonesian students in the UK. The pilot study was then conducted among 49 undergraduates at one of the universities participating in the study. The questionnaire has shown high reliability. The split-half reliability coefficients ranged between 0.888 and 0.979 ($p < 0.001$).

Part 1: level of willingness to seek counselling

Fourteen items were presented to students, in which they were asked to rate the likelihood that they would seek counselling for a variety of areas of concern: academic, transitions, welfare, parental relationships, romantic relationships, other relationships, loss, physical health, self, depression and mood change, anxiety, compulsive behaviour, abuse, and sexual issues. These areas of concern were constructed based on the categorisation of client concerns by the Association for University and College Counselling (Association for University and College Counselling, undated) and factor analysis of problem checklist scales (Zalaquett & McManus, 1996). A sheet containing the descriptions of areas of concern and the examples was also provided. For each area of concern students were asked to rate the degree of likelihood that they would seek counselling on a 4-point scale (1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high). The 14 areas of concern prompts had the following general structure: 'If I had a serious problem concerned with *Academic*, the degree of likelihood that I will seek professional counselling outside the university is ...' or 'If I had a serious problem concerned with *Academic*, the degree of likelihood that I will seek the university counselling service is ...'

Part 2: discouraging factors

Sixteen factors that might discourage students from seeking professional counselling outside the university were given to participants (see Table 3). In the context of the university counselling service, 19 potential inhibiting factors were presented (see Table 4). In each context, respondents were asked to choose three of the presented factors which most closely represented their own situation. Discouraging factors listed in the questionnaire were constructed based on the review of the literature, pre-pilot work and pilot study.

Part 3: encouraging factors

Students were presented with 12 factors which might make them more likely to seek professional counselling outside the university and 17 potential encouraging factors in relation to getting support from their university's counselling service (see Tables 5 and 6). They were then asked to choose three factors in each context. Like discouraging factors, the encouraging factors listed in the questionnaire were constructed based on the literature review, pre-pilot work and pilot study.

Results*Level of willingness to seek counselling*

Level of willingness to seek professional counselling outside the university (WSPCO). Table 1 shows the descriptive results of students' levels of willingness to seek counselling.

As seen in the table, the mean scores of WSPCO ranged from 1.6 to 2.0, and the average of mean scores was 1.8. These results indicate that the level of undergraduates' willingness to seek professional counselling outside the university was generally low. The areas of concern which achieved the highest mean scores were depression and mood change, and abuse. On the other hand, academic and transitions tended to have the lowest mean scores of willingness to seek counselling.

Level of willingness to seek the university's counselling service (WSUCS). Although there is a counselling service at both universities where this study took place, only 62.2% students ($n = 778$) were aware of it. To examine the level of willingness to seek the university's counselling service, only those who were aware of the service were

TABLE 1. Students' willingness to seek counseling

Area of concern	WSPCO		WSUCS	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Academic	1.6	0.8	2.3	1.0
Transitions	1.6	0.8	1.7	0.8
Welfare	1.6	0.9	1.6	0.8
Parental relationships	1.8	0.9	1.7	0.8
Romantic relationships	1.8	0.9	1.6	0.8
Other relationships	1.9	0.9	1.9	0.9
Loss	1.8	0.9	1.7	0.8
Physical health	1.9	1.0	1.6	0.8
Self	1.9	0.9	1.9	0.9
Depression and mood change	2.0	1.0	1.9	0.9
Anxiety	1.9	0.9	1.8	0.8
Compulsive behaviour	1.9	1.0	1.7	0.8
Abuse	2.0	1.0	1.8	0.9
Sexual issues	1.9	1.0	1.5	0.7
<i>Average</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>0.8</i>

n (WSPCO) = 1272–1278, n (WSUCS) = 772–774.

included in the analyses. The descriptive results of students' level of willingness to seek the university's counselling service are also shown in Table 1. It can be seen from the table that the mean scores of WSUCS ranged from 1.5 to 2.3, which indicate that the level of willingness to seek help from the university's counselling service was generally low. The area of concern which achieved the highest mean score of willingness was academic. The mean score of academic area was not only the highest mean score but also higher than 2.0. On the other hand, sexual issues acquired the lowest mean score of willingness to seek counselling.

Comparison between the level of willingness to seek professional counselling outside the university (WSPCO) and the university's counselling service (WSUCS). To examine whether there is a significant difference between the level of WSPCO and WSUCS, the mean scores of WSPCO and WSUCS across areas of concern were compared by employing the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test. Only students who were aware of the existence of the counselling service at their university were included in the analyses. The result of that comparison showed no significant difference (mean WSPCO = 1.8, mean WSUCS = 1.8; $z = -1.861$, NS).

However, when the comparison of the level of WSPCO and WSUCS was conducted per area of concern using the same test, the results showed significant differences in most of the areas of concern, which are clearly illustrated in Fig. 1.

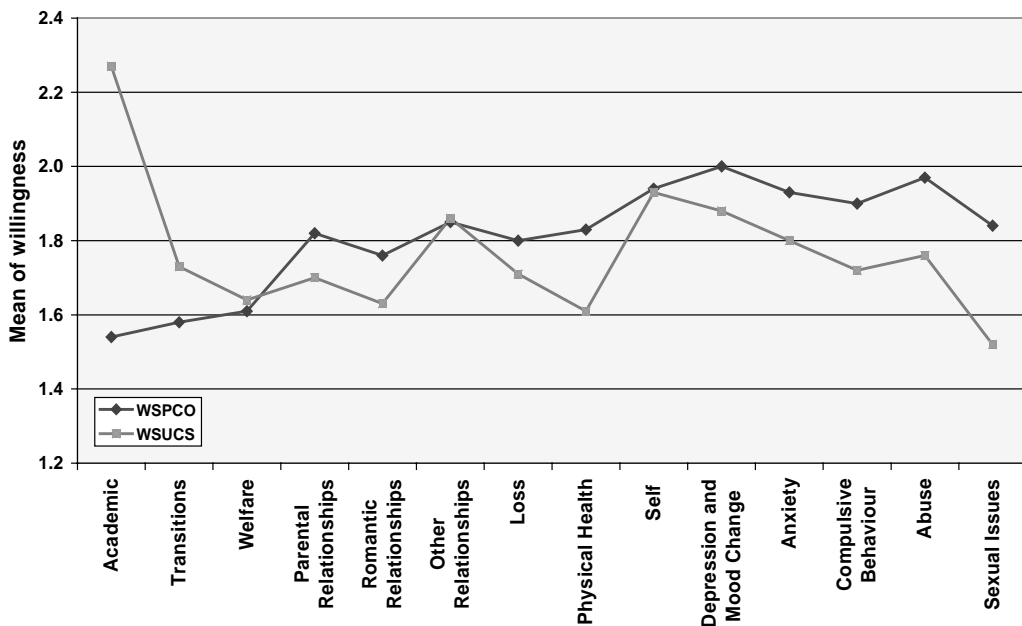
As shown in Table 2, the comparisons were significant in 11 of 14 areas of concern. In problems related to academic and transitions, the level of willingness to seek help from university counselling was significantly higher than the level of willingness to seek help from professional counselling services outside the university. On the other hand, in problems related to parental relationships, romantic relationships, loss, physical health, depression and mood change, anxiety, compulsive behaviour, abuse and sexual issues, the opposite direction was the case. The areas of concern in which the comparisons showed no significant difference were welfare, other relationships, and self.

Factors which discouraged students from seeking counselling

Discouraging factors from seeking professional counselling outside the university. The percentage of students who chose each of the discouraging factors is displayed in descending order in Table 3.

As shown in the table, 'having family/friends who can help' scored the highest percentage and was strikingly higher than the percentage of other possible discouraging factors listed. 'The counselling fee is felt to be a burden'; 'ability to solve one's own problem'; 'feeling shy to reveal one's problems to others' and 'lack of knowledge which service is good' were also frequently selected as a discouraging factor from seeking professional counselling outside the university.

Discouraging factors from seeking the university's counselling service. Table 4 displays the percentage of students who chose each of the discouraging factors in the context of universities' counselling service.



n (WSPCO) = 772-778

n (WSUCS) = 772-774

FIG. 1. The levels of WSPCO and WSUCS per area of concern.

Again, 'having family/friends who can help' scored the highest percentage, and was followed by 'ability to solve one's own problem'. Other factors which were also frequently selected were 'the problems are not serious so far'; 'feeling shy to reveal one's problems to others'; 'difficulty in trusting counsellors because of unfamiliarity'; and 'lack of confidence in the benefit of counselling'.

Factors which might encourage students to seek counselling

Encouraging factors in seeking professional counselling outside the university. As shown in Table 5, five from the 12 possible encouraging factors in seeking professional counselling outside the university acquired markedly higher percentages than the others.

Those five factors are 'provide information about the existence of the service, location, opening hours, and the procedure in seeking a counselling service'; 'assure strict confidentiality'; adjust the counselling fee according to the students' conditions'; 'encourage counsellors' understanding of students' world and ways of thinking'; and 'provide information about the benefits and functions of a counselling service'.

Encouraging factors in seeking the university's counselling service. Table 6 shows the percentage of students who chose each of the possible encouraging factors in seeking the university's counselling service.

Interestingly, the encouraging factors frequently chosen in the context of the universities' counselling service were similar to those chosen in the context of

TABLE 2. Comparisons between the level of WSPCO and WSUCS, per area of concern

Area of concern	Mean		SD		Z	p (2-tailed)
	WSPCO	WSUCS	WSPCO	WSUCS		
<i>Academic</i>	1.5	2.3	0.8	1.0	-15.287	0.000
<i>Transitions</i>	1.6	1.7	0.8	0.8	-4.974	0.000
Welfare	1.6	1.6	0.8	0.8	-1.304	0.192
Parental relationships	1.8	1.7	0.9	0.8	-3.443	0.001
Romantic relationships	1.8	1.6	0.9	0.8	-3.567	0.000
Other relationships	1.9	1.9	0.9	0.9	-0.132	0.895
Loss	1.8	1.7	0.9	0.8	-2.802	0.005
Physical health	1.8	1.6	1.0	0.8	-6.212	0.000
Self	1.9	1.9	0.9	0.9	-0.136	0.892
Depression and mood change	2.0	1.9	1.0	0.9	-3.197	0.001
Anxiety	1.9	1.8	0.9	0.8	-3.896	0.000
Compulsive behaviour	1.9	1.7	1.0	0.8	-5.354	0.000
Abuse	2.0	1.8	1.1	0.9	-5.725	0.000
Sexual issues	1.8	1.5	1.0	0.7	-8.836	0.000

n (WSPCO) = 772-778, n (WSUCS) = 772-774.

professional counselling outside the university. The only difference was on the expectation relation to counselling fees. As professional counselling outside the university is not normally free, students expected that counselling fees can be adjusted according to students' condition. In the university context, students expected that the service was free.

TABLE 3. Factors regarded as discouraging students from seeking professional counselling outside the university

Rk	Discouraging factors	%
1	Having family/friends who can help	47.6
2	The counselling fee is felt to be a burden	28.0
3	Ability to solve one's own problem	27.8
4	Feeling shy to reveal one's problems to others	24.8
5	Lack of knowledge which service is good	24.6
6	The problems are not serious so far	20.9
6 =	Lack of confidence in the benefit of counselling	20.9
7	Counselling is not popular in Indonesia	20.7
8	Difficulty in trusting a counsellor because of unfamiliarity	19.2
9	Lack of time	17.4
10	Lack of knowledge about the place	14.3
11	Lack of knowledge about the process in counselling	11.5
12	Lack of confidence in the confidentiality	10.5
13	Feeling embarrassed if seen going to a professional counsellor	4.8
14	The location of the counselling service is difficult to reach	2.9
15	Others	2.7

TABLE 4. Factors regarded as discouraging students from seeking the university's counselling service

Rk	Discouraging factors	%
1	Having family/friends who can help	47.5
2	Ability to solve one's own problem	32.1
3	The problems are not serious so far	27.4
4	Feeling shy to reveal one's problems to others	23.0
5	Difficulty in trusting counsellor because of unfamiliarity	21.5
6	Lack of confidence in the benefit of counselling	21.3
7	Lack of confidence in the confidentiality	18.1
8	Lack of knowledge about the procedure in seeking for a counselling service	15.1
9	Counselling is not popular in Indonesia	14.3
10	Lack of knowledge about the opening times	13.2
11	Lack of time	12.9
12	Lack of knowledge about the counselling process	12.0
13	Feeling embarrassed if seen going to a counsellor	8.6
14	Lack of knowledge about the place	8.0
15	Lack of knowledge about the existence of the service	7.1
16	Counselling fee is felt to be a burden	6.5
17	Difficulty in finding the counsellors	4.6
18	Others	3.5
19	Too long a waiting time	0.6

Discussion

Level of willingness to seek counselling

Results showed that the level of willingness of Indonesian undergraduates to seek both counselling services outside and inside the university was generally low. Looking at

TABLE 5. Factors regarded as encouraging students to seek professional counselling outside the university

Rk	Encouraging factors	%
1	Provide information about the existence of the service, location, opening hours, and the procedure in seeking a counselling service	46.6
2	Assure strict confidentiality	46.2
3	Adjust the counselling fee according to the students' conditions	42.1
4	Encourage counsellors' understanding of students' world and ways of thinking	41.4
5	Provide information about the benefits and functions of a counselling service	34.0
6	Provide information about the problems that counselling services deal with	17.3
7	Provide flexible time of counselling service	16.4
8	Provide general information about the counselling process	16.2
9	Encourage the advancement of counsellors' competence or skills	15.2
10	The location of the service easy to be found	14.6
11	Work towards short waiting time	7.2
12	Others	0.8

TABLE 6. Factors regarded as encouraging students to seek the university's counselling service

Rk	Encouraging factors	%
1	Provide information about the existence of the service, location, opening hours, and the procedure in seeking a counselling service	47.0
2	Assure strict confidentiality	37.1
3	Encourage counsellors' understanding of students' world and ways of thinking	36.7
4	Provide free service	33.0
5	Provide information about the benefits and functions of a counselling service	29.2
6	Efforts to make counsellors known by students	18.9
7	Provide counselling service at each faculty/department	15.4
8	Provide information about the problems that counselling services deal with	14.9
9	Provide general information about the counselling process	14.5
10	Encourage the advancement of counsellors' competence or skills	13.1
11	The location of the service easy to be found	10.4
12	Appoint counsellors from different gender backgrounds	7.6
13	Provide flexible time of counselling service	7.6
14	Appoint counsellors from a variety of religious backgrounds	7.0
15	Work towards short waiting time	3.3
16	Appoint counsellors from a variety of ethnic backgrounds	1.9
17	Others	1.0

Table 1 closely, there was no mean score in any areas of concern that reached 3.0 or at a moderate level, even though students had been asked to imagine themselves to be having serious problems. The overall comparison between the level of WSPCO and of WSUCS also showed no significant difference. These findings suggest that counselling services are not favoured sources of help regardless of the context of the counselling service. This was also supported by the findings in the other part of the study (Setiawan, 2004) that only 3.9% participants ($n=49$) had experience of seeking professional counselling outside the university. Furthermore, only 4.2% students ($n=32$) who knew there was a counselling service at their university had experience of using the service. This means that only approximately 2.5% of the total number of students who were involved in the study had made use of their university's counselling service. This figure is in contrast to the one resulting from the surveys of pre-1992 universities in the UK in 1997/1998, which is 4% (Association for University and College Counselling, 1999). The situation in Indonesia reflected from the results of this study is even in contrast to the figure suggested by Ratigan (1989). He asserts that a professional university counselling service could be contacted by about a tenth of the student population annually, if it is organised properly.

Interestingly, although the mean scores of willingness were generally low, the comparisons between the willingness to seek counselling in the two settings for each area of concern showed significant differences in most areas of concern (see Fig. 1 and Table 2). These findings indicate that students have different views regarding the areas of concern which are more suitable or more relevant to be taken to a certain type of counselling service. It is suggested that academic and transitional problems were seen as more suitable to be taken to the university's counselling service. On the other hand, problems related to relationships with parents or a romantic partner,

problems concerning loss, physical health, depression, anxiety, compulsive behaviour, abuse and sexual issues were seen to be more relevant to be taken to professional counselling outside the university. The results also imply that students perceive that the two types of counselling services have different areas of expertise, which was suggested by the interview data in this study (Setiawan, 2004).

Discouraging factors of seeking counselling help

Discouraging factors in the contexts of professional counselling outside the university and the university's counselling service were generally similar. 'Having family/friends who can help' was the most frequently chosen by students in the study as the reason for not seeking both types of counselling services. This result suggests that the availability of other sources of help is the main factor discouraging students from seeking counselling. This is consistent with the findings from previous studies (Bosmajian & Mattson, 1980; Goodman *et al.*, 1984; Kuhl *et al.*, 1997; Sherbourne, 1988). The result of the current study also supports the argument given by Sherbourne (1988, p. 1393) that 'the more support one has the less likely is one to use mental health services'.

The findings in the current study also suggest that students preferred to seek help from their family members and friends rather than from counsellors. I argue that seeking help from family members and friends is reasonable. However, it might be risky if students still do not want to seek professional help even if their social networks cannot help them or if their problems are beyond the capacity of their social networks to help. Looking back at the findings of the questionnaire part 1, it is shown that students' willingness to seek counselling was low even if they had serious problems. This leads to the question: what made students prefer to seek help from their family members and friends rather than a professional counsellor? This issue was explored further in the qualitative approach of the study.

The other reason for not seeking counselling in both contexts which was frequently given by students was 'ability to solve one's own problem'. However, it might be worth exploring further—does the perception of a personal ability to solve problems independently really reflect the ability to deal with problems? Or is this more a reflection of students' scepticism about the benefit of counselling? A study on the same respondents found that only half of the students perceived themselves as being able to solve their problems without seeking help from others (Setiawan, 2004). The study also showed that 66.7% students sometimes felt the need to discuss their problems with a counsellor.

Counselling fees were also found to be a strong discouraging factor from seeking professional counselling outside the university. These findings support previous studies (Leaf *et al.*, 1987; Stefl & Prospero, 1985; Waehler & Hardin, 1994). Counselling fees as a discouraging factor among Indonesian undergraduate could be understood considering that financial problems were widely experienced by students in this study (Setiawan, 2004) and that majority of them were still economically dependent on their parents. Furthermore, the disadvantaged economic condition of the country also contributes to this monetary concern, as the people would still

struggle to meet their basic needs (van Beek, 2002). However, counselling fees were not found to be an important discouraging factor in the context of universities' counselling service, as the counselling service at both universities is free.

Ways of encouraging and facilitating students to seek counselling help

The encouraging factors chosen in the two types of counselling service were generally similar. The similarity indicates that there are key factors which need to get serious attention if counselling services want to facilitate students to make use of the service. One of the key factors was the provision of information about service details and the benefits of counselling. This is consistent with findings in previous studies (House *et al.*, 1979; Loo *et al.*, 1989; Surf & Lynch, 1999) and supports the argument given by Lago and Thompson (1996) about the importance of clear information about counselling and service details. It could be argued that clear information about counselling would reduce uncertainties or worries involved in seeking counselling. Similarly clear information about counselling service details such as the location, opening hours, and the procedure in seeking a counselling service would make it easier for students to reach the service when they decide to seek help. Certainly the finding implies that counselling services are expected to improve the quantity and quality of publicity among students.

Moreover, counsellors were also expected to keep confidentiality and enhance their understanding of students' life. These findings mean that counsellors need not only to improve their professional quality, but also personal quality. The importance of preserving confidentiality found in the current study echoes previous work conducted by Grayson *et al.* (1998b), Howieson and Semple (2000), Riggs and Cheng (1988), and Surf and Lynch (1999). Similarly the importance of the personal quality of counsellors to understand their clients is in line with the findings in studies by Howieson and Semple (2000) and Surf and Lynch (1999). Obviously, these qualities would develop students' trust towards counsellors.

Furthermore, the adjustment of counselling fee was found to be important especially in the context of professional counselling outside the university. The provision of counselling service with affordable fees would enable students to seek professional help outside the university when no service is available at their university or when they choose to seek help from somebody outside the university.

Implications and limitations of the study

There are a number of implications which can be drawn from the study. First, the findings showed that the availability and use of social networks is the strongest reason for not seeking counselling help among students. Students also wanted to have more information about the benefits of counselling and the service details. Therefore, information about counselling should be disseminated widely. It should be distributed not only among students but also in wider Indonesian society. With better understanding, it is expected that students would seek counselling help when

their family and friends are no longer able to help and would receive encouragement from their family and friends to do so.

Second, as preserving confidentiality and understanding were strongly expected from counsellors, counsellors need to enhance these qualities. Additionally, the publicity about counselling in Indonesia should also cover the nature of relationships in counselling so that students would understand how counsellors would deal with them and how counsellors would treat the information they share. Third, professional counselling outside the university in Indonesia needs to adjust the service fee by considering the economic condition of students.

In addition to these implications, the current study has also a limitation. The sample for this study was drawn from students in two universities. Both of them are private universities and are situated in an urban area of Indonesia. Considering these circumstances, the results of this study cannot be generalised to all Indonesian undergraduates.

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