# PEOPLE'S KNOWLEDGE AND INTENTION IN USING ONLINE PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background:** The development of telepsychology in Indonesia is inseparable from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. One of its manifestations is online-based psychological interventions. With numerous growing applications in Indonesia, most of these services only provide counseling via chat with a psychologist. Indeed, the forms of online-based psychological interventions are not limited to chat. Further identifications are required to see if these online-based psychological interventions appeal to the community. This study aims to depict the knowledge and intention of the community to use online psychological interventions and the correlation between them.

**Method:** This study was quantitative research with survey method. The number of involved respondents was 127 male and female respondents aged 17-40.

**Result:** Research results show that 39.37% of respondents fell into the moderate category of knowledge, 22.04% fell into the low category, and 26.77% fell into the high category. About 49.61% of respondents indicated moderate intention, and 22.83% indicated a reasonably high intention to use online psychological interventions should they face mental health issues. Online interventions perceived as appealing for the community should they experience mental health issues were web-based intervention, psychologist-guided online therapies, application-based online interventions, and chat counseling.

**Discussion** Public knowledge of online psychological intervention is quite adequate. However, there are still a number of issues that the community doesn't understand, such as intervention design and understanding regarding the effectiveness of online psychological intervention. Nonetheless, people's intention to use psychological intervention is increasing in line with the challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic, which required people to use digital technology in their daily lives. Furthermore, efforts are needed to provide public understanding regarding the use of online psychological intervention.

**Conclusion** The community has sufficient knowledge and interest in online psychology services. There is a positive relationship between knowledge and intention to use online psychological interventions. Education is needed to increase public understanding regarding online interventions.

**Keywords:** *Telepsychology, Online Interventions, Mental Health*

## INTRODUCTION

In their daily lives, humans need help from others, one of the supports that practicing psychologists can provide is psychological counseling. Psychological consultation services keep changing

through time, and the continuously changing human mentality also indicates such changes. Thus, methods used to solve human mental issues are also changing following the era.

Traditionally, the practice of psychological counseling was originally in the form of face-to-face interaction between the psychologist and the client, which occurred because the client needed help to solve problems that could not be solved by himself, so he needed the help of a psychologist to listen to the complaints regarding problematic mental conditions, then providing advice, counseling, and responding wisely according to the capacity and professionalism of psychological services [1].

Consultations also provide solutions and more optimal results for psychological issues experienced by an individual. Consultations are also part of the client's psychological support, protection, and comfort. In addition, consultations are also an empowerment that identifies strengths and weaknesses in an individual [2].

In the past two years, the growth of psychological consultations showed significant changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to impacting people's psychologies, such as the feelings of anxiety, stress, fear, panic, and depression [3], the Covid-19 pandemic also affected industries and organizations; many lost their jobs, and a higher competition of human resources with heavier workloads. Therefore, a strict job selection process is also required. The occurring changes include the use of technology and the internet as the media to keep providing psychological services, particularly psychological interventions. Psychological services became available online through chat apps, video conferences, or applications specifically developed to provide psychological interventions [4,5].

In the past two years, psychological consultation services changed due to the physical limitations related to psychological service procedures commonly administered by practicing psychologists to their clients. One of these changes is telepsychology [6]. Telepsychology is a psychological service using the support of communication technology that can be used in the practice of psychology by giving the opportunity for everyone to acquire psychological support, ease of access, and considerations and challenges for the psychological service itself [7].

One form of telepsychology encompasses online-based psychological interventions, either in the form of web-based and/or app-based online psychoeducation, counseling, and psychotherapy. Some studies in Western countries have reported that online psychological interventions provided promising results [8]. The benefits of using online interventions are that they are easy to access, can be done anonymously, and

can reach individuals who are constrained to directly meet the psychologist [8,9].

In Indonesia, based on the data from the official page of the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia, one of the psychological services provided by the government is *Layanan Kesehatan Jiwa* (Sejiwa) or Mental Health Service. People can obtain education, consultations, and psychological assistance from this program via call center and extension 8 (www.kemenpppa.go.id).

Another form of online psychological consultation services is digital application, some launched applications related to psychological services are categorized as startups. One of the psychological service apps that became the selected startup in the startup studio program Batch 3 by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics is Bicarakan.id. By November 4th, 2021, this app had been used by more than 12,000 people, in which the users revealed their psychological problems by sending messages and sharing their thoughts. This type of consultation involves certified and licensed practicing psychologists (https://biz.kompas.com).

Online psychological services in Indonesia generate positive impacts on practicing psychologists. One of the impacts is the optimal integration between mental health services and technologies that becomes an alternative solution for people who, to date, find difficulties in accessing psychological services while decreasing the mental gap currently experienced by the community [10]. The reception, the preferred psychological services, and people's intention towards online psychological services in Indonesia have not been studied specifically. Exploring these matters will enrich and drive the development of more directed online psychological services per people's needs.

The growing online psychological intervention in Indonesia is the counseling service accessed through a chat app that is directly connected to the psychologist. Although many other online psychological interventions, such as web-based applications, games, and other services, include, exclude, and/or include minimum assistance from psychologists [8]. Despite many online psychological intervention apps growing in Indonesia, Are Indonesian people familiar with such interventions? Then, is there any intention to use them?

In view of the above, the research problems that can be defined in this study are 1) What is the overview of people's knowledge and intentions towards using online psychological interventions? 2) what is the relationship between knowledge and intentions of using these online psychological interventions?

## METHOD

### Research Design and Subject

This study was conducted using a descriptive quantitative method with a survey approach in relation to people's knowledge and intention toward online psychological interventions. An open survey research was applied to discover perceptions from many people in accordance with the criteria of respondents to be studied. Survey research aims to collect data from many respondents by acquiring various responses and concepts regarding research questions from the topic being raised. The survey was performed online, which participants can access through a smartphone or computer. Participants in this study comprised 127 male and female respondents aged 17-40 years old.

### Research Measuring Instrument

The data collection was done by using a questionnaire adopted from the study done by Sweeney et al. (2019) in Australia (11). The questionnaire consisted of 17 correct-incorrect items used to measure knowledge; 13 items of 1-5 rating and two yes/no items to measure people's intensity in using online psychological interventions.

### Statistical Analysis

The performed data analysis was descriptive statistics to explain an overview of people's knowledge and intentions towards online psychological interventions. In addition, an analysis will also be carried out through Spearman's Rho non-parametric to discover the correlation between knowledge and intention.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Subject Characteristics

The 127 respondents in this study had quite diverse demographic characteristics, as seen from age, occupation, and recent education. The demographic description of the respondents can be seen in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

| *Demography* | *n* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| *Age* | | |
| *17 – 24* | *110* | *86.62* |
| *25 – 32* | *10* | *7.87* |
| *33 – 40* | *7* | *5.51* |
| ***Total*** | *127* | *100* |
| *Occupation* | | |
| *Student* | *102* | *80.4* |
| *Working* | *16* | *12.6* |
| *Not working* | *9* | *7* |
| ***Total*** | *127* | *100* |
| *Recent education* | | |
| *Senior High School* | *94* | *74.01* |
| *Diploma* | *1* | *0.79* |
| *Bachelor graduate* | *22* | *17.32* |
| *Master graduate* | *10* | *7.88* |
| ***Total*** | *127* | *100* |

**An overview of knowledge and intention**

An overview of respondents' knowledge and intention level towards online psychological interventions is presented in **Table 2**. If divided into three categories (low, moderate, and high), then, the numbers of respondents that fell into the low and high categories of knowledge were almost equal, although the higher number still lied in the moderate category. According to the data analysis, the respondents' intention to use online psychological interventions was fairly high.

**Table 2**. An overview of knowledge and intention towards online psychological interventions*

| *Variable Category* | *Score Range* | *n* | *%* |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Knowledge*** | | | |
| *Very low* | *X < 1.7* | *10* | *7.87* |
| *Low* | *1.7 < X ≤ 4.5* | *28* | *22.04* |
| *Moderate* | *4.5 < X ≤ 7.3* | *50* | *39.37* |
| *High* | *7.3 < X ≤ 10* | *34* | *26.77* |
| *Very high* | *X > 10* | *5* | *3.93* |
| | | | |
| ***Intention*** | | *2* | *1.57* |
| *Not in the slightest* | - | *8* | *6.30* |
| *Perhaps a little* | - | *25* | *19.69* |
| *Perhaps* | - | *63* | *49.61* |
| *Quite likely* | - | *29* | *22.83* |
| *Very likely* | - | *2* | *1.57* |

*) Results of descriptive statistical analysis

Each item that measures the respondents' knowledge indicated the issues the respondents already know or do not know regarding online psychological interventions. The overview of items answered correctly by the respondents is presented in **Table 3**. There were four items that can only be answered correctly by <20% of respondents, namely items 1, 2, 3, and 5.

**Table 3**. Correct answers of each item used to measure respondents' knowledge

| | *Item* | *Respondents answer correctly* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *n* | *%* |
| *1.* | *All online psychological interventions involve an interaction with a psychologist/therapist.* | ***10*** | ***7.87*** |
| *2.* | *Online psychological interventions are less effective compared to offline face-to-face psychological interventions.* | ***15*** | ***11.8*** |
| *3.* | *Online psychological interventions can only be done via video conference, phone call, or messaging apps* | ***16*** | ***12.6*** |
| *4.* | *Online psychological interventions tend to be effective for teenagers and young adults* | *71* | *55.9* |
| *5.* | *Online psychological interventions are automatically adjusting with an individual's needs.* | ***11*** | ***8.66*** |
| *6.* | *People using online psychological interventions are generally satisfied.* | *22* | *17.3* |
| *7.* | *Online psychological interventions are not interactive.* | *49* | *38.6* |
| | *Online psychological interventions tend to be effective in dealing with the following psychological problems:* | | |
| *8.* | *Anxiety* | *73* | *57.5* |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *9.* | *Depression* | *47* | *37* |
| *10.* | *Substance abuse* | *29* | *22.8* |
| *11.* | *Phobias* | *36* | *28.3* |
| *12.* | *Pain* | *53* | *41.7* |
| *13.* | *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)* | *44* | *34.6* |
| *14.* | *Eating/body image disorders* | *64* | *50.4* |
| *15.* | *Sleep disorders* | *80* | *63* |
| *16.* | *Medication adherence* | *67* | *52.8* |
| *17.* | *Mental disorders* | *68* | *53.5* |

The results of the Spearman's Rho correlation test showed that knowledge and intention were correlated positively on online psychological interventions (**Table 4**). The positive correlation indicated that the higher the knowledge score, the higher the intention to use online psychological interventions. A correlation test between knowledge and 13 types of psychological interventions, both online and offline, was also performed (**Table 5**). Only 5 types of online psychological interventions have a positive correlation with knowledge of online psychological interventions, although the correlation can be said to be lackluster.

**Table 4. The Results Of The Correlation Test Between Knowledge And Intention**

| ***Variable*** | ***Correlation**** | ***Sig*** |
|---|---|---|
| *Knowledge*<br>*Intention* | *0.299* | *0.001*<br>*Sig at 0.01 level* |

* The *Spearman's Rho* correlation test

**Table 5. The Analysis Results Of Intervention And Its Correlation With The Knowledge Of Online Psychological Interventions**

| | ***Mean score of Intention******** | ***Knowledge*** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | ***Coefficient Correlation**** | ***Significance*** |
| ***Psychological Intervention Types*** | | | |
| *1. By a physician* | *2.9* | *0.075* | *0.4* |
| *2. By a psychologist* | *4.2* | *0.171* | *0.54* |
| *3. By a psychiatrist* | *3.6* | *0.168* | *0.59* |
| *4. By a therapist* | *3.4* | *0.075* | *0.4* |
| *5. By a counselor* | *3.8* | *0.174* | *0.051* |
| *6. Self-help book* | *3.3* | *0.105* | *0.24* |
| *7. Web-based interventions* | *3.8* | ***0.233*** | ***0.009****** |
| *8. Counselling via chat* | *3.5* | ***0.188*** | ***0.035**** |
| *9. Counselling via phone call* | *3.2* | ***0.209*** | ***0.018****** |
| *10. Counselling via video call* | *3.3* | ***0.182*** | ***0.041**** |
| *11. App-based interventions* | *3.5* | ***0.248*** | ***0.005****** |
| *12. Online therapies with the assistance of a psychologist* | *3.6* | *0.14* | *0.155* |
| *13. Online therapies without the assistance of a psychologist* | *2.4* | *0,019* | *083* |

** Spearman's Rho correlation test;*
***The correlation is significant at 0.05*
****The correlation is significant at 0.01*
*****Score range: Not in the slightest (1); Perhaps a little (2); Perhaps (3); Quite likely (4); Very likely (5)*

## Discussion

People's knowledge of online psychological intervention services was at a moderate level, so it can be interpreted that some people already know and are informed about some important points related to these interventions. However, some important issues still have yet to be understood by many people. This can be seen from the four items where more than 80% of the respondents answered incorrectly. Such issues were related to the presence or absence of psychologist/therapist assistance in online psychological interventions. Most respondents answered that a psychologist always accompanied psychological interventions. Obviously, this will greatly depend on the type of psychological services designed. Online psychology interventions can be designed with full, minimal, or no assistance from a psychologist [8]. Many respondents also considered that online interventions were ineffective compared to face-to-face interventions. Several studies actually show results that online interventions are quite effective for dealing with some mental problems [8,11–15].

It can be interpreted that the people's intention to use online psychological interventions was fairly high, which was more than 50%. These results differ from previous studies, which stated that the number of teenagers and college students seeking professional assistance or accessing online interventions is very low [16,17]. This difference is possible because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Both studies were conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic occurred. As is well known, the Covid-19 pandemic has encouraged health workers to continue providing services for dealing with mental health problems online or via telemental health [10].

The types of online psychological interventions that most people chose to use should they experience mental health problems were web-based interventions, therapy with psychologist assistance, application-based interventions, and counseling via chat, respectively. Some of these options are indeed in accordance with the characteristics of the majority of respondents who are students, where the types of interventions mentioned are easy for them to access. A study also states that adolescents and students were interested in using computer-based interventions, either with or without assistance from a psychologist [17].

## CONCLUSION

Referring to the research results, several online interventions that people are interested in using should they experience mental health issues were web-based interventions, online therapy with psychologist assistance, application-based online interventions, and counseling via chat. There was a positive correlation between knowledge and intentions related to online psychological interventions, but

the correlation can be said to be lackluster. However, a positive correlation can still be taken into consideration that to increase the use of online psychological interventions, it is necessary to provide education related to those interventions.

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