



# Psychological Dynamics of Self-Disclosure in Counseling

Muallifah Muallifah<sup>(✉)</sup> and Rohmatul Hannani

Maulana Malik Ibrahim Islamic State University, Malang, Indonesia  
muallifahpsi@uin-malang.ac.id

**Abstract.** Self-disclosure is an individual's action or ability to provide information and express thoughts and feelings related to themselves to others to create intimate and trusting relationships. Self-disclosure of assistance or in the process of counseling services in the community is low, So it has an impact on problem-solving and several cases experienced by the community. This study uses an approach with a type of phenomenological study to describe the dynamics of counselee self-disclosure during the counseling service process. The results of this study are an overview of the psychological dynamics of individuals in disclosing themselves when experiencing problems, including (a) the psychological condition of the subject; (b) the awakening of self-awareness in opening oneself to others; (c) the psychological dynamics of the self-disclosure process; finally (d) the subject gains self-understanding from self-disclosure. Individuals who do self-disclosure will get several benefits, including: (1) individuals will be able to build open communication with others; (2) individuals are also able to build familiarity with other people and able to understand their strengths and weaknesses in themselves. In addition, interpersonal communication skills are much better.

**Keywords:** psychological dynamics · self-disclosure · counseling

## 1 Introduction

Self-disclosure attitudes are an important part needed in establishing social interaction between individuals. Is already understood that humans are social beings who need each other, including the quality of social interaction well (Umanailo, 2020). As social beings, individuals should be able to have good relationships, including building good social interactions. Well-built social interactions are usually characterized by a pattern of mutually open relationships to create harmonious relationships and positive interactions. Such relationship conditions are needed in the process of counseling services.

To be able to develop it requires good social communication skills so that it can support individual success in building relationships. Individuals who have high social skills tend to gain social acceptance by showing the characteristics of being pleasant, trusting each other, and having a sense of security (Damirchi, 2018). The results showed that safe individuals have high self-confidence and feel free to express thoughts, feelings, and creatives (Greenacre et al., 2014). Whereas individuals who have low social skills

show insecurity, unable to express their thoughts and feelings freely. One of the indicators of individuals having good social skills is effective communication. This includes what is needed in the process of counseling services.

One of the important aspects to realize this condition is through self-disclosure attitudes. Self-disclosure is an individual's action in providing information related to themselves to others to create a relationship of closeness and mutual trust (Masaviru, 2016; B. Gainau, 2009). Self-disclosure is also understood as the individual's ability to express or express thoughts and feelings toward others.

Self-disclosure can be understood through two aspects, namely breadth, and depth. Breadth is related to an individual's ability to communicate with anyone without having to a specific person, whether a new person, an ordinary friend, a sibling's parent or a close friend. While the depth relates to the problem or theme being talked about, whether it is general or special. Both choices depend on who to talk to and how open it is to the person (B. Gainau, 2009; Masaviru, 2016).

Leung (2002) added that self-disclosure consists of five aspects, including the following: (1) Control of depth relating to the individual being able to talk quite a bit about oneself, express personal things, and fully express one's feelings on social media; (2) Accuracy relates to openness, sincerity, and honesty about feelings, thoughts, and emotions felt; (3) The amount of disclosure relates to how often the individual expresses oneself towards others; (4) Valence relating to the contents and conditions disclosed by the individual; and (5) The intent of disclosure relates to the individual's awareness in expressing what is perceived (Leung, 2002).

Some of the positive impacts that can be obtained are: (1) through self-disclosure the individual can understand himself from others who are the story team. The individual gains a new perspective on himself and can understand the self-concept more deeply (Minarto et al., 2021). (2) Self-disclosure can increase an individual's self-acceptance and can develop positive responses for themselves. (3) The self-disclosure model also has an impact on the effectiveness of communication (Robinson, 2017). Individuals who are open to each others, will easily understand what is meant in the process of communication. Likewise, in the counseling process, without openness or disclosure, relationship in counseling cannot be developed (Duesler, 2021).

When individuals are less open and less expressive in expressing their feelings, the individual becomes less likely to be closed and less confident (Masaviru, 2016). In addition, individuals who lack openness tend to be uncomfortable, unwilling to tell the psychological burden and problems they experience to others, and prone to stress (Gamayanti et al., 2018; Catona & Greene, 2015). Such relationship conditions are certainly not conducive to the counseling process.

In the process of counseling services, self-disclosure is needed, both in the form of openness carried out by counselors and counselors (Audet & Overall, 2010). The results showed that counselors who are willing to open up and tell themselves will have an impact on the counselor's condition. Counselors become motivated to be open in expressing their thoughts and feelings (Mulawarman, 2014; Watkins, 2015). But the reality and phenomena on the ground did not match expectations. Many parties still do not realize the importance of building good relationships in the counseling process. Establishing a good relationship can be done in the counseling process through self-

disclosure. The results of research by Gusmawati et al., (2016) stated that as many as 55.29% of students were still not open in telling the problems experienced. Students are expected to be able to be open when they experience problems to facilitate the counseling process. Similar research states that it is important for adolescents to do self-disclosure in telling the psychological condition they experienced after the divorce of their parents. Therefore, openness is needed for trusted parties, including counselors. This can be triggered by the counselor taking an open attitude to stimulate the openness of the counselor (Amelisa, 2018).

Often counseling on the phenomenon of cases of violence is not carried out through an open disclosure process, either by the victim or his family or the environment around him.

The results of a survey conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) involving 600 respondents aged 15–30 years with a composition of women 75.8 percent and men 22.8 percent, and other genders 1.3 percent. The survey results showed that 91.6 percent of respondents had experienced, seen, or heard firsthand at least one type of sexual violence. The most common forms of violence are sexually suggestive messages, gazes, jokes, or disrespectful calls (<https://www.voaindonesia.com>).

Likewise, the results of interviews conducted by researchers with several counselors stated that:

“To get the effectiveness and efficiency of counseling, it is necessary to collaborate with counselors for open communication regarding what they think and feel or the problems they experience, so that we as counselors can help as expected by counselors.” (September 12, 2022). Similar data also states that openness in counseling is very important.

“When counselors are willing to be open and honest, it is also easy for us to build familiarity with counselors, so this will affect the solutions and solutions expected by counselors, although sometimes we are also fishing or stimulating so that counselors want to be open.” (September 25, 2022).

Various phenomena and the results of these interviews show that the aspect of openness or self-disclosure carried out by the community, including for counselors who carry out the counseling service process is still low. So it has an impact on less than optimal problem solving and assistance in some cases experienced.

Among the causes of an individual’s lack of openness related to himself to others are cultural factors and a lack of self-awareness. Individuals who are less aware that openness is important to strengthen social support and alleviate what is felt, tend to close themselves and hide their information (Schuldt, 1991). Likewise, certain cultures still view telling or opening up to others is still taboo. Thus hiding what is felt has an effect on the lack of openness of the individual regarding himself (B. Gainau, 2009).

The various phenomena above are the background and reasons for researchers in conducting this research. Based on this, the focus of this study is the psychological dynamics of self-disclosure of subjects in carrying out counseling services.

## 2 Method

This research uses a qualitative approach. The characteristics of qualitative research are descriptive and interpretive from the data that has been obtained (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research seeks to develop a description of the results of the phenomenon data experienced by individuals as respondents, further interpreting the meaning of the respondent phenomenon, both personally and theoretically.

The type of research used in this study is a phenomenological study that focuses and puts forward the subjective experience of the individual. This approach aims to describe, understand, and analyze the events or situations experienced by individuals in everyday life (Sugiyono, 2011). So to describe the dynamics of self-disclosure by following the phenomenological study approach, this study focuses on personal experience as an individual's psychological dynamic from the beginning until the courage to open up.

The data collection techniques in the study used semi-structured interview techniques to analyze what depth of information was felt by the subject based on his experience. Data analysis techniques are carried out through the following stages, namely: transcribing the results of interviews; coding; and data categorization. The subjects in this study were several students who became counselors and counselors who were conducting counseling services at the Faculty of Psychology UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

## 3 Result

### Psychological Condition of the Subject or Counselor

Psychologically, the condition of counselors who access counseling services generally feels anxiety, anxiety, fear, insecurity, and even difficulty trusting others when experiencing problems. The average subject feels indecisive and stressed by what is thought and felt, but the subject also feels that what is thought and felt must be resolved and a solution is obtained. The subject understands that he needs help and support from others. However, what often happens is that the subject feels doubtful and afraid to tell who to tell to get help and support. This is consistent with the statement of the subject in the interview:

*“Every time I have a problem, especially if it's a serious problem like a problem with my parents or college, I want to tell a story to a friend, but sometimes I'm embarrassed and confused, worried that what I tell you later is known to people, later told to others, well I will be embarrassed if someone else finds out my problem. That's why I sometimes want to vent or counsel afraid, have to choose the right person to listen to my story” (May 19, 2022).*

*“When I get into an argument with a friend and there's a personal issue, I feel like it's very taxing on the mind. I feel uneasy and afraid if I meet other friends. I understand that I have to be able to finish, but sometimes I am afraid if I want to tell a story with other friends. I'm afraid of being bullied, afraid of being shunned, afraid of being made fun of, that's why sometimes I choose to be silent from being the subject of other friends' jokes (July 12, 2022).”*

The results of the interview showed that subjects who experienced problems, in general, psychologically felt discomfort. The subject felt that the problem became a burden resulting in anxiety, unrest, fear, and anxiety, as well as various other psychological conditions. The subject also desires to resolve various feelings and burdens of the mind but tends to lack courage and an open attitude to others.

The data obtained by the researcher describes the psychological dynamics of the subject or counselor when experiencing various problems and realizing that he needs help and support.

### **Building Self-Awareness to Open up to Others**

The subject begins to realize the importance of *self-disclosure* or being open to others when experiencing problems. Initially, the subject of the subject feels that being open to others is equivalent to telling the weaknesses and shortcomings possessed. But then the subject knows that telling stories to others, especially to the right and trustworthy people, actually affects the comfort and decomposition of the problems experienced. This is by accordance with the results of the interview as follows:

*“At first, I was embarrassed and afraid I had to tell what I experienced, but because of the various mentoring and support from my counselor, I finally wanted to tell and be more open. When I’ve trusted my counselor and told the counselor slowly, then I feel relieved that I’ve shared the burden and feel more comfortable going through the days ahead.” (July 15, 2022)*

*“Openness in counseling sessions is very necessary when doing peer counseling, openness is access for counselors to be willing to tell about the burdens, problems, and confusion experienced by counselors.” (July 20, 2022)*

The results of the interview showed that the subject began to realize that conducting self-disclosure with trusted people is the right step or strategy to do problem-solving and determine the desired solution. In addition, through self-disclosure, the subject also feels that the emotional and psychological burden of the problems experienced is much lighter.

### **Psychological Dynamics of the Self- Disclosure Process**

The subject had felt a heavy burden when he experienced problems. The subject feels that all the perceived burdens must be resolved alone and independently. But when the subject begins to believe and is willing to tell what he feels to the counselor, slowly the subject eventually feels that his burden is getting lighter. This corresponds to the following data:

*“The openness process can be carried out from the beginning when doing a good report to the end of counseling or evaluation. The level of openness of counselors in conducting counseling, some are immediately easy to tell, some must be provoked first and then want to tell stories, and some must make counselors fully trust the counselor to want to tell stories. The counselor who is willing to open up feels relieved after telling what he has experienced and can vent the emotions that are suppressed in the right way.” (July 2022)*

The subject needs time and stages to believe and be open in telling the problems experienced. The subject initially experiences a dilemma when he wants to tell the problem experienced, but through the support and encouragement of the counselor, the subject is finally able to fully trust and be willing to share to get an agreed solution. In addition, openness is also influenced by the character of each counselor, sometimes counselors encounter counselors who are easy to open, so it is easy to tell stories. But some counselors tend to be closed, making it difficult to tell stories and require support and encouragement from counselors to be more open.

The different ways and processes that the subject shows to be open and tell what is perceived by the counselor are part of the psychological dynamics experienced by the subject. The psychological dynamics in question include fear, worry to the phase of daring to decide to be open to others while experiencing problems.

### **The Subject Gains Self-Understanding from *Self Disclosure***

Through his attitude of openness to others, the subject feels that he can understand all the potentials and shortcomings possessed. This can reinforce that the subject can benefit from the attitude of *self-disclosure* that is carried out to others. During the process of telling his problems to others, the subject is also able to understand all the potential he has to develop better and be more independent. *“Maybe at first I was afraid when I wanted to tell a story to a friend, but finally when I opened up telling a friend, I finally felt that I got input and advice for the development of the advantages and potential that I had.” (July 2022)*

The above data show that the subject feels that he benefits from his attitude of openness to others, especially for self- development. Through an open attitude, many new things are discovered by the subject, including advantages and disadvantages that the subject can develop or improve in his later life.

## **4 Discussion**

Counseling services are two-way communication activities carried out by counselors and counselors. Such communication conditions mean involving both of them to be active in building open communication (Muhammad & Kabir, 2018). Openness carried out in counseling has an impact on the effectiveness of counseling implementation (Mulawarman, 2014).

Through open self-disclosure, individuals can understand themselves, their potential and shortcomings, responsibilities, and obligations to build social interactions (Rubin et al., 1993). In addition, the openness (self-disclosure) built between counselors and counselors can have an impact on mutual understanding and facilitate the achievement of mutually expected goals, especially for counselors.

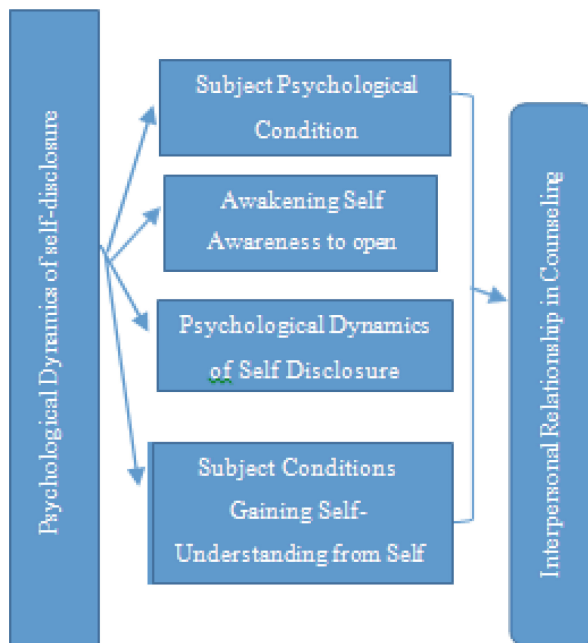
Counseling relationships built through self-disclosure create more intimate relationships in counseling (Mulawarman, 2014). Self-disclosure can also affect relationships that maintain mutual trust, care, commitment, self-acceptance, and close friendship (Harvey & Boynton, 2021). Through self-disclosure, the individual believes in telling what he or she has experienced to others. When a counselor can tell the problem to the counselor openly, it shows that the relationship built can be said to be close so that it can cause

mutual trust and mutual respect. Counseling relationships that have been built intimately will usually easily achieve counseling success.

In expressing himself, the counselor must be honest, not lie or cover up the actual events during the counseling process. Because a lie will only give rise to a new problem of the covered condition. Self-disclosure will provide benefits if individuals are happy to be open to sharing their feelings and thoughts. Several benefits will be obtained if individuals are willing to disclose self-information to others, including: (1) individuals understanding more about themselves; (2) the ability to be ready to solve problems; and (3) reducing the psychological burden (Masaviru, 2016; Gamayanti et al., 2018).

The research respondents involved were included in the category of developmental stage and early adulthood. According to Richardson (2000) adolescence is a time when it is easier to interact with peers and want to get social recognition. Therefore, teenagers who have difficulty doing themselves well, usually tend to be closed. Furthermore, it is explained that self-disclosure can improve social relations, among others: (1) self-disclosure can improve close relationships with other people; (2) self-disclosure increases everyone's confidence; and (3) information about self can help understand oneself, potential, and shortcomings and strengthen self-concept (Rubin et al., 1993; Robinson, 2017).

While in counseling practice, one of the efforts that counselors can make to build self-disclosure are: (1) counselors need to understand each counselee's characteristics; (2) counselors are needed in providing counseling for counsees more openly; (3) counselors can provide information services about ethics in giving oneself what must



**Fig. 1.** Self-disclosure counselors (Hendrik, 1988; Mulawarman, 2014)

be done to the counselee; (4) counseling can provide individual or group counseling to assist the counselee regarding problem-solving; (5) providing assistance and training to counsees who have low levels of self-disclosure (Hendrik, 1988; Mulawarman, 2014). The following chart can be described in this study (Fig. 1).

## 5 Conclusion

Each individual has different characteristics. Sometimes individuals have expressive characteristics when responding to problems experienced, so they tend to be more open in expressing perceived problems, thoughts and feelings. Conversely, there are also individuals with the closed type, so they are reluctant to tell anything they feel. There is a description of the psychological dynamics of individuals in conducting self-disclosure when experiencing problems, including (a) the psychological condition of the subject, (b) the awakening of self-awareness of opening oneself to others; (c) the psychological dynamics of the self-disclosure process; finally (d) the subject gains self-understanding from self-disclosure.

Individuals who do self-disclosure will get several benefits, including: (1) individuals will be able to establish open communication with others; (2) individuals are also able to build familiarity with other people and be able to understand their strengths and weaknesses in themselves. In addition, interpersonal communication skills are much better. Therefore the ability to do self-disclosure is important for every individual, especially when carrying out the process of counseling services. One of the factors that influence the effectiveness of counseling is the ability of self-disclosure between the counselor and the counselee.

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