

Therapeutic Communication in Mental Health Telemedicine Services through the Halodoc Application

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Abstract. *This qualitative study explores the communication dynamics between psychologists and clients within the framework of utilising mental health services provided by Halodoc. Telemedicine has emerged as a popular alternative for individuals seeking mental health support in the digital age. Using a case study methodology, in-depth interviews were conducted with psychologists and clients who availed themselves of Halodoc's mental health features. The findings reveal both advantages and challenges associated with communication via Halodoc. Advantages include enhanced accessibility, convenience, and privacy for clients, while challenges encompass the absence of non-verbal cues, difficulties in building rapport, and occasional technical constraints affecting session quality. This research offers valuable insights into the communication dynamics of digital mental health services, laying the groundwork for enhancing service efficacy and user experience. In conclusion, the study emphasises the need to address challenges within telemedicine platforms and continuously improve them to optimise mental health service delivery in the digital realm. Ultimately, the study contributes to advancing our understanding of communication in digital mental health services and underscores the importance of ongoing refinement in telemedicine platforms to meet the evolving needs of clients and psychologists alike.*

Keywords: *health communication, mental health, telemedicine, therapeutic communication*

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the prevalence of mental health issues in Indonesia has been increasing. As reported by the Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS), 1 in 3 adolescents aged 10-17 in Indonesia faces mental health challenges. Additionally, one in 20 teenagers in Indonesia has experienced a mental disorder within the past 12 months. This corresponds to approximately 15.5 million and 2.45 million teenagers, respectively (I-NAMHS, 2022).

The prevalence of various mental disorders experienced by Indonesian adolescents aged 10-17 years, as depicted by research data I-NAMHS, 2022, is shown in Table 1. Anxiety disorders, which encompass social phobia and generalised anxiety disorder, take the lead in terms of prevalence. This suggests

that a substantial number of adolescents encounter difficulties in managing social anxiety and generalised anxiety. Subsequently, Major Depressive Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are also notable mental health challenges within this age group.

Mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and behavioural disorders, have become prominent factors contributing to illness and disability among adolescents. It ranks as the fourth leading cause of death in the age group of 15 to 29. According to the Indonesia-National Adolescent Mental Health Survey 2022, a staggering 15.5 million teenagers, which accounts for 34.9 per cent of this demographic, are grappling with mental health disorders. Alarmingly,

TABLE 1. The types of mental disorders experienced by Indonesian adolescents aged 10-17 years respectively (I-NAMHS, 2022)

No	Name	Percentage (%)
1	Anxiety Disorder	3.7
2	Major Depressive Disorder	1
3	Behavioural Disorder	0.9
4	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	0.5
5	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	0.5

only 2.6 per cent of these individuals sought counselling services to access emotional and behavioural support (Arif, 2023).

Mental health concerns, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, have become a significant issue globally and nationally. Dr. Maxi Rein Rondonuwu, Director General of Disease Prevention and Control at the Ministry of Health, highlights the simultaneous battle against anxiety, fear, mental stress, and efforts to control the virus. This struggle is fueled by isolation, physical distancing, social restrictions, and uncertainty, affecting millions of people's mental well-being (Diniati et al., 2022).

Telemedicine has revolutionised how psychologists interact with clients, moving away from traditional in-person counselling sessions (Valencia et al., 2019). Therapeutic communication, essential in healing, allows psychologists to understand clients deeply, build strong relationships, and offer crucial support. Through telemedicine, mental health counselling is now accessible via personal devices, eliminating face-to-face meetings (Martin & Chanda, 2016). This shift has changed the dynamics of psychologist-client interactions, emphasising the importance of remotely examining clients' behaviours and concerns.

In telemedicine, psychologists must rely solely on verbal communication, lacking the richness of nonverbal cues found in face-to-face sessions,

as highlighted in a study during the COVID-19 pandemic (Feijt et al., 2020).

These nonverbal cues, such as body language and gestures, are crucial for building rapport and trust. As (Mulyana, 2016a) argues, nonverbal cues enhance the bond between psychologists and clients, leading to greater satisfaction and productive therapeutic relationships.

Telemedicine represents a significant technological advancement, providing swift access to mental health support. Indonesia has an estimated 15.6 million people experiencing depression, with only 8 per cent seeking professional help (Azizah, 2019). Telemedicine acts as a catalyst, encouraging a more significant portion of the population to seek assistance for mental health issues. Research by (Arafat et al., 2021) emphasises how telemedicine enhances mental health service accessibility while addressing the stigma associated with seeking help. Telemedicine platforms like Halodoc provide clients a secure space to anonymise their concerns, eliminating the fear of judgment or disclosure of their true identities.

Psychologists' online communication styles significantly impact their interactions with clients, fostering friendliness, reassurance, and warmth while promoting a positive outlook among clients. Effective communication also facilitates meaningful exchanges, informed decision-making, and the identification of suitable solutions (Liansyah & Kurniawan, 2015). To

provide optimal mental health services, psychologists must excel in online communication.

Halodoc offers live chat and scheduled consultations for individuals seeking mental health guidance. With people spending more time on digital devices, telemedicine has become a convenient solution for healthcare needs.

It allows individuals to access mental health services from the comfort of their homes, overcoming the challenges of in-person consultations. The scarcity of psychologists, primarily in urban areas, presents a significant challenge in Indonesia. With around 2,808 clinical psychologists for a population of approximately 270 million, the psychologist-to-population ratio falls far short of WHO recommendations (IPK Indonesia, 2022). Telemedicine services bridge this gap, enabling remote and underserved regions to access online consultations with psychologists.

The COVID-19 pandemic has driven a significant rise in online health

consultations, particularly for mental health support: Halodoc, part of the Indonesian Telemedicine Alliance under PT. Media Dokter Investama (M-Healthcare) initially focused on online doctor consultations in 2016. However, since 2020, they have expanded to provide mental health services. Halodoc allows users to consult with psychologists and mental health professionals through their platform, eliminating the need for in-person visits to healthcare facilities. Their app offers a wide range of mental health resources, including articles, tips, and guidance, making it a convenient and comprehensive resource for mental health support.

According to a survey conducted by Populix in September 2022, as shown in Figure 1, involving 1,005 respondents nationwide in Indonesia, Halodoc has emerged as the predominant telemedicine service, garnering a notable 79% utilisation rate for addressing mental health concerns. The top 9 applications providing psychological consultation

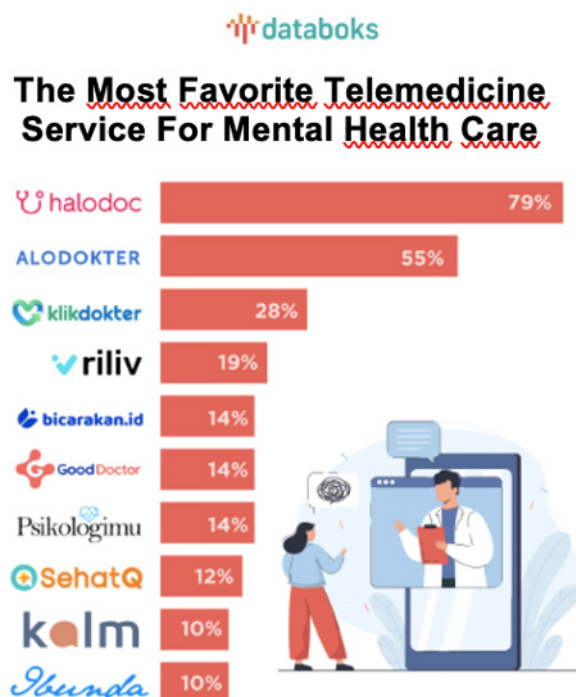


FIGURE 1. Most Frequently Used Mental Health Service Applications by Indonesian Population in 2022 (Source: Populix, 2022)

services in 2022 are also shown in Figure 1. The principal motivations underlying the preference for this telemedicine platform include convenient accessibility, affordability, guaranteed privacy, provision of practical solutions, and alignment with technological trends. This service empowers individuals to seamlessly consult at their convenience from any location by utilising the application on their electronic devices. Furthermore, it aids in identifying optimal resolutions for mental health issues (Annur, 2020).

A psychologist is a trained expert specialising in psychology, focusing on mental conditions, cognitive processes, perception, emotions, social dynamics, and individual behaviour. This article focuses on Clinical Psychologists. These professionals harness their extensive psychological knowledge and skills to assist individuals in navigating and surmounting their challenges (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023).

Clinical Psychologists at Halodoc have experienced professionals in clinical psychology, providing online counselling and therapy for various mental health issues, including stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and emotional challenges. In psychology, clients seek guidance for their psychological struggles, actively participating in their healing process while maintaining self-awareness. (Mulawarman & Munawaroh, 2016).

Communication is crucial in mental health services, particularly in telemedicine. Therapeutic communication involves establishing an emotional connection and collaboration to understand and explore the client's emotions without judgment, even in a virtual setting (Townsend & Morgan, 2017). This form of communication is a critical factor in mental health recovery and treatment. The study investigates

the communication dynamics within Halodoc's mental health services and the motivations of psychologists and clients for choosing this platform.

Therapeutic communication in telemedicine is intricately linked to the progression of technology, particularly the emergence of new media. This evolution includes various digital communication devices that facilitate virtual interactions, eliminating the need for face-to-face contact by utilising the Internet. (McQuail, 2011)

The Halodoc telemedicine platform provides online consultations through a mobile application accessible on the Play Store and App Store. Both clinical psychologists and clients can avail themselves of mental health services through mobile applications. While face-to-face consultations offer immediate message responses, online consultations may encounter disruptions contingent on internet stability, such as delayed or interrupted messages. Research highlights psychologists' concerns about these challenges, with potential inadequacies in communication tools and home distractions hindering the consultation process (Uscher-Pines et al., 2020)

In practical terms, online consultations require psychologists to comprehend clients' issues without physical interactions, relying solely on verbal communication. The absence of nonverbal cues necessitates psychologists interpreting clients' messages and comprehending limited written expressions. Since information is conveyed exclusively through text, psychologists must read messages carefully and attentively. The evolving landscape of telemedicine poses challenges and considerations in maintaining effective therapeutic communication, highlighting the need for ongoing adaptation and improvements in the digital realm of mental health services.

METHOD

This study uses a constructivist approach to explore therapeutic communication dynamics between psychologists and clients via the Halodoc application in mental health services. Embracing diverse individual meanings, this approach encourages researchers to understand participants' experiences and perceptions regarding telemedicine applications. Employing a qualitative approach grounded in the constructivist paradigm, the study delves into users' experiences with the telemedicine application in mental health services. It utilises a case study methodology, focusing on the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Data is gathered through interviews, observations, and interpreting symbols. Additionally, a multisource approach is adopted, collecting data from interviews with psychologists and clients alongside observations of Halodoc applications usage (John et al. Creswell, 2018). This approach enables a comprehensive understanding and facilitates scrutiny of the phenomenon from multiple perspectives.

In this study, the triangulation data collection technique was employed. This technique combines multiple preexisting data sources, encompassing observations, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis is inductive, and data reduction techniques are applied to obtain conclusions (Sugiyono & Puji Lestari, 2021, p. 56). Triangulation aims to garner insights from various sources, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Within this research, the participants comprised three practising psychologists on Halodoc, three clients, and two clients' families who act as caregivers. Creswell notes that the number of participants in qualitative research varies based on research objectives and

the target population's characteristics. However, for qualitative studies utilising interview methods, Creswell suggests an optimal number of participants between 3 and 10 individuals (John et al. Creswell, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In healthcare, therapeutic communication between psychologists and clients is crucial for facilitating healing. This form of communication involves purposeful interactions to exchange meaningful messages between psychologists and clients. It encompasses verbal and nonverbal exchanges, providing psychological, emotional, and physical support while building trust (Wahyuningsih, 2021).

The emergence of telemedicine, exemplified by platforms like Halodoc, has revolutionised communication between psychologists and clients. In the digital sphere, interpersonal communication occurs through interactive message exchanges within virtual environments (Siregar, 2021). Successful interpersonal communication relies on various skills such as verbal fluency, politeness, empathy, and other competencies. It significantly influences the attitudes of all parties involved, aligning with the personal experiences of clients (Roudhi & Zakiah, 2020).

"I have experience with different psychologists during virtual consultations. It turns out that each psychologist has a different communication style."

(Client DS, interview, April 1, 2023)

Client DS noted variations in communication styles among psychologists during virtual consultations. The psychologist adopted a formal and structured approach in the initial session, providing clear guidance. Communication

was direct and focused. However, in a subsequent session with a different psychologist, the experience was more relaxed and informal. This psychologist displayed empathy and openness, creating a comfortable environment for clients to discuss personal issues. This observation resonates with insights from Psychologist NA:

“I always try to find the root of the problem, but not all issues can be resolved online. However, I strive to ensure that the client knows what steps to take next and at least has some alternative solutions. Halodoc is available 24 hours, right? It is expected to provide easier and more flexible access for the community.”
(Psychologist NA, Interview, April 1, 2023)

Psychologists NA emphasised their commitment to uncovering the root causes of various issues and empowering clients to make informed decisions. They acknowledged that online platforms might not have solutions for every challenge. Halodoc’s 24/7 availability aligns with its goal of enhancing community accessibility and flexibility.

These differing communication styles among psychologists reflect their unique approaches to virtual counselling, influenced by their backgrounds and experiences. The study highlights the importance of selecting a psychologist based on personal needs, preferences, experience, compatibility, and communication skills in virtual consultations. In the mental health telemedicine on the Halodoc application, the communication models utilised are as follows; (1) The Informed Model: Psychologists offer treatment information, benefits, and risks, allowing clients to choose the most suitable approach, such as therapy options through Halodoc. (2) The Shared Model: Psychologists

and clients collaborate on treatment decisions, discussing mental health issues and engaging in Q&A sessions on the Halodoc app to consider various factors and client comfort during treatment. (Mulyana, 2016b).

Telemedicine services within the Halodoc application indirectly underscore the significance of the interpersonal communication model. Employing an interpersonal communication approach with persuasive elements offers the advantage of nurturing robust relationships between psychologists and clients. The pivotal aspect of successful healing via telemedicine services lies in the interactions between communicators and recipients. When both parties share a mutual interpretation of a message, they foster reciprocal comprehension. Effective interpersonal communication constitutes a form of interaction crafted through linguistic and psychological methodologies (Husain, 2020, p. 128).

In this service, interpersonal communication occurs through a distinct medium, specifically telemedicine. Interpersonal communication typically entails a direct approach in which communicators interact face-to-face, observing their interlocutors’ expressions, gestures, and linguistic styles. Figure 2 illustrates the model of interpersonal communication between Clients and Psychologists.

Figure 2 illustrates the communication process within telemedicine, influenced by two communication models: Shannon and Weaver’s Communication Model and the Circular Communication Model. Shannon and Weaver’s model emphasises precise message delivery, considering both the communicator and recipient’s roles in interpretation, but has limitations related to interference or noise (Anggriana, 2017). The Circular Communication Model, developed by Osgood and Schramm,

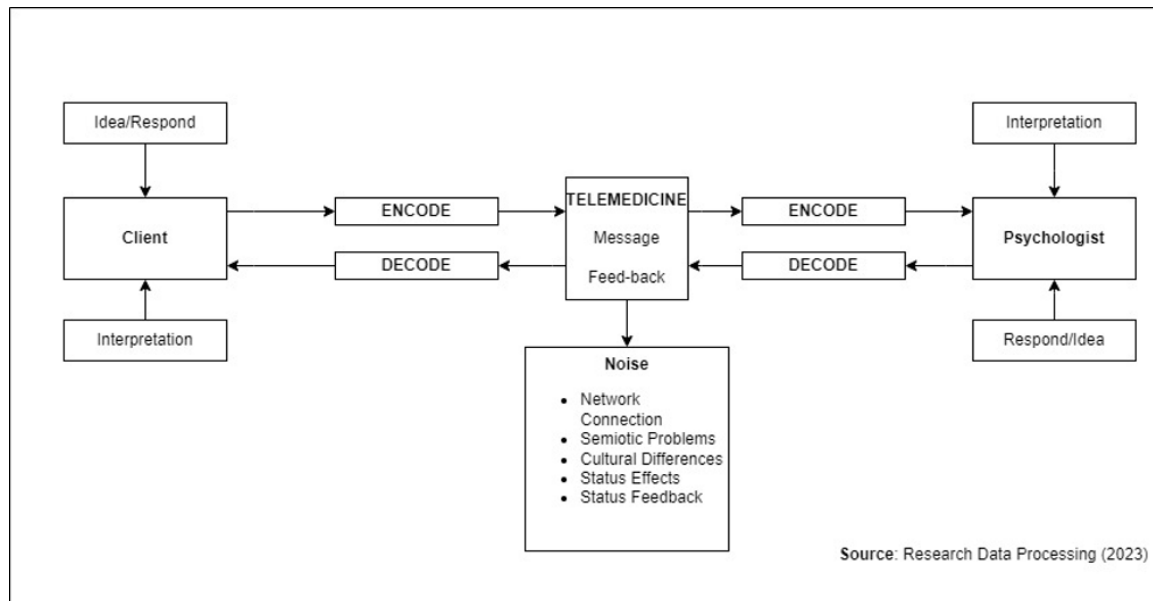


FIGURE 2. Communication Model of Telemedicine Services by Researcher
(Source: The data analysis was conducted by the researchers in 2023)

introduces the idea that communicators and recipients can interchangeably serve as the source and destination of messages, emphasising bidirectional communication (Muhammad et al., 2019).

Communication between psychologists and clients is paramount to ensuring service user satisfaction in telemedicine. This type of communication is categorised as health communication, where healthcare professionals serve as service providers, and clients and their families are the service recipients (Gunawan & Isnaini, 2021). Within telemedicine, health communication aims to convey information while maintaining relationships, ensuring that clients continue to benefit from the provider’s services and enhancing its positive impact

The model involves clients utilising the telemedicine service in the Halodoc application. As communicators or communicators, clients initiate the communication process by sending messages to registered psychologists through the application. This process involves message encoding, the initial step in communication construction. Encoding is a transmission process that

transforms ideas into symbols, such as calls or messages (Anisah et al., 2022). Telemedicine services are constrained to voice and text messages, which can limit the interpretability of messages conveyed to both communicators and communicators.

Within the telemedicine medium, communication between communicators and communication poses various barriers (noise). These barriers encompass the devices used, individual network connectivity, cultural differences, status effects, and feedback status. As messages enter the telemedicine medium, they undergo processing before reaching the communicator, who, in this case, is a psychologist.

The psychologist deciphers the message conveyed by the communicator (client). This process is called message decoding, which entails translating ideas represented by symbols into meaningful content (Djawad, 2016). The received message is decoded by a psychologist in textual form or through vocal communication. A psychologist strives to interpret the message conveyed by the client. In this scenario, the psychologist

cannot ascertain the client's culture, background, situation, or conditions. The psychologist's role is limited to analysing, evaluating, and responding to the message conveyed by the client to ensure the client's comprehension. In online services, communicators and communicators must fully understand the symbolic messages. Symbolic interactions are particularly pertinent in pandemic and post-pandemic situations. After interpreting the message, the psychologist responded to the partner.

The psychologist's role shifts to the communicator when responding to a message. The message enters the telemedicine medium (online health service), and in this phase, the medium manages the message while considering the obstacles that may arise, as shown in Figure 2. Subsequently, the client interprets the message again, leading to a response. Hence, therapeutic communication can facilitate the healing process when the client and the psychologist have a well-established feedback loop. The media employed by online health services represents an adaptation to changes in the media.

The interpersonal communication model employed by a psychologist and a client follows a distinctive persuasive pattern. In this case, the client takes on the role of the communicator, while the psychologist becomes the communicator, adapting to their communication partner. Therapeutic communication is a form of health communication tailored to the healing process. The telemedicine medium conveys messages as "text" symbols to the communicator. As a result, feedback is provided that aligns with the experiential realm of the communicator, who is grappling with mental health challenges.

The Benefits of Therapeutic Communication in Telemedicine Services

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, there has been a significant increase in mental health issues in Indonesia, affecting 52% of the population, and this problem has continued into the post-pandemic period. The pandemic has driven healthcare institutions to use online platforms to reach out to people, leading to a digital lifestyle with increased reliance on the internet and mobile devices. This digital shift, especially among children and adolescents, has been linked to higher vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and behavioural disorders (Mazia, 2020). Additionally, a lack of physical activity has contributed to increased levels of depression and anxiety.

Users can choose psychologists who best match their needs and preferences, offering flexibility in mental health service selection. Figure 3 displays available online psychologists with detailed profiles, including their expertise, work experience, offline practice location, educational background, and user ratings.

Since 2020, including mental health services in Halodoc has addressed healthcare accessibility issues, especially during restricted physical access to healthcare facilities. This addition has been crucial during times like the COVID-19 pandemic when in-person healthcare options were limited. Telemedicine through Halodoc enables individuals to access mental health support without geographical or temporal constraints. Users can choose psychologists based on various criteria, such as gender, age, experience, specialisation, and ratings.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) used for healthcare, particularly online health consultations, aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Halodoc's telemedicine services adapt to traditional face-to-face healthcare interactions, allowing for the remote delivery of mental health services. This approach addresses the

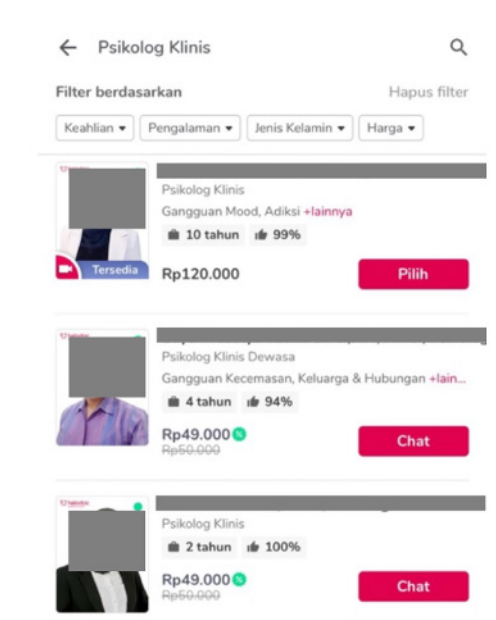


FIGURE 3. Halodoc Display of Mental Health Services
(Source: Halodoc, 2023)

challenge of limited healthcare facilities in Indonesia, especially in remote areas, by expanding the reach of healthcare professionals to provide mental health support to individuals who previously faced geographical barriers.

Through telemedicine, psychologists can reach clients in their immediate vicinity and remote locations, enhancing the accessibility of mental health services and bridging geographical gaps. The insights drawn from interviews with Clients GA align with this perspective:

“So, the ease of online access for consultations becomes a solution in such situations. Although the offline experience feels more substantial in the end, consulting online can be done first before coming directly, especially when a considerable distance is involved.”

(Client GA, Interview April 1, 2023).

Telemedicine offers convenient access to healthcare services, especially when individuals face geographical barriers. It serves as an initial step before

opting for in-person appointments. Telemedicine eliminates the need for waiting in queues, providing on-demand access to services. While some still prefer face-to-face consultations, telemedicine is vital for urgent cases requiring prompt treatment. It aligns with the modern lifestyle, where internet usage is prevalent, allowing people to access mental health support from their homes. Telemedicine enables family caregivers to communicate with mental health professionals, receive guidance and contribute to their loved one’s well-being. Seeking expert advice prevents potential issues associated with self-diagnosis, which can be inaccurate, harmful, and lead to misconceptions about mental health conditions. (Sadida, 2021).

In addition to overcoming geographical barriers, telemedicine apps can reduce the stigma associated with mental health treatment. Through telemedicine, individuals can access mental health services anonymously from their homes without concerns about identification or facing stigmatisation from their social environment. Telemedicine offers enhanced privacy,

mitigating the apprehension of seeking mental health assistance. By utilising secure communication channels, individuals can engage with mental health professionals, share their experiences, and seek answers without fearing being judged or discriminated against. Therefore, telemedicine applications play a significant role in diminishing the stigma surrounding mental health and motivating individuals to seek and receive the necessary care without being hindered by societal factors.

Telemedicine services constitute digital health service communications. Digital communication is a person-centred communication process employing a computer or mobile phone device connected to the internet to transmit and receive messages or exchange information through a platform (Priyono, 2022). Digital communication does not replace direct interaction but serves as an alternative for conducting health consultations, mainly when hindered by distance and time limitations.

The telemedicine service provided by the Halodoc application for mental health treatment intensifies the demand for psychologists in Indonesia. Unlike medical professionals, who are more widely accessible, the number of psychologists is smaller and often concentrated in specific areas. The limited availability, geographical distances, and dispersion of the psychology profession make it challenging to conduct face-to-face consultations, which require considerable effort and resources. The scarcity of human resources with expertise in psychology can pose difficulties for individuals needing such services. This resonates with what Psychologist DA expressed:

“The first advantage is that clients do not need to spend much time travelling to a psychologist’s office, which can be a constraint offline,

especially when distance is a factor. In such cases, it can be quite draining. The second advantage is that when conducting sessions online, we can reach clients from various regions, meaning clients don’t have to be from the same area as the psychologist’s office” (Interview with Psychologist DA, April 1, 2023).

Online mental health consultations through platforms like Halodoc offer several advantages. Firstly, they save clients a significant amount of time as they eliminate the need for physical visits to a psychologist’s office, which is particularly beneficial when geographical constraints are a factor. Such limitations can be physically and mentally taxing. Secondly, these online services extend their reach, allowing clients from various regions, even beyond their immediate vicinity, to access mental health consultations. In the past, finding a nearby psychologist could be more challenging than locating a medical doctor, especially in regions with a shortage of accessible psychologists due to limited human resources.

As mentioned in the insights from psychologist DA, Halodoc’s telemedicine service simplifies the process of accessing healthcare facilities, especially for addressing mental health issues. The increased reliance on internet connectivity during and after the pandemic has streamlined accessibility to healthcare services, including mental health support. This shift reflects the transition towards Society 5.0, where individuals, objects, and systems are interconnected through the internet, which significantly enhances human capabilities and connectivity. (Kurniawan & Andiyan, 2021). This transformation has a positive impact and enhances the effectiveness of health facility services, especially in cases where human resources are scarce within

psychology.

The telemedicine services provided by the Halodoc application have contributed to the enhancement of health facilities, particularly in addressing mental health issues. Although the general population often trivialises mental health issues, they can profoundly impact individual well-being. Through integrating humans with telemedicine services, numerous benefits are realised, including the reduction of physical distance, spatial limitations, and time constraints during consultations. These services can serve as initial interventions for mental health treatment.

Barriers to Therapeutic Communication in Telemedicine Services

Face-to-face consultations offer the advantage of direct, barrier-free communication, which is sometimes hindered in virtual interactions. In online mental health consultations, psychologists face challenges, including limited time for each session, in Halodoc restricted to 45-60 minutes.

Virtual communication in mental health consultations is not always seamless due to various obstacles. Internet network instability is a recurring issue, leading to delayed or interrupted messages and hindering effective therapeutic communication. Some psychologists have reservations about online methods due to these limitations. Moreover, the chosen communication medium may not be fully supportive, and distractions in a less conducive home environment can further impact the quality of interaction (Uscher-Pines et al., 2020). In the Halodoc application, there is a maximum time limit for conducting a consultation, as stated by Psychologist NA:

“The psychologist has a maximum response time of 2 minutes for each incoming chat, while the client has a waiting time of 10

minutes to respond after receiving a reply from the psychologist. If no chat is incoming from the client, the consultation session will automatically end.”

(Psychologist NA, Interview April 1, 2023)

Psychologists adhere to a maximum response time of 2 minutes for each incoming chat, while clients are given a waiting period of 10 minutes to formulate their response after receiving feedback from the psychologist. The consultation session will automatically conclude if the client initiates no further communication. Time limitations in responding to client chats pose a challenge for psychologists in online consultations, as exceeding the maximum time limit can decrease the psychologist's rating. This situation often leaves psychologists concerned that their replies may be ineffective and that they might not have enough time to analyse the client's concerns thoroughly. This can impede the therapeutic process, as psychologists require more time to comprehensively understand the client's issues, provide informative responses in easily comprehensible language, and present the best implementable solutions. The client also needs sufficient time to give a detailed description of the problem.

During a consultation conducted through the Halodoc telemedicine service application, a psychologist evaluates the communicator's (client) argument. Argumentation presents a viewpoint, supporting one's perspective and effectively persuading the communication counterpart (Littlejohn S. W & Foss, 2010). The type of argumentation conveyed by the communicator (client) influences the interpretation of the message by the communicator (psychologist), as the argumentation is often in the form of a non-verbal message or symbol. Thus, in understanding a context, a thorough

understanding is essential to ensure that feedback to the communicator (client) aligns with the perception (mutual understanding).

In face-to-face consultations, psychologists can gather insights and information from clients through spoken words and nonverbal elements like gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, voice tone, and touch. Besides conveying responses in clear language, psychologists can reinforce their message through nonverbal cues to enhance client trust and confidence. However, in online consultations, nonverbal cues are often limited or absent, posing a challenge for psychologists to establish emotional connections and therapeutic rapport with clients. The utilisation of the Halodoc application, particularly in managing Mental Health, encounters obstacles, particularly among clients, as indicated by the outcomes of interviews with Client RY:

“Language style, because translating through words can sometimes be confusing, right? It is different when we meet in person, as we can be more expressive. Here on Halodoc, we cannot express our emotions as we would if we met in person. For example, we cannot just cry or get emotional in the same way as we can with face-to-face interactions. In telemedicine, we are limited to words.”

(Client RY Interview, April 1, 2023).

The intricacies of language translation often introduce ambiguity, particularly in textual communication, unlike the expressive nature of face-to-face interactions. Within the context of Halodoc’s telemedicine platform, the ability to convey emotions is constrained, as direct expressions such as shedding tears or emotional gestures

are limited by the medium’s reliance on textual communication. Based on the outcomes of the interviews with YR, both psychologists and clients play a significant role in building effective communication between communicators and communicatees within the mental health healing process. Effective communication built upon this foundation can positively impact expediting the client’s healing process. A case study involving the usage of the Halodoc application revealed obstacles faced by two informants who had to adapt to the conveyed language style. Not all messages conveyed can be immediately understood to achieve the same understanding (mutual understanding). In the translation, each individual possesses abilities and capacities that cannot be standardised.

In online communication, individuals cannot perceive direct responses through non-verbal symbolic communication from the two informants. They can only infer each other’s intentions from the symbols provided by the communicator and communicate. Telemedicine services encounter challenges in direct treatment, particularly when clients are experiencing severe mental distress that requires immediate intervention. Psychologists face limitations in terms of space and time, preventing them from directly conducting psychotherapeutic treatments. Aligning with the statement of Psychologist DA, online services face obstacles, namely:

“For instance, in clinical cases, sometimes I don’t delve into the details due to time constraints and the need for additional assessment. This is what I mentioned earlier, and it becomes a limitation when conducting sessions online. There are some issues where we feel that in-person psychotherapy is needed, but it’s difficult to handle

those online.” (Psychologist DA, interview, April 1, 2023).

Clinical scenarios sometimes require prioritised evaluations due to time constraints and the need for additional assessments. As previously mentioned, this limitation presents a challenge during online consultations. Certain situations arise that seem to necessitate in-person psychotherapy, yet managing this aspect through online platforms becomes intricate. Communication barriers encountered by psychologists and clients encompass direct handling actions. Therapeutic communication aims to facilitate the healing process involving service providers and clients. In establishing a therapeutic communication relationship, various stages must be developed.

Building an effective communication relationship between a psychologist and a client involves several stages, as outlined in the Textbook of Psychiatry, including the stages presented by Hildegard E. Peplau. These stages introduce methods for cultivating client and therapist relationships, beginning with client orientation, identifying client problems, exploring issues, and ultimately working toward resolution to find solutions for the challenges faced by clients (Dulwahab et al., 2020).

At the client’s orientation stage, psychologists can solely identify issues based on messages conveyed by clients. During this orientation, symbolic interaction comes into play. Symbolic interaction refers to human activities involving communicating or exchanging symbols carrying meaning (Mulyana, 2006). Symbolic interactions conducted through telemedicine services can be effective when supported by reliable and fast communication connections and reciprocal frequencies. However, inadequacies in the facilities of the

communicator and communicant can become obstacles, leading to disruptions (noise).

Therapeutic communication encounters obstacles (noise) when utilising the Halodoc Application as a medium for addressing mental health issues. This is particularly evident in interpreting conveyed messages, as the lack of face-to-face interaction makes it difficult to perceive emotions, gestures, facial expressions, and other symbolic communication forms. The presented results stem from the stages of therapeutic communication using symbolic interpretation through online media. However, these tests are restricted to addressing anxiety, depression, and stress disorders. Other more complex issues necessitate direct communication or physical interaction. The utility of telemedicine services remains confined to the features provided by the Halodoc application. It is contingent on the human resources’ capabilities, namely the psychologist and the client.

The telemedicine service provided by the Halodoc application, especially for mental health treatment, encounters challenges concerning the preparedness of human resources and facilities, especially the quality of the internet network. Challenges encountered in using the Halodoc telemedicine service are still influenced by internet connectivity and the time frame for responding to consultation messages. Given that psychologists are allotted only 2 minutes to reply, the time constraint is quite limited, impacting their ability to interpret the message content from the client. Delays in sending responses can also affect a psychologist’s rating within the Halodoc application.

The challenge faced in telemedicine services lies with the psychologists themselves. When interpreting written communication, the focus rests on achieving reciprocity (feedback).

Suppose the psychologist's response does not align with the client's expectations. In that case, there is a risk that the client might perceive the response as originating from a robot or automated system rather than a professional psychologist. Psychologists must operate within time constraints and swiftly interpret messages to communicate effectively.

Benefits of Therapeutic Communication in Telemedicine Services

The incorporation of telemedicine through the Halodoc application for mental health Telemedicine, as a form of mental health treatment, adapts to the use of Communication and Information Technology (ICT). It provides essential mental health support, especially for clients experiencing anxiety who may have difficulty accessing in-person services. Therapeutic communication is crucial in alleviating the client's burden of illness. Psychologists aim to build trust and address anxiety-related concerns through interpersonal communication, ultimately promoting a sense of calmness for the client. Therapeutic communication carries specific goals and provides significant benefits, facilitating the positive and adaptive development of the client's personality as they progress and mature. These encompass: (1) self-realisation, self-acceptance, and elevated self-esteem. (2) proficiency in building interpersonal relationships and cultivating interdependence with others. (3) enhanced functional capacity and the ability to fulfil needs while accomplishing attainable objectives. (4) a distinct sense of personal identity and an amplified level of self-integrity.

Incorporating therapeutic communication within telemedicine services addresses immediate concerns and nurtures broader personal and psychological growth, enhancing overall well-being and development (Siregar,

2021). Telemedicine services provided by Halodoc focus on therapeutic communication, even in the context of online interactions. The process involves acknowledging the client's concerns, building interpersonal relationships, boosting their self-confidence, and guiding them to recognise their situation and work towards self-improvement.

This approach benefits Halodoc clients by allowing them to openly express their concerns, particularly issues like anxiety, over the phone. Online consultations are tailored for digital platforms and offer convenience and privacy for those seeking help while prioritising confidentiality. Psychologists working with Halodoc maintain their professionalism and competence in virtual consultations, helping clients clarify their emotions, alleviate burdens, and take proactive steps toward improving their situation, assuming the client is open to necessary changes (Wahyuningsih, 2021). In line with the results of the interview with Psychologist NA:

“Okay, so a client asked me whether to take a flight tomorrow because they wanted to fly but were anxious and confused. They consulted me in the evening; their flight was the next morning, so they needed an answer on the same day. So, telemedicine is helpful for clients who need quick answers or reassurance.”

(Psychologist NA, interview April 1, 2023)

Telemedicine plays a crucial role in swiftly addressing clients' needs and uncertainties, as exemplified in a recent case involving a client's anxiety about air travel. Psychologist NA's ability to provide rapid solutions highlights the effectiveness of telemedicine in delivering timely reassurance and guidance. Therapeutic communication within

telemedicine services offers significant benefits, particularly for individuals requiring immediate healthcare intervention. Halodoc's telemedicine services demonstrate professionalism and have become increasingly important, especially given the rise in mental health disorders like anxiety, depression, and stress, which have persisted beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

The integration of telemedicine represents an adaptive measure with favourable outcomes in healthcare provision, and hospitals and clinics are increasingly embracing online services. It is important to note that telemedicine is a supplementary method for initial medical assistance rather than a complete replacement for in-person communication. While some limitations exist, ongoing adaptation and development are expected to address these issues and enhance functionality over time.

CONCLUSION

In telemedicine services, represented by platforms like Halodoc, effective health communication plays a pivotal role in establishing therapeutic connections between psychologists and clients. Despite the significant advantages of expanding healthcare accessibility, notable hurdles, such as technical constraints and limitations in virtual engagement, persist.

To address these challenges, research efforts can focus on developing improved online therapeutic communication frameworks tailored to the digital environment while integrating adaptations of traditional communication methods. Additionally, psychologists and healthcare practitioners must undergo appropriate training to optimise telemedicine platforms and refine their communication skills for fostering online therapeutic relationships.

To provide practical solutions,

personalised strategies in online communication are recommended, along with extending the duration of consultation sessions and facilitating continuous training for psychologists. Consequently, telemedicine services in mental health can evolve to become more adept and responsive to clients' needs.

In conclusion, through a comprehensive and integrative approach spanning theoretical, practical, and technical aspects, telemedicine platforms like Halodoc can continue to advance, offering broader healthcare accessibility while maintaining standards of communication quality and therapeutic rapport between psychologists and clients.

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