Identification of counselor mind process on online counseling

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Internal counselor competence refers to the metacognition skills to manage all their mental experiences and internal conditions. These are in the form of mind skills. In particular, in the industrial revolution 4.0 and the COVID-19 pandemic situation, online counselors face many unpredictable and unfamiliar conditions. This study aims to identify the state level of the counselor's mind skills during online counseling sessions. This research method uses survey research methods of 181 online counselors in various regions in Indonesia. A mind skills journal is the instrument used for data collection to assess the four levels of counselor metacognition (reflective, strategic, aware, and tacit). The analysis used basic statistics and graphs. The results showed the overall score of the mind skills level was 78.166%, which was in the strategic use level. The mind skills contribution can be counselor self-regulation, counselor assessment, verbalization, information visualization description, causal analysis, and predictive planning. Suggestions based on research results are the need for an alternative to improve mind skills through reflective learning of prospective counselors and reflective supervision activities of counselors in the field.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The counselor's internal competence is related to the counselor's skills to manage all their internal processes during the counseling process. This competence also controls their internal framework for every mental state, and psychological and physical sensation during the counseling process [1]. This process involves the skills to uncover, process, manage, and use information about the counselee, choose appropriate therapeutic techniques, and build therapeutic situations and relationships [2]. More fundamentally, the use of the counselor's cognitive skills impacts the process of creating a combination of conditions revealed by the counselee and using it in diagnostic analysis to make decisions for further treatment [3]. The thought process becomes essential to engage and focus intensely on the counselee's well-being and maximizes their capacity to deal with the counselee's dysfunctional behavior. This condition is a form of counselor involvement in the complexity of their cognitive aspect [4], [5].

The complex thinking process of all internal experiences requires good metacognitive skills from a counselor. Implementing counselor metacognition in the counseling process will lead to the counselor's role as a listener, reflector, facilitator, and recipient of information to direct therapeutic techniques [6]. At this point, the role of metacognition encourages counselors to manage self-readiness, diagnose, design counseling, and direct each session in the process. The counselor's metacognition can also anticipate obstacles during the counseling process, thereby increasing the chances of successful counseling [7].

On the other hand, the counselor's metacognition plays a role in managing information resources related to the counselee through self-awareness and internal control [8]–[10]. Through these skills, counselors can control their thought processes and implement them in their behavior and emotions. The success of this process can increase the adjustment and positive motivation of counselors so that they can be actively involved and participate during the counseling process [11].

The rationale for this research is based on metacognition as the counselor's internal framework, specifically as a form of internal counselor competence. In a more operational form, the counselor's metacognition refers to the structure of mind skills that has been proposed by Nelson-Jones [12], [13]. The adaptive mind skills require the regulation of the metacognition level. In addition, the mind skills framework also plays a different role in placing the counselor's thinking process consistently to be active and wholly and entirely involved in the counseling process [14]. Mind skills are manifested in six forms, namely rules, perceptions, self-talk, visual images, explanations, and expectations [12], [13]. Furthermore, mind skills as a counselor's metacognition also play a role in alleviating and avoiding obstacles to the counseling process, especially in distortions and cognitive disorders experienced by counselors. Symptoms are often experienced by clients when their minds become reflexive until finally trapped in the complexity of their thoughts [15]. An unprepared counselor can trigger these cognitive distortions, counselor expectations, and judgment that are unsupportive of online counseling settings and situations.

One of the unpredictable disturbance conditions is the online counseling setting which has unpredictable variables of device, network, environment, and electricity. These variables become increasingly erratic in the setting conditions of the students [16]–[18]. The counselor's competence in online counseling is not only based on counseling communication but also on managing the conditions of counseling prerequisites [19]. The counselor's metacognition has a much more significant role in dealing with these conditions.

The urgency of the counselor's mind skills, especially in online counseling settings, is increasing with the online learning conditions because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which shows some disturbances. The state of digital technology development in Indonesia is still evenly distributed, so it is not yet fully prepared to support online educational activities [20]. The problem of technological limitations to economic limitations to access technology is a common condition felt by various sectors in various regions in Indonesia [21]. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced face-to-face counseling settings to change to online counseling. The online counseling setting is also predicted to continue after the pandemic for new habits and the 4.0 industrial revolution [22]. Currently, recent studies related to online counseling are still focused on developing the models and media. However, studies on the factors influencing the success and effectiveness of online counseling have not been widely discussed. This research identifies one of the factors influencing the effectiveness of online counseling, especially the counselor's mind process influence on their online counseling performance. Therefore, the identification of the counselor's mind skills will be a form of evaluating the cognitive performance of counselors in Indonesia. This data can be used in planning follow-up efforts to increase online counseling for counselors.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this study is identification the mind skills of counselors in online counseling. Thus, this study uses a non-experimental quantitative research method with a survey design. The research survey design aims to reveal data samples that can represent and generalize data on population conditions [23]. The population in this study were online counselors in Indonesia, precisely in various educational cities in Indonesia, including Malang, Surabaya, Bandung, and Jakarta. It has an excellent academic atmosphere, supported by multiple good educational institutions. This research carried out the sample selection randomly in different cities in Indonesia. As a result, 181 online counselors became the research sample. The overall research sample has represented various levels of education ranging from junior high school, senior high school, vocational high school, boarding school, and higher education. Furthermore, research samples also have a variety of professional experiences ranging from beginner counselors to expert counselors.

The instrument used in this research is a mind skills journal. The mind skills journal is an open questionnaire consisting of 15 items. The open-questionnaire items are based on six forms of counselor mind skills which refer to the mind skills construct proposed by Nelson-Jones [13]. The development of the mind skills journal has been through instrument testing to see the validity of the items and the reliability of the open questionnaire. As a result, each of the 15 mind skills journal items showed a form of significance at the 0.05 level through the product-moment test. While the reliability test through Cronbach's alpha also shows high reliability at 0.859 of the coefficients. All items in the form of descriptions are related to the thoughts that arise and managing thoughts during the online counseling process. The respondent fills out the mind skills journal to describe their internal experience during the online counseling process. The mind skills

journal has four rating scores for each item, with a maximum score of 80 points. The score is based on four levels of metacognition [24], namely i) Reflective Use (4-point); ii) Strategic Use (3-point); iii) Aware Use has two levels (2 and 1-point); and iv) Tacit Use (0-point). The interpretation of the instrument refers to the rubric in Table 1. The following mind skills journal scoring process is counting and tabulating the respondent group. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate the mean and percentage.

Table 1. Metacognition level percentage description

Metacognition level	Item score	Score percentage
Reflective use	4	80-100%
Strategic use	3	60-80%
Aware use	1-2	20-60%
Tacit use	0	0-20%

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Description of respondent's overall mind skills level

The research data as a whole describes the overall achievement of respondents for each form of mind skill. Each form of mind skills data is presented in the final calculation of the percentage. Table 2 shows the average score of mind skills at 78.166%. This result shows the minimum value is 75.698%. Based on the overall data, the counselor's metacognition level is at strategic use.

Mind skills become internal condition management skills to help counselor performance. Counselors can be more responsive and reflective of what is going on in their minds and mental experiences. The internal condition is related to theoretical mastery and counselor experience in finding solutions to any disturbances during the online counseling process. Furthermore, the counselor can choose the point of view of the counselee's problem, the counseling technique used, to the solution to overcome the obstacles to his performance during the online counseling session. The disturbed internal state of the counselor can reduce the effectiveness of online counseling, cause the breakup of the counseling relationship, and even lead to early termination [25], [26]. Management of internal conditions through mind skills is an alternative for counselors to prevent, find, and overcome mental distortions experienced by counselors.

Table 2. Description of overall online counselor mind skills

Mind skills form	Percentages	Metacognition level
Rules	75.698%	Strategic use
Perception	80.307%	Reflective use
Self-talk	82.612%	Reflective use
Visual-images	78.422%	Strategic use
Explanation	79.620%	Strategic use
Expectation	78.166%	Strategic use

3.2. Description of every mind skills level

The following research data focuses on the study of the respective mind skills as shown in Figure 1. The first form is rules. The rules focus on portraying self-regulation in the counselor. This achievement is described in more detail in Figure 1 (a). The data shows that the counselor's score in the online counseling setting is seen in the score range of 70-80% at the Strategic Use level. Based on descriptive analysis, 138 counselors have developed internal regulations for setting readiness to carry out online counseling.

Rules work as self-regulated in counselors [27]. The rules have the same construct as Ellis's belief [28] and Beck's intermediate belief [29], [30]. Rules states or beliefs that are rigid, inflexible, and even do not have preferences can be a nuisance for counselors [31]. In the online counseling setting, the condition of network barriers until a connection is left behind is very likely to occur. Creating rules, regulations, or indoctrination of beliefs in counselors needs to be done with flexible and preferential criteria. Rules with these criteria can prevent unnecessary stress from occurring in the counselor's internal conditions. In addition, these adaptive rules can direct counselors more quickly and be responsive to alternative forms of solutions to external disturbances they experience [32]. In this condition, the failure to achieve the counselor's flexible self-regulation goal will not be a burden and stress for the counselor.

The mind skills perception focuses on the forms of assessment and assessment that the counselor presents. In more detail, these achievements are also shown in Figure 1 (b). The perceived level of the counselor in online counseling settings is seen in the score range of 70-80% and 80-90% at the level of Strategic Use and Reflective Use. Based on the descriptive analysis, 156 counselors focus on prudence in assessing each assessment objectively.

The counselor's perception will direct their thinking process towards assessing, judging, and labeling the counselee's self, problems, and the counseling situation [33]. These skills will support the counselor's role in providing unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding through appropriate judgments and assumptions [34], [35]. Furthermore, the counselor could be more congruent to the online counseling process [36], [37]. Online counseling settings have minimal direct interaction and they cannot convey non-verbal communication like face-to-face counseling. In addition, external disturbances (networks, devices, and environment) in online counseling require proper perception to support and strengthen communication. The mind skill self-talk focuses on the forms of internal dialogue and verbalization that arise in the counselor's mind. In more detail, these achievements are also presented in Figure 1 (c). The description of the self-talk data of online counselors shows the 70-80% and 90-100% score ranges at the level of Strategic Use and Reflective Use. Based on the descriptive analysis, 150 counselors focus on the negative to positive forms of counselor self-talk coping efforts.

Self-talk in mind skills has similar constructs to automatic thought [29] and inner dialogue [38] as the counselor's thoughts appear in verbal sentences in the counselor. Like dialogue with other people, self-talk can also have specific effects on a counselor's feelings, physiology, and decision-making. Negative dialogue processes in self-talk can take the form of inappropriate language selection to rumination [39]. If negative self-talk continues in the form of rumination, minor issues can become a snowball that magnifies the counselor's negative feelings [40]. This condition can affect the counselor's meaning of the dialogue process within themselves. Objectivity to this reality can lead to cognitive fusion within the counselor [15], [41]. Self-talk control requires a coping process reflective of the situation they are experiencing [42]. The metacognition process will provide awareness to the counselor on verbalized sentences in his self-talk. This awareness can support the counselor's decentering process in distinguishing the internal conditions and the realities that the counselors experience.

The mind skills visual-images focus on descriptions describing the information that appears in the counselor's mind. In more detail, these achievements are also presented in Figure 1 (d). Description of the data shows in the score range of 70-80% at the level of Strategic and Reflective Use. Based on the descriptive analysis, 145 counselors focused on the visual description of the situation stories conveyed by the counselee.

Mind skills visual-images relate to the counselor's internal process of depicting the counselor's visualization image. This image will help the counselor to simulate the information received by the counselor [43]. A deep understanding of information is the goal of visual image mind skills. The information visualization process requires complete and comprehensive forms of information. The image of the counselor often appears as a continuation of the internal counselor process, whether it is an image that is needed at the time or an unrelated image. The reflective coping strategy [42] will sort out the pictures-images required and appropriate by the counselor during the online counseling process.

The mind skills explanation focuses on analyzing the causes of causality in an objective manner that focuses on the counselor. In more detail, the data are also presented in Figure 1 (e). The description of the data shows in the range of 70-80% at the level of Strategic Use and Reflective Use. Based on descriptive analysis, 144 counselors focused on rationalizing communication techniques in the online counseling process. The process of explanation relates to analyzing causal relationships in every event and decision that the counselor has [44]. Mind skills explanation focuses on how counselors can objectively explain themselves as a form of self-reflection, self-introspection, and counselor responsibilities [45], [46]. In the concept of choice theory, every event in an individual's life results from choices made [47]. External and internal disturbances in the online counseling setting will place the counselor in a decision on attitude, up to the steps required during the counseling session. The counselor's exploratory skills will focus on the counselor and avoid the process of blaming oneself, others, and the situation. Thus, the explanation process can lead to alternative steps that counselors can take [48], [49].

The mind skill expectation focuses on planning and following up on realistic and predictive situations which are also presented in Figure 1 (f). The description of the data shows a score range of 70-80% at the level of Strategic Use and Reflective Use. Based on the descriptive analysis, 140 counselors focus on avoiding excessive expectations of the counselee, the counseling situation, and the counseling results.

Expectations place individuals in a predictive design for actual conditions that may occur [50]. The right expectations can support a counselor's unconditional positive regard before counseling until after counseling [51]. Furthermore, the counselor also works to engage the counselee in making long-term and short-term plans. Thus, it can increase the chances of success and effectiveness of the online counseling process. On other hand, barriers in online communication settings can impact the counselee's understanding of plans, monitoring counselors to unpredictable conditions [52]. The counselor's realistic expectations will give the counselor a more precise and realistic picture and predict the conditions [53]. In these conditions, the counselor also does not rule out the possibility of unexpected factors. This condition will increase the acceptance of counselors before counseling begins.
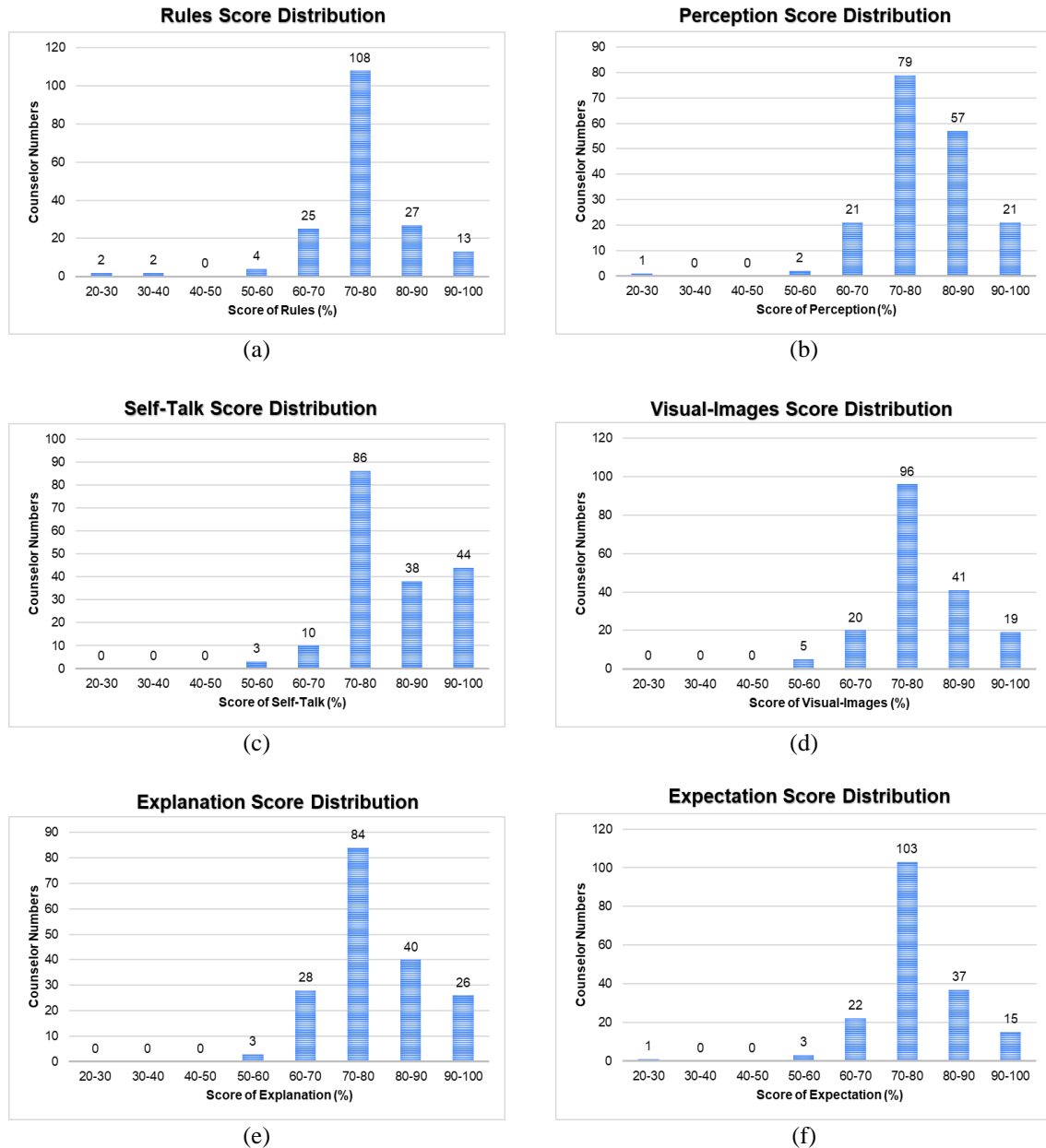
Figure 1. The score of mind skills distribution for (a) rules, (b) perception, (c) self-talk, (d) visual images, (e) explanation, and (f) expectation

Based on the overall data, some counselors still show a level of tacit-use metacognition. It means those respondents are not using any awareness of their cognition to manage their thoughts and mental experiences. Although a minor data, this condition shows possible obstacles and disturbances to managing the counselor's internal condition. This interpretation also follows the total reflective-use level of all respondents, an average of 34.80% for each mind skill. In other words, as many as 62.79% of respondents need to improve their internal condition management competence at a higher metacognitive level.

In general, each form of mind skill has its function in managing the counselor's internal condition. Mind skills provide an experience of awareness of the counselors' internal state, working these internal conditions so that they can use them in the online counseling process [14]. Mind skills require a high level of metacognition and reflective thinking in counselors [54]. At the level of metacognition, Reflective use is the level that counselors need to achieve. The education of prospective counselors and supervision of counselors is becoming increasingly important to improve the counselor's mind skills.

4. CONCLUSION

The identification of counselor mind skills shows how the internal competencies of counselors in online counseling. The result of mind skills identification shows that online counselors' overall score data are generally at the strategic use level. Mind skills demonstrate their urgency in online counseling settings. The online counseling setting has distortions from the internal counselor, the counseling setting, and the counselee's condition. Each mind skill has its own to manage the shape of the counselor's internal condition. Mind skills in: i) Rules are related to the regulation of counselor form; ii) Perceptions of the counselor's objective assessment; iii) Self-talk related to the counselor's internal dialogue; iv) Visual-images is related to visualizing the understanding of counselor counseling information; v) Explanation related to the cause-and-effect analysis in the counselor; vi) Expectations related to the counselor's realistic plans and predictions during the counseling session. The six mind skills are a metacognitive process that needs to be achieved at the reflective use level. Further suggestions are the need for an alternative to increasing the counselors' reflective thinking during the education of prospective counselors and supervisory activities of counselors in the field.

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