

Enhancing the Needs of Counselor's Communication Competencies in Assisting Child Victims of Sexual Violence

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Abstract

Children who are at risk of sexual assault often have limited knowledge and experience, which makes it challenging for them to understand the violence they have endured and how to react to it. This significantly hinders their ability to open up and talk about the traumatic experience. Such situations will make difficult the trauma-healing efforts carried out by counselors. The study aims to identify the competencies counselors must acquire for the counseling process to function smoothly and successfully. Data were collected through detailed interviews and observations involving 14 informants. Researchers also conducted literature reviews and administrative tasks to support their findings. Case studies were conducted to explore the role and significance of communication skills for counselors in the trauma recovery process for child victims of sexual assault. The findings revealed that counselors must not only have psychological knowledge or counseling competencies but also possess a variety of characteristics such as personality competence, professional competence, social competence, and, most importantly, communication competence.

Keywords: communication competencies, counselor, sexual violence, child trauma recovery

1. Introduction

Child sexual abuse is a global health issue (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986) that has enduring impacts on the mental, psychological, physical, and sexual health of survivors (Gewirtz-Meydan & Finkelhor, 2020). Children who come to child protection agencies have experienced various types of criminal acts, including being used for sexual stimulation, force children to engage in sexual activity, displaying pornography to children, having sexual contact or sexual intercourse with children, or using children to produce pornography. Often, the perpetrator to be a close person (Starkman, 2017).

Children, like adults, are social beings who rely on others in their life. However, because of their age, they still have a limited knowledge and awareness of reality. Criminal's frequently target children's vulnerability (Fattah, 1989), including for sexual harassment. Because of their limited information and experience, young children may not recognize that they are victims of a crime. Counselors face a problem in managing communication with children who have experienced sexual trauma. Unlike adults, children lack the understanding to seek treatment for their difficulties. Aside from parents, children were frequently invited to come to police station since the authorities need the information for the investigation of the incident. Consequently, the police collaborate with child protection authorities to further investigate crimes involving children.

Timely access to supportive and therapeutic resources for victims of child sexual abuse can reduce risks to the psychological well-being and mental health of children, adolescents, and adults (Alaggia et al., 2019). According to studies, victims of sexual assault in Indonesia are rarely willing to report and seek aid (Rumble et al., 2020). As a result, the counselor performs a crucial role in helping children get protection.

In reality, it is simpler for counselors to focus on how to cure their clients' trauma than on the trauma happening to them. Counselors who are educated to treat others sometimes ignore the need for self-care. Counselors provide and execute trauma recovery treatment for clients in their job, but often struggle to do the same for themselves (O'Halloran & Linton, 2000). Children who have suffered sexual assault are more likely to shut down. Counselors have to consider various

factors while interacting with their clients. Counselors working with vulnerable psychological states must understand the communication method employed in counseling.

Studies on sexual assault on children are more commonly undertaken to address the symptoms, effect, and methods of trauma recovery in children (Greenson et al., 2011) (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986) or the lack of disclosure of sexual assault instances (Watkins-Kagebein et al., 2019) (Deal et al., 2020). While earlier research on counseling has primarily concentrated on treatment or therapy intended to restore clients (Khosravi & Adibi, 2022), such as a finding from previous research stating that a counselor tends to use directive methods, this method leads clients toward addressing their problems (Fajri, 2017). However, research focusing on the value of counselor communication competence is still extremely limited, even though various studies indicate the necessity of communication competence in counselling (Duffy et al., 2004). Furthermore, only a few studies have been conducted to analyze counselor competences utilizing the principle of communication management.

This study emphasizes how the counselor's competence in all stages of communication management affects the trauma recovery of child victims of sexual assault. Competence is the foundation of people's traits, indicating a style of behaving or thinking, equalizing conditions, and providing long-term support (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). In general, competencies outline the actions individuals perform in the workplace across different levels and define the standards for each level. They specify the knowledge and skills needed to effectively execute tasks and responsibilities, meeting professional quality standards in their work (Zwell, 2000).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Communication Management

Communication management is critical in connecting communication science to the world of reality (Kuswarno, 2009). Communication management emerged from a necessity to bridge the gap between communication theorists and practitioners. Theorists have constraints in their ability to apply their knowledge. While communication practitioners face constraints in theoretical frameworks or communication studies. Kaye defines Communication Management as how individuals handle their communication processes in relation to others within a given communication environment or context. It pertains to how people manage their communication by generating meanings about their interactions with others across various contexts. They manage their words and behaviors in personal and professional situations (Kaye, 1994).

Communication management is associated with social interactions. There are occasions when we need to effectively position ourselves in specific situations and interact and collaborate with others without interfering with our own concerns. These are some of the reasons why you should have a professional attitude. Communication management occurs inside and across social systems. Communication management involves receiving, processing, storing, and disseminating information within social sub-systems such as individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and society.

According to Kaye, researchers employ perspectives that frame communication management to identify the significant aspects of the phenomena surrounding counselors' interactions with child victims of sexual assault that may be evaluated logically. (Kaye, 1994) identifies four perspectives: social impact, relationship, competence, and meaning.

This study will investigate the significance of communication management while counselors are supporting child victims of sexual assault. Kaye stated that four stages of communication management are necessary for successful communication, which counselors can apply when interacting with child victims of sexual trauma (Kaye, 1994).

3. Methods

Smith describes a case as a bounded system (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). In this context, the bounded system refers to the environment within the Women and Children Protection Center (WCPC), specifically focusing on the counselors' communication competence in handling cases involving child victims of sexual violence at the institution. Social research, particularly studies on human services like the one conducted by researchers, involves operational components, goals, and an intrinsic purpose, as case study research is conducted with thoroughness and depth on the case under examination.

Case study research utilizes various information sources to reveal the details of the case being investigated (Yin, 2013). For this study, researchers collected data from 14 informants, including counselors, child protection agency managers, legal experts, police officers, and social activists involved in social welfare. The counselors came from diverse fields such as psychology, theology, social work, and law. This diversity helped fulfill the requirements for case studies that incorporate multiple data sources. Researchers organized and coordinated all the collected data to obtain essential information for the case study. As a qualitative research method, case studies often take considerable time to complete and generate extensive data that requires meticulous organization. Researchers conducted this study over a significant period, more than two years from 2021 to 2023, to gather comprehensive and extensive data sets.

The researcher maintained the data set, aiming to analyse all features of the data collected from the child protection agency, which serves as the research site, concerning the case study research. The data search aimed to verify the completeness of the collected data in all its aspects. The researcher ensured that the data obtained were adequate for thorough processing and analysis. In this study, a case study was used to explore the nuances of human experience, specifically focusing on counselors' interactions with children who have experienced sexual assault. The study employed a process that develops a method for sharing insights within the framework of communication between counselors and child victims of sexual assault, considering multiple perspectives. This research has met the criteria for a case study, as outlined previously.

Case studies incorporate evidence or data from six sources: documents, archival recordings, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2013). After determining the case and research methodology, the researcher utilized interviews, observations, documentation, and a literature review as sources of evidence or data.

1) Interviews

The researchers carried out detailed interviews with 14 informants. Researchers were first directed to conduct interviews with informants directly responsible for the WCPC, and subsequently expanded to other parts and disciplines based on research requirements. Researchers conducted in-depth interviews with chosen informants at the research location to get relevant information. In-depth interviews allow researchers to delve into data regarding diverse situations that become cases. Researchers require information about how the case might develop, how the procedure works, who initiates the case, and what occurs afterwards. When researchers interview informants, they record and take notes. When the researcher's notes are missing, recordings must be used to confirm the data.

2) Observation

The researchers conducted direct observations, observing events firsthand and then recorded and documented their findings based on the studied case. Researchers utilized a predefined checklist tailored to the case for these direct observations. In addition to formal observations, researchers also engaged in less formal direct observations during field visits and other evidence collection activities, such as interviews. These direct observations took place at the WCPC office and during various events organized by the center.

3) Literature Study

Researchers used material from books, journals, and dissertations related to the subject being investigated when compiling the data for this study. Furthermore, to assist this research, researchers use articles from websites whose content is relevant to the study. In addition, the data for this study were collected through cyberspace (the internet). To access data online, the search was carried out by browsing or downloading the desired material via a specific website.

4) Documentation

Researchers explore research data based on written documents related to WCPC, including letters, agendas, event reports, administrative documents, proposals, previous research findings, internet data, press clippings, and internet and television news. The materials chosen were pertinent to the case study under investigation. Although in the form of documents, this material is critical for researchers since it provides historical context for the subject under investigation. The researcher conducted a thorough search for these records, particularly during field trips.

One of the informants in this study was the Head of WCPC, who was eager to contribute thoughts and information about numerous research-related topics. Researchers talked with key informants and asked several questions from the start to obtain a thorough and comprehensive picture of the challenges faced by counselors at WCPC. The head of WCPC was picked as a key informant because the researcher believed he was a member of the WCPC and was actively involved in the present counselor's job. He was prepared to make an effort to ensure that researchers could engage and discuss this study without difficulties. While gathering information, key informants explained and described the facts and information required in natural language rather than analytical terminology, ensuring that researchers received pure and accurate data. Furthermore, researchers chose research informants from WCPC based on the data and information required by the study. As the inquiry continued, a greater quantity of information became available. At the start of the study, researchers called the Integrated Service Center for the Protection of Women and Children, where victims of sexual assault may get counseling and legal help. Under the cooperation and suggestion of the Head of the Central Service Unit, the researcher was provided 24 names of counselors who worked there. From the 24 persons, 9 people were chosen as the major informants in this study according to the following criteria:

- 1) They were employed at the WCPC in Bandung. The researcher chooses a research site that is related to the study objectives. The purpose of determining this location is to narrow the scope and refine the study of the social

phenomena to be examined, as well as to address the problem, which is how counselors handle communication while dealing with children who have experienced sexual assault.

- 2) Those who have dealt with sexual assault against children. The counselor chosen as an informant must be personally involved in the phenomena being studied. The informant is an active participant in the institution being studied and may offer information on the problem being investigated.

In addition, to complete the required data and information, researchers gathered information on counselor communication management from many viewpoints. As a result, the researcher identified other informants who may contribute additional information to the study's analysis and discussion. This informant was supposed to disclose information that the counselor did not get as an informant. For this reason, the researcher established the criteria for these informants as follows:

- 1) Those with knowledge of social welfare, including counselor roles and responsibilities. Researchers require other perspectives while investigating counselor communication management to have a larger and fuller viewpoint for the investigation.
- 2) Those responsible for addressing child sexual assault in the counseling sector are also needed. To investigate communication management, researchers must also obtain viewpoints from officers in other disciplines and organizations that handle cases of sexual assault of children in diverse domains.

The research informant details are presented in the following data table:

Table 1. Informant Data

No.	Informant Code	Field of Work	Description
1.	KPs1	Psychology Counselor	Informant 3
2.	KPs2	Psychology Counselor	Informant 7
3.	KPs3	Psychology Counselor	Informant 8
4.	KPs4	Psychology Counselor	Informant10
5.	KA1	Religious Counselor	Informant 2
6.	KA2	Religious Counselor	Informant 6
7.	KH1	Legal Counselor	Informant 4
8.	KPS1	General Counselor in Social Work	Informant 5
9.	KPS2	General Counselor in Social Work	Informant 9
10.	AH1	Legal Expert (<i>Advocate/Lawyer</i>)	Informant 11
11.	KU	Head of WCPC	Informant 1
12.	KSb	Head of WCPC	Informant 12
13.	KP	<i>Kanit PPA</i> (Unit Head for Child and Women Protection) Criminal Investigation Unit of the Bandung Metropolitan Police	Informant 13
14.	PS	Social Activist (Academician in the Field of Social Welfare)	Informant t14

Source: Researcher, 2023

4. Findings

4.1 Personality Competence in Counselor Communication Management for Handling Child Victims of Sexual Violence

The WCPC, as a community-serving institution, is expected to deliver the optimal services. Given that this institution's work focuses on breaches of the rights of psychologically vulnerable women and children, the counselors at this WCPC are constantly improving the numerous skills required to deliver community services. One approach is to improve personality competency.

A counselor's personality is crucial in counseling. The counselor's personality significantly impacts therapy. Counselors at WCPC demonstrate pleasant attitudes and behaviors toward others, such as being friendly, attentive to clients, pleasant in their speech, having high self-confidence, being able to appreciate clients with diverse personalities, and being sincere in their work.

The counselor's personality is one of the defining aspects in his ability to solve client difficulties. These explanations show that counselors must have certain qualifications, particularly in terms of personality, to aid child victims of sexual assault. Besides other requirements like knowledge and skills, a person's ability to perform a job effectively means that the counselor must understand the principles and theories of guidance and counseling and possess practical experience. A competent counselor is a successful one who understands themselves, their client, the counseling process, and its goals.

Observations and studies have revealed that counselors at the WCPC share numerous personality-related characteristics, including the ability to understand self-concept and self-disclosure, respect for oneself (self-esteem), curiosity and compassion for others, effective listening skills, comprehension of verbal and nonverbal communication, empathy with clients, emotional regulation, prioritization of others' interests, and maintaining close relationships.

Counselors at WCPC may integrate scientific skills and knowledge into their daily life, allowing them to attain interpersonal balance and technical proficiency. The counselor must acquire other personality traits for him to establish himself in his profession. According to Cormier and Cornier, the supporting factors of counselor personality characteristics include: 1) Intellectual competency, the capacity to learn and think rapidly and creatively 2) Energy, physical and psychological endurance 3). breadth, adaptability to clientele 4). Support and the capacity to inspire the council to make good choices. 5). Goodwill, purpose to assist the counselee in establishing 6). Self-awareness, or knowing one's own attitudes, thoughts, actions, and values, and the various elements that impact one another (Cormier & Cormier, 1985).

In the work of supporting children who have experienced sexual assault, the counselor's personality is a crucial factor which brings about changes in attitudes and counseling behavior. Counselor education, unlike the capacity to grasp theory and practice, is not always possible to modify the traits of the counselee. So, besides intellectual skill, a counselor's primary qualification is personality. The Regulation Number 27 of 2008 by the Minister of National Education regarding Academic Qualification Standards and Counselor Competencies specifies how counselors should develop themselves to meet personality competencies. Counselors at WCPC intentionally incorporate these government laws into their work and roles as counselors.

The implementation of government regulations in the work of counselors at WCPC includes that the counselor is always in the process of developing a distinct style, describing the counselor's personal philosophy and lifestyle, and that while counselors are free to borrow other people's ideas and techniques, they do not mechanically imitate them. Counselors have their unique approach to professional development. They have honor and self-esteem, as well as entire strength. They acknowledge and respect their own skills. WCPC counselors are adaptable and prepared to take more chances. They broaden their horizons and recognize that the higher the demands, the greater risks are. They demonstrate the desire and resilience to leave the safety of a familiar setting and dare to accept new things that are unknown, as well as insist on recognizing their untapped potential.

WCPC counselors realize that limited awareness leads to limited freedom; however, increased awareness allows for a richer life that includes feelings, values, beliefs, self-motivation, basic life attitudes, body reactions, sensory abilities, etc. The counselor directs energy toward maximal experience and awareness growth rather than storing energy in defensive behavior to prevent experience. This implies they understand who they are, what they can do, their life goals, and what is vital. They raise inquiries about life and want to put their own ideals to the test. They seek to be themselves, revealing the core of their life, rather than simply reflecting what others desire and expect. Essentially, their principles have been internalized, and they have the confidence to act in accordance with their beliefs even when there is no financial reward.

Counselors, like Corey, exhibit non-possessive empathy. Able to experience and understand the counselee's reality. Recognizing their own challenges and suffering and being in the right state of mind to get to know the counselee without losing their individuality. Empathy includes compassion, warmth, and self-control (Corey, 2016). By adopting the items above, WCPC counselors achieve the personality skills that will undoubtedly assist their tasks as counselors for children who have experienced sexual assault.

4.2 Professional Competence in Counselor Communication Management for Handling Child Victims of Sexual Violence

Examining counselor professionalism is directly related to the counselor's capacity to comprehend the academic framework as a scientific foundation for carrying out his profession, so that they may provide professional assistance to child victims of sexual assault. Academic competence serves as the foundation for the development of professional competence, which includes: (1) a thorough understanding of the counselees served, (2) mastery of the foundation and

theoretical framework of counseling, (3) organizing counseling services that empower, and (4) ongoing personal and professional counseling development.

Counselors who attempt to resolve their clients' issues require particular education to achieve experience in the field of counseling. All counselors in charge of WCPC are university graduates, with the lowest level being Bachelor, which is appropriate for the counselors' field of specialization, which are:

- 1) General Counselors are Social Welfare Study Program graduates who understand core social work concepts, values, and ethics. Social workers who operate as general counselors have strategies for enhancing the quality of life in the community, intended to influence community welfare. They also understand psychological health, interpersonal interactions in the family and social setting, community empowerment, and social policy creation. Communication skills, advocacy skills, analytical abilities, research abilities, observational skills, logical reasoning, problem-solving capabilities, sensitivity and empathy are all characteristics of general counselors who are also social workers.
- 2) Religious counselors hold degrees in Arabic literature and language, as well as in Sufism and psychotherapy. Religious counselors at WCPC, particularly, have an educational background that allows them to conduct counseling activities. Religious counselors trained in the science of Sufism and psychotherapy, as well as mental therapy expertise, have a Sufistic personality and can apply their knowledge to solve spiritual and psychological problems in society, particularly in the field of counseling, using a psychosufistic approach. Religious counselors has talents such as persuasive communication, listening, speaking, therapeutic planning, inspiring, and persuasive communication. The capacity to recognize, diagnose, map, and evaluate diverse human psychological issues to design acceptable remedies via study
- 3) Legal Counselors are graduates of the Faculty of Law who are equipped with knowledge related to advocacy, legal assistance, and legal remedies for clients at WCPC, including the ability to master normative aspects in the field of law, the ability to analyze legal problems by providing legal reasoning or legal opinion, the ability to compile and apply legal decisions, the ability to integrate legal theories and principles in actions or behavior, oral and written communication.
- 4) Psychological Counselors at WCPC provide mental health counseling to address emotional, social, and physical issues caused by stress or sexual assault. Counselor comes from the Latin word 'conselere', which means to provide advice, hence the primary function of psychological counselors is to provide psychological guidance to clients to improve their mental health. Counselors can make others feel comfortable enough to open out and solve their difficulties. The competencies possessed by psychological counselors at WCPC include the following; the ability to understand client conditions (client-centric/people centered therapy) focus on client well-being, understand psychopathology or symptoms, stress and mental disorders, the ability to reflect, provide insight and guide clients to solve their problems without the use of drugs, psychological therapy skills, conduct and read psychological test results, the ability to diagnose mental illness or disorders, interpersonal relationship skills and verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

Counselor core competencies (common competencies) are a collection of knowledge, attitudes, and abilities that counselors may apply in any environment. Professional competence refers to a set of abilities counselors must achieve to become professional figures (Marjo & Sodik, 2022). This professional competence is one of four competency requirements that counselors must meet (Permendiknas No. 27, 2008). Counselor professional competence is a combination of personal, scientific, technological, and social skills that constitute the foundation of the counselor profession (Fadhilla, 2019).

All of the counselors at WCPC have a strong understanding of the individuals they help. He learns the client's condition and history via observations conducted on referral customers and clients who come in alone to receive assistance. For referral clients, data and information about the client's situation are often collected from partners who recommend clients, such as police or Health Center who manage clients from the start. For clients who come in independently to seek treatment, the counselor gathers statistics and information about them from the parents or family members who accompany them. Following that, they observe the client during the early phases of counseling so that the counselor may have a thorough grasp of his client.

The counselors of the WCPC consist of counselors from several fields of study such as religion, psychology, social work, and legal experts. They have undergone various relevant study programs according to their respective fields. With a minimum education level of bachelor's degree, and some having even attained postgraduate degrees, they possess a strong academic foundation to carry out their duties as counselors. Thus, it can be believed that counselors master the foundations and theoretical frameworks of counseling in line with the profession's demands.

Aligned with their task of assisting and helping clients, the counselors of the WCPC also believe that the ultimate goal of counseling is to enable clients to live independently. Therefore, counselors realize that every therapy plan must be designed so that the counseling goals are ultimately achieved. Empowering counseling will enable clients to successfully overcome trauma and stand on their own after the therapy is completed.

The dynamic and complex societal issues demand counselors to constantly keep up with the scientific and conceptual developments regarding these societal problems and the best strategies to address them. Therefore, counselors strive to develop themselves personally and professionally continuously. Despite budget limitations hindering counselors from attending training or courses, the counselors of the WCPC endeavor to develop themselves through discussions with fellow counselors, reading and studying various scientific journals, and keeping up with the developments in societal issues through conventional or modern media.

Another key aspect in the effective counseling process is the counseling relationship, which is the quality of the relationship between the counselor and the client. Carl Rogers explained three main qualities of counselors for effective counseling: congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy (Rogers, 1961).

Research results indicate that counselors of the WCPC have congruent attitudes where they behave and act in accordance with their self-image. In their attitudes and behaviors, counselors demonstrate authenticity, both personally and professionally. They do not pretend to cover up their shortcomings. They know that they have both positive potentials and negative shortcomings, and they understand how to develop their positive potentials and address their negative aspects. For example, in experiencing vicarious trauma caused by receiving a client's trauma, counselors can cope with it well, of course with support from colleagues and institution management.

The second quality that needs to be implemented as an effort to carry out duties professionally is unconditional positive regard towards the client. Research results indicate that counselors can accept clients with all their shortcomings and strengths without judgment. This means that counselors do not assess, judge, blame, or denigrate the behavior of child victims of sexual violence, even if that behavior does not conform to societal norms. This attitude is not easily achieved by counselors; therefore, it requires experience, patience, and self-understanding first.

Research results also show that as an effort to help clients recover from trauma, counselors have an empathetic attitude. Counselors at the WCPC can feel and experience what their clients feel without losing their own identity. They empathize with the feelings, needs, and suffering of their clients. This aligns with Rogers' statement that empathy means not being judgmental, reflecting his view on caring. Caring in therapeutic relationships often involves conflicts, not prioritizing oneself, and focusing on others. Consistent with Rogers, counselors have a non-possessive caring attitude, which does not demand personal satisfaction (Rogers, 1961).

Several specific personality types perform well in particular work environments (Gladding, 2012). Environments where counselors can excel are typically socially and problem-oriented. In this case, counselors at the WCPC possess intrapersonal management skills, enabling them to build interpersonal relationships with clients and fellow counselors.

4.3 Social Competence in Counselor Communication Management for Handling Child Victims of Sexual Violence

Counselors are required to have social competence (Sagala, 2013). Based on the research findings and the researcher's observations, counselors at the WCPC have social competence consisting of sub-competencies, namely understanding and appreciating differences, managing conflicts and clashes, harmoniously collaborating, building a cohesive, intelligent, dynamic, and agile team, conducting effective and enjoyable communication, understanding and internalizing environmental changes that affect their tasks, submitting themselves to the prevailing societal values, and implementing good governance principles.

In formulating Academic and Professional Competencies as outlined in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 27 of 2008 regarding Academic Qualification Standards and Counselor Competencies, it is regulated how counselors should manage competencies related to the organization or institution where they work. Counselors at the WCPC conscientiously implement this government regulation and function as counselors. The core competencies of counselors realized as social competence in the WCPC City can be seen from how counselors implement internal collaboration within the institution. They understand the basis, objectives, organization, and roles of other parties in the institution where they work. They can also communicate about the basis, objectives, and counseling service activities to both peer partners and institution management. And most importantly, they can collaborate with all parties, especially in handling cases of child victims of sexual assault.

Counselors at the WCPC actively participate in the institution, adhere to the counselor's code of ethics, and actively engage in professional organizations as part of their self-development and professional development. In inter-institutional relations, counselors can implement collaboration between professions. They understand the roles of other organizations or institutions and utilize them for the success of counseling. Counselors can also work with partners from other

institutions such as the police, legal experts, and healthcare professionals. One of the tasks performed by counselors is to refer clients to these partner institutions for the effective rehabilitation of child victims of sexual violence.

4.4 Communication Competence in Counselor Communication Management for Handling Child Victims of Sexual Violence

Counselors at the WCPC recognize the importance of improving communication competence. According to Spitzberg, as discussed by Green and Burlison, the elements of counselor communication competence encompass knowledge, motivation, and ability (Spitzberg, 2003).

Counselors who work with children who have experienced sexual violence must deepen their knowledge from various angles, particularly regarding how to communicate with these children. The emphasis is on the counselor's communication process, while also considering the fundamental understanding of the message being conveyed. Counselors should explore the best approaches for interacting with children, including the use of easily understood language, appropriate word choices, tone of voice, behavior, and readiness to receive feedback from children in any situation. They must also be knowledgeable about the content of both verbal and non-verbal messages. As counselors gain more experience and knowledge, they become increasingly adept at handling communication in diverse situations with different clients. The researcher found that counselors need to improve their communication competence through training or workshops on effective communication techniques.

Interacting with a child who has experienced sexual assault differs significantly from communicating with a child who has not undergone such trauma. Caution and deep understanding of the trauma experienced by the child are necessary. While a counselor's dedication to helping a child work through their trauma is unquestionable, there are instances where counselors need to bolster their motivation to engage with their clients. The challenge of penetrating a child's defenses, due to the trauma they have endured, can sometimes lead to counselor frustration. In such situations, counselors must find ways to foster a desire to engage in communication rather than a tendency to avoid it. It is understandable that counselors might feel demotivated and inclined to avoid communication when they perceive the burden as too great. However, they must also recognize that they are a critical source of hope for the child in overcoming their trauma and returning to normalcy. The researcher found that counselors need positive reinforcement and opportunities to relieve stress to facilitate effective communication with child victims of sexual assault.

Counselors are skilled at handling the anxiety that comes from their clients' issues. They keep a composed and assured demeanor during communication, even if they need time to process their own emotions and get ready to interact with the client. Moreover, counselors excel at showing genuine concern, offering supportive comments, and maintaining enthusiasm to keep a positive attitude. They modify their tone, vocal delivery, intensity, and body language according to the interaction. Counselors also effectively manage the communication process by knowing when to listen, respond, give feedback, and, most importantly, how to motivate the child to express themselves. They place themselves in their client's shoes so they can understand and fully pay attention to the client. Counselors are capable of managing the anxiety that arises from their client's issues. They maintain a calm and confident demeanor during communication, even though they may need time to process their emotions and prepare to engage with the client. Additionally, counselors are adept at demonstrating appropriate concern, offering supportive expressions, and displaying enthusiasm to sustain a positive attitude. They adjust their tone, vocalization, intensity, and various body movements and behaviors in their interactions. Counselors also manage the flow of communication effectively, understanding when to listen, react, provide feedback, and, most importantly, how to encourage the child to communicate.

Counselors must develop communication competence, which Kaye considers the key element at every level of communication coordination (Kaye, 1994). Mastering this competence will enable counselors to establish effective communication. Counselor competence refers to the mastery of concepts, internalization and embodiment of values, and a personal demeanor that is supportive and professional performance that is accountable. Counselor competence is built on a philosophical foundation regarding the nature of human beings and their existence as creatures of Almighty God, individual beings, and citizens based on Indonesian culture.

Counselors at the WCPC, including general counselors (social workers), religious counselors, legal counselors, and psychological counselors, are highly motivated and committed to helping others. They exhibit positive qualities that enable them to perceive clients as individuals with unique values, religious beliefs, cultures, and backgrounds. These counselors demonstrate full responsibility, self-control, emotional balance, and a deep awareness of the differences in values, religions, cultures, and beliefs. As professional counselors, they can meet the qualifications as counselors effectively, thus being able to assist clients well. The knowledge, understanding, abilities, values, attitudes, and interests counselors possess serve as a primary defense against misunderstandings with the position and condition of clients. With their competence, counselors will gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their clients.

According to Gibson's statement that the root of every profession is based on an understanding of the nature of humans and society (Gibson & Mitchell, 2016), counselor communication competence begins with how they understand that clients, even if they are children, are human beings who should be treated with respect, appreciation, and protection. To achieve effective communication, counselors care about the interests of their clients (altruistic) and are not easily angered or frustrated. They possess warm, friendly, open, sensitive, patient, and creative characteristics, which align with what Gladding has proposed (Gladding, 2012).

5. Discussion

This research thoroughly explores the significance of communication management for counselors who support child victims of sexual violence. Kaye identified that four stages of communication coordination are essential for effective communication (Kaye, 1994). In this instance, to facilitate effective communication between counselors and children who have experienced sexual violence, counseling is conducted through 4 (four) stages of communication coordination.

The fourth level encompasses all the preceding levels of competence within the model (Kaye, 1994). Therefore, this section describes counselor competence at all stages of communication management when handling child victims of sexual violence. The concept of competence is not only assessed from an external perspective. Competence is the fundamental basis of a person's characteristics and indicates ways of behaving or thinking, adapting to situations, and supporting over a long period of time (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). In general, competence describes what individuals perform in the workplace across different levels and specifies the standards for each level. It outlines the knowledge and skills necessary for individuals to effectively carry out their tasks and responsibilities, thereby meeting professional quality standards in their work (Zwell, 2000).

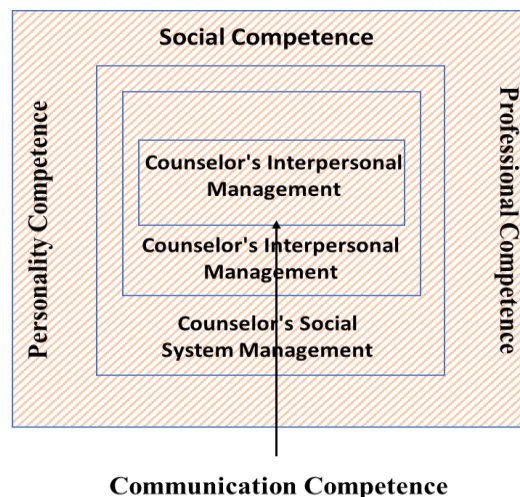


Figure 1. Communication Competence of Counselors at the WCPC in Handling Cases of Children as Victims of Sexual Violence

Source: Researcher (2023)

The diagram above illustrates the communication competence model for counselors at the WCPC in managing cases involving children who are victims of sexual violence. According to Kaye's concept, counselors progress through four stages of communication coordination to achieve effective communication. (Kaye, 1994). In this context, counselors are able of communicating effectively with children who have endured sexual violence. The fourth level of communication coordination integrates all previous levels of competence within the model (Kaye, 1994). The concept of competence is not solely viewed from an external perspective.

At the first level of the above model, it can be explained that it is important for counselors to understand their own concept, be aware of their self-esteem to manage intrapersonal communication within themselves by using several techniques above. As stated by Kaye; "Competence communication management requires people to be honest with themselves." That communication competence demands people to be honest with themselves. Thus, counselors can control the influence of negative word stimuli on their thoughts through intrapersonal management techniques, so counselors are expected to communicate interpersonally effectively with clients and fellow counselors.

Kaye defines the second level after self-management as self-relating to others, which highlights how one's self affects and is affected by interactions with others (Kaye, 1994). Counselors generate meaning through their interactions with clients and those around them. The intrapersonal communication within a counselor's own self forms the foundation for

developing interpersonal relationships. This self-concept, shaped by internal communication, is also influenced by how others perceive and shape it. Additionally, counselors must be attentive to their communication with others, particularly clients, as the messages they convey, both verbal and non-verbal, can impact or alter their clients' experiences.

Counselors engage with and establish interpersonal relationships with individuals within the institution that supports them. The aforementioned aspects are addressed as part of the efforts to assist counselors in managing communication with all clients. At the third level of the Communication Management Model, it is important for an individual involved in communication activities to focus on understanding and managing the culture of the human system or organization. "People in the system," as the phrase implies, refers to how counselors enable an organizational system to operate effectively. At this level, Kaye argues that the human system or organization will affect human activities. However, it is also suggested that it is not the organization that molds human behavior, but rather human behavior that shapes the organization, given that individuals hold authority within the system (Kaye, 1994).

Furthermore, the main and most important competence as depicted in the above model is undoubtedly communication competence. In this case, it is the counselor's skill in managing intrapersonal and interpersonal communication and how they communicate with their work environment. However, the primary aspect is that counselor communication coordination significantly affects the counseling process. The essence of communication lies not in the superficial message but in the meaning or interpretation perceived from that message. When a message is presented directly, the interpretation of the message is also influenced by its delivery. The interaction of messages, presentation, and interpretation forms the unique character of the communication process. One's interpretation of the meaning of stimuli forms the basis for communicative actions and intentions towards others.

The concept of 'communication management' indicates that the ability to communicate effectively is not inherent since birth, but rather something that can be learned and improved upon. In this regard, counselors can learn to become more adept communicators in various counseling activities, ranging from interviews with clients, meetings, or public forums. Consistent with Mayo's Theory, the learning process involves more than just compliance with a set of predetermined mechanical rules. It requires more than just a framework of binding rules; what's more important is the human relationships among them.

Procedures; it also requires an awareness of process variables that can influence the quality of dialogue that occurs. Communication management thus is a general term for conceptualizing various variables that can contribute to coordinating meaning among people. These variables include how meaning is interpreted, the strategies used to infer others' intentions, and preferred styles for communicating reactions to others. As individuals, we also show differences that can influence how we construct meaning about others. For example, when a client reacts negatively to feedback from the counselor that seems judgmental, or perhaps conversely, when the counselor views the client's issues as trivial matters that don't need addressing. Therefore, individual differences may also explain why we communicate with others in certain ways.

Essentially, counselors at the WCPC continually enhance their competence in communication management as they carry out their duties. Counselors understand that effective communication is the key asset for successfully interacting with children who have experienced sexual violence.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study, along with those of similar studies, underscore the necessity for targeted training in a range of competencies, including academic, professional, and social skills. These competencies enrich the quality of counselors to provide the best services to children as victims of sexual violence. However, there is one competence that colors all levels of competency, from intrapersonal management, interpersonal management, social system management to various competencies possessed, and that competence is communication competence. Future research should further diagnose and analyze the training deficiencies of guidance counselors in communication competencies to implement continuous training programs that address these issues. Additionally, this study highlights the need for professional recognition of guidance counselors, which should be supported by increased staffing in guidance units, improved working conditions based on the performance of each team, and greater visibility for their enhanced skills in providing better assistance.

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Authors contributions

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