



Research Article

Profile empathy quality and prosocial intension of counselor candidates

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the quality of empathy and prosocial intentions of counselor candidates and see the effect of empathy quality on the prosocial intensity of counselor candidates. The study uses descriptive survey type. The research sample of 260 counselor candidates of 11 Guidance and Counseling Study Programs in Indonesia. The research sample was selected using purposive sampling technique. Data collection using a questionnaire that is the empathy quality scale (EQS) and prosocial intention scale (PIS) in the form of a five-level scale. Data analysis techniques used descriptive statistics and regression analysis (ANAREG) and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results showed the empathy quality of students in the good category, they showed better scores in Personal Distress factors, Perspective Taking factors, Fantasy factors, and Emphatic Concerns. But it shows a lower prosocial intention score. The results also showed that there was no correlation between empathic quality and prosocial intentions of students



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Introduction

Over the past few decades, empathy and related emotional reactions have seized the attention of developmental and social psychologists. This is very possible because there is a theoretical relationship between empathy and positive social behavior and social competence of individuals (Manstead et al. 1996). Although there are variations and differences about the definition of empathy itself, experts basically have conventionally agreed that empathy can be defined as an emotional response to the emotional status or condition of others that is consistent with the emotional status or state of the other person. For example, a person becomes sad because he sees his friend in a state of mourning (Manstead et al. 1996; Miville et al. 2006).

Thus, in the status of empathy there is a presupposition that it is as if someone is like another person (Miville et al. 2006; Hojat et al. 2005; Shechtman, 2003). One's capacity in responding to other people's situations certainly requires adequate understanding of the thoughts and feelings of others. In the context of client-centered counseling and psychotherapy, the condition is termed an internal frame of reference of another, namely an empathic understanding of the counselor on the client's internal frame of reference (Hall & Lindzey, 1978).

Based on these definitions, some technical aspects that form empathy can be divided into the following dimensions (Miville et al. 2006; Hojat et al. 2005; Shechtman, 2003), namely empathy cognitive or commonly known as perspective-taking, emphatic concern, and personal distress. Perspective-taking is the spontaneous ability of a person to adopt or understand the mindset of another person, while the affective element of empathy is more directed to what is felt by someone towards the state of others; including the state of sympathy and full attention to others. The

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other component, namely personal distress is a state of anxiety, worry, and stress experienced by someone as a negative reaction to the interpersonal situation they experience.

On the other hand, prosocial behavior by some experts is described as a form of behavior that tends to benefit others. The behaviors involved in this are giving comfort to others (comforting), sharing, working cooperatively, and showing empathic attitudes towards others (Robinson & Curry, 2006). In-depth studies of prosocial behavior are complex and often overlap with other personality qualities. Therefore, according to Eisenberg and Miller stated that empathy, altruism, and prosocial behavior are constructs of terms that are closely related to each other (Hojat et al. 2005). Because of this overlapping terminology, many experts assume that a person's prosocial behavior is formed from the qualities of empathy and altruism that he has. In contrast to altruism which is motivated more by intrinsic motives, prosocial behavior is not only influenced by pure intrinsic tendencies to help others, it is also often influenced by high social expectations. These expectations can be either to be praised or to get certain rewards (Robinson & Curry, 2006).

Intensive studies on improving the quality of empathy and its correlation with prosocial behavior and other helpful behaviors have been a concern of psychologists for a long time. Some of them are studies conducted by Hojat (2005) and Miville (2006). A study conducted by Hojat (Hojat et al. 2005) proved that there was an increase in the quality of student empathy in medical schools during their 3-year educational program. This high rate of improvement is a comparison between the quality of empathy before and after attending an education program. Even empathy is also a major component that determines the effectiveness of counseling services (McLeod, 2001). Some research results explain that there is a close relationship between empathy and the tendency of prosocial behavior (helping). Both of them even greatly affect the quality of interpersonal relationships (Hojat et al. 2005). Thus, this study confirms the previous assumption that educational programs are considered to have a high effectiveness to form and improve the quality of empathy for helper candidates.

Miville (2006) have also intensively studied the quality of empathy related to one's emotional intelligence. The study shows that the quality of empathy of a professional counselor is strongly influenced by his ability to effectively manage positive and negative emotions (Miville et al. 2006). The conclusion of the study confirms that individuals who are able to monitor and separate their emotions and the emotions of clients actually have a high quality of empathy. Therefore, Miville suggest that in training or educating prospective counselors, program participants must truly be tested for their ability to distinguish themselves from others' emotions. Even empathy is also a major component that determines the effectiveness of counseling services (McLeod, 2001). Some research results explain that there is a close relationship between empathy and the tendency of prosocial behavior (helping). Both of them even greatly affect the quality of interpersonal relationships (Hojat et al. 2005).

Theoretical and empirical studies on the quality of empathy and prosocial intensity and their relationship in general have been widely carried out by experts and researchers in the international world. However, research to explore the quality profile of empathy and prosocial intensity of prospective counselors has not been widely studied, particularly in Indonesia. Though this study can contribute to the evaluation of inputs about student personality and benchmarks for study program managers to assess the success of the learning process.

Research Problem

Based on the background that has been explained, the research problem is to. explore the quality of empathy and prosocial intentions of counselor candidates and see the effect of empathy quality on the prosocial intensity of counselor candidates. The research questions are stated as follows:

- How is the quality of empathy counselor candidates based on genre and force?
- How is the prosocial intention counselor candidates based on genre and force?
- Is there a relationship between the quality of empathy and prosocial intentions of counselor candidates?

Methods

Research design

The research method used is descriptive survey type because it is intended to identify or explore various facts, opinions, attitudes, and certain behaviors (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). The things that are identified or explored are the quality of empathy and prosocial intention counselor, as well as the relationship between the quality of empathy and prosocial intention counselor candidates.

Participant

The study was conducted in March-April 2019. The population of the study was affordable namely 562 counselor candidates at least in the second semester of 11 Guidance and Counseling Study Programs in Indonesia. The research sample was selected using purposive sampling technique. The criteria determined are: (1) administratively registered as a student at least the second semester, (2) have attended or are attending lectures theory and practicum counseling and personal development counselor. Based on questionnaire filling data, 260 obtained complete filling

Instruments

The data collection instruments used the empathy quality scale and prosocial intention scale that was developed by the researcher based on standard psychological assessment standards. The empathy quality scale consists of 30 items, and the prosocial intention scale consists of 28 items. This scale is in the form of a rating scale with five levels, namely: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = quite agree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. From the results of the device reliability test, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of empathy was 0.71 and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of prosocial intentions scale was 0.65

Data analysis

Data analysis techniques used descriptive statistics and analysis regression (ANAREG) and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to compare differences in gender status and tertiary institutions as long as they were related to the quality of empathy and prosocial intentions. The validity and reliability have been analyzed and analyzed by different experts. The results of the research data were analyzed using IBM SPSS v 26.0 for Windows statistical tools with a statistical significance value of 0.05

Results

Profile Empathy Quality Counselor Candidates Based on Genre and Force

The categorization in this study is divided into three parts. [Azwar \(2003\)](#) argues that if desired the grouping of subjects into three categories, the criteria are: low categorization (limit $X < (M - 1 SD)$), moderate categorization ($(M - 1 SD) < X < (M + 1 SD)$), high categorization (boundary $(M + 1 SD) < X$). The following are the results of the calculation of the level categories obtained based on the determination of the hypothetical average that might be achieved ([Azwar, 2003](#)).

In table 1, the data obtained that most of the empathy profiles of guidance and counseling students (counselor candidates) are moderate (69.2%). The number of female students categorized has moderate empathy as many as 105 people (40.4%) and the number of male students with moderate empathy quality is 28 people (28.8%). One interesting information that can be described from the table is the large number of female students who have a low level of empathy (13.1%). Meanwhile, male students included in the category of low empathy level were only 3.1%.

Even so, these percentage differences statistically have not been able to describe differences in the quality of empathy of male and female students. Comparison of the quality of empathy between male and female students can be seen based on the average difference in each of the intended variables (table 2). In terms of the average number, the variables contained in empathy show inconspicuous differences between men and students. At a glance, it can be described that in some aspects, male and female students appear to be slightly different.

One important aspect that needs to be explored further is the extent of differences in the quality of empathy in student guidance and counseling (counselor candidates) when viewed from differences in entry forces. This difference needs to be known to assess the affective competency profile of students both before entering the guidance and counseling study program or when actively involved in the process, and to the maximum extent possible if necessary there is further study exploring the performance of graduates of guidance and counseling study programs (counselors) not only by cognitive and psychomotor, but also affective performance. The researcher assumes that the higher entry students (class 2016 and previous class) ideally have a better quality of empathy compared to the new batches entering 2019.

This comparison is based on the impact of lectures and the achievement of material cognitively should be directly proportional to the increasing affective sensitivity of students in dealing with problems faced by others. Meanwhile, for students who are included in the new generation, the description of empathy status should only describe affective input in the first years. These assumptions seem to contradict the findings of this study (see table

Table 1.
Categorization Profiles of Empathy Counselor Candidates Based on Gender

NORM		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Low	Count	34	8	42
	% of Total	13.1%	3.1%	16.1%
Medium	Count	105	75	180
	% of Total	40.4%	28.8%	69.2%
High	Count	26	12	38
	% of Total	10%	4.6%	14.6%
	Count	165	95	260
	% of Total	63.5%	36.5%	100.0%

Table 2.
Mean and Standard Deviation of Empathy Variables Based on Gender

Gender		Perspective Taking	Fantasy	Emphatic Concern	Personal Distress
Female	Mean	27.0395	17.2895	18.8684	20.8571
	N	165	165	165	165
	Std. Deviation	2.68050	1.74979	1.28936	2.17882
Male	Mean	26.6429	17.2143	18.7857	19.8421
	N	95	95	95	95
	Std. Deviation	3.79488	1.84718	2.19014	1.96674
Total	Mean	26.9778	17.2778	18.8556	20.0000
	N	260	260	260	260
	Std. Deviation	2.85994	1.75479	1.45000	2.02235

Table 3.
Mean and Standard Deviation of Empathy Variables Based on Force Differences

Force		Perspective Taking	Fantasy	Emphatic Concern	Personal Distress
2019	Mean	26.6923	18.1154	18.8462	20.3462
	N	88	88	88	88
	Std. Deviation	2.64982	1.36607	1.64176	2.86974
2018	Mean	26.0000	17.5000	19.6667	19.5000
	N	69	69	69	69
	Std. Deviation	2.50217	1.47442	1.34056	1.53226
2017	Mean	27.5833	16.8333	18.2917	20.1250
	N	67	67	67	67
	Std. Deviation	2.61960	1.83366	1.45898	1.54110
2016	Mean	28.0000	16.2500	18.5000	20.0000
	N	36	36	36	36
	Std. Deviation	3.65148	1.98326	.51640	1.63299
Total	Mean	26.9778	17.2778	18.8556	20.0000
	N	260	260	260	260
	Std. Deviation	2.85994	1.75479	1.45000	2.02235

Profile Prosocial Intention Counselor Candidates Based on Genre and Force

The data used to reveal the prosocial intention profile of Guidance and Counseling students (counselor candidates) in this study used a closed questionnaire instrument consisting of 24 items. The scores used in this questionnaire are 3 (Good), 2 (Medium), and 1 (Poor). Based on the number of items and the range of scores used, the highest score possible is $3 \times 24 = 72$, while the lowest possible score is $1 \times 24 = 24$. From the data collected it turns out that the following scores were obtained, the highest score was 55 and the lowest score was 35. The categorization in this study

is divided into three parts. Azwar (2003) argues that if desired the grouping of subjects into three categories, the criteria are: low categorization (limit $X < (M - 1 SD)$), moderate categorization $(M - 1 SD) < X < (M + 1 SD)$, high categorization (boundary $(M + 1 SD) < X$). The following are the results of the calculation of the level categories obtained based on the determination of the hypothetical average that might be achieved (Azwar, 2003).

In terms of the normative category, the prosocial intentions of most students (counselor candidates) are actually relatively low (65.4%). The number of female students included in the prosocial intentions in the low category was far more than that of men (63.5%). However, this difference in frequency distribution and percentage cannot certainly be a valid benchmark that female students are different from male students. This difference is of course solely caused by differences in the number of samples. (see table 4 and 5).

Table 4.
Categorization Profiles of Prosocial Intention Counselor Candidates Based on Gender

Gender		Norm			Total
		Low	Medium	High	
Female	Count	108	24	33	165
	% of Total	41.5%	9.3%	12.7%	63.5%
Male	Count	62	8	25	95
	% of Total	23.9%	3.1%	9.6%	36.5%
Total	Count	170	32	58	260
	% of Total	65.4%	12.3%	22.3%	100.0%

Table 5.
Mean and Standard Deviation of Prosocial Intention Variables based on Gender

Gender		Helping	Sharing	Cooperati on	Honest	Contribute	Generous	Care
Female	Mean	4.5325	6.5325	5.9870	4.8052	3.4675	6.9091	6.5974
	N	165	165	165	165	165	165	165
	Std. Deviation	.82053	1.09526	.86593	.84354	.95400	.86118	1.25928
Male	Mean	4.6154	7.0000	5.8462	5.9231	3.9231	7.1538	5.9231
	N	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
	Std. Deviation	1.19293	1.08012	1.57301	1.38212	1.75412	.80064	.95407
Total	Mean	4.5444	6.6000	5.9667	4.9667	3.5333	6.9444	6.5000
	N	260	260	260	260	260	260	260
	Std. Deviation	.87617	1.09954	.98813	1.01062	1.10362	.85277	1.23843

Table 6.
Mean and Standard Deviation of Prosocial Intention Variables Based on Force

Force		Helping	Sharing	Coopera tion	Honest	Contribut e	Generus	Care
2019	Mean	4.4615	6.3846	5.8077	4.8077	3.5385	7.1154	6.2692
	Std. Deviation	.76057	.89786	.93890	.93890	1.06699	.86380	1.25085
2018	Mean	4.5833	6.9167	5.9167	5.0833	3.1667	6.6667	6.9167
	Std. Deviation	.88055	1.21285	.88055	1.05981	.56466	.86811	.77553
2017	Mean	4.6250	6.4167	6.1667	5.1667	3.9167	6.8333	6.3333
	Std. Deviation	1.01350	1.28255	1.12932	1.27404	1.52990	.96309	1.20386
2016	Mean	4.5000	6.7500	6.0000	4.7500	3.5000	7.2500	6.5000
	Std. Deviation	.89443	.85635	1.03280	.44721	.89443	.44721	1.71270
Total	Mean	4.5444	6.6000	5.9667	4.9667	3.5333	6.9444	6.5000
	Std. Deviation	.87617	1.09954	.98813	1.01062	1.10362	.85277	1.23843

Table 7.
The Effect of Empathy Quality on Prosocial Intention

	Model	Sum of Squares		Mean Square		Sig.
			df	F		
1	Regression	669.471	4	167.368	1.181	.325(a)
	Residual	12050.185	85	141.767		
	Total	12719.656	89			

Discussion and Conclusion

In general, the quality of empathy for guidance and counseling students (counselor candidates) can be said to be moderate, meaning, if empathy is understood as a condition in which a person is able to put himself in a state experienced by others, then the empathy status of student guidance and counseling (counselor candidates) is still in an ambiguous state. There is a tendency of ambiguity and excitement that reflects the instability of personal distress, perspective taking, fantasy, caring that is shared between self and others (emphatic concern).

When viewed in each aspect of the quality of empathy, in the perspective taking variable it turns out that female students look more able to understand the problems experienced by others rationally (27.03) compared to male students (26.64). One difference that is also not so striking is also found in the ability to control emotional (personal distress). Some previous studies [Miville \(2006\)](#) state that a person's empathy status can be called good, if he is able to separate the positive and negative emotions in himself, and is able to separate the emotions of self and others well. Typically, there are significant differences between men and women in terms of regulating emotions in dealing with the problems of others ([Miville et al. 2006](#)).

Furthermore, the average personal distress for female students was also slightly higher (20.85) compared to male students (19.84). This is consistent with the prevailing view that women have good emotional control compared to men. The results of this study are in line with research conducted by [Ratnasari and Suleman \(2017\)](#) which states that there are differences in emotional regulation between female and male students, which in each component of the emotional regulation of female students shows higher results compared to male students ([Ratnasari & Suleman, 2017](#)). However, when viewed from the difference in the total empirical average in the aspect of empathy, there is actually no significant difference ($t = -1.069$; $p = 0.288$) between male students ($M = 83.50$) and women ($M = 84.03$).

Furthermore in terms of the differences in the average numbers in table 3, the variables described also show inconspicuous differences between male and female students. In fact, variations in the differences between these groups of forces appear to be inconsistent between one variable and another. The average difference that looks striking between the forces appears on the perspective taking variable. However, this difference was not statistically significant ($F = 2141$; $p = 0.101$). The results of statistical calculations for the total aspects of empathy also contradict the assumptions built by researchers. Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between the empathy of students in each class in the guidance and counseling study program ($M = 0.386$; $p = 0.764$).

Previous studies ([Hojat et al. 2005](#)) have proven that educational programs are considered to have a high effectiveness in forming and improving the quality of empathy for prospective helper. Studies conducted at several medical schools show that there is an increase in the quality of student empathy during the 3-year educational program. In addition to the research conducted by [Gayati et al. \(2018\)](#) about increasing the attitude of empathy for prospective nurses through empathy care training, the results showed that there were differences in attitude of empathy after participating in training ([Gayati et al. 2018](#)). Thus, further studies can be directed at evaluating the extent to which the effectiveness of the learning process can affect the achievement of students' affective competencies. Thus, further studies can be directed at evaluating the extent to which the effectiveness of the learning process can affect the achievement of students' affective competencies.

So also when looking at the numbers in table 5, there appears to be no significant difference in mean between male and female students. Statistical computation of the total prosocial intention variables also reinforced the absence of significant differences between male and female students ($t = -1.784$; $p = 0.78$). The only significant difference was only in the honesty variable ($F = 15,884$; $p = 0,000$). Male students ($M = 5.90$) appear to have a high level of honesty (sincerity) compared to female students in terms of a tendency to help others ($M = 4.80$). This can be explained by the opinion of [Myer \(2001\)](#) that prosocial behavior displayed by individuals is influenced by several factors, namely (1) situational factors (the number of bystander, whether other people also provide help at that time including time

pressure), (2) personal factors (feelings, motivation, mood, personality traits, gender, also includes one's beliefs) (Myers, 2001). This means that gender cannot always be a differentiator of a person's prosocial behavior, because there are still other factors that influence the prosocial behavior displayed by an individual.

Similar to psychological variables in the aspect of empathy, psychological variables contained in the aspect of prosocial intentions also did not show a striking difference in average numbers between the classes of 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. In fact, this research is expected to be able to map the different prosocial intentions between each generation with the same assumptions with the status of empathy as previously described.

Based on the regression analysis conducted to assess the extent to which prosocial intentions are influenced by psychological variables contained in empathy. Miller and Eisenberg state that empathy, altruism, and prosocial behavior are constructs of terms that are closely related to each other (1997). Because of this overlapping terminology, many experts assume that a person's prosocial behavior is formed from the qualities of empathy and altruistics that he has (Robinson & Curry, 2006).

Based on the regression results in table 7, the statistical computation results of the Fraction value of 1.181 with a significance level of the correlation coefficient R or p of 0.325 (significant). Thus, it can be concluded that it turns out that a unique case in the guidance and counseling study program actually shows the gap between prosocial intentions and empathy status. The tendency of students to help others is not influenced by the quality of empathy. That is, it is probable that there are other external factors influencing prosocial behavior.

This inconsistency can be traced to research on attitudes and behavior. In general, an individual's attitude is a source of motivation and direction for actions taken by that individual. The construction of a person's attitude is considered a predictor of one's behavior and actions (Manstead et al. 1996). This term is commonly known as cognitive consistency. Circumstances that do not show the diversity between attitudes and behavior can occur if the state of individual cognition experiences dissonance due to various factors (cognitive dissonance). Based on the theory of reasoned action triggered by Fishbein & Ajzen (Manstead et al. 1996), there are four elements that influence a person's tendency to behave in a certain way, namely (1) the form of the behavior itself, (2) the object of behavior, (3) situational factors, and (4) time factor. Usually, prosocial behavior can be distorted from its original purpose to help others unconditionally, due to the influence of situational factors and time.

From the results of this study it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the quality of empathy and prosocial intentions of counselor candidates in terms of gender and generation. The tendency of students to help others is not influenced by the quality of empathy. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide input for study program managers to evaluate education and training models for students so that changes occur not only in terms of cognitive, but also skills and attitudes. In addition, in the future, it is expected that further research will explore the factors forming prosocial intentions, and factors that influence the quality of empathy for counselors candidates with a wider population.

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