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## Research Article

# Counseling as a Catalyst for Psychological Freedom and Self-Potential

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### Abstract

This article reviews the role of counseling as a means to help individuals develop their potential in order to achieve psychological freedom. With a systematic approach, counseling helps individuals explore their strengths and weaknesses, and formulate life goals that they want to achieve. This process is not only oriented towards solving psychological problems, but also supports continuous self-development, which can ultimately strengthen self-confidence, increase motivation, and improve individuals' abilities in facing various life challenges. Thus, counseling has a significant role in supporting individuals to live more meaningful and satisfying lives, and achieve the desired psychological well-being. Research and theory that underlie counseling practice show that this approach can have a significant positive influence on an individual's mental well-being.

## Introduction

Counseling is one of the recognized forms of intervention in the field of psychology, widely acknowledged as an effective method for helping individuals develop their potential. In this context, counseling does not only function to address psychological problems, but also plays a role in supporting individuals to explore and enhance their existing abilities. (Gladding, 2012) states that through counseling, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of themselves, allowing them to recognize both their strengths and weaknesses. This process plays a crucial role in achieving psychological balance, enabling individuals to function optimally in their daily lives. Counseling plays an important role in individual development. Over time, counseling has expanded into various aspects of life. This development is driven by an increasing awareness of the importance of counseling as a preventive measure to avoid errors in learning processes and individuals' interactions with their environment (Awlawi, 2018).

Psychological freedom refers to a condition where an individual can overcome various pressures and mental challenges that potentially affect their well-being. In this context, counseling acts as a platform that supports individuals in recognizing and developing potentials they may not yet fully realize. Through an approach focused on self-understanding and skill development, counseling can assist individuals in recognizing their life goals and planning the necessary steps to achieve them (Corey, 2016). Therefore, counseling is not solely focused on solving problems but also plays a role in supporting continuous self-growth and development.

Moreover, research findings indicate that individuals who undergo counseling tend to show progress in various psychological aspects, such as increased self-confidence, motivation, and their ability to overcome challenges (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014). These findings suggest that counseling can serve as an effective method for supporting individuals in achieving the desired psychological well-being. By undergoing counseling, individuals can explore their potential not only to resolve the problems they face but also to achieve a more meaningful and satisfying life. Therefore, understanding how to optimize the counseling process is a key aspect in helping individuals on their journey to true psychological well-being.

## **Method**

According to Triandini, the approach used in this study is the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. SLR refers to a study or research and development method conducted to gather and evaluate research related to a specific focus (Rohayati, 2023).

According to Utomo & Pahlevi, (2022), researchers apply an approach in the research process involving several steps. These steps include identifying, reviewing, evaluating, and systematically interpreting research findings. This process also involves systematic review and assessment while ensuring that each step adheres to predetermined guidelines (Widjayatri et al., 2023).

## **Results And Discussion**

### **A. Counseling**

Counseling is a process of interaction between the counselor and the counselee. In this interaction, the counselee, whether as an individual or as part of a group, faces a problem and seeks assistance from the counselor as a third party to find an appropriate solution. When encountering problems that are difficult to solve alone, the counselee seeks help from the counselor. With this support, the counselee hopes to find various alternative solutions to overcome the issues they face. In interacting with the counselor, the counselee requires guidance, direction, and consultation. The counselor is expected to remain neutral in order to provide more objective perspectives or alternative solutions to help the counselee deal with their problems. The counselee expects the counselor to demonstrate maturity in attitude and thought when addressing issues. Furthermore, the counselor is also expected to maintain confidentiality regarding any issues shared, without disclosing them to others (Hartini & Ariana, 2016).

Counseling is a multidisciplinary discipline because it adopts and utilizes contributions from various other fields of study. These contributions not only play a role in the formation and development of counseling theories but also in the implementation of its practice (Batubara et al., 2022). Gibson (1995) state that to understand counseling as a discipline, it is necessary to trace its origins and development into a profession. It is explained that counseling is rooted in the field of psychology, and this discipline has made significant contributions to the development of counseling theories and processes, assessment standardization, counseling techniques for both individuals and groups, as well as theories on career development and decision-making. Specifically, the field of psychology contributing to counseling includes: (1) educational psychology, which includes learning theories, child development, and their impact on the educational environment; (2) social psychology, which helps understand how social situations affect individuals, including the environmental influences on behavior; (3) ecological psychology, which examines the interconnectedness and reciprocal relationships between individuals and their environment in shaping behavior; and (4) developmental psychology, which helps explain the reasons and processes of individual changes throughout their lifespan (Sunardi & Assjari, 2008).

According to Burks and Steffire ( in Berger & McLeod, 2006), counseling is a professional interaction between a trained counselor and a client. This interaction typically occurs individually, although in some situations, it may involve more than one person. Meanwhile, Krumboltz and Thoreson ( in Berger & McLeod, 2006) define counseling as a process of providing assistance to individuals facing problems. This assistance aims to help the client understand their life perspective, learn how to achieve the goals they have set for themselves through appropriate and meaningful choices, and resolve interpersonal relationship issues.

According to Burks and Steffire ( in Cooper & McLeod, 2007), counseling is designed to help clients understand and interpret their views on life. Additionally, counseling also aims to support clients in achieving independence in determining their life goals through well-considered decisions that have meaning for them, as well as resolving emotional and interpersonal relationship issues. An effective counseling relationship is characterized by the application of one or more psychological theories and a set of well-known communication skills, adjusted through experience, intuition, and other interpersonal factors. These are applied to address the client's attention, problems, or personal aspirations. The main principle focuses more on facilitation than giving advice or pressure. Counseling has various meanings. Burks and Steffire ( in Cooper & McLeod, 2007) emphasize the importance of a professional relationship and the primary goal of helping the client achieve independence in making decisions. Meanwhile, the BAC definition emphasizes the exploration and understanding process over direct action.

Dryden (1993) highlight the interconnected areas between counseling and other forms of assistance, such as care, social work, and even daily interactions in friendships.

According to Shertzer and Stone in *Fundamentals of Counseling* (1976: 173-174), citing Patterson, counseling has several key characteristics:

1. Counseling is a relationship aimed at helping the client voluntarily change their behavior, where the client has a desire to change and seeks support from the counselor.
2. Counseling aims to create conditions that support and ease the voluntary process of change. These conditions become the individual's responsibility in making the right decisions, enabling them to stand on their own and enhance their self-confidence.
3. The client has a range of actions that are adjusted to the counseling goals, which have been mutually agreed upon with the counselor at the beginning of the counseling process. This range of actions is determined by the counseling goals and influenced by the values and philosophy adhered to by the counselor.
4. Conditions supporting behavioral change are facilitated through the interview process. Although not all interviews can be called counseling, every counseling session always involves an interview.
5. Counseling includes a listening process, but counseling is not limited to just the activity of listening.
6. The counselor has an understanding of the client.
7. Counseling is conducted in a private atmosphere, and the results are kept confidential.
8. The client faces various psychological issues, while the counselor has the skills and expertise to help resolve these issues (Aryani et al., 2023).

## **B. Self-Potential**

The desire to "be yourself" often arises when someone feels uncomfortable with what they are currently doing. But what does this statement actually mean? This phrase describes a perspective that can open up insights into how an individual understands themselves. The concept of the self relates to both the natural and conceptual understanding of an individual's identity. According to James F. Calhoun (1995), self-concept is a mental image of oneself that includes an understanding of one's self, expectations of oneself, and self-evaluation (Aisyah, 2019).

Potential refers to the capacities a person has, which have the opportunity to be developed and realized in real life. According to Purwanto (2006), potential encompasses all possibilities or abilities that an individual possesses, which can be realized as they undergo their developmental process. Self-potential is the basic capacity that a person possesses, but it remains hidden and can develop if supported by the environment, training, and appropriate facilities (Masni, 2017). Based on this definition, potential can be understood as the totality of abilities that learners possess, which can develop and be realized in real life. Each learner has

different potentials; some are more cognitively intelligent, more emotionally sensitive, stronger-willed, or superior in physical endurance compared to others (Amaliyah & Rahmat, 2021).

According to Endra K. Pihadhi (2004:6), potential can be defined as hidden strengths, energy, or abilities that an individual possesses but has not maximally utilized. The self-potential referred to here encompasses physical aspects, character, interests, talents, intelligence, and values within a person that have not yet been developed or optimally utilized.

In developing self-potential, an individual needs to make use of their creativity. It should be understood that every individual has the potential to be creative, although the level of creativity can vary. Looking at the history of great figures in the world, they showed creativity from a young age. Developing creativity from an early age is proof of extraordinary talent (Surani et al., 2016).

Self-potential can simply be defined as the hidden capacities and abilities within an individual. In other words, these potentials have not been realized or manifested in the form of behavior, actions, or real activities. These abilities and capacities can cover various fields and take many forms. Whether positive or negative, potential is still potential. Factors such as persistence, hard work, luck, and talent play a role in determining how far that potential can be realized. According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), self-potential refers to the abilities and qualities within a person that have not yet been optimally utilized (Mappeware et al., 2023).

According to Hapsari (2005), self-potential refers to the strengths and abilities that a person possesses, both physically and mentally, that can develop if nurtured and supported by adequate facilities. According to Tarmudji (1998), developing self-potential involves honing one's talents, realizing one's aspirations, increasing self-confidence, resilience in facing challenges, and building harmonious relationships with others. This achievement can be reached through learning from experiences, receiving feedback from others, increasing sensitivity to oneself and the surrounding environment, deepening self-awareness, and trusting one's intuition when taking action (Mahaardhika et al., 2022).

Here are ways to explore self-potential:

1. Be Brave to Act  
Don't hesitate to take steps in facing challenges. Courage is the key to recognizing and developing your abilities.
2. Stand Up for Yourself  
When facing unfair treatment, don't stay silent. Every individual has the right to be treated well. If facing difficulty, remember that there are always people who care and are ready to help.
3. Help Others  
When seeing someone treated unfairly, show concern by offering support or taking action to stop it. Having the courage to fight injustice shows strength and self-belief.
4. Understand Others  
Even if someone behaves poorly, it doesn't mean they don't have feelings. Trying to understand the reasons behind someone's behavior can help deal with the situation more wisely.

### **C. Psychological Freedom**

The background in the context of Psychological Freedom includes exploring the search for an autonomous and meaningful life space. A profound understanding of the concepts of freedom, independence, and the meaning of life is an essential part of this study. Since ancient times, philosophers and thinkers have strived to understand the essence of freedom and how humans can realize it in their lives. From a psychological perspective, freedom is often associated with the extent to which an individual feels they have control over their life. This includes the ability to make decisions based on personal values, beliefs, and preferences without the dominance of external pressures. The concept of autonomy also plays a crucial role in psychological freedom. Autonomy refers to an individual's awareness of their responsibility and control over their decisions and actions. When someone has a high level of autonomy, they tend to feel more capable of managing their life and facing various challenges. Moreover, autonomy is related to increased motivation, happiness, and overall psychological well-being.

The meaning of life is also a crucial element in the pursuit of freedom and psychological well-being. Every individual tends to strive to find meaning and purpose in their life, and they will feel more satisfied when they can live in harmony with the values and ideals they hold. Meaning provides direction and structure in life, allowing individuals to feel more connected with themselves and their environment. It is important to understand that freedom, autonomy, and meaning are relative and subjective, meaning they can differ for each individual and culture. Various factors such as cultural background, religious beliefs, and life experiences influence how a person defines freedom, autonomy, and their life goals.

In the modern era, society often faces complex pressures and challenges, which can impact individuals' ability to achieve freedom and psychological well-being. Technological advancements, globalization, and social and economic changes often add burdens to individuals, creating imbalance and confusion in finding a meaningful and independent life space. Additionally, technological development influences how individuals interact with their environment, including in aspects of social relationships, the need for connectivity, and the recognition from others. This situation can affect how individuals understand autonomy and meaning in their lives, and can potentially increase the risk of feeling socially isolated and experiencing loneliness.

Problems such as stress, depression, and anxiety can also become obstacles for individuals in achieving freedom and mental well-being. Increasing life pressures can disrupt emotional balance, reduce the sense of control and life satisfaction, and make it more difficult for individuals to find meaning and purpose in life. In this regard, psychological freedom is becoming increasingly important as a field of study and practice that focuses on developing strategies and interventions to support individuals in creating an autonomous and meaningful life. By gaining a deeper understanding of the concepts of freedom, independence, and meaning in life, along with the factors influencing their achievement, professionals in the field of psychology can support individuals in facing the dynamics of modern life and achieving optimal mental well-being.

In the increasingly complex dynamics, research in the field of psychological freedom continues to develop to explore various factors that influence an individual's ability to achieve psychological well-being. This research focuses on identifying factors that support or hinder an individual's freedom and independence, developing effective psychological interventions to enhance mental well-being, and gaining a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and economic context's influence in shaping the concepts of freedom and meaning in life (Rahmat Aziz, 2010).

In psychological practice, therapeutic and counseling methods based on the psychology of freedom aim to help individuals overcome the obstacles that hinder them from achieving independence and psychological well-being. This approach may include strengthening skills in facing challenges, enhancing self-understanding, and managing emotions, while also exploring values and life goals that give meaning and direction to individuals. Additionally, education and advocacy play an essential role in the practice of psychological freedom. Providing information and insights regarding the concepts of freedom, autonomy, and the meaning of life to the public can increase understanding of the importance of these aspects in achieving psychological well-being. This can include learning skills in emotional management, decision-making, effective communication, as well as reflecting on values and life goals that give meaning (Utami, 2024).

Psychological freedom is a state that allows an individual to express their thoughts and feelings without pressure and be themselves according to their inner condition. Psychological freedom refers to an individual's ability to express their thoughts and feelings within acceptable limits in social life, while still being responsible for themselves and their surroundings (Ghufron & Suminta, 2010).

According to the American Counseling Association (ACA) in Gladding (2012), counseling is the application of principles related to mental health and human development through various interventions, both cognitive, affective, behavioral, and systemic. Counseling also includes strategies aimed at improving well-being, personal growth, career development, and addressing psychological issues. This definition is designed to align and accommodate various types and approaches to counseling practiced by ACA members. Understanding the elements of this definition is crucial (Habsy, 2017).

Each individual has various potentials that can be developed. The ability to develop one's self-potential is a hope for everyone, as this process occurs systematically and gradually. In general, there are three types of intelligence possessed by humans, namely:

1. Intellectual Intelligence (IQ)
2. Emotional Intelligence (EQ)
3. Spiritual Intelligence (SQ)

These three types of intelligence are crucial aspects in the learning process, enabling each student to develop their potential optimally. Intellectual Intelligence (IQ) is related to an individual's ability to understand and learn through the thinking process. This intelligence is typically measured through verbal and logical skills, and it remains the primary focus in the current educational world. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) consists of five main aspects: self-awareness, emotional management, motivation, empathy, and the ability to build and maintain social relationships. Meanwhile, Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) serves as the soul's function, acting as an internal mechanism within a person that enables an individual to have sensitivity and the ability to understand the meaning behind an event or occurrence.

Based on the intelligence potential possessed by students, educators are responsible for implementing the educational process. To understand the extent of a person's potential, self-potential can be measured through personal reflection, feedback from others, or personality or psychological tests. Humans possess various types of intelligence that can be developed, including:

- a. Logical intelligence
- b. Verbal intelligence
- c. Practical intelligence
- d. Intrapersonal intelligence
- e. Spatial intelligence

In recognizing self-potential, each educator needs to guide students in developing their talents and interests. Additionally, educators also play a role in sharpening various aspects of intelligence, such as intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence, while helping channel talents and identify children's intelligence potential (Yumnah et al., 2016).

The development of individual potential is closely related to various theories regarding the formation of human personality. Experts categorize these theories into several types, namely:

- a) Nature Theory argues that an individual's personality is formed from birth as a result of innate factors. In other words, the potential possessed by an individual is influenced by natural talent.
- b) Nurture Theory assumes that a person's personality is more influenced by environmental factors than by innate factors.
- c) Convergence or Integration Theory suggests that a person's personality is formed through the interaction between innate potential and environmental influences in developing or realizing that potential.

The benefit of developing individual potential is to optimally balance the innate factors (nature) and environmental influences (nurture). This allows individuals to sharpen their positive potentials while reducing negative aspects, thus shaping a strong personality and achieving success (Kuswandi, 2020).

## Conclusion

Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded that exploring self-potential through counseling is an important step toward achieving psychological freedom. Counseling not only plays a role in helping resolve psychological issues but also becomes a process that supports individuals in exploring and developing the potential within themselves. With support from a positive environment and appropriate interventions, individuals can identify and optimize their potential, whether in intellectual, emotional, or spiritual aspects. This understanding aligns with the concept that every individual has unique and diverse potential, which can be developed to achieve a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

Furthermore, psychological freedom, independence, and meaning in life play a vital role that cannot be overlooked. In the modern era, filled with pressures and challenges, counseling serves as a means to support individuals in overcoming obstacles that may hinder them from achieving psychological freedom. Through an approach that focuses on self-understanding and skill development, counseling can help individuals enhance their sense of control and satisfaction in life. Therefore, the application of the concept of psychological freedom in counseling and education plays a crucial role in helping individuals achieve psychological freedom and optimally develop their self-potential.

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