Management of Religious e-Counseling at Islamic Religious Colleges in the New Normal Era

Neng Gustini¹, Ahmad Almofahir², Hary Priatna Sanusi³, Aliya Elvandari⁴

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Jawa Barat, Indonesia

¹neng.gustini@uinsgd.ac.id, ²fahirahmad122@gmail.com, ³harypriatna@uinsgd.ac.id, ⁴aliyaelvandari@gmail.com

Abstract

The existence of technology requires us to change in all aspects of life, including guidance and counseling in Islamic religious colleges. Maximum utilization of resources in Society 5.0 benefits the effectiveness and efficiency of managing guidance and counseling services. This study aimed to identify the management of religious e-Counseling at Islamic Religious Colleges in the new normal era. This research uses qualitative research with case study analysis. The research subject is UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. The results showed that implementing e-Counseling at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung was the responsibility of the Unit of Psychology Service. Clients can access the process of implementing e-Counseling by contacting the registration admin, then the admin will contact the psychologist/counselor and inform the client/counselor about the counseling schedule with the psychologist/counselor. Clients/counselors can also follow the counseling process according to the agreement and procedures set by the Unit of Psychology Service of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. Handling problems in e-religious counseling is carried out through stages: opening: awareness planting (qawmah), exploration stage (taubah), contemplation stage (muhhasabah) and basirah (determination of vision and goals), implementation and development stage (‘umal) and the prayer stage (closing) with transpersonal approaches such as prayer, fasting, dhikr, and Islamic art therapy.

Keywords: e-Counseling; Islamic Religious College; Religious
Introduction

Science and technology are developing positively, especially in increasing individual work productivity. One area where technology is vital is education. To support the process of increasing the effectiveness of work results through optimizing student absorption of learning materials, education tries to improve the position of technology in teaching and learning activities (Jalil, 2021).

Following the post-covid-19 pandemic, all activities must be carried out online. With advances in technology and information, it provides convenience in various ways. For example, it can simplify the communication process and save costs if we want to make relationships with other people who are far away. (Abdillah dkk., 2020) said in his research that the Covid-19 pandemic marked the era of online use as a communication learning medium.

Apart from that, the maximum utilization of resources in Society 5.0 is beneficial in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, especially in implementing guidance and counseling services in educational institutions, including Islamic religious colleges. Although psychologically, they have not accepted new habits; this needs to be done to address the times’ challenges. The implementation of this counseling in terms of counseling guidance is called e-Counseling.

*E-Counseling* is a term from English, namely electronic counseling, which can be interpreted as providing guidance and counseling electronically (Sommerville, 2011). This follows the opinion expressed by (Amani, 2007); e-Counseling is counseling guidance via the Internet, which generally refers to professions related to mental health services through information communication technology, computers, and the Internet.

In this complicated new normal situation, guidance and counseling services are needed to accompany children who face various problems, both learning, personal, social, and so on (Permatasari dkk., 2021). Learning in the network (online) due to the Covid-19 pandemic also changes old patterns or lifestyles into new designs or lifestyles, an adaptation of new habits or the new normal (Rahman & Bhakti, 2020). The reality of the consequences of online learning shows that, in fact, during the online learning process at home, some students at school experience various psychological and mental problems such as feeling bored, bored, lazy with many tasks, feeling tired with
assignments, feeling disappointed, not enthusiastic, feeling anxious, needing entertainment, financial difficulties, missing friends so that it has an impact, namely burnout study (Nita dkk., 2020).

The results of other research, March 2020 with research subjects aged 14 -17 years (69% female and 31% male) with a total of 717 people from 29 provinces throughout Indonesia conducted by the Ministry of PP&PA (Women's Empowerment and Child Protection), showed that 58% of students do not like studying from home (Rahman, 2022).

Several schools have implemented e-counseling consultation services using websites, WhatsApp, Skype, Messenger, Zoom, and Google Meet. This has been carried out by one of the high schools in Gresik (Fadhilah dkk., 2021), SMK PGRI 2 Palembang (Arizona dkk., 2022), SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Tarakan (Sunarni, 2021), and so on. With the e-consultation service feature, guidance and counseling teachers can help with difficulties faced by students (AM, 2022).

This research is different from the previous research above. Management of religious-based e-counseling in Islamic universities in the new normal era offers unique opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, e-counseling allows counselors to reach a wider audience, extend their support beyond campus boundaries, and facilitate counseling sessions at flexible times. It also allows the integration of multimedia resources, such as recorded sermons, lectures, and interactive materials, to enhance the counseling experience. On the other hand, implementing effective management strategies for e-counseling requires careful consideration of factors such as technological infrastructure, privacy and security concerns, counselor training, and maintaining the personal and intimate nature of the counseling relationship.

Islamic Religious Colleges play an important role in fostering students' spiritual, moral, and intellectual growth, preparing them to become scholars, leaders, and contributors to their society. Therefore, Islamic Religious Colleges have a unique environment requiring an extraordinary counseling approach. Integrating religious values and principles into counseling services is essential to provide practical support to students. Therefore, the management of religious e-counseling can be the right solution to meet the needs of students at Islamic religious tertiary institutions.
In creating a religious Islamic Higher Education environment, the counselor's role in developing students' totality includes four aspects: physical-biological, mental-psychic, socio-cultural, and spiritual aspects. The development of the spiritual aspect can be carried out on a religious basis. Based on the results of research conducted by Bahlroh and Suud, the religious-based counseling guidance model can be applied by inviting students to go to the mosque, getting used to doing good, giving examples, making students comfortable in learning, and mingling with students during breaks, empathizing (Bahlroh & Suud, 2020).

The Unit of Psychology Service of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung comes with psychological services to assist in implementing educational programs to explore the potential of students and educators/employees, which can be developed optimally. With psychological services, educational institutions could be assisted in knowing the abilities of students and educators so that they can achieve optimal learning achievement or performance, as well as improve the quality of educational institutions in the community. During the Covid-19 pandemic and the new normal era, the Unit of Psychology Service of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung provided online counseling services. In its implementation, the Unit of Psychology Service is based on Islamic or religious values. This follows the unit's vision: to become a psychological service center oriented to developing and applying psychology based on Islamic values and local wisdom.

To improve the quality of education and competitiveness, Islamic religious universities can take advantage of religious-based e-counseling management. By providing counseling services relevant to religious values and spirituality, universities can attract prospective students looking for holistic support and an academic environment oriented towards religious values. Through religious-based e-counseling management, students can receive specific guidance and assistance to overcome this problem and strengthen religious aspects. Considering the importance of counseling guidance in the new normal period, ULP must strive to develop adaptive service programs to continue providing the best service to clients.

This research explores the critical aspects of managing religious e-counseling in Islamic religious universities in the new normal era. This research shows how effective religious-based e-counseling is in helping students solve their personal and spiritual
problems. This will expand understanding of whether this approach benefits students at Islamic religious colleges. By examining real-world examples and leveraging existing research and literature, this article aims to equip administrators, counselors, and stakeholders with practical insights to effectively navigate the evolving landscape of religious counseling in the digital age.

Method

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach with descriptive methods, which aims to analyze the implementation of religious-based e-Counseling in Islamic Religious Universities in the new normal era. This method is based on postpositivism philosophy and is used to observe the condition of objects naturally. This qualitative research involves researchers as key instruments, using triangulation data collection techniques and inductive/qualitative data analysis. The results of this research place more emphasis on understanding meaning rather than generalization (Emzir, 2018). The research subject is the Psychological Services Unit of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. The informants in this research were 2 ULP staff and several students who were counselors. Data was obtained from participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Meanwhile, the data analysis used in this research is data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion by systematizing the theory of religious-based e-counseling management in Islamic universities (Sugiyono, 2019).

Discussion

The Unit of Psychology Service (ULP) is one of the units engaged in psychological services under the auspices of the Psychology Faculty at Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University, Bandung. Along with the change in the status of the Psychology Study Program to the Faculty of Psychology, since 2006, a unit under the Faculty of Psychology, UIN SGD Bandung, which provides psychological services, has been initiated. However, it was only around 2008 that the unit was given the official name of the Psychology Service Bureau (BPP). In line with the structural changes of the faculty, in 2015, BPP changed to the Psychology and Community Service Unit (LPPM) and finally became the Unit of Psychology Service (ULP) in 2018.
The Unit of Psychology Service (ULP) employees consist of six admins, seven ULP officials, one Office Boy, and nine counselor associations divided into several faculties, namely the Faculty of Da’wah and Communication majoring in Islamic Counseling Guidance, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teachers majoring in Counseling Guidance, and the Faculty of Ushuluddin majoring in Psychotherapy Sufism and Psychologists, totaling 20 people.

The Unit of Psychology Service (ULP) Faculty of Psychology UIN Bandung continues to innovate in providing services following the development of situations and conditions, such as since the Covid-19 pandemic to the new normal in mid-April 2020, the Unit of Psychology Service provided online counseling services for free namely, for students of UIN Bandung and the general public who feel that their mental health has been disrupted due to Covid-19 and need professional assistance. The service was opened in line with the Covid-19 outbreak, threatening physical and mental health.

In addition to personal and group counseling, the Unit of Psychology Service provides various other clinical services, namely Early Detection of Child Growth and Development (DDTK), observation or detection of Children with Special Needs (ABK), psychotherapy, and Sharing Session activities. In addition to clinical services, the Unit of Psychology Service provides various non-clinical services, including intelligence tests, maturity or learning readiness tests, detection of learning difficulties, interest and talent tracking tests, career guidance, workshops, career assessments, job analysis and Competency Test Places (TUK).

The ULP online counseling service process can be accessed by clients in the following stages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact the admin via the WhatsApp application</th>
<th>Fill out the online registration form</th>
<th>Confirm filling out the form with the admin via WhatsApp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clients follow the counseling process</td>
<td>Client counseling schedule with a psychologist/counselor</td>
<td>Admin contacts a psychologist/counselor</td>
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</table>

Table 1 UIN Bandung Psychology Service Unit Service Flow
There is a difference between counseling in general and Islamic religious colleges, namely, using a spiritual approach following the institution’s characteristics. Spirituality in the sense of providing awareness to clients to appreciate more deeply how important spirituality is for mental health because, after all, a mentally healthy person is not only physically and socially beneficial, but also spiritual issues need to be considered, such as reminding to get closer to God- It can be through dhikr, fasting, sunnah prayers, or other things related to transpersonal.

At Islamic Religious Colleges, including the Unit of Psychology Service of Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, counselors relate spiritual or religious issues through the guidance and counseling process that is carried out. The Unit of Psychology Service has handled 80 clients with e-counseling services with 391 counseling sessions. The implementation of e-counseling is carried out according to the problems faced by the counselee If the client’s situation is low or average, it can be done in one session. However, when the counselee’s problem is severe or very clinical, it can be done up to several meetings. Counselors serve a maximum of three people daily, and each person or counselee can be handled within one to two hours.

Based on the results of the study, the problems faced by clients are very diverse, such as experiencing mental disorders that often arise during a pandemic, not being enthusiastic, being quickly carried away by emotions, stress, worry, excessive anxiety (depression), feelings of inner tension, feeling tired quickly, difficulty concentrating, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) to a broken home.

One of the treatments carried out by counselors is a religious counseling approach, including through the following stages:

Table 2 Stages of Counseling-Based Religious

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening: awareness planting (qawmah)</td>
<td>Exploration stage (taubah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The prayer stage (closing)</td>
<td>Implementation and development stage (’amal)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Contemplation stage (muhasabah) and determination of vision and goals (basirah)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Based on the table above, it is known that the stages of implementing the religious guidance and counseling model consist of five stages. The first stage is opening: planting awareness (*qawmah*). In this stage, the Supervisor/Counselor builds an atmosphere of student/counselee involvement by opening the heart or instilling in students awareness of the need for God, accepting and believing that forgiveness, repentance, prayer, reading the holy book, meditation (*muhasabah*) can be a little peace of mind and happiness in life and fostering students to straighten their intentions and understand the importance of religion in guidance.

The second stage is exploration: awareness (*taubah*). Things that the Supervisor/Counselor must do are: a) explore the experiences of students/counselees regarding the theme being studied; b) analyze the norms held by students/counselees related to their experiences and attitudes towards the theme to be studied; c) explain the importance of repentance for mistakes or sins committed; d) explain the conditions for acceptable repentance following the holy verses of the Qur’an; e) conducting questions and answers about the characters studied; f) invite the counselee to understand the nature or essence, form, indicators, benefits and consequences of the character being studied for himself and his life in general, referring to the holy verses of the Qur’an and Hadith; g) inviting the counselee to explore the problems faced by the counselee relating to his/her character; and h) concluding the results of the exploration of the counselee’s experience and connecting it to the theme studied.

The third stage is contemplation (*muhasabah*) and determining the vision or goal (*basirah*). Things that the Guide/Counselor must do are a) link conclusions to religious values; b) use religious guidance and counseling techniques (awareness (*taubah*), reading holy books, meditation, and prayer) through audio-visual video; c) ask students to follow and repeat what is in the video; d) invite the counselee to reflect to realize that the character being studied has consequences; e) encourage students to think deeply through stimulating several questions about the messages and wisdom conveyed via video to be linked to the character theme being studied so that the counselees have the self-awareness to remain steadfast in their character according to their belief in Allah SWT; f) guide the counselee to find messages and reflect on the problems faced based on students’ daily experiences related to the character being studied; and g) counselors facilitate students/counselees to have a vision or aim to have good character.
The fourth stage is implementation and development (‘amal). Things that must be done by the Guide/Counselor at this stage are: a) Motivate and invite the counselor to commit together to change the perspective and strengthen belief in the message through repentance, forgiveness, reading the holy book, meditation (muhassabah), and prayer to be applied in life daily; b) helping clients to become aware of and change bad character based on faith and obedience to God; c) facilitate the counselee to understand that this character can be successfully developed by an individual if he has rational and realistic rules within himself following religious norms, responsibility, and rational goals based on the Koran and Hadith; d) facilitate the counselee to develop good character in himself and understand that the development of this character is done by himself, not by other people or the environment; e) facilitate the counselee to understand that the development of the character being studied must be accompanied by the belief that the counselee/student is capable of developing it; f) encourage clients to be in a group or community that can remind and advise each other in truth and goodness.

The final stage is prayer (closing). In this stage, the Supervisor/Counselor facilitates the counselee to understand the character that must be developed, invites the counselee/student to explore the factors that hinder and support the development of the character being studied, informs the counselee/student always to work together to develop good character, guides, and mentors students/counselees to pray and want students/counselees to pray loudly and clearly with complete devotion, munajat, hoping for Allah’s blessing in order to receive guidance, mercy, help, and strength to be steadfast in good character. At this stage, getting used to ending all activities with prayer is also emphasized. Apart from that, the counselor emphasizes that this final stage activity is a follow-up to always guide and develop character through one’s own experience by imitating other people or learning from other people’s stories and experiences. The Guide/Counselor also facilitates the counselee to reflect and give advice. Alternatively, close the guidance session by saying hamdallah and greetings.

The model implementation stage uses the 20/40/30 rule, meaning 20 minutes for the opening stage, 40 minutes for the core stage, which consists of exploration, contemplation, and development, and 30 minutes for the closing stage (prayer). In the religious approach, several methods are used, including prayer therapy, fasting therapy, dhikr therapy, and Islamic art therapy.
Prayer is not only a movement that must be carried out. However, prayer is a worship that can be used as a therapy. If someone lives up to his prayers, prayer can play an essential role in a person's body, especially regarding one's spiritual or physical health (Budiman et al., 2022). Suppose a person can pray fervently and with full appreciation. In that case, that person will be able to feel the great benefits of the wisdom in the prayer so that he can feel immense happiness and be interested in praying (Aziz, 2013).

Performing worship or prayer is one of the signs of a servant's submission to Allah SWT, as in the ifitah prayer, which reads, "Wajjahtu wajhiya liladzii fatarassamawaati wal ardh haniifam Muslimaw wamaa anaa minal mushrikeen" which means "I turn my face to the substance that has created the heavens and the earth with full of sincerity and submission and I am not one of the polytheists." By multiplying and improving the quality of worship to Allah, there will be a hope that Allah can forgive all his mistakes and hope to be given way to all his problems. Through prayer, the servant and his Lord have a strong bond or relationship by mobilizing all his emotions and body parts to Allah SWT (Lubis, 2021).

Through prayer therapy also, various psychological tensions can be reduced. Sincere prayer can bring peace and stability to humans, encourage positive thinking in life, and fight the anxiety that arises from the stress that is felt. By always being grateful and praying to Allah, prayer directs the human mind only to gratitude for what he has, not his various shortcomings (Bahsani, 2008).

As for fasting therapy, it can train a person to behave patiently and be more steadfast in living life even though no one is watching his behavior. By fasting individually, a person controls his lust (Lubis, 2021). Fasting is closely related to the psychological world; various studies have shown that fasting can relieve mental illnesses and stress. This is evidenced by research showing that various physical and spiritual mental disorders can be recovered by fasting on Mondays and Thursdays. In addition, fasting functions as therapy in Islamic Counseling Guidance, from the healing function: to overcoming mental stress and curing drug addiction. Not only serves as a healing, but fasting also functions as a deterrent: breaking the tendency of the soul to immorality; and fasting can give affect the ability of self-control and the function of coaching and development: fasting brings an attitude of piety self-control; patience development, and fasting to form self-maturity (Kurniasari, 2015).
Several research results state the effect of fasting therapy on human health. Research conducted by Fadiyah said that fasting therapy had an effect on hypertension blood pressure (Fadiyah dkk., 2016). According to research by Riandi Alfin et al., fasting can stabilize blood sugar in diabetes patients (Alfin dkk., 2019). Subsequent studies have revealed that fasting significantly affects mental health (Rosyidin, 2011).

Dhikr therapy is an effort to instill monotheistic values in a person by remembering Allah SWT repeatedly. Dhikr contains practical psychotherapeutic elements, not only from the point of view of mental health but also physical health. Scientific evidence states that remembering Allah (dhikr) is a form of one's religious commitment. From a psychological point of view, dhikr has a tremendous spiritual effect and a sense of devotion, faith, maturity, honesty, and steadfastness in life. There is an alternative to overcome anxiety, namely dhikr, with a religious psychoneuroimmunology basis. The results of the study stated that there was a significant relationship between religion, soul (psychic), and body (neuroimmunology) (Rofiqah, 2016). Research has proven that dhikr therapy as an intervention can effectively reduce anxiety in older people (Widyastuti dkk., 2019).

Islamic art therapy can be in the form of Murrotal Al-Qur’an therapy and Islamic music therapy. Murata Al-Qur’an therapy can provide a therapeutic effect, relaxation, and calm for those who listen and read. It also affects the client's anxiety level. In addition, Islamic music therapy can also be used as a relaxation medium that can lead us to a feeling of peace—profound and spiritual awareness. However, in Islamic music therapy, paying attention to the harmony between the poetry or the lyrics and the counselee’s problem is necessary.

The benefits of Islamic art therapy are personal recovery (curative) and personal achievement (development). Islamic art therapy is expected to communicate pent-up negative emotions that are difficult to express in the client's body to help more accept their shortcomings and increase the counselee's self-confidence (Wajahtera & Nurjannah, 2022). In addition, art therapy can be used as an alternative to help develop children's self-concept. This is proven in research that art therapy affects increasing children’s self-concept (Hidayah, 2014).

The implementation of e-Counseling in the Psychology Services Unit at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati has been implemented well, although some factors must continue
to be improved. Several studies show that the results of e-counseling are necessary and successful or effective in its implementation. Among other things, research conducted by (Ifdil & Ardi, 2013) shows that e-counseling is quite adequate, whereas, for counselees who do not have the opportunity or are constrained by distance, online counseling is a solution to help alleviate problems.

The obstacles during e-counseling at the UIN Bandung Psychological Services Unit (ULP) are network factors and limitations in client observation. The way to overcome this obstacle is by optimizing the network system that will be used and implementing it via video conference as a substitute for direct observation or intervention. This follows research conducted by (Fahri dkk., 2021), which shows the use of Zoom media as an e-counseling tool for class.

Conclusion

The Unit of Psychology Service (ULP) of UIN Bandung has provided free e-Counseling services since the covid 19 pandemic. Clients can access the process of implementing e-Counseling by contacting the admin via WhatsApp and then filling out the registration form; after that, the admin will contact the psychologist and inform schedule client counseling with a psychologist/counselor. The counselee can also follow the counseling process according to the agreement and procedures set by the Unit of Psychology Service of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. In implementing religious e-Counseling, counselors deal with existing problems through stages: opening; awareness planting (qawmah), exploration stage (taubah), contemplation stage (muhasabah), and basirah (determination of vision and goals), implementation and development stage ('amal) and the prayer stage (closing) with transpersonal approaches such as prayer, fasting, dhikr, and Islamic art therapy.

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