

## **The Effect of Physical Appearance and Counselors Age on Students Self-Disclosure**

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### **Abstract**

Self-disclosure is the primary material of the psychotherapy process and has been proven as an essential aspect in the therapeutic relationship, the process of counseling and psychotherapy will be more productive, if the counselee has self-disclosure to the counselor. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of physical appearance and counselors age on self-disclosure. The data analysis technique used is the 2-way ANOVA test and the average difference. The instrument used the Emotional Self-disclosure Scale (ESDS) is an instrument developed by Snell, Miller, and Belk (1988). The results show that physical appearance and counselors age influence self-disclosure.

**Keywords:** *Counselors age, physical appearance, self-disclosure.*

### **Introduction**

Self-disclosure or response of individuals to the situation at hand and provide information that is relevant or useful to understand the reaction of the individual in the present. Self-disclosure can be descriptive and evaluative. Descriptive self-disclosure, i.e., individuals describe various facts about themselves that the listener may not know, such as work, residence, and so on. Whereas evaluative self-disclosure, individuals express their opinions or personal feelings, that they like certain people. The counseling and psychotherapy process will be more productive if the counselee has a self-disclosure to the counselor. Self-disclosure is material as the basis of the psychotherapy process and has been proven as an essential aspect of the therapeutic relationship. Almost all forms of counseling and psychotherapy emphasize the importance of client self-disclosure because disclosure is seen as a self-exploration center needed for successful advice and the primary source of some client problems that stem from the problem approach.

In a study that had been done, it was stated that regardless of a person's willingness to express themselves, the nature of the initial problem and the level of attractiveness in the physical appearance of the therapist influence the participant's commitment to self-disclosure in a partner's situation (Albada, Knapp, & Theune, 2002). They

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are also more comfortable to express attractive young therapists than unattractive young therapists. It is important to remember old evidence that individuals have biases based on physical attraction. Some researchers have documented how physical appearance is an important marker that shapes life interactions and outcomes. In line with other studies such as race or age, physical appearance not only influences how individuals think about others but also how they interact with them (Perepiczka & Balkin, 2010). Individuals often make biases that are favored by individuals who have physical attraction. In society, people will be able to conclude several assumptions and personality competencies, based solely on appearance.

One reason for the physical attraction is interpersonal attraction such as race, gender, age of physical appearance. Physical attraction can also affect an individual's personality. Physical appearance is the most apparent personal characteristic and is evident by others in direct interpersonal interactions. Although there is some research on the influence of the client's physical appearance on counseling relationships, so far, social psychology research has been entirely consistent in documenting the existence of social stereotypes on physical attraction. This stereotype has been found to operate in a variety of contexts, including juridical decisions, dating behavior, interactions, and teacher expectations.

One study found that physically attractive students tended to have more peer attention than physically unattractive students (Gold, Petrella, Angel, Ennis, & Woolley, 2012). Clients who are physically attractive in analog counseling situations are considered to have a better prognosis than physically unattractive clients. On the other hand, researchers study that attractive physical appearance that is showing calm, friendly, independent, dominant, happy, sexy, adaptable, successful, more masculine (male), and more feminine (female). So, someone tends to choose to interact with people. Physical appearance is a therapist's characteristics that are quickly assessed and can contribute to the client's disclosure decision-making process. Existing literature shows that client perceptions about the effectiveness, competence, and trustworthiness of the counselor are related to the client's first impression of the therapist, and this impression is based on the part of the therapist's appearance. This first impression is made from information that is visually recognized and valued. Personal characteristics that are easily seen (gender, color, age, physical appearance) and the meaning attached to them contribute to the client's first assessment of the counselor's skills and abilities to bring up students' perceptions and interests in self-disclosure

It is essential to understand that physical appearance leads to spontaneous positive or negative judgments. A study supporting the effect of physical appearance on positive things and beautiful phenomena is good with the impact of strength that seems comparable to the age (Yang et al., 2017). Furthermore, another study found that applicants who were more attractive regardless of gender and age tended to track whether men or women with age match dominated the position (Vásquez-Amézquita et al., 2019).

### **Problem of Study**

Based on the above research explanation, physical appearance, and age counselors were hypothesized to influence student self-disclosure. In this study, self-disclosure is a significant problem considering self-

disclosure is essential in conducting counseling activities. In general, the difference from this study with previous research is that this study focuses on students' first impressions about the counselor and its effect on self-disclosure.

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

This research is an experimental research with factorial design. This study has two independent variables and one dependent variable, to examine the effect of the counselor's physical appearance and age on self-disclosure.

### **Participants**

The subjects in this study were students of public high school 14 Bandar Lampung-Indonesia, and then 116 students were taken as research samples. This research was conducted by gathering respondents in class. Next, a PowerPoint is displayed to explain the steps of the activity and provide instructions related to the drawing and how to fill the instrument. The picture will be displayed for five seconds then the respondent is asked to see it and does not need to pay attention to the ability and competence of the counselor in the picture, respondents are only proposed to assess the physical appearance of the counselor and know the age of the counselor in the image and whether there is a possibility that the respondent will be interested. After being displayed for 5 seconds, the respondent fills in the ESDS instrument for 5-10 minutes. This procedure is carried out four times to show how much the respondent's self-disclosure is.

### **Data Collection Tools**

The instrument used The Emotional Self-disclosure Scale (ESDS) is an instrument developed by Snell, Miller, and Belk (1988). ESDS has eight subscales, and each has five items. 1) Depression emotional-disclosure subscale (Items 1, 9, 17, 25, 33), 2). Happiness emotional-disclosure subscale (Items 2, 10, 18, 26, 34),3) Jealousy emotional-disclosure subscale (Items 3, 11, 19, 27, 35),4) Anxiety emotional-disclosure subscale (Items 4, 12, 20, 28, 36), 5) Anger emotional-disclosure subscale (Items 5, 13, 21, 29, 37), 6) Calmness emotional-disclosure subscale (Items 6, 14, 22, 30, 38),7) Apathy emotional-disclosure subscale (Items 7, 15, 23, 31, 39), 8) Fear emotional-disclosure subscale (Items 8, 16, 24, 32, 40). Pearson product-moment test results confirm validity (0.482 to 0.780), so the overall scale produced is valid.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis technique used is the 2-way ANOVA test and the average difference.

## **Results**

Hypothesis testing used in this study uses ANOVA two paths with factorial design and using independent T-test. Furthermore, hypothesis testing is done with the help of SPSS for Windows version 16.00. A summary of the results of the 2-way ANOVA test can be seen in table 1.

Table 1

*Description of Self-disclosure based on Physical Appearance and Counselors Age*

<i>Physical Appearance</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Attractive appearance	Older counselor	88.13	31.100
	Younger counselor	129.13	39.813
	Total	108.63	37.450
Unattractive appearance	Older counselor	90.39	33.003
	Younger counselor	104.09	31.516
	Total	97.24	32.494
Total	Older counselor	89.26	32.051
	Younger counselor	116.61	35.664
	Total	102.93	33.857

Table 1 it can be seen that overall, respondents are more open to attractive counselors than unattractive counselors. However, when viewed from the age of counselors, respondents are more open to younger age counselors compared to older age counselors.

Manipulation checks are carried out to assess differences in the attractiveness of the counselor's appearance, which is presented as a research instrument. Tests carried out using one-way ANOVA show that  $F_{(3,96)} = 32.272$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Differences in perceptions about the level of attractiveness between attractive counselors and unattractive counselors were analyzed based on the results of the post hock using the Tukey technique.

The result is that there is no difference between an unattractive older counselor and an attractive younger counselor ( $MD = -.2800$ ,  $SE = .3793$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and between an unattractive younger counselor and an attractive younger counselor ( $MD = -.2440$ ,  $SE = .3793$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) while there is a difference between unattractive old counselors and unattractive young counselors ( $MD = -.4400$ ,  $SE = .3793$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), and there is no difference between young counselors interesting with interesting old counselors ( $MD = .080$ ,  $SE = .3793$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Comparisons between partners reveal the physical appearance of each counselor is different from each other. Thus the comparison between counselors differs from one another and has a gradation from one another.

The effect of the counselor's physical appearance on the respondent's self-disclosure can be seen in several research results. Based on the two-line ANOVA test results in table 2, it can be seen that physical appearance has an effect on self disclosure ( $F_{(3,468)} = 12,106$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), where the effect of openness is higher for attractive counselors ( $M = 108.63$ ,  $SD = 37.450$ ) compared to unattractive counselors ( $M = 97.24$ ,  $SD = 32.494$ ). Thus based on these findings, it can be explained that the counselor's physical appearance influences students' self-disclosure.

The effect of age counselor on respondents' self-disclosure can be seen in several research results. Based on the two-line Anova test results in table 2 it can be seen that it has an effect on self disclosure ( $F_{(3,468)} = 26,702$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) where the effect is higher in younger age counselors ( $M = 110.86$   $SD = 36, 947$ ) compared to counselors older age ( $M = 95.01$ ,  $SD = 32.127$ ). Thus based on these findings, it can be explained that the age counselor influences students' self-disclosure.

Hypothesis testing used in this study uses ANOVA 2 path with factorial design and using independent T-test. Furthermore, hypothesis testing is done with the help of SPSS for Windows version 24.00. A summary of the results of the two-way ANOVA test can be seen in table 2.

Table 2

*Interaction Effects Physical Appearance and Counselors Age on Self-disclosure*

Effects	F (3,46)	P
PA	12.106	<0.01
Age	26.702	<0.01
Interaction PA*Age	5.206	<0.05

Based on table 2, it can be seen that the ANOVA 2 path test results show that the interaction between physical appearance and counselors age obtained  $F_{(3,46)} = 5.206$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , which indicates that there is an interaction value between PA and age in influencing self-disclosure.

Furthermore, there is an interaction effect between physical appearance and counselors' age on self-disclosure; the difference in effects between pairs of groups can be seen in table 3.

Table 3

*Differences in Effects Between Groups in Couples*

Paired Group	F	p
Older age attractive vs. younger age attractive	24.40	<0.01
Older Age $\neq$ Attractive vs. Younger Age $\neq$ Attractive	4.36	>0.05
Older age Attractive vs. Older age $\neq$ Attractive	1.52	>0.05
Younger Attractive vs. Younger Age $\neq$ Attractive	15.28	<0.01

In table 3 it is known that there is a difference in the effect between attractive older age counselors and younger attractive age counselors in influencing self-disclosure ( $F_{(1,234)} = 24.40$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), there are differences in effects between attractive older age counselors and older age counselors young is not attractive in influencing self-disclosure ( $F_{(1,234)} = 4.36$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), there is no difference in effect between attractive older age counselors and older age counselors not attractive in influencing self-disclosure ( $F_{(1,234)} = 1.52$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), and there is a difference in effect between younger attractive counselors and younger non-attractive counselors ( $F_{(1,234)} = 15.28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

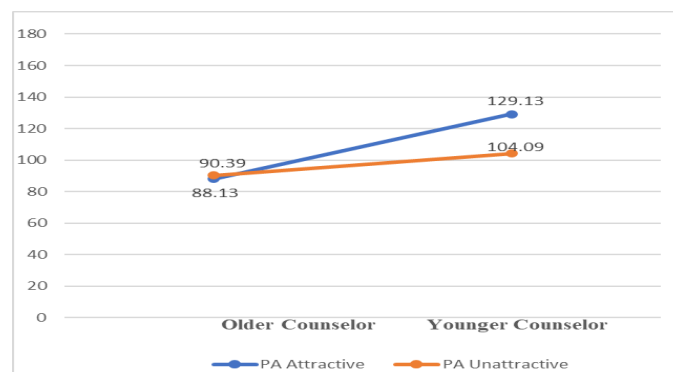


Figure 1. Physical Appearance and Counselors Age Graph of Self Disclosure

From the analysis of the effects of physical appearance and age shows that students tend to have self-disclosure to attractive counselors and younger age counselors. Overall, self-disclosure is very high for young and attractive counselors ( $M = 129.13$ ), while self-disclosure is lower for older age counselors who are not attractive (90.39). Visually for differences in self-disclosure can be seen in Figure 1.

This study aims to look at the form of student self-disclosure based on the counselor's physical appearance, which aims to see whether there are differences in the way of respondents' self-disclosure to the counselor. Physical appearance is the most apparent personal characteristic and can be accessed by others in direct interpersonal interactions (Reis, Wheeler, Spiegel, Kernis, & Nezlek, 2018).

The results of this study indicate that physical appearance has a strong positive effect on self-disclosure. Two forms of physical appearance (attractive and unattractive) have different significance influence values on self-disclosure. In this study, it is known that young counselor respondents and old counselors have the same self-disclosure of the counselor's physical appearance. The results of instruments that are processed using SPSS show that male and female respondents both have higher self-disclosure to attractive counselors than non-attractive counselors. Thus the results of this study indicate that there is an effect of physical appearance in influencing self-disclosure.

### **Discussion And Conclusion**

This study shows that the physical appearance of the counselor on the first impression of students affects student self-disclosure. Attractive counselors display positive characteristics that affect the decision of students to open themselves or not. This finding shows that a person's components that are easily assessed, such as physical appearance, can contribute to one's level of self-disclosure. The physical appearance of the counselor shows the impression on the competency and feasibility of the counselor on the client's perception of the counselor.

It is therefore expected that counselors can display actual physical appearance such as dressing neatly, which can make the best initial impression on clients when they appear on counseling activities. This is because someone consciously or unconsciously makes conclusions that they have gotten from their experiences with other people, where there are specific meanings attached to the form of one's appearance, one of which is appropriate clothing. This is supported based on the results of research showing physical attractiveness, and gender counselors influence self-disclosure, where attractive counselors and female counselors are preferred (Hanum, Purwanto, & Sunawan, 2019).

This study proves the interaction between physical appearance and age with self-disclosure for students in the city of Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. Teachers' expectations about students show that physical attractiveness is associated with academic expectations and the intellectual abilities of students in the classroom (Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne, & Sibley, 2016). Teachers tend to judge attractive students as being preferred in terms of intelligence, social skills, academic abilities, and achievement grades. Attractive students are also seen as more open and have more leadership potential and social skills and higher self-esteem (Carter, Mustafaa, & Leath, 2018). Also, exciting student offenses are not rated as severe and tend to be associated with external

factors compared to those committed by students who are not attractive (Shaheen & Batool, 2019). Supported by research that says the intimacy of self-disclosure is greater for interesting people than non-attractive (Brundage, Derlega, & Cash, 2016).

Besides, a study showed that the physical appearance of the teacher's contribution in learning, motivation, facilities and significant to learning outcomes indirectly through learning discipline, with a donation of 10%; There is a contribution of the teacher's appearance in learning, motivation, facilities, and significance to the regulation of knowledge, with a donation of 22.1%; and there is a contribution of learning discipline and importance to learning outcomes, with a donation of 4.16% (Bambaeeroo & Shokrpour, 2017). This is not supported by research which says that teacher behavior is more influential on learning success and motivation to practice sports (Derbali, Matoussi, & Elloumi, 2019), the research reveals how the teaching of a teacher influences the learning process. If the teacher teaches well, then the learning process will run smoothly or vice versa. Therefore, the teacher must have a way of teaching that interests students to participate in learning well. Furthermore, in other studies found teachers must be sensitive to skills and appearance to become better teachers.

The education system can understand the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher recruitment process related to appearance and abilities (Hafizi, Bagheri, Sadighi, & Yarmohammadi, 2017). Relation to the counselor, the counselor is a teacher who has a duty to the psychological well-being of students, one of which is student self-disclosure, because the impact of students not being open to themselves will hamper social interaction and effective communication. Because, to establish excellent communication, individual and another must be able to be open. Effective communication is constructive for individuals to open up. (Bulantika, Sari, & Mafirja, 2020).

Therefore a counselor strategy is needed to be able to attract or foster student interest in self-disclosure, by paying attention to physical appearance, besides the age of the counselor also plays a role. A study explores the success of counseling on students' self-efficacy by looking at counselor education programs, gender, and age (Lam, Tracz, & Lucey, 2013). Furthermore, in an article examining 32 undergraduate women and 32 non-college women of age-related interest in counselors, the results reveal that undergraduate and non-college women prefer older female counselors. (Simons & Helms, 1976).

Some previous studies are relevant to the results of this research, from the effects of research students do need counselors as good, fair, creative, fun, patient, assertive, caring, and communicative. Still, students often feel bored when given services by counselors because the same material often repeated and preferred young counselors who were more creative and friendly than counselors who were seniors at school. It can be concluded that students' perceptions of counselors occur because these students pay attention to something that appears in the counselor's physical appearance, as well as the creativity of the counselor on the strategy in counseling, in this case, young counselors are considered students have more creativity and better understand what students expect compared to senior counselors or older. If the physical appearance and counselor's strategy is not as what is expected by students, then students will perceive less well (negative), and there is no self-disclosure of students.

A limitation of this study is the lack of personal characteristics of the counselor. Because there is no other information about the counselor, respondents will only use physical appearance and age as a basis for drawing different conclusions, especially conclusions regarding the credibility of the counselor in conducting counseling activities. By adding character traits, attitudes, and physical appearance have a significant effect on respondents. Different patterns of influence on personal characteristics can be compared to the counselor's physical appearance. Respondents may not be attracted to unattractive counselors, but if the respondent sees the character and attitude of the counselor, it can increase the respondent's self-disclosure. It is also possible that respondents' self-disclosure will be reduced if they see a counselor who has an attractive physical appearance but does not have the character and attitude that is liked by the respondent.

The results of this study note that among respondents have the same self-disclosure. From the results of instruments that are processed using SPSS show that respondents equally have higher self-disclosure to young counselors than to older counselors. Thus the results of this study indicate that there is an effect of counselors' age in influencing self-disclosure and that young counselors benefit more than older counselors.

This research was conducted to see the effect of the counselor's physical appearance and age on self-disclosure. The results showed that physical appearance and age influenced self-disclosure. There are differences in students' self-disclosure when viewed from the physical appearance and age of the counselor. The results show that students are far more open to attractive counselors than to unattractive counselors. And also more open to counselors who are younger than counselors who have an older age. Overall, students are more open to an attractive, more adolescent counselor. So it is concluded that more inexperienced counselors who are attractive are far more disadvantaged than former counselors who are not attractive.

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