

INDONESIAN SOCIETY'S PERCEPTION OF HYPNOTHERAPY COMPARED TO OTHER TYPES OF PSYCHOTHERAPY: A POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGE

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ABSTRACT

Background: Hypnotherapy has demonstrated high efficacy and is recognized for its potential for various clinical or health conditions. However, the perception of hypnotherapy among the general public is very diverse and influenced by many factors, especially compared to other types of psychotherapy.

Objective: We aimed to investigate Indonesian society's perception of hypnotherapy compared to other types of psychotherapy.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey design was used, targeting users of Twitter and Instagram. The chosen online questionnaires assessed variables, including respondents' characteristic data. This study also used the "Persepsi Praktik Hipnoterapi" questionnaire that has been peer-reviewed.

Results: Among 100 participants, hypnotherapy is the most widely known, trusted (35%) type of psychotherapy. Most of the respondents had never undergone psychotherapy (36%). Moreover, most of the respondents in this study had never undergone hypnotherapy (71%). The majority of respondents also gave a possible response to hypnotherapy that can help to cure mental disorders (65%) and physical illnesses (54%) and heal permanently (55%). Most respondents responded "no" to the thought that hypnotherapy can replace the role of psychology and psychiatrists (86%).

Conclusion: Respondents are more familiar with hypnotherapy than other psychotherapy techniques but many do not know the authority of hypnotherapists.

Keywords: Hypnotherapy, Indonesia, perception, psychotherapy.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, hypnosis treatments for various clinical or health conditions, called hypnotherapy, have demonstrated high efficacy and are recognized for their potential to help relax the individual's physical and mental aspects.¹ An altered state of consciousness and the process used to create it are called "hypnosis." Physiological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes can all be altered when someone is in a hypnotic trance. A therapist or oneself can generate a hypnotic state and hypnotic phenomena (self-hypnosis). These high levels of spontaneity and sincerity could define the subjective hypnotic experience.²

Some modalities, such as electroencephalography (EEG) and other imaging techniques, can separate hypnosis from other states of consciousness, such as regular alertness, sleep,

profound relaxation, or meditation. Regression to a younger age (retrieval of memories or experiences from an earlier developmental stage), a conspicuous inward focus, increased suggestibility, or a greater sensitivity to suggestions are only a few of the physiological and mental processes that define a hypnotic trance. Hypnotic events may spontaneously arise in clinical scenarios involving a high level of the patient's emotive involvement, such as crises, diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, or communicating a critical diagnosis.³ In the medical field, hypnotherapy is generally used to give the patient access to their resources to enhance the patient's problem-solving abilities, facilitate behavioral changes, restructure cognitive-affective patterns (minimization, reinforcement, and new conditioning), restructure emotionally taxing situations and feelings, and integration of sensations that are not accessible (dissociated).⁴⁻⁶

However, based on a recent meta-analysis, the majority of the population believed that hypnotherapy is a supplement to a medical procedure rather than a substitute and that the hypnotist is affiliated with the mainstream of either the medical or psychological fields through certification or referral.² The relevance of those who appeared to reject hypnosis is unknown because the numbers varied greatly. Moreover, only bare-bones interpretations of the veracity of popular opinion will be presented because hypnosis is currently poorly understood, even among hypnotists.⁷ Most people usually perceive hypnosis as an interaction between a hypnotist and one or more subjects, during which the hypnotist directs the subject's focus inward and employs suggestions to alter the subject's perception and experience.³ Hence, hypnotherapy is only recommended when patients are given a specific therapeutic goal. In addition, the perception of hypnotherapy among the general public is very diverse and is influenced by many factors. Therefore, we aim to investigate Indonesian society's perception of hypnotherapy compared to other types of psychotherapy.

METHOD

This study was descriptive, utilizing a cross-sectional survey design that was carried out from April to August 2022. The target population was all users of Twitter and Instagram. Inclusion criteria are who have fully agreed to be involved in the study by signing the informed consent. Sampling was carried out using the consecutive sampling method, and data collection was done via online questionnaires using Google Forms.

The chosen online questionnaires assessed variables, such as characteristic data (age, occupation, and education history). This study also used the "Persepsi Praktik Hipnoterapi" questionnaire peer-reviewed. The measurements of people's perceptions of hypnosis were also carried out by measuring "The Valencia Scale of Attitudes and Beliefs Toward Hypnosis-Client Version and Hypnotizability." All research procedure has been declared ethical by ethics committees in the Medicine Faculty, University of Brawijaya (Ethical clearance No.135/EC/KEPK/07/2020). The collected data were processed in Microsoft Excel and SPSS software for data analysis.

RESULT

Study Characteristics

Respondents in this study amounted to 100 people who completed an online questionnaire by obtaining a link on Twitter or Instagram. The age of the respondents was not normally distributed. Thus the data presented was a median of 25.50 (17-49) years. In terms of employment, students are the majority of respondents in this study, as many as 30 (30.0%) people. Meanwhile, the last education of the majority of respondents was undergraduate, as many as 49 (49.0%) people. The study characteristics are presented in Table 1.

In this study, hypnotherapy is the most widely known type of psychotherapy or heard by respondents. Most of the respondents had never undergone psychotherapy (36%). Hypnotherapy is the most trusted psychotherapy that can overcome mental problems (35%). The majority of respondents stated that hypnotherapy might be able to overcome mental problems (61%). Most of the respondents in

this study had never undergone hypnotherapy (71%), and if they wanted to undergo hypnotherapy, it would be done by a psychiatrist (43%). Most of the respondents responded to the competence of the hypnotherapist, namely providing therapy with hypnotherapy (68%). If the respondent's family or acquaintances experience psychological problems, most of the respondents will suggest they consult a psychologist (49%). Most of the respondents are neutral about the effectiveness of hypnotherapy (64%). The majority of respondents also gave a possible response to hypnotherapy that can help to cure mental disorders (65%) and physical illnesses (54%) and heal permanently (55%). Most of the respondents gave the response "no" to the thought that hypnotherapy can replace the role of psychology and psychiatrists (86%) and did not know where to report if there was a suspicion of ethical violations or malpractice from the hypnotherapist (75%). All data is described in Table 2.

DISCUSS

Respondents in this study were generally young adults. It can be caused by most respondents' occupations being college students with the most recent education, undergraduate. These results differ from the research by Flik et al. (2019), who conducted a study on the efficacy of individual and group hypnotherapy in irritable bowel syndrome with a total of 354 respondents. This study states that the average age of respondents is 34.5 – 37.4 years, with the majority of education levels being primary and secondary.⁸

The number of students who became respondents to this study could be due to their high interest in hypnotherapy. Research by Nurcahyaningrum and Moordiningsih (2021), which examined the effectiveness of hypnotherapy in reducing depression in the final semester of engineering students, stated that there was a significant difference in the level of depression between the scores of subjects before and after being given hypnotherapy.⁹ This is also supported by research by Ayun (2021), which shows that hypnotherapy effectively reduces the impact of destructive emotions on students, namely avoidance behavior, insecurity, crowd phobia, aggressive behavior, difficulty forgiving the past, and unable to concentrate.¹⁰

Respondents are more familiar with hypnotherapy than other psychotherapy techniques (96%), even when compared to cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which is the gold standard in several psychotherapy approaches. Hypnotherapy is becoming more popular for treating several rather widespread psychological and physiological conditions. Industry trends show that hypnosis methods are increasingly being recognized as the most effective technique for treating several of these widespread maladies, as opposed to basic hypnosis techniques.¹¹ Study by Taştan et al. (2021) shows hypnosis and CBT as the gold standard can be used with comparable high success rates when treating vaginismus. The hypnotherapy group's mean number of sessions before successful coitus was noticeably lower.¹² Also, a study by Fuhr et al. (2021) shows that hypnotherapy was not inferior to CBT after six months of treatment to reduce depressive symptoms, assessed in mild to moderate major depression (MD).¹³

Hypnotherapy is becoming more and more well-liked due to its efficacy comparable to CBT. It has been utilized for millennia in various ways, but it has to be reassessed in light of contemporary science and medicine from a biological, psychological, social, and spiritual perspective. Hypnotherapy

Table 1. Study characteristics

Variable	N (%)
Age (years)	
Median (min-max)	25.50 (17 -49)
Mean $\pm$ SD	26.20 $\pm$ 5.172
Occupation	
Administrator	1 (1.0)
Civil servant	4 (4.0)
Unemployment	6 (6.0)
Copywriter	1 (1.0)
Dentist	1 (1.0)
Lecturer	3 (3.0)
Freelancer	7 (7.0)
Teacher	3 (3.0)
Housewife	7 (7.0)
Private employee	18 (18.0)
Security	1 (1.0)
College student	30 (30.0)
Occupational therapist	1 (1.0)
Seller	2 (2.0)
Student	1 (1.0)
Health services	1 (1.0)
Regional-owned enterprise	1 (1.0)
State-owned enterprise	1 (1.0)
Psychologist	9 (9.0)
Technician	
Entrepreneur	
Last education	
Senior high school	35 (35.0)
Diploma	6 (6.0)
Undergraduate	49 (49.0)
Postgraduate	10 (10.0)

Table 2. The Questionnaire Answers Description

Questions and Answers	N	%
Which of these psychotherapy lists have you heard of or know about?		
Hypnotherapy	96	33
Cognitive Behavior Therapy	68	23
Psychodynamic Therapy	16	6
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy	12	75
Dialectical Behavior Therapy	16	6
Humanistic psychotherapy	18	6
Mindfulness-Based Intervention	63	22
Do not know all of the lists	1	0
Which of these psychotherapy lists do you hear the most?		
Hypnotherapy	66	66
Cognitive Behavior Therapy	24	24
Psychodynamic Therapy	0	0
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy	0	0
Dialectical Behavior Therapy	1	1
Humanistic psychotherapy	1	1
Mindfulness-Based Intervention	8	8
Never heard the whole list	0	0
Which of these psychotherapies have you had?		
Hypnotherapy	28	21

Cognitive Behavior Therapy	20	15
Psychodynamic Therapy	2	2
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy	5	4
Dialectical Behavior Therapy	5	4
Humanistic psychotherapy	3	2
Mindfulness-Based Intervention	18	14
Not completely familiar	2	2
Others	1	1
Never had psychotherapy	48	36
From all of the following, which one is most believed to be able to overcome mental problems?		
Hypnotherapy	35	35
Cognitive Behavior Therapy	24	24
Psychodynamic Therapy	1	1
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy	5	5
Dialectical Behavior Therapy	3	3
Humanistic psychotherapy	3	3
Mindfulness-Based Intervention	16	16
There is not any	15	15
Do you believe hypnotherapy can solve mental problems?		
Yes	34	34
No	5	5
Probably	61	61
If you believe hypnotherapy can solve mental problems, why do you believe in this approach? If you answered no, please leave it blank		
Read the article in credible journals	26	21
Many people have proven it	16	13
Can recover quickly	3	2
View promotions in the media	13	10
Solving the root of the problem	31	25
No side effects	9	7
No need for treatment	11	9
Only a few meeting	3	2
Difficult access to psychologist/psychiatrist	7	6
Others	7	6
Have you ever run hypnotherapy? If so, with whom?		
Never	71	71
Once, with a psychologist	10	10
Once, with a psychiatrist	4	4
Once, with a certified therapist	12	12
Once, with others	3	3
If you have never had hypnotherapy but want to be treated with hypnotherapy, who would you like to be treated with?		
Do not want to run hypnotherapy	12	12
Want with a psychologist	23	23
Want with a psychiatrist	43	43
Want to be with a certified therapist	20	20
Want with anybody	2	2
In your opinion, which is the competence of a hypnotherapist?		

Provide therapy with hypnotherapy	98	68
Diagnosing mental disorders	15	10
Diagnosing physical illness	2	1
Provide advice on the treatment given by a psychiatrist	27	19
Giving medicine for mental disorders	2	1
If your family/acquaintance is experiencing psychological problems, where would you advise them to consult?		
Psychologist	81	49
Psychiatrist	70	42
Hypnotherapist	13	8
Coach	1	1
No need for consultation	0	0
How effective do you think hypnotherapy is?		
Very effective	29	29
Effective	0	0
Neutral	64	64
Less effective	6	6
Not effective	1	1
Do you think hypnotherapy can help cure mental disorders?		
Yes	28	28
No	7	7
Probably	65	65
Do you think hypnotherapists can help to heal physical illness?		
Yes	8	8
No	38	38
Probably	54	54
In your opinion, is hypnotherapy a permanent cure?		
Yes	2	2
No	43	43
Probably	55	55
Do you think that a hypnotherapist can replace the role of a psychologist or psychiatrist?		
Yes	3	3
No	86	86
Probably	11	11
Do you know where to report if there is a suspected ethical violation/malpractice from a hypnotherapist?		
Yes	20	20
No	75	75
Probably	5	5

is regaining favor in the trend of individualized and holistic health without drugs, injections, or side effects.¹⁴ Hypnotherapy is increasingly popular because it is often equated with hypnosis shows that magicians often perform on television for entertainment. Hypnotherapy became popular in 1900 to help people quit smoking and lose weight.¹⁵ A person in a hypnotic state will display several different characteristics and tendencies compared to someone who is not in a hypnotic state, which is easy to accept suggestions. It causes

hypnotherapy to be easy, safe, effective and efficient to change, instill a new belief, create a new habit and overcome other emotional problems. This situation makes hypnotherapy an alternative to overcoming client complaints about mental health.¹⁶

Hypnotherapy is also a technique that many respondents have experienced compared to other techniques. Along with the emergence of psychological problems caused, various methods were developed which are expected to overcome them. This method was developed by experts in their respective fields, including hypnotherapists who develop hypnosis-based science to overcome problems.¹⁷ Hypnotherapy provides clinical benefits to patients, including reduced chronic pain, reduced anxiety, management of phobias or fears, stopping drug and alcohol addiction, and improved self-esteem and emotional distress.^{18–22} Although hypnosis promotes the experience of ideas, patients are not compelled to undergo certain experiences. Hypnotherapy is simple to use, affordable, and efficient. It has no known negative effects and may be used on its own and in conjunction with other therapies.²³ Therefore, hypnotherapy is preferred.

The level of public confidence in hypnotherapy is higher than in other techniques. At the same time, mindfulness is gaining popularity as a form of psychotherapy. The perception of hypnotherapy is also good in society. According to Agus and Yuliandra's research from 2020, three indicators of the attitudes of male futsal athletes at the Indonesian Technocrat University are positively evaluated. Most athletes find that using hypnotherapy techniques to improve focus while competing works quite well.²⁴ The effectiveness of mindfulness-based therapies in enhancing mental health is now supported by a multitude of research. In addition, the relationship between dispositional or trait mindfulness and psychological well-being has drawn more and more attention in recent work.²⁵

The impacts of attention/cognitive control, emotion regulation, and self-related processes, as well as motivation and learning mechanisms, are complex and synergistic, and a mindful self-regulation model based on an integration of neuroscientific discoveries summarizes the mindfulness effects.²⁶ The proponents of mindfulness would have us think that almost all patients and therapists might gain from practicing mindfulness. Self-control, objectivity, affect tolerance, more flexibility, serenity, better focus and mental clarity, emotional intelligence, and the capacity to relate to oneself and others with love, acceptance, and compassion are some of its advantages.²⁷

This study found that hypnotherapy is the most popular type of psychotherapy, the most heard, and the most trusted to overcome mental health disorders. These results are consistent with previous studies, which reported that most subjects had a positive attitude towards hypnotherapy and would consider its use in appropriate situations. Most of the subjects in the study also believed that hypnotherapy is useful in dealing with psychological problems and supports medical intervention, and hypnosis can also improve abilities, especially memory.³ There is an assumption that hypnotherapy can solve problems from the root of the problem. This assumption may be due to many advertisements from hypnosis practitioners. However, these assumptions and claims do not have a basis in the form of scientific evidence.

Respondents who underwent hypnotherapy with a certified therapist had a similar number of respondents who went to a psychologist. It may be due to the stigma that people visit

mental health professionals, making certified hypnotherapists more likely to be visited. The stigma in Indonesia states that a person who goes to a psychologist or psychiatrist is often associated with weakness, disgrace, personal mistakes, ungratefulness, and lack of faith.

In previous studies, it was stated that hypnotherapy services seemed to be more acceptable if a doctor gave them a referral. It impacts the increasing application of hypnotherapy and can address the limitations of psychological treatment for physical problems. This hypnotherapy is likely generalized to most complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies.³ A small percentage of the subject's negative attitude seems to be a problem for those wishing to promote hypnotherapy treatments. This group may have negative views about hypnosis stemming from media depictions. About 3.8% of the subjects in the study believed that hypnosis could induce demonic possession, suggesting that religious beliefs may be a factor in these negative attitudes.²⁸

Despite the large number of people who seek and believe in hypnotherapy that psychologists or psychiatrists do not perform, some are unaware of hypnotherapists' authority. Some assume that hypnotherapists can diagnose mental disorders, and physical illnesses, provide opinions on treatment by psychiatrists, and prescribe medications for

CONCLUSION

Respondents are more familiar with hypnosis than other psychotherapy procedures, even when compared to CBT, the gold standard of multiple psychotherapy approaches. Moreover, hypnotherapy is a technique utilized by more respondents than other techniques, with a greater degree of public confidence than other approaches. It is commonly believed that hypnosis tackles issues at their source. Those who had hypnosis with a therapist were comparable to those who saw a psychologist or psychiatrist. In addition to the numerous non-psychologists/psychiatrists who find and believe in hypnotherapy, many do not recognize the authority of hypnotherapists.

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mental health disorders. It is an ethical issue in health practice because some practitioners do not have a medical background. It can also be made worse because most respondents do not know where to report a practitioner if there is a suspicion of an ethical violation or malpractice. Ignorance or wrong assumptions related to hypnotherapists and hypnotherapy, especially those not carried out by these health workers, will lead to ethical problems, such as misdiagnosis and input about inappropriate treatment, which can be a dangerous risk for the patient.

Similarly, as previous studies discussed, hypnosis has been followed by some concerns about its validity as a therapeutic approach in the health sector. There is agreement among professionals and researchers that hypnosis has potential risks if done without appropriate skills.^{29–31} Although the acceptance and use of hypnosis have grown over the last few years, the possible harmful risks that hypnosis abuse can pose to patients still exist. The potential risk of harm to the patient is due to the practice of an unlicensed hypnotist. Hypnosis therapy techniques are associated with potential risks if not applied properly by an expert.^{31,32} This ethical consideration includes competence, supervision, informed consent, and confidentiality to be practiced properly by those who use hypnosis.³³

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