

# The Process of Developing Online Consultation Application as an Alternative in Handling Adolescent Problems

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**ABSTRACT:** *This increasingly advanced era has made us face the fact that adolescents' need for guidance and counseling is increasing. the problems they face are increasingly diverse. In schools and universities, for various reason, the need for consultation is also increasing. The problem is that many teenagers find it hard to tell their problems face-to-face. It's not that they have a low communication skill, but a variety of other obstacles. One of which is that no one is able or willing to listen to their anxieties. On the other hand, the use of internet, including web-based applications, by the adolescents is increasing rapidly. The latest data from Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII) indicate that 49% of 88.1 million Indonesian internet users are adolescents. Therefore, providing a web-based consultation application is the right step to help them solve the problems anytime and anywhere.*

*The objective of this research is to describe the teenagers' need for mobile application consultation media. In addition, this research will also design a web-based and android based application as the lecturer forum for voluntary serving adolescents who want to confide in or consult their problems. The results showed that apart from career, teenage problems are friendship, love, family, and financial. Most respondents posted their problems in social media to release their pressure, without expecting feedback from their friends or followers. Nearly all respondents are interested in using online consultation service. They hope they can consult personally and privately, where no one can read their consultation history. In addition, the respondents recommended using a popular name, instead of institutional one, that is close to teen's life for the online consultation media name. Thus, we developed www.sobatmu.com. After running for a year, the need for improved consulting means this service should transform into an android application for mutual comfort of counselors, users and service managers.*

**Keywords:** *online consulting, counseling, teenage problem*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) states that the number of Indonesian internet users has now reached 171,17 million, i.e. 64,8% of total population. Thus, compared to the total population based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), since 2013, with 71.9 million users, the number of internet users in Indonesia have grown by 100 million from, where 49% of them are aged 18 to 25 (APJII, 2019).

On the other hand, Juju Masunah shows interesting data in a policy brief of the Center for Population Research and Development, University of Education of Indonesia, entitled "Education, Health, and Social Profile of Bandung City Adolescents: Problems and Alternative Solutions". Masunah describes that adolescents in Bandung have various problems. According to Masunah, teenage problems include educational problems, where according to Bandung City Education Office a considerable number of students drop out of junior high and high schools. The next problem is health, including menstrual disorders, that is sitting at the peak of adolescent reproductive health cases (73%), contraceptive consultation (15.18%), sexually-transmitted diseases (3.75%), dating problems (2.4%), premarital sex (2%), and HIV/AIDS (1.92%) (Masunah, 2011). Another research in Bandung shows that adolescent problems range from friendship, romance, school, family, to mental health problems (Rathomi & Shafira, 2019).

Another study entitled Knowledge and Information Service Needs for Adolescent Reproductive Health in Several Big Cities in Java conducted by Soeparmanto et al. shows that information about reproduction, including sexual behavior, is indeed needed by adolescents. However, the way to appropriately deliver it to them needs to be well-formulated. Currently they get information about reproductive health from their parents, peers, counseling teachers, biology lessons, newspapers, seminars, youth discussions, magazines and TV. They expect the following methods of conveying information: discussions, hotline services (telephone), counseling, mailing, printed media (booklets, leaflets and posters). They desire a packaging with teen soul, and expect information from peers, teachers, youth consultation agencies, parents, doctors, or midwives, where it covers moral values, laws, religion, youth development, teenage relationships, healthy sexual behavior, sexually-transmitted diseases, and illegal drugs (Azizah, 2013; Sofwan, 2013).

The causes of adolescent problems may vary, from academics to other things. In tertiary education, the causes of their failure or problems are personal backgrounds, including age, family conditions, and so on (Khoirunnisak & Iriawan, 2010). Not only that, religious views in the family environment and also ecological aspects are also factors that must be considered in discussing the causes of student problems (French, Christ, Lu, & Purwono, 2014).

These teenagers found it hard to solve their problems because they are usually not close to their parents or afraid to communicate with them. In addition to the context of career guidance or consultation, the majority of the adolescents are afraid of having a face-to-face consultation with the counseling teachers at their schools or universities (Setya & Widyastuti, 2009; Tanuwijaya, 2018).

To face the adolescent problems and challenges of consultation, developed countries have long developed online consultation media. Developing countries like Indonesia have also begun to adopt this method, but mostly in adult health consultation. Therefore, it is necessary

to develop an online consultation that facilitates adolescents to address their problems and get answers or enlightenment from relevant consultants (Newman & Ingraham, 2017).

Previous research on adolescence has been carried out in various aspects. Nisfiannor analyzes group acceptance as an important phase in adolescent life. The results show a strong relationship between adolescents' ability to manage emotions and group acceptance (Nisfiannor, 2004). Various adolescent problems should be overcome not only by face to face consultation but also by utilizing technology that is currently developing (Torous & Roberts, 2017).

Teenagers are one of the highest users of the latest communication technology. The number of smartphone users among teenagers is very high. Eighty eight point sixty six percent of them have cell phones and 93.78 percent of them have used cellphones in the last three months. In addition, around 26.27 percent of youth used computers and 81.22 percent of youth used the internet in the last three months. Based on the type of area, young people's access to technology in the urban areas is higher than in the rural ones. Another disparity in access to technology can also be observed from their physical conditions, where those with disabilities tend to have less access to cellphones, computers and the internet (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2019).

The current public need for digital media consultations is shown by Kusmiyati et al. in their research entitled The Utilization of Cellular-Based Short Message Services for Improving Knowledge about and Attitudes towards Premarital Sex in Adolescents that sms provides equally good knowledge about reproductive health for adolescents in Yogyakarta (Kusmiyati, Kusnanti, & Hakimi, 2011; Newman & Ingraham, 2017). In accordance with the explanation above, it is important to provide online consultation in this digital era as an alternative to deal with adolescent problems. In this paper, we will describe the adolescents' needs for online consultation media, and the way researchers realize the expected prototypes of online consultation media.

## **2. METHODS**

This research was conducted in two steps. The first was to describe the needs for online consultation media, and the second was to develop a prototype of online consultation media based on those needs. The first step used descriptive method to answer and describe adolescents' needs for online consultation media. This was done by analyzing the results of questionnaires from 42 respondents and Focus Group Discussion with ten students from Communication Training And Consulting, Faculty of Communication Science, Universitas Padjadjaran. Afterwards, the next step was to develop a prototype of online consultation media based on the needs of teenagers.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In this study, the majority of respondents began to enter late adolescence, aged 18 to 21. This is in accordance with the data of their educational background, where the majority of them are university students, from semester I to semester VII. Meanwhile, 28% of respondents are

aged 16-18, i.e. the second and third graders of high schools. The remaining 5% are teenagers in their first year of high school.

The majority of respondents, who are currently studying at tertiary institutions, admit that their pocket money ranges from IDR750,000 to IDR1,000,000 per month. Meanwhile, on average, high school respondents admit that, apart from their primary needs, they receive pocket money per week from IDR100,000 to IDR150,000. With this allowance, the teenagers will easily have access to online media. This is that today many providers offer attractive internet packages at affordable prices for teenagers. For example, Three provides AON (Always On) package that allows them to access Facebook and Twitter for free for one year even though the main package has run out.

According to the respondents, the most common problems they faced were family problems. Unexpectedly, it turns out that the teenagers also faced financial problems. In this case they are the freshmen who have to be able to manage their own monthly money, even though many of them still receive daily or weekly allowances so far. When they go to college, they have to manage their allowance for a month, and they couldn't easily ask additional allowance when they run out of money. Before college, they only take care of secondary and tertiary needs. However, in college they should take care of their primary needs as well. Economic condition is one of the factors that influence the problems and mental health of urban adolescents (Landis et al., 2007)

Another problem they face is love, in this case the teenage romance like having a crush on someone, the desire for having a boyfriend, and having on and off relationship. Beyond that, friendship problems are also common. However, academic problems are the one they regard without much seriousness or even ignore. Other problems include health, hobby, organization activities at school/university. An environment that does not facilitate their hobbies and organizational needs will result in a feeling of pressure for adolescents (Steinberg & Simon, 2019).

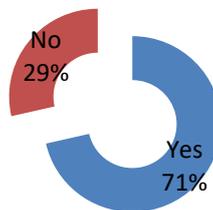
More than half of the respondents preferred to tell their friends when they have problems. They think friends are the ones who can best understand their problems, provide solutions, and be there when they need "supports". As many as 22% of respondents chose to keep the problems to themselves and did not tell anyone the problems. They think that their problems will not be resolved even if they tell them to others. Therefore, instead of letting people know their problems and getting no meaningful solutions, these respondents chose to keep them to themselves. Meanwhile, there were also respondents who did not share their problems but actively sought solutions themselves, assuming that they themselves understood the problems and the key to solving these problems was entirely within them. Surprisingly, only 7% of the respondents shared their problems with their families, either their parents or their brothers and sisters. They are reluctant to share their problems because they are ashamed to tell them to their parents. They are afraid that their parents will be overly worried, and eventually became overprotective toward their interactions. In regard to non-career problems, it turns out that they don't see school or university counseling as an option to consult with about their problems.

The tendency of adolescents to share problems with friends is in line with what is expressed by Albert et al that adolescence is a time in which a person experiences many cognitive, emotional, and social changes (Albert, Chein, & Steinberg, 2013). They begin to think more

complexly, become more emotionally sensitive and spend more time with their friends. The relationship between adolescents and their peers is the main thing in adolescent development, because at that time adolescents seek to be independent and no longer connected with their parents. Teens need more supports from their friends than their parents (Landis et al., 2007).

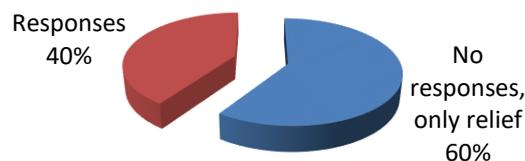
With regard to the use of social media, as previously predicted, the teenagers may share their problems on social media because they frequently access social media. In fact, most of them (71%) have indeed shared their problems on social media.

Picture 1  
Expressing problems on social  
media



In the FGD, it was found that the most suitable social media to "curb" or chat with friends were Facebook and Twitter. What kind of postings do the teenagers usually share on social media? It is not a long description of their problems, but it was shrouded by various forms of posting, from posting indirect sentences, appropriate pieces of song lyrics, and appropriate quotes.

Picture 2  
Teenagers' expectation after posting on  
social media



The majority of respondents posted status about their problems and did not really expect an active response from their friends and followers. Posting problems on social media is seen as a means of catharsis or relief from pressure. By expressing their problems in various forms of writing, either confessions, song lyrics, or quotes, they feel relieved.

When the respondents were asked whether they were interested in and would like to try an online consultation service, nearly all respondents answered yes and wanted to try it.

Based on the FGD, it is found that the teenagers' interest in online consultation media is that they would understand the problems, so there is no harm in telling them to people with relevant expertise, especially when there is no risk of "leaking" the problem. Since it is online,

they can confide in anytime and anywhere, without anyone knowing. If there is an online consultation service, the teenagers hope they can consult adolescent issues, including financial, romance, friendship, education, and sex and health.

In general, teenagers hope that if they consult with a consultant about their problems, it must be kept confidential. They don't want the consultant to publish their problems, even though their name and location is changed. According to them, it has to be between themselves and the consultant. Therefore, the consultations should be conducted in private networks or direct messages between the teenagers and their consultants. Only 14% of teenagers allowed the publication of their consultations with anonymity and private location.

Respondents preferred "slang" name with teen soul for the name of the website. During the FGD, the researchers offered the following names: [www.konsultasiremajaonline.com](http://www.konsultasiremajaonline.com), [www.konsultasiunpad.com](http://www.konsultasiunpad.com), [www.curhat.com](http://www.curhat.com), [www.sobatmu.com](http://www.sobatmu.com). Eventually, the participants chose [www.sobatmu.com](http://www.sobatmu.com), because they thought *sobatmu* 'your friend' was unique. It is an acronym for Sahabat Obrol Atasi Masalahmu "a friend to talk and solve your problems"

After deciding the name, the next step is creating a logo. To make a logo, the team got help from students who were fluent in graphic design. The FGD participants selected the following logo:

Picture 3. Logo for [sobatmu.com](http://sobatmu.com)

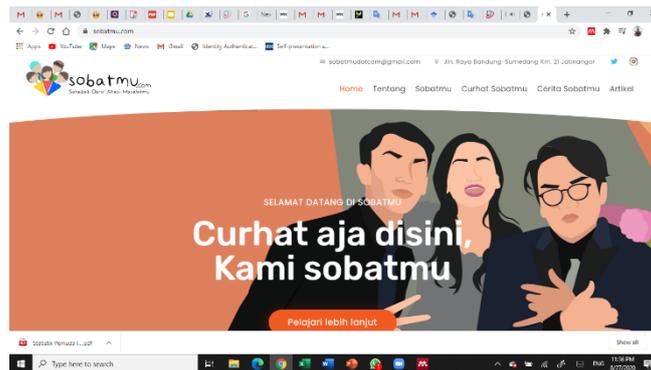


According to them, the bright colors represent cheerfulness in youth. Faceless icons illustrate teenagers who are confused about their problems, but when they are together, the problems will unravel.

After determining the logo, the next step is contacting a website developer to create a web-based application. The researchers then chose Smuufy and SoccaAksara Digital, Bandung-based web designers and developers. The results of descriptive research and the desire for a suitable website for adolescent online consultation were discussed with M. Yusuf Adiwiyarso, S.T. and Fauzy Akmal Muslimin who direct the professional website development agencies.

Based on the results of this study, the researchers then developed [www.sobatmu.com](http://www.sobatmu.com) as an online consultation media for adolescents. Sobatmu stands for *Sahabat Obrol Atasi Masalahmu* "A Friend to Talk and Solve Your Problems". To make it attractive to teenagers, this website is designed with an attractive appearance, icon, and bright background colors. In the consultation, a teenager will have a personal dashboard containing their profile and consultation history. The dashboard is confidential because it can only be opened with a username and password. The consultants of this website are experienced lecturers in the field of adolescent problems. They are called "Kakak" (sister/brother), instead of "Mister" or "Madam", to create closeness with the teenagers.

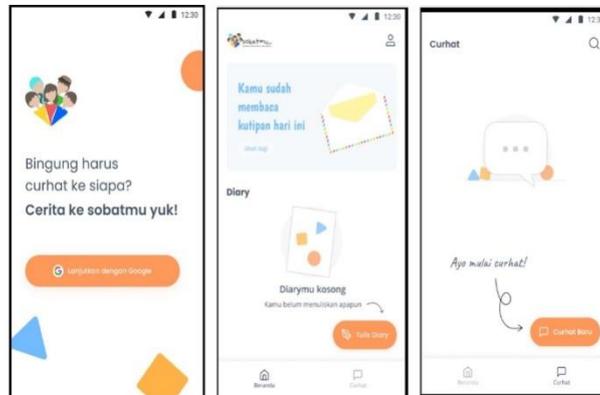
Picture 4. Interface of www.sobatmu.com



After successfully building and running the online consultation website "sobatmu", it should be possible to conduct trials with Bandung youths to find out how they appreciate or behave towards this website. Researchers also have no objection if there is a lecturer who wants to do service in the form of socializing website sobatmu to teenagers in Bandung and other cities in Indonesia, because in fact the reach of this online media is not limited to Bandung.

The next step we take is to develop sobatmu.com into an android application. There are 3 applications made are client applications for teenage users, applications for counselors, and applications for admins. The following is a picture of Sobatmu android application developed.

Picture 5. Sobatmu Android application for client



#### 4. CONCLUSION

The results showed that the problems faced by adolescents in Bandung City include friendship, love, family, and financial. In general, the adolescents tell their problems to their friends, not to their families or counseling teachers. Most of the respondents have posted their problems on social media, only to release pressure, not to expect any feedbacks from their friends or followers. Nearly all respondents are interested in trying an online consultation service. They hope that, even though it is online, the consultations can be done in private, without anyone knowing. They also hope that their problems are not disclosed to the public, even if it's anonymous. In addition, the respondents recommend a name that is close to the teenage life, not a formal, institutional name, for the online consultation media. Researchers

develop web and android-based consulting applications to facilitate adolescents to easily consult their problems.

## 5. LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

This study has several limitations, including the less-specific respondents. In addition, further research is needed to measure user experience satisfaction with the application.

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