

# Physiognomy and Counselor Competencies

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**Abstract:** The counselors required competencies which are needed to do their job well. One of the competencies is the ability to identify a counselee, especially on the multicultural context. If the counselors can recognize their counselee well, they can determine the kind of intervention or an appropriate therapy for a counselee. There are many ways to assess and identify a counselee. One of them is by using physiognomy. Physiognomy is the study of seeing and understanding body appearance as a means to identify the intangible personal characteristics. This paper discussed physiognomy as a study to see counselee from many perspectives such as physiognomy from Western, the Middle East, China, and Indonesia. The method used in this paper is a literature review through inter-textual approach. The result showed that physiognomy can be used as an efficient alternative, especially when a counselor does not have many times for counselee who needs intervention or therapy in limited time. Moreover, this paper also discussed how to apply physiognomy along with its advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of using physiognomy are easy and more efficient to be applied, while some disadvantages are also found such as a cultural bias, a pseudo-science, and a pseudo expression from a counselee observed.

**Keywords:** *physiognomy, counseling, competence, multi-culture*

## INTRODUCTION

Humans live in the trajectory of cultural exchange. As time goes on, various approaches are needed to understand each other. Because every human being has a different background, they have different needs. Similarly, it is only natural for a counselor to have knowledge and sensitivity before deciding which intervention or therapy to use for the counselee. If the intervention and therapy are not in accordance with the nature or background of the counselee, of course the therapeutic process cannot run smoothly, it may even be rejected by the counselee because it is contrary to the culture or character of the counselee. In order to deliver effective counseling with a framework of multiculturalism, this paper tries to highlight the competence of the counselor that has been mentioned by experts and the methods or skills needed to become competent counselors. After discussing the method in the initial discussion, the second discussion will discuss the counselor's competence both theoretically and practically, both from the west and Indonesia. The third discussion is about physiognomy, its understanding, history, and its application. From the two discussions, the discussion continued on the importance of physiognomy as a competency that should be mastered by a counselor. This paper concludes with conclusions and outputs from the results of the discussion.

Research on physiognomy in the world of counseling already exists in several themes such as research conducted by Azmi (2016) who took the title: Bimbingan dan Konseling Islam Pasca Face Reading untuk Meningkatkan Self-Acceptance Calon Istri terhadap Pasangan (Studi Kasus Calon Istri di Biro Konsultasi dan Konseling Keluarga Sakinah Al-Falah). This research uses physiognomy to analyze the face of the prospective husband of the counselee, then the counselor helps interpret it to increase the counselee's self-acceptance of her future husband. Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, (2010) in their research entitled *Intentional Interviewing and Counseling: Facilitating Client Development in a Multicultural Society* states that recognizing the reflection of the client's emotions as one of the most important tools in the counseling

process. Heesacker (1997) in their research entitled *Beyond Feelings: Psychotherapy and Emotion*, state that emotions often lie at the center of the process related to counseling. But ironically, the field of applied psychology (for example, school psychologists or counselors) has not done a large amount of systematic research on constructs related to emotions, such as the recognition of facial emotions Gerstein & Ægisdo'ttir as cited in (Hutchison & Gerstein, 2012). While the focus of this paper is on the importance of physiognomy, it is used by counselors to recognize counselees so that an appropriate form of intervention and therapy can be decided.

## LITERATURE STUDIES

### *Counselor Competencies*

Today the term counseling is often found everywhere, both in the legal, social and educational spheres, but each has a different role and action. Counseling in this article leads to the realm of education. Counseling is a special assistance process that focuses on the individual's personal meaning obtained from an experience (Myrick, 2011). Asserts that counseling focuses more on individual personal awareness, individual attitudes, and certain goals that individuals conceptualize (Myrick, 2011). (Neukrug, 2012) admitted that it was difficult to define counseling so he mentioned a number of words that could represent the meaning of counseling; short term, facilitative, here and now, change, problem solving, listening, and awareness. While the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2010a in Neukrug, 2012) has endorsed a term of counseling as a professional relationship with the aim of achieving mental health, health, education and career goals by empowering individuals, families, and groups. Many theories about counselor competencies have been formulated by experts. One well-known approach is the RESPECTFUL approach (Lewis, Lewis, Daniels, & D'Andrea, 2011). This devotion pays more attention to multicultural aspects, diversity, and social contexts. RESPECTFUL Principles consist of Religious/Spiritual Identity (Economic/religious identity), Economic Class Background (economic class background), Sexual Identity (sexual identity/orientation), Psychological Maturity (Ethnic maturity), Ethnic/Racial Identity (ethnic/racial identity), Chronological/Developmental Challenges, Trauma and Other Treatments to One's Well-Being (trauma and other treatments that affect personal well-being), Family Background/History (background/family history), Unique Physical Characteristic (uniqueness of physical characteristics) and Location of Residence or Language Differences (location of residence or difference in language). The multicultural counseling movement represents a revolutionary movement that clearly begins to take place in the counseling profession. This movement encourages a paradigm shift that has so far been a cultural bias towards fundamental concepts of mental health, psychological maturity, human development, psychological illnesses, and appropriate treatment strategies to better respect cultural differences and individual ways of thinking.

While in Indonesia, the formulation of the Counselor Competency Standards has been formulated on the basis of a framework that confirms the context of the task and the performance expectations of a counselor. If it's organized into four educator competencies as stated in PP 19/2005, then the formulation of academic and professional competencies of a counselor can be categorized into pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies. The counselor's competency standard is to understand in depth the counselee who wants to be served, to master the theoretical basis of guidance and counseling, to hold guidance and counseling that is independent, also to develop personally and professionally in a sustainable manner (Nasional Minister of National Education, 2008).

Of the two forms of competency that arise in the west and Indonesia, there are things that both must be mastered, it's called the ability to understand the counselee in depth. In Lewis et al., (2011) approach, the ability to understand counselees includes an understanding of religious identity, culture, sex, psychology, family, origin, race, even trauma experienced by the counselee. Meanwhile, according to the Minister of National Education (2008), the ability to understand counselees includes the ability to respect and uphold humanitarian values, individualism, freedom to choose and get the benefit of the counselee in the general welfare context, as well as applying physiological and psychological development and counselee behavior. What can be drawn from both is, the counselee who comes to the counselor needs deep understanding, which cannot be generalized with other counselees.

### ***Physiognomy***

Physiognomy is a science that is quite old. In various parts of the world, this knowledge is quite widely studied and applied in various activities. One way to find out one's personality is through Physiognomy. Susilo (2014) mentioned that physiognomy comes from the words physis and gnomon. Physis means nature and gnomon means valuation. Meanwhile in term of terminology, Prasetyono (2015) defines physiognomy as an art and science that is used to recognize one's character by looking at the face, or commonly referred to as face reading. The use of the term physiognomy in other branches of science also has its own meaning. For example in geography, physiognomy is defined as the science of spatial structure and internal arrangements of cities, Badcock as cited in Eddo, (2006) Badco as cited in Coiacetto, Eddo (2006). In addition, in geography, physiognomy is also often called metoposcopy (Werner, 2004).

Historically, (Azmi, 2016) stated that the first science of physiognomy was compiled by Aristotle by examining the relationship between individual physical characteristics and personality traits. In the 18th century, the development of the science of physiognomy continued Johan Kaspar Lavater by identifying the facial characteristics of a person with mental tendencies. Then in the 19th century a skull contour frenology theory emerged, which was initiated by Franz Joseph Gall, where he identified skull contours that had a relationship with character. Meanwhile (Morison, 1843) used physiognomy to identify patients' mental illnesses in his time. The theory of physiognomy was later developed by Edward Jones in the 1930s in identifying someone's crime. Edward Jones, who is a judge from Los Angeles, observed the facial gestures of behavior in the session and then found a more effective method of reading faces. Edward Jones also uses physiognomy in the process of selecting a trial judge because according to Edward Jones, physiognomy can be used to develop personality, to improve a relationship and develop one's career. Then William Sheldon in the 1950s initiated the theory of somatotypes, the theory of the relationship between body posture and individual personality. After that Robert Whiteside used Physiognomy to decide on work placements. Robert Whiteside's research revealed a match between personality, relationships and careers whose accuracy reached 92% (Tickle, 2014).

The science of physiognomy in China has existed since 2,000 years ago. (Prasetyono, 2015) stated that the science of physiognomy in China is carried out in the form of facial readings by Chinese doctors and uses it as a diagnosis of disease. The ability to recognize traits and profound dispositions is very helpful in the process of diagnosing disease and choosing the right therapy. This principle was later developed by the Taoists (Kohn, 1986). They drafted the concept of reading faces by describing three human components, namely physical, spiritual, and

soul. Physical body is a form that can be seen and touched by the senses. Spirit is the spiritual dimension of human beings while the soul is the mental dimension of humans, both of which are abstract in shape, different from physical concepts. Individual characteristics can be reflected in physical form, especially the face. The art of face reading in China was also introduced by the philosopher Gui-Gu Tze. Gu Gu Tze lived around 481-221 BC. He wrote a book called Xiang Bian Wei Mang which until now in China is still used to study physiognomy.

The Islamic world has its own figure in the science of physiognomy, namely Imam Fakhruddin Al-Razi. The book written by al-Razi is titled *Al-Firasah: Daliluka ilaa Ma'rifah Akhlaq al-Nas wa Thabai'ihim wa ka-annahum Kitabun Maftuh*. Al-Razi (2015) explained the term *Firasat* as a term to refer to the inner condition based on visible signs. Al-Razi has six techniques for reading one's character. First, it's based on individual form and appearance. Second, it's based on the type of voice. Third, it's based on similarities with animals in certain physical forms. Fourth, it's based on the similarity of racial characteristics. Fifth, it's based on gender differences. Sixth, it's based on part of the known character. While Imam Syafii in the *Wirasat Sapii* text has also written a note about the science of physiognomy that has been studied by Ahmad (2018). This Syafii manuscript has been edited by T.E. Bahrend is an Arab-Pegon accent and is kept neatly in the Main Catalog of Archipelago Manuscripts Volume 4 of the National Library of Indonesia. From the Syafii manuscript it was found that the limbs examined by Imam Syafii included; head, hair, forehead, eyebrows, ears, eyes, nose and lips. Imam Syafii interpreted each form of the member of the body with the meaning contained in human nature.

## METHOD

The method used in this paper is a literature study with an inter-textual approach. The inter-textual approach is chosen because this paper does not focus on one literature but rather a lot of literatures. Literature studies are used because this paper discusses multicultural approaches, especially from the western, eastern (Chinese), Islamic, and Indonesian approaches in particular. The main sources of literature in this paper are books that discuss the technicalities of physiognomy, both how to read faces and body language. In the discussion, we will mention the slices of some of the literature presented for analysis and conclusions. Each book will be sorted on themes that discuss the practice of physiognomy. From the analysis and discussion, we will discuss the application of physiognomy with its various shortcomings based on the literature that has been studied and analyzed with my perspective. The results of the study will be added to the output of suggestions from me.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Physiognomy in the West*

Face reading technique based on physiognomy is a science that is used to determine the character of a person's personality by looking at the face. Face reading techniques based on physiognomy in the west were developed in terms of placement or predicting one's crime. One of the characters is Tickle (2014) who has a book called *You Can Read a Face like a Book*. In interpreting faces, (Tickle, 2014) combines spiritual, emotional, and mental aspects. In addition Tickle also explained the implementation of the science of physiognomy as a means of developing personality, improving human relations, to about work placement that is in accordance with human character. In addition, research Keating (1985) shows that the science

of physiognomy can identify how the shape of a man's ideal face according to women, and vice versa (in the west). According to men, women who have an immature face and not too dominant are preferred. Meanwhile women, on the other hand, prefer men who are mature and dominant. Then the research from (Keating, Randall, & Kendrick, 1999) also succeeded in using physiognomy to change the image of the American President to change people's perceptions, especially for political opponents of the president's face. The president's photo can be produced to impress a mature, warm and interesting president. Meanwhile (Nierenberg & Calero, 2007) wrote a book called *How to Read a Person Like a Book*. In the book, not only faces are read, but also gestures, and other body movements that arise from the subconscious, which have certain meanings. The book teaches simple techniques for understanding other people by translating body movements and facial expressions.

### ***Physiognomy in the East***

The art of face reading was developed in China through the concept of *yin-yang*, the concept breaks down the body into three, namely physical, spiritual and soul. The body is controlled by spirit and soul. Spirit and soul create basic characteristics that reflect the physical face (Prasetyono, 2015). In the Islamic world, al-Razi is the main physiognomy figure of Muslims who sees something that appears to someone physically and interprets it to understand inner states (Al-Razi, 2015). In addition, Imam Syafii has also written notes in the science of physiognomy found in the *Wirasat Sapii* text (Ahmad, 2018).

### ***Physiognomy in Indonesia***

A reference source of the science of physiognomy in Indonesia is quite common. Prasetyono, (2013) wrote a book entitled *Membaca Wajah Orang*. This book focuses more on face reading techniques. Every limb in the face from the forehead to the chin cannot be separated from his observation. In interpreting it, Prasetyono looked very specific, but in some cases there was still doubt. For example, when interpreting a round and square forehead, according to Prasetyono, it means that individuals are adventurous, interested in new things, but tend to prefer at home. While (Susanto, 2012) wrote a book entitled *100 Cara Supercepat Membaca Wajah*. In this book, Susanto mentions pluses and minuses of certain limbs. For example, when interpreting a round face means individuals have a mental strength, confidence, intelligence, ability to adapt, but tend to be lazy and unfaithful. Then when interpreting the face of a triangle means that individuals have persistence in working and want to stand out, but quickly get bored with things they have. In addition to interpreting certain forms on the face, Susanto also mentioned the importance of observing a micro expression that appears a split second on a human face. Then (Susilo, 2014) wrote a book called *Membaca Kejujuran dan Kebohongan dari Wajah*. Susilo is similar to Susanto in interpreting facial shapes, namely by mentioning the plus and minus of the meanings contained in the face. For example, on a diamond-shaped face, individuals have a warm, high-willed personality, but tend to be selfish and like to tell their sacrifices.

Zalfis (2014) wrote a book called *50 Trik Membaca Karakter Orang Lain*. In this book, Zalfis not only observes the shape of the face or limbs on the face, but also the color of the face such as white, reddish, blackish, slightly yellowish white, fine red, reddish white, and pale oil. While (Widanarti, 2015) wrote a book titled *21 Cara Membaca Kepribadian Orang Lain*. In this book, Widanarti tends to interpret interpreted faces. For example, on a crescent-shaped eyebrow and black, it means that individuals are friendly, creative, hard-working, diligent, and

not easily tempted. Or when reading thin eyebrows from the base to the end, it means that the individual has intelligence, is neat, orderly, hard-working, and likes to look for lessons. Kumar (2009) also wrote a book called *Buku Kecil tentang Membaca Tubuh*. Kumar highlighted the body language that emerged as a non-verbal language both to strengthen verbal language or implicit meaning that observers must understand.

The book on physiognomy in the family context also has several titles. Yanuar (2014) wrote a book entitled *Pintar Membaca Wajah dan Tubuh Istri*. Yanuar highlights the expression on the wife's face and interprets it because it is a micro expression. Besides, wife's body language such as scratching the neck, tidying up the sitting position, putting the hand in front of the mouth, also has meaning. Then (Fakih, 2011) also wrote a book called *Membaca Misteri Tubuh Wanita*. The difference is that Fakih tends to observe women in general, not specifically as Yanuar did in observing wives. In contrast Maharani (2014) wrote a book called *Cara Cerdas Membaca Wajah dan Tubuh Suami*. Maharani looks at the husband's face and interprets it, then gives a response that should be done by a wife. For example, when her forehead wrinkles, the husband is stressed. So a wife must issue positive and soothing words.

### ***Physiognomy's Weakness***

Physiognomy is enough to get a lot of pros and cons among experts. In the west, Stimili, (2005) highlighted that physiognomy is the body's politics. Stimili criticizes that many physiognomists are merely doing transliteration, not translation. That is, Stimili likens the face to writing. This requires observers to see it by combining the science of philology and philosophy. Whereas when copying and transferring languages, westerners have ignored the original writing, so they cannot distinguish between textual and figurative forms of language transfer. Likewise when interpreting the face. But overall, I argue that there are three weaknesses of physiognomy that must be well recognized.

### ***Culture Bias***

Almost every culture has its own meaning in face shape, facial expression, and body language. As a counselor, you must have more preparation when dealing with counselees who come from different cultures. It is not possible to use a culture that the counselor uses to assess the culture used by the counselee. However, there are still universal meanings in the form of expressions commonly understood by humans, for example crying, laughing, angry, and so on.

### ***Pseudo Science***

As a science that has never been agreed upon by experts, physiognomy places more emphasis on local wisdom. Therefore, counselors must be careful when using it in scientific forums. But as an alternative, physiognomy can be used as an emergency tool when not having time, or as a reinforcement assessment that has been done by the counselor to the counselee. Further techniques are needed in using physiognomy, especially the validity of interpretation. For example, using 3-4 counselors to interpret together then compare the results. But at present, the analysis of physiognomy can use software as done by Fitriani, Faisol, & Yulianto, (2017) who use computer assistance to interpret individual lip shapes. As a result, the SOM method that they use successfully identifies individual characters. Kohonen SOM is the method first initiated by Tuevo Kohonen which can be used as an introduction to imaging.

### *Pseudo Expression*

It is possible when a counselee meets a counselor, or a suspect in a court, falsifies his face and expressions. This can be done when the counselee or suspect has understood the science of physiognomy, or has consulted with experts in physiognomy. They can do that to cover things up or trick people who observe by creating expressions that do not naturally come out from within themselves. Sometimes they also use attributes such as glasses to protect eye expressions, masks or veils to protect lip expression, and others. Counselors or observers must understand this and be more careful. Therefore, micro expression is very important to note.

### CONCLUSION

After analyzing the technique of physiognomy. It can be concluded that it is very useful for practitioners such as counselors, investigators, judges, HRDs, and so on. Although, physiognomy is not an exact science like physics, chemistry, or mathematics. But physiognomy as a social sciences, it can be one ways that very useful for practitioners in helping their clients. Through physiognomy, the practitioners can make the appropriateness intervention and therapy for their clients. However, as other sciences. Physiognomy also has several weaknesses such as cultural bias, pseudo-science, and pseudo expression. The three weaknesses must be realized by the observer so that it is not easy to identify individuals rashly. But if you succeed in defining it well, intervention or therapy can be given appropriately, especially from a counselor. Similarly, a judge can declare someone guilty or not, or an HRD who decides someone is promoted or transferred.

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