A LITERATURE STUDY OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-AWARENESS

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Abstract: *Self-awareness is a core capability of human life that enables individuals to understand their emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs, motives, values and goals of life. This paper surveys the self-awareness literature by focusing on the importance of self-awareness. In general, it is found that there are two aspects of life in which self-awareness shows its importance. First aspect is in personal life and the second is in social life. Personally, self-awareness allows individuals to make wise and responsible choices, be anticipative in preventing unhealthy and destructive behavior for themselves and others, opening space for constructive communication while eliminating egoism, and ultimately bringing happiness and welfare to the individual's life. While socially, self-awareness impacts on four areas of life namely education, counseling, leadership and social work. Therefore, the development of self-awareness should be done in every phase of life for self-awareness is an unending process that requires time, energy, and commitment.*

Keywords: *Self-Awareness, Personal Life, Social Life*

I. INTRODUCTION

Self-awareness is the root and basis of all other human capacities (Corey, 2017). It has been seen as the first component of emotional intelligence, namely one's understanding of oneself related to emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs, motives, values and life goals (Goleman et al., 2019). Further, it is said that those who have a high level of self-awareness are able to recognize the effects caused by feelings towards themselves, others and their performance at work. This means, a self-aware person is someone who knows that a tight deadline will bring out the worst for him, so he has anticipated it by doing or making wise work plans. In addition, an individual with a high level of awareness is helped to calmly and mature deal with demanding individuals. Here, the self-conscious person will understand the impact that the demanding individuals have on his mood and the deeper causes of his frustration, so that the trivial demands that might make him work ineffectively and cause anger, can changed

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of self-awareness know where they are going and why they are going there, whereas people who have a low level of self-awareness tend to make decisions that bring about inner turmoil because they are grounded in things that are not meaningful (Goleman et al., 2019).

Research in the last five decades shows that low self-awareness has effect on student's life. For instance, it can move students to commit illicit acts such as cheating, whereas in general students themselves recognize that cheating is an act of violating morals (Diener, 1976). Low self-awareness also influences verbal anger and aggressive attitudes among students in the United States (Kinney et al., 2001). In research on breast cancer self-awareness of female students in Angola (Sambanje & Mafuvadze, 2012) and in Jordan (Alsaraireh & Darawad, 2017), it was found that most or the majority had low levels of self-awareness, so awareness training through the BSE program was needed. (breast-self examination) and regular clinical testing so that they find out early because this cancer is a type of cancer that endangers the lives of women in general throughout the world. However, in a study of medical students at Haramaya University, Ethiopia, data was obtained that although it was realized that the BSE (breast-self examination) program was important for early detection, but in practice many did not attend BSE on the grounds that they did not have problems, forgetfulness, and fear of being known. affected by abnormalities (Ameer et al., 2014).

In addition, students who have low self-awareness often pay less attention to their behaviors that are considered taboo or forbidden in social life, so peers often feel uncomfortable around and even avoid them and don't want to accept them as best friend (Najdowski, 2017). Studies on aspects of self-awareness among nursing students in India show that most are at an average level (60.5%) and a bit at a low level (7.4%) so that self-awareness training needs to be given because for professional nurses, self awareness is needed or becomes essential in developing therapeutic relationships with patients who need therapeutic healing (Buvaneswari & Sylvia, 2018). The lack of awareness in health school students about the importance of empathy with patients in developing therapeutic relations was also found in a simple survey of three nursing schools in Germany, so practical reflection exercises to increase self-awareness of the importance of empathy need to be given to them (Ahrweller et al., 2014).

However, Morin (2011) in his literature surveys found out the function and positive effectt of self-awareness such as self-evaluation, self-avoidance form destrcutive behaviours (alcohol drinking, illegal drugs consuming, overeating, involving in extreme sexual behavior, and commit suicide), emotional intensity, self-knowledge, self-regulation, and soccial cognition. Morin's findings show and prove the idea that self-awareness is a special and unique

ability of humans, which becomes the source of all the highest qualities in human beings, so that it is different from other living creatures (May, 1981). George (2015) cited that self-awareness is the foundation of authenticity, or the pivot and center of human's growth (Craig et al., 2015).

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a literature study method. Nazir stated that literature study is a data collection technique conducted by researcher to gather informations relevant to the topic or problem being solved that obtained from books, research reports, scientific essays, and other written sources both printed and electronic (Nazir, 1988). Nazir further added that study literature is an important step, which is after the researcher establish a research topic, the next step is to conduct a study related to the theory of research topics.

In this present paper, researchers try to find out more of the impact and the importance of self-awareness on human's life based on the literature study or survey in the latest ten years.

III. DISCUSSIONS

Based on the study of literature, unlike Morin's findings in 2011, the researchers reveal the effects or importances of self-awareness in two parts. First part is the effects of self-awareness on personal life; while the second part is the effects of self-awareness on social life especially in four fields such as education, counseling, leadership, and social work.

a) The Importance of Self-Awareness in Personal Life

In general, it can be said that self-awareness acts as an intrinsic motivation to help individual personal growth because he/she is aware of his/her own limitations and potentials (Ugur, 2015). All potentials are utilized as well as possible for the purpose of self-development, while weaknesses or limitations are used as a basis for self-improvement and renewal towards a better life. In other words, self-awareness enables one to know limitations and recognize one's potential so that he can make wise and responsible choices for optimal personal growth and development. Thus, self-awareness becomes an important component for individuals in carrying out their daily life activities optimally, because it allows individuals to adjust their attitudes and behavior to different situations based on their abilities. More than that, a person with high self-awareness can develop an attitude of anticipation to prevent the behaviors that have risks and negative impacts on themselves and others. This attitude of anticipation can be

referred to as withdrawal or resignation. So, self-awareness plays an important role as a path of self-development towards psychologically healthy individuals (Sutton, 2016).

In addition, practitioners and researchers also view self-awareness as a means or tool to reduce or relieve psychological tensions which further have implications for the welfare of the individual where he works (Sutton et al., 2015). It was explained that self-awareness enables a person to give a high appreciation of the differences between workers, improve the way and style in relating and communicating with colleagues, and ultimately increase the confidence of the individual concerned at work. In other words, self-awareness allows people to consider the opinions, feelings, and beliefs of others so that people do not behave egocentrically in living together with others (Abbate et al., 2016). Here, the individual worker as a social creature really realizes that the environment where he works is his second home. Therefore people who are in this environment must create or provide psychological and mental needs that make everyone able to work optimally to achieve maximum results. If psychological needs are not found then as a consequence people cannot commit or carry out their tasks fully and properly so that they can ultimately reduce their productivity and innovation (Mansouri & Tajrobehkar, 2015). This shows that self-awareness is always closely related to goal monitoring, a process that helps individuals to identify difficulties that hinder them from pursuing goals, so self-awareness is seen as a predictor for the identification of obstacles related to goals (Kreibich et al., 2020).

There are also researchers who view self-awareness has an effect on individual happiness (Bagherian et al., 2016). Self-awareness here is interpreted as an act of assessment or assessment carried out by individuals both cognitive and emotive about themselves and their lives. Meanwhile, happiness is described as a state characterized by positive emotions, life satisfaction, and the absence of negative emotions such as anxiety and depression. This means that happiness depends on an individual's reaction or assessment of himself and all life events that he feels or experiences. In their study of 430 students at universities in the Province of Alborz it was found that those who were extroverted had higher levels of happiness and self-awareness compared to those who were of introverted type. It was explained that extroverts like social or shared life, full of activities, being assertive and brave, and open to experiences that allow them to accept new ideas and unusual values, and also experience positive and negative emotions more deeply and intensive. On the other hand, introverts don't enjoy and suffer much when they have to meet face-to-face with other people, they are less open to experience so they become very conventional, rigid, less creative and imaginative.

Another crucial impact of self-awareness is helping and encouraging individuals in changing eating behavior in an effort to reduce weight and obesity (Alawad et al., 2015). In their research they used mirrors as a tool to increase self-awareness to modify food consumption behavior. The results showed that by reflecting, participants helped to reduce food and spent a lot of time adjusting and modifying their behavior such as eating fast and chewing food. With this the advantage of reflecting is to encourage a healthier society and help people to change bad eating habits and reduce weight.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Chowdhry (2019) of 304 US-based Mturk workers (42.5% women, average age = 34 years, 38% married, average opinion per year = $ 36,000), try to see the relationship between self-awareness financial individuals with financial results (financial outcomes). Individual financial self-awareness is defined as knowledge of existing financial assets, obligations, and spending patterns. The results showed that high financial self awareness affects financial decisions and individual satisfaction. This effect is mediated by the perceived efficacy of dealing with personal finances. In addition, financial literacy strengthens the relationship between financial self-awareness and investment and financial salvation, but does not affect the relationship between financial self-awareness and financial satisfaction or spending decisions. Increased client financial self-awareness offers a useful method for financial advisors and policy makers to produce wise financial decisions.

Meanwhile, a study run by Whiteside and Barclay (2020) shows that increasing self-awareness through self-focusing conditions can help managers advance interactional justice when communicating negative news to individuals who have a low empathy nature. Based on self-awareness theory, they argue that the increased self-awareness of managers can motivate managers who feel low empathy to engage in a better level of justice. This research was conducted on 76 respondents from university students in North America using an experimental study to see the interactive effects of empathy and self-awareness status where individuals are asked to communicate negative news. In other words, individuals with high levels of self-awareness can overcome the effects of low empathy for interactional justice. Self-awareness is seen as a state of motivation that occurs when one's attention is focused on oneself as an object that is evaluated.

b) The Importance of Self-awareness in Social Life

Literature study also shows that self-awareness has an important role in human social life. Many areas of community life that emphasize the importance of self-awareness include education, counseling, leadership, and social work.

1. Education

Education has a large and important role in building a more developed and dignified society, nation and state in social, cultural, economic and political aspects. In other words, the face of a nation is often determined by the quality of education. Thondike in 1989 even asserts that no nation can build its country without first investing in education (Ramadhan, 2017). Therefore, education practitioners, especially teachers, must show their duties and roles and responsibilities as the frontline in pursuing the goals of educational organizations, including improving productivity and community development, and must have the skills, knowledge, competence and information for the better quality of education (Mansouri & Tajrobehkar, 2015). According to them, education must be able to provide and facilitate students to develop their abilities and potential to independently move towards their desired goals and find their own identity that is unique to them in social life. So in their research, it was reported that teachers who have high self-awareness of their duties and responsibilities to teach their students can significantly predict job satisfaction and performance as a teacher.

Meanwhile, self-awareness has also an effect on students. According to Flavian (2016), students who have high self-awareness of the learning process, can help them improve their motivation, self-evaluation and academic achievement. In addition, self-awareness impacts learning motivation and responsibility. Wulandari's research (2014) of sociology education students at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Makassar State University showed that self-awareness of status as students who want to finish college on time with good results encourages and motivates them to carry out their tasks with full discipline and responsibility. Thus, self-awareness awakens the understanding that discipline is an important element for his good and success. In other words, self-awareness is seen as a motive that creates or shapes discipline (Maharani & Mustika, 2016; Sudarmono et al., 2017; Mumpuni, 2018).

Self-awareness also has a positive impact on self-management of students (Huynh & Luong, 2019). The results of Huynh and Luong's research on grade 4 and 5 elementary school children in Vietnam show that there is a positive reciprocal correlation at the moderate level between self-awareness and self-management. It is said that students who understand themselves clearly and are aware of themselves are able to manage themselves more, and vice versa. This means that if someone wants to manage himself, then he must accurately know his emotions, thoughts, hobbies, strengths and weaknesses to control it. If he can control it, then he can have the calm and wisdom to become aware of everything. Furthermore, self-awareness can help students in improving accountability and self-identification (Yahyazadehjeloudar et

al., 2018). Because by high awareness, students are able to understand themselves with all their characters, needs, feelings, strengths and weaknesses better.

The magnitude of the role of self-awareness for students, encouraging educators (teachers or lecturers) to help students to build and develop self-awareness. According to Mcnaughton (2016), building and developing self-awareness is something that is important in preparing students at the level of higher education today to dive into a world that is supercomplex and uncertain. This preparation is crucial because they will become future leaders. Therefore, Muir (2014) argues that self-awareness which is an important prerequisite for the development and progress of success as a future leader is a challenge that must begin to be built and developed in students.

According to Harris (2017), it is the teacher's job to help students to pay full attention and focus on what they need to learn. When teachers work together and with students in teaching them to reflect, monitor and evaluate themselves, students can become more independent, productive and flexible. More than that, students will be helped to improve their ability to weigh and think about their choices and decide what is good and right for themselves. In addition, when students have difficulty understanding concepts or ideas, they use reflective strategies as a means for developing self-awareness to recognize their difficulties and then try to improve them, including in the development of their emotional and social lives.

Recognizing the benefits or positive impacts caused by self-awareness, the pharmaceutical education of doctoral programs makes self-awareness a key component that is used as an accreditation standard in the field of personality and professional development (Maxwell et al., 2016). Nursing education also makes self-awareness an important instrument for the development of personality and professionalism of nursing, and helps them improve sensitivity to others and develop effective relationships between nurses and patients (Rasheed et al., 2018).

2. Counseling

The goal of all counseling is to increase self-awareness which is included in it, namely awareness of alternatives, motivations, factors that affect personal, and personal goals (Corey, 2017). This means that self-awareness is an important element that is needed in the counseling process (Pieterse et al., 2013). Self-awareness is seen as a state of being converted to thoughts, feelings, beliefs, behavior and attitudes, as well as knowledge of how these factors are shaped by important aspects of one's development and social history. Thus, indifference to the condition of the self can bring satisfaction along with a feeling of partial death, but conversely

if the individual opens his personal world then he can expect a lot of chaos as well as the potential or opportunity for more self-fulfillment (Corey, 2017). From this perspective, self-awareness training is objective for counselors to develop the ability to identify their personal responses and to understand and to the extent possible use these reactions in the counseling relationship. Thus, the focus on developing self-awareness is outlined in the latest model based on a broad tradition of psychotherapy training that emphasizes the role and function of therapists in providing effective counseling and psychotherapy services (Pieterse et al., 2013).

Rogers in 1957 has emphasized that self-awareness is an important element in developing the character of empathy and congruence from a counselor (Bell et al., 2014). As the counselor's self-awareness increases, empathy and congruence increase; the greater the degree of self-awareness the counselor will affect the ability of counselors in counseling to participate in feeling the client's experience. Thus, providing creative play-based activities that allow the counselor to increase self-awareness in training not only benefits students participating in these activities, but will also help them in the future when dealing with clients in counseling practice.

Self-awareness also helps the counselee (client) in individual counseling to identify more closely about personality traits, needs, desires, goals, emotions and points of weakness (Ziaei et al., 2018). According to Ziaei et al., Self-awareness based on individual counseling can increase personal self-awareness and public self-awareness and reduce social anxiety of women of reproductive age. Therefore, they recommend that individual counseling approaches to increase self-awareness of women of reproductive age continue to be carried out because self-awareness can help them overcome the problems they are experiencing and express their needs effectively.

3. Leadership

Self-awareness must be a starting and central point in every effort to develop authentic leadership (George, 2015). In other words, leadership starts with self-awareness (Esentas et al., 2017). A person who is aware of his positive and negative traits or characteristics is expected to be a better leader in the group he is leading. Because self-awareness allows a person to express his emotions, thoughts, and desires in a realistic way and be able to recognize the strengths and at the same time acknowledge the weaknesses of the characteristic traits that are available to him. According to Sengupta (2018), self-awareness is essential for an effective leadership because before helping others, he must help himself first through an awareness of his personal strengths and weaknesses.

Self-awareness is also used as an inner compass and an essential component for getting to know yourself, looking closely at passion, and finding leadership goals. Thus, according to Eurich, leaders who have high self-awareness are able to see themselves as seen by their subordinates, so that workers tend to have good relations with him, feel satisfied with his leadership style, and see him as a leader who is generally successful or effective (Goleman et al., 2019). Moreover, leaders who have self-awareness will be able to appreciate the efforts and work of their members, assess and accept diversity, respect and encourage different perspectives or views of each member to enrich and advance an organization or project they lead (Sengupta, 2018). Such a leader will gain the support of trust and confidence from his subordinates so that he himself becomes more confident in himself, able to overcome ambiguity and more open to change (Okpara & Edwin, 2015). In their study, Okpara and Edwin found a significant positive effect of self-awareness on organizational performance in the bank sector in Nigeria. High self-awareness from bank managers is very helpful for them in managing and improving performance that can generate net profit and return on investment. Self-awareness here is seen as an important competency in building emotional intelligence in the workplace, which enables them to recognize emotions and their effects so they can work more effectively. While organizational performance is a measure of effectiveness and efficiency. Therefore, it is recommended that bank managers and workers be trained to develop their self-awareness competencies for good organizational performance.

As an important aspect of leadership, self-awareness helps a leader to focus on abilities in anticipating the views of others. Studies conducted by Sturm et al. (2014) prove how female leaders predict that their superiors will judge them in terms of leadership behavior and the possible factors that can contribute to these predictions. Furthermore, Nair (2017) in his study of prospective leaders of state-owned companies in South Africa, found that self-awareness is an important element for an effective leadership. According to him, a leader who is aware of his life's journey, thoughts and feelings can help him act and behave accordingly in his workplace because the focus is specifically on the people he leads. In other words, self-awareness makes it easy for a leader to develop his behavioral regulation skills at the place he works. In addition, Nair also identified obstacles in the development of self-awareness, namely conditioned education, processes and dealing with feedback, and introverted feelings; while the factors to increase self-awareness are hard upbringing, self-determination, life turning points, spouse and family, storytelling, training, reading, spirituality, and religion.

The results of other studies also revealed that the capacity of self-awareness has a positive effect on the stability and success of building teamwork. It is said that a team consisting of individuals with a higher level of awareness will show the performance and function of the team at a more effective level. For this reason, awareness and recognition are needed that the team is essentially a collection of individual members who are unique in everything they have whether knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, dispositional tendencies, or behaviors manifested and contribute collectively to affect the team's capacity as a whole (Dierdorff et al., 2018).

4. Social Work

Self-awareness can be seen as an important element for students who work socially in developing cultural competencies, so they can reduce the influence bias and personal values. They learn about the meaning of their own culture and family history so that they become acquainted with personal history (Negi et al., 2018). According to them, self-awareness as an important component in building cultural competencies to reduce the influence bias and cultural values themselves. In similar, Lu and Wan (2018) said that an individual should be aware of the influence of the culture in his different aspects of self such as his values and behaviors. Those who have high cultural self-awareness would have a clearer sensitivity of how their cultural experience forming and influencing them. Then this cultural self-awareness will lead them to well-being of life.

Therefore, since the bench of social work education, students must be equipped with knowledge, skills and values to increase their self-awareness related to social and cultural life. This is done through SAA (Self Awareness Assignment) consisting of prewritten self-reflection, role play, written and discussed peer evaluation, and self reflection after written (postwritten self-reflection) (Law et al., 2019).

IV.   CONCLUSION

Based on the literature findings, the researchers conclude that self-awareness has a positive impact on human life both personally and socially. Personally, self-awareness is seen as an internal motivation that helps these individuals develop themselves and realize a better personal life. Self-awareness also allows individuals to make wise and responsible choices, be anticipative in preventing unhealthy and destructive behavior for themselves and others, opening space for constructive communication while eliminating egoism, and ultimately bringing happiness and welfare to the individual's life. While socially, self-awareness impacts on four areas of life namely education, counseling, leadership and social work. Thus, self-

awareness is really a specialty possessed by humans that distinguishes it from other living creatures at the same time indicating that humans are creatures that are individual and also social.

May (1981) in summary says that this capacity of self-awareness opens up space for humans to interpret every time flow where humans can learn from the past by remembering what happened, distancing themselves from present conditions, and directing or imagining their existence in the future. In addition, self-awareness can help someone to see themselves as seen by others about themselves. And in togetherness with others, self-awareness will also enable someone to divert themselves to others to feel what others feel and position themselves in the situations and conditions of others so that it allows a person to find and plan actions or attitudes that show empathy towards people other.

Recognizing the vitality of the capacity of self-awareness in various dimensions of human life both personally and socially, the researchers perceive that each individual needs to build and enhance this aspect of self-awareness. For instance, during pandemic covid-19 everyone is invited and even instructed to be aware of keeping safe by staying at home, working from home, daring learning, always washing hands, using mask and physical distancing in order to not affected by virus. However, it is found that many are not aware and act ignorant so that the government is forced to take decisive action and make certain rules in order to make people aware. Therefore, according to Flavian (2016), the development of self-awareness should actually have been done since a person is in his childhood so that he can be more successful in education (school) and in his later life. The same thing was emphasized again by Rasheed et al. (2018) that an individual's self-awareness should be developed from childhood and continues into adulthood. Therefore, formal education since pre-school level not only provides an understanding of important formal lessons, but also instills self-awareness in language, psychomotor, and class creativity activities to students (Astawa, 2018). Gable and Herrmann (2016) stated that the development of self-awareness is a process that never stops or continues that requires time, energy, and commitment.

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