

## The Implementation of Psychoeducational Group with Role Play and Symbolic Modelling Techniques to Improve the Interpersonal Communication of the Guidance and Counseling Students of Universitas IKIP Veteran Semarang

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### Abstract

This study aimed at examining and analyzing the implementation of psychoeducational group with role play to improve the interpersonal communication of guidance and counseling students. This study used pretest-posttest comparison group design. Meanwhile, purposive sampling was used to select 18 experimental subjects placed in two groups randomly so that each group consisted of nine students. Their data were collected using interpersonal communication scale. The results of wilcoxon test showed that the implementation of psychoeducational group with role play and symbolic modelling and the combination of both techniques was effective to improve students' interpersonal communication. Further, the implication of the study findings are discussed in the discussion chapter.

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## INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication holds a significant role for counselors. This kind of communication contributes to the establishment and maintenance of social relationship with others (Jhonson, 1981, Kindred & Roper, 2004, Sahlstein, 2004, Devito, 2016). Unfortunately, this urgency is not accompanied by sufficient skills of counselors, and even the current competences of educators and counselors are concerning. The low competence of Indonesia educators/ teachers can be clearly identified based on the average score of the initial teacher competency test in 337 regencies / cities, namely 42.25 or below the average (Nuh, 2012).

In line with the above statement, students apparently lack of training. Rosenberg (1997) mentions that there are 82% counseling students need more experience in the practice of counseling and trainings. Almost 80% of them demand more trainings on self-adjustment counseling in relation to communication disorders.

There was a need to solve the aforementioned problems. An effort that can be done is by providing guidance and counseling service, particularly in form of psychoeducational group. Psychoeducational group is a group that is focused on the development of life skills and psychological problems prevention strategies which influence behaviors and utilize cognitive behavioral framework (DeLucia-Waack, 2006). This is a kind of group formed based on programs which contain psychological issues, and behavioral structures to comprehend the environment of the members' problems, identify, change attitudes and behaviors so that individuals would be aware of the consequences for not changing their undesirable behaviors (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). This is supported by Zahra Ghazavi's study (2010) that psychoeducational groups can improve nurse communication.

The techniques implemented in the psychoeducational groups in this study were role play and symbolic modelling. Anshu (2016) conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of role play to improve high school students'

communication skills. He found that role play significantly improved the communication skills. Additionally, after reviewing several previous studies regarding this technique, the researchers were interested in improving counselor's interpersonal communication by using role play technique.

Taylor et. al. (2018) investigated the implementation of role play (RP) to train communication skills (CST) in medical curriculum of preclinical medical students in Australia. Their study used experimental method with the subjects of medical students, and audio recordings. The results of the study showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the use of role play (RP) in improving communication skills. The results also showed that the role play used in CST had no effect on the students' communication skills.

By referring to the above description, this study aimed at examining the effectiveness of the implementation of psychoeducational group with role play and symbolic modelling techniques to improve interpersonal communication of the students of guidance and counseling. Even though there were some relevant theories in the above previous studies, some of those studies showed contradictive results. It was such as Taylor et. al. study (2018) which found that role play had no influence on students' communication skills because some subjects of their study did not join, and refused to participate in the study. Other influential factors were technical failures, such as the empty audio file, and too many samples involved. The last, their study only covered verbal communication data. Therefore, there was a need to conduct further studies which use and involve fewer samples so that students are able to play an active role when implementing treatments to overcome problems. In this way, the current study could affirm the use of role play and symbolic modeling techniques to overcome the limitations of interpersonal communication of the students of guidance and counseling, and can be used as a basis for further researchers.

## METHODS

The subject of this study were the fifth semester students of Universitas IKIP Veteran Semarang amounted to 63. They were sampled using purposive sampling technique based on the low level of interpersonal communication criterion. The sampling resulted 27 students of 35. These students were grouped into three by using random assignment. Meanwhile, the experimental design employed in this study was pretest-posttest comparison group covering role play technique experimental group consisting of 9 female students, symbolic modelling technique experimental group consisting of 9 female students, and collaboration of role play and symbolic modelling techniques group consisting of 9 students.

The instrument used in this study was interpersonal communication scale made by the researchers themselves based on De Vito's theory (2016) consisting of 47 statement items. The result of validity test on this instrument showed that the valid items gained  $r_{xy}$  ranging from 0.310 – 0.888, and obtained alpha coefficient of 0.757.

This study was carried out in several steps. First, the provision of intervention to experimental group A, namely the psychoeducational group with role play technique, in form of dialogues to the students to be performed as counselors and clients.

Moreover, the experimental group B, namely the psychoeducational group with symbolic modelling technique was given videos to observe, and practice. For more, the C group, namely the psychoeducational group with the combination of role play and symbolic modeling techniques was given videos to observe, and dialogues to practice. During the session of psychoeducational group each group had 8 meetings with the time allotment of 2x40 minutes for each.

Third, the researchers gave posttest to those three groups to see the improvement of their interpersonal communication. The data collected from pretest, and posttest were analyzed using Wilcoxon test to see an increase in the score of interpersonal communication, and kruskal-wallis test to see differences in the effectiveness of both techniques.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the analysis of pretest results, it was known that of 63 students there were 55% students belonged to the low category with the score of ( $x < 125$ ), 31% of students in the fair category with the score of ( $125 \leq x < 183$ ), and the high category with the score of ( $183 \leq x$ ) amounting to 14% of students. Further, the mean and standard deviation (SD) of each activity both pretest and posttest can be seen in table 1.

**Table 1.** The Results of Wilcoxon Test

Techniques	Pretest		Posttest		Z	P
	M	SD	M	SD		
RP	120.00	3.53	145.89	21.52	-2.66	< 0.05
MS	118.11	5.32	145.67	15.53	-2.66	< 0.05
RP+MS	118.11	4.83	182.78	10.46	-2.67	< 0.05
$\chi^2$	0.91		14.33			
P	> 0.05		< 0.05			

Information:

Z : Wilcoxon Test

$\chi^2$ : Kruskal Wallis Test

RP : Role Play

MS : Symbolic Modelling

Table 1 indicates improvement in all three groups based on wilcoxon test. First, the initial condition of the role play group in the pretest was (M = 120.00, SD = 3.53), while the post-test it gained an increase (M = 145.89 SD = 21.52; Z = -2.66 p = < 0.05). Second, symbolic modeling

group previously gained (M = 118.11, SD = 5.32) in the pretest, and gained an increase in the posttest (M = 145.67 SD = 15.532; Z = -2.66 p = < 0.05). Third, the combination group showed an increase from the pre-test scores to the posttest

score, namely ( $M = 118.11$ ,  $SD = 4.833$ ) to ( $M = 182.78$   $SD = 10.462$ ;  $Z = -2.677$   $p = < 0.05$ ).

Based on Kruskal Wallis test, the researchers found differences between role play group, symbolic modelling group, and the combination group ( $X^2 = 14,327$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). When viewed from the mean and Standard Deviation (SD) of the posttest, it can be seen that the combination group obtained the highest score in the level of interpersonal communication.

These findings affirmed the impact of role play on students' interpersonal communication. Accordingly, these were supported by the previous studies done by Putra (2013), Wiratna (2017), and Nair (2019). Meanwhile, the findings of the impact of symbolic modeling technique on interpersonal communication were based on the findings of Rully (2016), Noor & Sugiyo (2016), and Anderson (2016) studies.

Thus, this research has succeeded in knowing the effectiveness of the role play technique combined with symbolic modeling technique in improving students' interpersonal communication. Interestingly, the combination of role play and symbolic modeling techniques provided the most powerful effect in improving interpersonal communication. This surely was an interesting contribution for the study findings.

Psychoeducational groups with role play and symbolic modeling techniques can complement each other to improve interaction skills (Avenell, 2012). Symbolic modeling technique is a way of learning from observation (vicarious learning), namely the ability to pay attention to behavior that is modeled by watching videos of the target behavior then motivated to imitate it. Further, individuals analyze and monitor the model's behaviors in terms of interpersonal communication. Therefore, the interpersonal communication skills developed in the current study were the aspects of communication behaviors which could be imitated visually, and developed by counselors. Those are such as acceptance ability, verbal ability, and counselors' understandings (Charlop-Christy, Le & Fremen, 2000). Role play technique is important to implement because it can improve counselors' therapeutic ability, solve

problems, and foster clients' potentials through the provision of positive reinforcement in terms of practice (doing), and feeling the consequences of any behaviors being performed (feeling) (Alberto, Clark & Gama 2005). From the explanation above, the combination of symbolic modeling technique was initially carried out to train visual learning from watching models, and giving a structured understanding to build motivation to imitate. After that, role play was provided to give direct experience when individuals did performance to train their therapeutic ability. Alternatively, positive reinforcement was also provided in order to maintain behaviors and attitudes in line with the expectation and give the consequences of inappropriate behavior.

This study implied that role play technique could provide visual learning, give motivation to imitate in a structured way to improve interpersonal communication. Meanwhile, symbolic modelling technique provided direct experience. It would be better if those techniques are combined. Besides beneficial contribution, this study had a limitation, namely the involvement of one private university which had limited students. Therefore, the future studies are suggested to involved larger study sample.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the psychoeducational group with role play and symbolic modelling techniques is effective to improve the interpersonal communication of the students of guidance and counseling program of Universitas IKIP Veteran Semarang.

This study contributes some significances, namely (1) guidance and counseling study program should design the guidance and counseling service programs which provide the expected students' interpersonal communication (2) the future researchers can utilize this study as a basic understanding and reinforcement regarding role play and symbolic modelling techniques to improve students' communication in the provision of guidance and counseling.

Also, they can add more media to collaborate with the techniques being implemented so that there will be contributions to the counseling field in current modern era.

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