Assessment Aspects of Group Counselling Activities

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This study was designed to find out the aspects of assessing group counselling activities by reviewing literature related to the assessment of group counselling. The results show that two dimensions can be assessing group counselling, being content and process dimensions. Content dimensions involve evaluating the client's responses to the topic discussed in the group c; the relevance, the usefulness, the development of the skills, and the improvement that happens to the client. Meanwhile, the process dimensions have aspects such as; organisational structure and purpose of the group, the interaction and communication between the group members, the cohesiveness and the togetherness, and the steps taken by the group to reach the goals and leadership. The results of this study provide a basis for assessing the process of group counselling activities that have been carried out in more detail so that can improve the implementation of group counselling.

Key words: *Assessment aspects, Group counselling.*

Introduction

Group counselling in schools is one responsive service where assistance is offered to students/counselees who have needs and problems that need immediate intervention (Kementerian Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan, 2016; Berg, Landreth & Fall 2013; Supriatna, 2002). Group counselling is a type of growth-centered group activity that aims to develop students' personalities, such as the ability to communicate and socialise (Pérusse, Goodnough, & Lee, 2009; Winkel & Hastuti, 2005; Wibowo, 2001). Group counselling is in line with the character education program launched by the government which aims to create a conducive learning environment. As a result, students can learn effectively in a stress-free atmosphere that provides security, appreciation and enthusiasm (Amri, Jauhari & Elisah, 2011; Shakoor, 2004).

The advantage of group counselling services is the presence of dynamics such as an active, vibrant and dynamic state which makes group activities happy, fun and engaging (Tate et al., 2013; Robison, 2012; Walgito, 2010; Sanyata, 2010). The dynamics of social interaction become about forging attitudes, skills and social courage in a sense of tolerance. Additionally, Prayitno (2010) clarifies that if counselling groups are continuously held in schools, then future generations can learn to communicate more effectively with people from different ages, cultures, and even nations.

Various studies reveal the benefits of group counselling activities:improving students' learning discipline (Smith, 2011), an increase in student confidence (Imro'atun, 2017), and developing students' self-esteem (Ayuevita, Rosra & Mayasari, 2014; Anjar, 2012). Besides being given to students, group counselling can also be conducted for the elderly. It can be seen from Asniat's study (2013) about 'A Systematic Review: Counselling Group for Older People with Depression' that counselling groups with characteristics of group dynamics can overcome social isolation and increase self-esteem in the elderly so that they can live more independently, feel meaningful, and improve their quality of life.

Assessment of group activities can be conducted in two ways. The first is comparing pre-and post-group counselling activity through a survey or observation of attitudes (behaviour) of group members. The second is to evaluate group processes through feedback from group members (Steen, Henfield & Booker, 2014; Swank, Lambie & Witta, 2012; Wheeler, & Loesch, 1981, Pattison, 1965). Assessment by asking for feedback from members can be seen from an article written by Bagley and Young (1999) entitled 'Long-Term Evaluation of the Counselling Group for Women with a History of Child Sexual Abuse: Focus on Depression, Self-Esteem, Suicidal Behaviours, and Social Support.' This article explains that changes in depression, self-esteem, suicidal behaviour and social support of those children are indicators of the success of counselling, gathered through evaluating the results of group counselling activities.

Currently, the assessment of group counselling in schools is conducted by asking for feedback from group members. Group members were asked to reveal to what extent group activities had helped them solve their problems. This assessment is carried out both verbally and in written form by filling in the specific format (Thinking, Feeling, Behaving, Acting Responsibly) in which participants are asked to express their feelings, opinions, expectations, interests, and attitudes towards various good things they have done during group activities (Prayitno et al., 2017). The assessment is still in the form of a description which has shortcomings, namely that the accuracy of measurement (validity) and the power of measurement stability (reliability) is still low. Therefore, it is less reliable as an evaluation tool (Sudijono, 2001). The assessments carried out so far only focus on the positive impact felt by group members after participating in group counselling. Meanwhile, the group counselling process itself was not assessed. Hence, it is essential to conduct research that can reveal aspects in assessing the process of group

activities in more detail to make group leaders know what aspects need to be improved and developed to maintain accountability in group counselling activities.

Method

This research is qualitative research with a type of library research. The first step taken in this study is to note all findings regarding the assessment in group counselling of each study discussion and to obtain the relevant literature and sources. Subsequently, all the findings are combined, both theory and new findings of the assessment in group counselling. Third, all findings from various readings are analysed relating to their respective relationships regarding group counselling assessments (Harahap, 2014; Zed, 2004).

Results and Discussion

Assessment of group counselling activities is very important because according to Wandt and Brown (Sudijono, 2001; Paritzky & Magoon, 1982) assessment is an action or process to determine the value of something. Assessing group counselling activities is seen not only from the viewpoint of group members assessing the positive impact of group counselling activities but also the extent to which the group counselling process can be carried out by the rules. Based on the literature it can be concluded that the assessment of a group consists of two dimensions, namely the content dimensions and process dimensions (Ristianti et al., 2019; Winkel & Hastuti, 2005; Furr & Barret, 2000).

Content Dimensions

The content dimension shows the focus of the group's attention regarding objectives to be achieved related to what is being done, and what is discussed. The dimensions of this content relate to the material being discussed, the extent to which the material is understood and what benefits are obtained by group members from the material (Ristianti et al., 2019; Prayitno et al., 2017; Winkel & Hastuti, 2005). Regarding content dimensions, DiStefano, Hohman and Barker (2013) have researched the development of GTES (Group Topic Evaluation Scale) to evaluate clients' responses about topics discussed in groups. Based on their research, DiStefano et al. (2013) analysed that the assessment of content dimensions of group counselling can be seen from the usefulness of the topic for group members. The relevance of the topic to the needs of group members, skills development felt by group members from the topic discussed and changes that happen to group members after understanding the topic.

Process Dimensions

The process dimension shows how groups work to reach their goals in counselling. This process dimension includes organisational structure and purpose of group formation,

interaction and communication between group members, cohesion and togetherness as units, and forward motion or steps that are taken by the group to reach goals and leadership (Yocum, 2017; Lee, 2014; Winkel & Hastuti, 2005).

Organisational structure and purpose of forming groups

The group counselling organisational structure belongs to the type of informal group where there is no division of tasks in groups (Winkel & Hastuti, 2005). The organisational structure is related to the purpose of group counselling. It is supported by the opinion of Winkel and Hastuti (2005), Prayitno et al. (2017), Wibowo (2001) and Pérusse et al. (2009) that the purpose of group counselling is to solve problems experienced by group members. All group members must solve problems that are being experienced by members of the group. Besides, group member problems can be solved through group counselling. As a result, the social skills of group members also develop automatically.

The purpose of group counselling must also be understood by participating members. This goal must be explained in advance by the group leader so that the objectives can be agreed upon and accepted by them. Prayitno et al. (2017) further explained that the importance of shared goals accepted and agreed upon by all group members would make them act by these objectives. Furthermore, this goal should be attractive to participants, according to the needs of each of them, affordable within a short period, quite challenging and satisfying if it has been achieved (Bates, 1968; Berg et al., 2013; Winkel & Hastuti, 2005).

Interaction and communication between group members

In a group, there is interaction and communication between members. Winkel and Hastuti (2005) outline that people who are members of groups will communicate and interact through their words and their various actions. Discussions within groups are a form of interpersonal communication which is more complicated because several individuals interact with each other for an extended period. The task of the group leader is to make the thoughts and feelings expressed formulated as clearly as possible and appropriately captured. The interaction of all group members will be enhanced by regulating the physical environment to make all members feel included, for instance having the group sitting facing each other. The intentions and attitudes of participants influence the communication and interaction of group members, some intentions being the need to not only attack responses but to attack other people's opinions. Likewise, the attitude of group members should give each member time and opportunity to express their opinions freely (Prayitno et al., 2017).

Interaction and communication in group counselling are likely to be dynamic as explained by Jacobs et al. (2011), who outline that communication among participating members is the development of participation of each group member in expressing ideas or opinions. Cooperative activities involve sharing ideas to solve problems, creating close interaction,

achieving deep awareness of group problems and leadership of a democratic group. This dynamic interaction will foster a nature of openness, intimacy, mutual understanding, compassion and cohesiveness among participating group members.

Integration and togetherness as cohesion units

Integration and togetherness are elements that encourage all members to stay and continue to engage in group activities to achieve collective goals. The element of this attachment is the cooperative atmosphere, which involves each member's desire for others to survive in a group, provides a sense of satisfaction, fosters interest in each other, develops the level of acceptance, trust and support given and received to and from each other, and various other norms that apply in groups. As a result, cohesion is said to be togetherness behaviour (Steen, Vasserman-Stokes & Vannatta, 2014; Lerner, McLeod & Mikami, 2013), which is indicated by the presence of all members when they gather. This is also evident through the following behaviours: everyone arriving on time and not being the one to leave the meeting place first, expressions of mutual trust and mutual support, mutual acceptance of the personality traits of each group member, an atmosphere of excitement during group meetings, and the absence of clicks that pursue their interests outside of the group's interests (Winkel & Hastuti, 2005).

There are two studies related to the measurement of group cohesion: the research of Treadwell et al. (2001) in which the Scale-Revised Cohesion Group was developed, and the study of Macgoan (2003) about 'Increasing Engagement in Groups: A Measurement-Based Approach' where he triggered an instrument called The Group Engagement Measure (GEM). These studies show that the assessment of group cohesion in group counselling can be seen from the attendance of all members, in which they come on time and are willing to attend until the group activities are ended, the expression of mutual trust and support of each other, accepting the personality of each group member, the atmosphere of excitement during group meetings, the efforts of members to overcome the problems, as well as the efforts of members to achieve group goals.

For cohesion and togetherness to be increased and developed in groups, the leaders must work on the willingness of members to cooperate, develop a willingness to give each other trust, involve everyone in group activities and share the role of controlling the group equally so that all have the opportunity to influence the process positive group activities (Macgowan, 2008; Ohrt, Robinson & Hagedorn, 2013; Winkel & Hastuti, 2005).

Forward movement or steps were taken by the group to reach the target

Group counselling is an activity to solve a problem, so the steps in solving this problem are very influential. The steps in group counselling according to Winkel and Hastuti (2005) are opening, explaining the problems, extracting background problems, solving problems and

closing. Whereas Prayitno et al. (2017) and Leuty, et al. (2015) mentioned the steps in group counselling are the stages of formation, transition, activities (focus on discussing personal issues of group members) and the termination stage.

Group counselling is an activity to solve a problem and develop the social skills of group members. This goal greatly influences the steps of group counselling. The first step in group counselling is opening, which is a process of the group members to understand and participate in group counselling activities (Prayitno et al., 2017; Morran, 1982). The second step is explaining the problem (Winkel and Hastuti, 2005). The third step is understanding the problem and then solving it. The last is evaluating the understanding, satisfaction, and effort that will be made by group members after the group counselling activities end.

Leadership

The form of leadership is very important in group counselling (Pearson, 1981). The leadership task includes directing processes to the goals to be achieved and fostering unity among participants. Some of the roles that can be performed by leaders are being able to assist, provide direction or direct interference with activities, focusing on the atmosphere of feeling that develops, giving feedback about various things that occur, being able to organise the activities, holding the game rules (being a referee), reconciling and encouraging cooperation among the members to create an atmosphere of togetherness, and maintaining confidentiality (Mobley & Crowell, 2014; Praytino et al., 2017; Gage, 2011).

The aspects of leadership can be assessed from the ability of leaders to carry out group counselling. The ability of a leader is seen from the ability to listen actively, reflecting, explaining and asking, using voice and eyes, concluding, providing descriptions and information, encouraging and supporting, organising the group atmosphere, becoming a model, opening themselves, and identifying the allies (Furr & Barret, 2000; Jacobs et al., 2011).

Conclusion

From this study, it was concluded that in assessing group counselling activities can be analysed through content dimensions and process dimensions. The content dimension provides information about increasing group members' insights and skills after discussing topics in group counselling. In contrast, the process dimension provides information about the changes that group members have gained from the process passed in group counselling. The assessment process has rarely been conducted in group counselling assessments so far. Therefore, so that assessment can be done objectively and effectively in group counselling activities, it is advisable for guidance and counselling teachers to use the assessment dimensions available in this study.

Acknowledgments

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