
The Effect of Play Therapy in Group Counseling on Junior High School Students' Social Interaction

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out the effect of play therapy through group counseling on student social interaction. To this end, pre-experimental one group pretest-posttest design was applied. Ten participants were recruited using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Hypotheses were tested using the Wilcoxon test. The wilcoxon test results showed a Sig. (2-tailed) score of 0.005 (<0.05). Therefore, Ho was rejected and Ha was accepted, meaning that play therapy through group counseling services affects the social interactions of students who are associative (cooperation, accommodation, assimilation) and dissociative (competition). It is recommended for teachers, especially school counselors, to optimize the implementation of group counseling services with play therapy techniques as a means to help students, especially in increasing social interaction. Keywords: group counseling, play therapy, social interactions.

INTRODUCTION

School is a place for students to learn and grow into optimal personalities. Thus, through learning at school, students not only learn academically but also learn to establish good relationships with their peers in their interactions at school. Middle school students are teenagers who are in the process of developing toward maturity and independence both personally and socially. In the process of development, a student needs good social interaction with the environment.

Social interactions are dynamic social relations that involve an individual's

relationship with a group of people (Pachucki et al., 2015; Videras et al., 2012; Xiong et al., 2018). The establishment of good social interaction in children will lead to acceptance from peers, acceptance from the teacher, and success in learning. Dwistia et al. (2013) state that in a good social environment, if students do an associative process, i.e., students can work together (cooperation), students do the accommodation process (the process of mutual adjustment between individuals to overcome tensions), learners carry out the process of assimilation (efforts to reduce differences for common goals and interests).

Mahyuddin (2016) stated that students with low social interaction tend to find it difficult to cooperate, adjust themselves to the environment, interact properly, control their emotions, empathize, obey the rules, and respect others. Social activities are a general form of social processes that occur in the real-life context, which is a picture of social interaction because social interaction is the main condition for social activities.

Teenagers' lives are often marked by various problems in their interaction patterns. Previous research related to the problem of social interaction conducted by Loban et al. (2017) found that many students have low interpersonal relationships, such as students having difficulty cooperating, low sense of responsibility for giving assignments, irritability if there are disputes in class, lack of closeness and intimacy with friends, hostility in the classroom, difficulty in interacting, difficult to accept differences of opinion, and have not been able to resolve conflicts or problems that occur with peers.

Based on observations at the time of PL-KPS implementation at SMP N 1 Kota Jambi conducted for three months from March-May 2018 that there were students who interacted with friends at school, especially in class when learning was very low, which was marked by not wanting to give his contribution in completing the tasks given by the teacher both between individuals and groups, did not want to teach friends when having difficulty doing the task, a competition that occurs with the result that social interaction is broken, breaking the rules that applied in class such as inviting friends in and out of class if feeling bored, noisy, feeling he is right thus he did not want to listen to opinions or suggestions from friends, is easily angry and offended hence he throws harsh words at friends.

Observing the problems that arise in the field that the low social interaction that arises is part of forms of social interaction, including cooperation (cooperative), accommodation (accommodation), assimilation (assimilation), and competition (competition). Some students do not realize the importance of social interaction. If the social interaction of students

is low, it will cause some obstacles in their daily lives, especially in the school environment, that hinder the learning process (Fatnar & Anam, 2014; Novalinda et al., 2020; Zuhroh & Umanailo, 2021).

Following up on problems that occurred at the school, an initial survey was carried out on the description of social interactions between peers conducted at two schools, namely SMP N 1 Kota Jambi on October 22, 2018, and SMP N 8 on March 18, 2019, namely closed interviews with subject teachers at the school.

Interview with counselors and teachers in the SMP N 1 Kota Jambi revealed that some 8th-grade students did not want to collaborate with their friends inside especially if there are students in the group who can be used, there are students who do not obey the rules enforced in class such as in and out of class, chatting with friends, there are students in their activities class who do not want to accept opinions, criticisms, and suggestions from friends so they cannot control their emotions even though they have repeatedly entered the BK room, and unfair competition occurs between students in the class to get ranked in the class, for example when the teacher gives a quiz the student enthusiastically raises his hand and wants to answer questions from the teacher so that there are students who are arguing with each other, dropping peers' opinions, and there are some students who are cheating on exam and exam so it often happens conflicts and disputes between students in the classroom.

Meanwhile, in SMP N 8 Kota Jambi, according to the explanation of one of the school counselors who supports VIII grade students, there are also some VIII grade students who do not want to do group work, there are persistent students who are willing to work on group assignments, some only enjoy the results without being involved. There are a lot of complaints from students that A, B, and C do not participate in making assignments, there are students who do not obey the rules imposed in the classroom, such as going out of the classroom, chatting with friends, there are children who are emotional, easily upset so that they can not respond to

differences that arise each individual so that conflicts arise, competition in the school, especially in class VIII students have not shown an enthusiastic competition for ranking/achievement, for example when the teacher gives a quiz, there are one or two students who want to respond so that the lack of response from these students has not shown enthusiastic students in competing.

School counselors are responsible for helping students face their problems, including social interaction problems. Therefore, counselor efforts in assisting in increasing students' social interaction can be done using group counseling services. Excellence provided by group counseling services is a place to develop communication skills and social interaction for service participants (Jager et al., 2019).

Play therapy is one of the tools provided to children or adolescents by the use of games as an effective media to express and explore themselves in achieving optimal growth and development (Irawan, 2013; Ray et al., 2015; Schaefer & Drewes, 2015; Lin & Bratton, 2015). According to Geldard et al., (2016) effective media to improve the ability to interact socially for early teens aged 11-13 years is a game that will be used to interact with the environment because playing is not just something fun activity, but contains a therapeutic value.

The implementation of play therapy through group counseling services allows students to learn to adjust to the real-life demands. Based on research conducted by Pitria (2013), play therapy in group counseling can help resolve conflicts among students. In the first cycle, two conflicts are resolved, representing 50% of the total sample, and in the second cycle, all conflicts were resolved. A study by Burtch, play therapy researchers, entitled "The use of play therapy in the private clinical setting" asserts that play therapy is the possible method for treating and is also widely used and accepted in dealing with problems of children and adolescents.

Based on the explanation above and the phenomena that occur in the field, it is, therefore, necessary to conduct a study entitled "The Effect of Play Therapy Through

Group Counseling Services to Improve Social Interaction of Class VIII Students of SMP N 1 Kota Jambi". Play therapy is a technique that is considered attractive for teenagers. Through play therapy, they get learning experiences in the form of interactions with others, communicating, and collaborating.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative pre-experimental design with One Group Pretest-Posttest Design. Ten students participating this study were recruited using a purposive sampling technique by purposive sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The proposed hypotheses were tested using the Wilcoxon test.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1.

Classification of Social Interaction Levels of Students Pre-Test Experiment Class

No	Category	Interval Class	f	%
1.	Very High	157-169	1	3,3
2.	High	144-156	10	33,33
3.	Is on	131-143	9	30
4.	Low	118-130	5	16,67
5.	Very low	105-117	5	16,67
Total			30	100

Based on the table, it can be seen that the initial conditions of the experimental class students totaling 30 students before treatment, i.e., some students are in the category of very high, high, and medium, means that students are able to interact socially well in school and only a few percent of students are in the category low and very low. This shows that there are still students with low social interaction, and for that, it needs to be improved again. One effort can be done is by providing treatment in the form of play therapy through group counseling services in schools, with the aim that students' social interaction increases.

The elaboration of the results of the scale of social interactions obtained by (3.33%) students have very high social interactions, i.e., only 1 student, students who are in the high category (33.33%) with a total of 10

students, students who are at medium category (30%) with 9 students, students in the low category (16.67%) with 5 students, students who are at a very low level (16.67%) with 5 students. In order to make it easier to understand, researchers make a diagram of the results of the percentage of students' social interaction levels in the experimental class as follows:

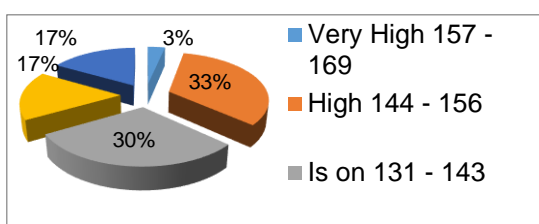


Figure 1.

Percentage Results of Pre-Test Students' Social Interaction Level Before Treatment

The description of the social interaction results of the study sample students after the treatment can be seen in the following table.

Table 2.

Results of Post-Test Social Interaction Scores for Grade VIII G Students for Experiment Class After Treatment

Code Name	Pre-Test	Category	Post-Test	Category
NTH	129	Low	145	High
CSR	108	Very Low	157	High
AAL	118	Low	141	Is on
MNA	110	Very Low	155	High
MSR	117	Very Low	153	High
HSW	106	Very Low	166	Very High
MRA	107	Very Low	143	Is on
RPR	124	Low	155	High
MGR	127	Low	142	Is on
MRA	121	Low	167	Very High

Table 2. explained that the results of the post-test scale of social interaction from NTH obtained a total score of 145 with a high category, CSR obtained a total score of 157 with a high category, AAL obtained a total score of 141 with a moderate category, MNA obtained a total score of 155 with a high category, MSR obtained a total score of 153 in the high category, HSW obtained a total

score of 166 in the very high category, MRA obtained a total score of 143 in the medium category, RPR obtained a total score of 155 in the high category, MGR obtained a total score of 142 in the medium category and MRA obtained a total score 167 with a very high category.

Based on the results of the distribution of data, can be classified as a normative interval continuum (KIN).

Table 3.

Classification of Social Interaction Levels of Experimental Class Students) After Treatment

No	Category	Interval Class	f	%
1.	Very High	157-169	2	20
2.	High	144-156	5	30
3.	Is on	131-143	3	50
4.	Low	118-130	0	0
5.	Very low	105-117	0	0
Total			10	100

Based on table 3., it can be concluded that some students are in the high category and some students are in the very high and medium category. This shows that students are able to interact socially well in school after treatment is carried out, which is evidenced by the results of categorization based on data obtained from these respondents that there are no students in the low and very low categories.

The elaboration of the results of the social interaction scale obtained is (20%) students have a very high social interaction with the number of 2 students, students who are in the high category (50%) with a total of 5 students, students who are in the moderate category (30%) with a total of 3 students, students in the low category (0%) with a total of 0 students, and students in the very low category (0%) with a total of 0 students.

Hypothesis testing is conducted non-parametrically with the Wilcoxon test for small samples. The following is table 4. Test results using SPSS 21.00:

Table 4.
Wilcoxon Test Results

Posttest – Pretest	
Z	-2.805
Asymp. Sig.(2-tailed)	.005

Interpretation of the Wilcoxon test, which is as follows:

- a. If the Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05 , then H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted, which means play therapy through group counseling services affects the social interactions of students who are associative (cooperation, accommodation, assimilation), and dissociative (competition) ".
- b. If the Sig. (2-tailed) > 0.05 , then H_0 is accepted and H_a is rejected, which means that play therapy through group counseling services does not affect students' social interactions that are associative (cooperation, accommodation, assimilation) and dissociative (competition) ".

Based on the output above, it is known that the value of Sig. (2-tailed) ie $0.005 < 0.05$ then H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted, which means that play therapy through group counseling services affects the social interactions of students who are associative (cooperation, accommodation, assimilation) and dissociative (competition).

Observations made to observe the activities of students at the time of treatment showed increased results where in the first treatment the average results of observation of students 2.2 with a percentage of 27%, then on the second treatment the average results of observation of students 4 with a percentage of 50% , in the third treatment the average student observation results were 5.5 with a percentage of 68.75%, and in the fourth treatment the average student observation results were 6.9 with a percentage of 86.25%. Based on these observations it can be seen that students' social interactions have increased from the first treatment to the end.

Discussion of Research Results

The following section describes the the results of social interactions based on each indicator.

a. Cooperation Indicator

Collaboration is an activity carried out by students together between individuals and groups in working on an activity that involves learning in the classroom assigned by the teacher or awareness of students to do the activity. Based on the results of the calculation of the percentage using the formula C for different scales or items, the data obtained that the social interaction of experimental class students on the indicator of cooperation has a very low quality that is equal to 66.85% before treatment, on the other hand, the results of the post-test has a moderate quality of 82 % after treatment.

The findings show that in the experimental class, social interaction cooperation indicators have increased from very low to moderate categories. Thus, it is illustrated that the initial conditions of grade VIII students do have very low social interactions in accordance with observations made by subject teachers and counselors during teaching periods in class VIII, then supported by structured interviews conducted by researchers with three subject teachers at VIII grade, and school counselor.

Based on the results, this study showed an increase in student social interaction that is an indicator of cooperation after treatment using play therapy through group counseling services. This is in accordance with the theory revealed by Geldard et al. (2016) that games can be used by counselors to help children practice social skills such as collaboration, collaboration and practice an appropriate response to disappointment, setbacks, failures, and success. In line with the opinion of Eliasa (Loban et al., 2017), who found that games can help improve the cooperation and social abilities of each group member. Barakova & Emilia said that social skills that are carried out in conjunction with the game can stimulate social behavior that is included in the elements of positive social interaction (Andriati, 2016; Forsell, et al., 2020; Leaf et al., 2017).

b. Accommodation Indicator

Accommodation is a rule that applies during the learning process including norms and social values that apply and efforts to control emotions in the classroom. Based on the results of the calculation of the percentage using the formula C for different scales or items, the results show that the social interaction of the control class students on the accommodation indicator has a very low quality of 63.5% before treatment, on the other hand, for the post-test has a very low quality of 63, 83% after treatment.

This description showed that, in the experimental class, social interaction accommodation indicators do not experience a significant increase. This might occur because of a number of factors such as play therapy with the game "Make Something Beautiful" the benefits of service participants have not been felt because there are several obstacles, namely when the treatment takes place the multimedia room, suddenly the room need to be used by the school because SMP N 1 Kota Jambi was just appointed as a choir filler to commemorate World Children's Day. Thus, the duration of treatment must be accelerated or shortened.

The unmet achievement of the treatment implementation goal occurs due to several constraints, namely the availability of time that is not in accordance with the specified duration of time hence it seems urgent, and students do not fully understand and feel the benefits of play therapy. Suwarjo & Eliasa (2011) revealed that if the face-to-face time is not sufficient, the game is cut in the middle of the road, which will cause mutual disappointment, and the game's goal is not achieved. The results of this study contradict Sarok & Blum's opinion (in Loban et al., 2017), which stated that group counseling using games could benefit group members that can abide by rules, can solve problems, can practice self-discipline and emotional control, and can adopt the roles of leaders and followers who are all important components of socialization.

c. Assimilation Indicator

Assimilation is the behavior exhibited by students to reduce differences of opinion and habits which occur between individuals or groups to enhance the unity of actions and attitudes by paying attention to shared interests and goals in the classroom. Based on the results of the calculation of the percentage using the formula C for different scales or items, the data obtained showed that the social interaction of experimental class students on the assimilation indicator has a very low quality of 66.75% before treatment, on the other hand, for the post-test has a high quality of 88, 25% after treatment, showed that in the experimental class social interaction assimilation indicators have increased.

The results of this study are consistent with the theory expressed by Geldard et al. (2016) that games are fun and also help children develop physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially. Then reinforced by the opinion of Loban et al. (2017) which stated that playing facilitates the process of assimilation, strengthening and consolidating knowledge, influencing the development and maturity of the personality. Venter said that when playing, therapists use different games, toys, and other media to help children express their emotions so that children have the opportunity to deal with their emotions appropriately in a safe environment (Putri, 2014).

d. Competition Indicator

Competition is an attempt by an individual to get a value or achievement (award or ranking) in the class. Based on the results of the calculation of the percentage using the formula C for different scales or items, it was found that the social interaction of the experimental class students on the competition indicators had a very low quality of 63.77% before treatment, while for the post-test had a high quality of 87, 77% after treatment, showing that in the experimental class social interaction competition indicators have increased.

The results of this study are supported by Reid & Schafer's theory (in Hatiningsih, 2013)

which states that play therapy really helps children to improve concentration because in games, children learn to practice motor, sensory, cognitive, and concentration development. In line with Rusmana's view (in Suwarjo & Eliasa, 2011) that in playing, individuals tend to have enough frustration tolerance, reality testing to accept the limits in behavior, how patience is used, queuing laws, turns, obeying the rules of the game and ready accept defeat.

Students' social interaction on competition indicators increases because of the provision of "See Out Feet" treatment play therapy through group counseling services. They really focus and concentrate on the services or activities they are taking so that they are not disturbed by the environment and can apply them in everyday life. Therefore students can feel how healthy competition should be and be able to accept every defeat and acknowledge the success of others.

This study successfully demonstrated a change in the level of social interaction of students after treatment for the experimental class in the form of group counseling services with play therapy techniques. In comparison, students who were previously in the low and very low categories rose to medium, high, and very high categories. In contrast, the control class did not experience a significant increase. That is because the techniques used in increasing student social interaction have indeed been designed for students who have difficulty in social interaction. Besides, the internal factors within the student to be able to follow treatment with real and full confidence and external support from teachers and researchers that can arouse enthusiasm and motivation when doing treatment play therapy.

This research is inseparable from the various obstacles experienced, where these obstacles can affect treatment results. The obstacle experienced by researchers is the time or duration of treatment implementation because researchers use the teacher's lesson hours, and the implementation of the treatment approaches the implementation of mid-semester exams so students and teachers are actively discussing the subject

matter to be tested. To the extent that the time spent on the treatment is well scheduled with the assigned teachers. However, it has constraints, namely when the weather research is not supportable because of the haze that struck the province of Jambi hence the activity of providing treatment is disrupted both in terms of the time and condition of students.

In addition, the limitations of researchers because they still cannot control outside interference; thus, there are some students who are not focused and do not concentrate well on the treatment implementation. In calm conditions, this treatment will be more effective because students can focus and concentrate. These obstacles should be considered by future researchers, in order to avoid mistakes and reduce the bias that occurs in research conducted. Consideration of subject characteristics such as the number of subjects, age, sex, personality and parenting, and the state of the subject need to be taken into consideration in taking research subjects.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion of research that has been carried out at SMP N 1 Kota Jambi in class VIII of the academic year 2017/2018, it can be concluded that play therapy through group counseling services is effective in improving the social interactions of students. It is recommended for teachers, especially school counselors, to optimize the implementation of group counseling services with play therapy techniques as a means to help students, especially in increasing social interaction.

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