

The Differences of Group Counseling Competencies Between Pre-Service Counselors and School Counselors

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at investigating the distinction between group counselor competencies of the pre-service counselors at the Department of Guidance and Counseling, Universitas Negeri Jakarta and school counselors in DKI Jakarta. The *ex-post-facto* research method was employed in carrying out this study. Participants of this research were 46 students (group counselors) from the Department of Guidance and Counseling, Universitas Negeri Jakarta and 27 school counselors at DKI Jakarta. Data was collected using the Group Counselor Competencies Scale. The data gathered were analyzed using the independent sample t-test. The result of this research found positively significant differences in scores of group counseling competencies between the pre-service and school counselors. Research implications towards education and supervision of counselors were discussed in this article.

Keywords: *Group counseling, group counseling competencies, pre-service counselor, school counselor.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The professional performance of a group counselor is influenced by its competencies. Group counselling contains therapeutic aspects that allow the counselee to develop self and social capabilities, and also to comprehend, explore, and solve problems effectively and efficiently (Berg, Landreth & Fall 2018; Corey 2012; Corey, Corey & Corey 2014; Jacob et al. 2012). Previous studies show that group counseling is an important component of school counseling programs and an effective intervention when working in an academic environment (Akos, Goodnough & Milsom 2010; Perusse, Goodnough & Lee 2009). Another studies shows that group counselling has significant positive effect towards self-awareness, reasoning, emotional regulation (Erden 2015), trust (Gultekin, Erkan & Tuzunturk 2011), and social competence (Ates 2016).

Group counselor is a reflective practitioner, therefore, it requires a lot of professional experiences in an authentic setting. The skillful experiences of a group of counselors in conducting group counseling is one of the key factors influencing the development of group counselling competency of the pre-service and school counselors. Professional experiences in practicing group counseling prediction can develop group counseling competencies, self-awareness and reflective practice (Granello & Young 2012). Previous studies shows that service learning project in a group counseling can positively impact pre-service counselors learning outcomes as well as self-efficacy in facilitating a group

(Bjornestad, Mims & Mims 2016). It increases group leadership, self-efficacy and multicultural knowledge and awareness (Midgett, Hausheer & Doumas 2016). Another studies shows that training and experience can develop group counseling skills and abilities (Ohrt et al. 2014).

So far, there has not been any research that intensively investigates the group counseling competency of the pre-service counselors and school counselors in Indonesia. As a result of this rationale, this present study focuses on examining the counseling competencies between pre-service counselors and school counselors in Jakarta.

The hypothesis proposed in this research was that there are positively significant differences between pre-service counselors and school counselors in Jakarta.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This research employed an *ex-post-facto* research method (Heppner, Wampold & Kivlighan 2008). The applied method was applied to compare the group counseling competency between pre-service counselors from the Department of Guidance and Counseling Faculty of Educational Sciences Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) and school counselors in DKI Jakarta.

2.2 Participants

Participants of this research were 46 students (pre-service counselors) from the Guidance and Counseling Department of FIP UNJ and 27 school counselors in DKI

Jakarta. They were selected using the simple random sampling technique.

2.3 The Data Collection Technique

The data were collected using questionnaires, known as a Group Counselling Competencies Scale (GCCS). Its instruments were made up of 37 items applied to measure three sub-competencies of the group counselling competencies namely: g knowledge, skills, and experiences. GCCS was developed in the form of 10 point rating scale, from 1 = very low, until 10 = very high GCCS. The items-total product coefficient ranged from 0,616 – 0,925. The results showed that the reliability coefficient (α) of GCCS was.982. This meant that GCCS reliability was on the highest category (Drummond & Jones 2010).

2.4 The Analysis Technique

An independent sample t-test was used to analyze the differences of the group counselling competency of the pre-service and school counselors. This technique was based on the opinion that independent samples t-test was employed to examine the differences of the average scores of the two sample groups (Creswell 2012). Operationally, the data were managed using an IBM SPSS v. 23.0 for Windows.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The proposed hypothesis analyzes that there are positively significant differences of the average score of a group counseling competency between pre-service counselors from Department of Guidance and Counseling FIP UNJ and school counselors from DKI Jakarta.

Results of this research, as shown in Table 1, revealed that there were significantly positive different scores of group counselling competencies between pre-service counselors from Department of Guidance and Counseling FIP UNJ and school counselors from DKI Jakarta. It was signified by the score of *Sig. (2-tailed) < p 0,05 (t =-3,23; Sig. =0,002)*. The profile of group counseling competency of pre-service counselors was at the moderate level ($M = 6,8; SD = 1,0$), while that of the school counselors was at the competent level ($M = 7,6; SD =1,0$). In other words, the hypothesis was accepted that professional experiences in practicing group counseling had important roles and contributed positively to the development of group counselling competencies of the pre-service and school counselors.

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation, and t-test in Group Counselor Competencies between pre-service counselors and school counselors

Competency/ Subcompet	PreService Counselors	School Counselors	T	Sig.
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encies	M	SD	M	SD		
GCC (Group Counseling Competencies)	6,8	1,0	7,6	1,0	-3,23	0,002
SC1: Knowledge	6,7	1,0	7,6	1,0	-3,61	0,001
SC2: Skills	6,8	1,0	7,6	1,1	-3,10	0,003
SC3: Experiences	7,0	1,1	7,5	1,2	-1,77	0,082

**p < 0,05 (2-tailed).*

The results of this research proved that professional experiences were one of the key factors influencing the development of group counselling competence of the group counselors. Professional experiences of a group counselor in the practicing group is one of the key factors influencing the development of group counselling competency of the pre-service and school counselors. Professional experiences in the practicing group can develop the group counseling competencies, self-awareness and reflective practice (Granello & Young 2012). This research was also in accordance with the findings that education, training, and professional experiences could increase the pre-services and school counselors' self-efficacy in group counselling (Mullen et al. 2015).

The following are the further elaboration of each sub-competency group. First, there were positively significant differences in group counseling knowledge between the pre-service counselors in Department of Guidance and Counseling FIP UNJ and school counselors in DKI Jakarta. It was signified by the score of *Sig. (2-tailed) < p 0,05 (t =-3.61; Sig. =0,001)*. The profile of group counseling competency of pre-service counselors tended to be at a moderate level ($M = 6,7; SD = 1,0$), while that of the school counselors was in a competent level ($M = 7,6; SD =1,0$). But, the group counseling knowledge of pre-service counselors and counselors was not optimum. The professional group counsellors should know when to hold individual or group counselling. This sub-competency is indicated by the ability of group counsellors to: (1) understand the main theory of group counseling; (2) understand the principles of group dynamic; (3) identify and explain the strength and weakness of a group leader; (4) understand the ethical issues in group counseling; (5) understand the roles of group counselors and members of group counselors; (6) familiarize with the current research in group counseling; (7) understand in the effective interaction characteristics of group counseling (Berg, Landreth & Fall 2018; Corey 2012; Corey, Corey & Corey 2014; Jacob et al. 2012).

Secondly, there were positive significant differences in group counseling skills between the pre-service

counselors in Department of Guidance and Counseling FIP UNJ and school counselors in DKI Jakarta. It was signified by the score of Sig. (2-tailed) $< p 0,05$ ($t = -3,10$; Sig. = 0,003). The profile of group counseling competency of pre-service counselors was at a moderate level ($M = 6,8$; $SD = 1,0$), while that of school counselors was at a competent level ($M = 7,6$; $SD = 1,1$). But, ggrouop counseling knowledge of pre-service counselors and counselors was not optimum. The professional counsellor group had high skills in practicing group counseling. This sub-competency is indicated by the ability of group counsellors to: (1) choose and apply the appropriate group counseling theory and approach; (2) apply the principles of group dynamic; (3) be able to perform their awareness of facilitative and deliberative roles and group management, such as explaining and performing various roles correctly and cooperation between group members; (4) apply the various types of group counselling activities appropriate to group members characteristics and problems; (5) mastering the steps and strategies in organizing, preparing, beginning, explaining the first step or opening, work stage or main parts, last part or closing, and also the procedure to finish the group; and (6) keep following the development of professional literature on group counselling (Berg, Landreth & Fall 2018; Corey 2012; Corey, Corey & Corey 2014; Jacob et al. 2012).

Group counselor should also be aware of the code and ethics on group counselling. According to schoolars (Berg, Landreth & Fall 2018; Corey 2012; Corey, Corey & Corey 2014; Jacob et al. 2012), a competent group counsellor should be able to obey the professional code of ethics, namely: (1) conducting a new group's orientation; (2) selecting group members; (3) applying the principles of voluntarism, justice, confidentiality, equality, and liberty; (4) avoiding multiple relationship; (5) applying procedures of consultation, referral, and finishing the group. Therefore, a counsellor should understand, obey, and conduct an ethical justification before choosing alternatives and making the right decision (Kaplan 2014). Adhere to the principles, policies, and code of ethics of counselling (Herlihy & Duffrene 2011).

Lastly,, there were positive significant differences in the counselling group as experiences' sub-competence score between the pre-services counselors from Department of Guidance and Counseling FIP UNJ and school counselors in DKI Jakarta. It was signified by the score of Sig. (2-tailed) $> p 0,05$ ($t = -1,77$; Sig. = 0,082). Pre-service counselors and school counselors were competent level in group counseling experiences ($M = 7,1$; $7,5$; $SD = 1,1$; $1,2$). This subcompetency should be developed optimally.

The implications of this research were that education counsellors should consider and facilitate the development of group counselling competencies. First they should adequate space to the group counsellor to review the latest theory and research, to request for

experience in practicing in terms of authentic, reflecting, integrating, internalizing, and transforming their experiences optimally. Secondly, a counsellor educator should continuously supervise other candidates using various supervision techniques such as; clinical, administrative, developmental, and integrative formats (Bernard & Goodyear 2014; CACREP 2016; McAuliffe & Eriksen 2011). The last, is evaluating the group counseling competencies as an integral part of the learning process by using multimodal sources, such as self-report, objective test, case analysis essay test, portfolio, observation, performance assessment, and authentic assessment.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This research has confirmed that the hypothesis was accepted, meaning that there are positively significant differences in scores of group counselling competencies between the pre-service counselors from Department of Guidance and Counseling FIP UNJ and school counselors in DKI Jakarta. the school counselors more competent than pre-service counselors, especially in knowledge and skills. It means that the professional experiences had important roles and positively contributed to the development of group counsellor competencies.

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