

# Upgrading Counselor's Critical Thinking Skills for High School Counselors in Surabaya to Improve Student Problem Solving Readiness during The Pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

The optimization of counselors in high school during the pandemic must be carried out properly based on the fact that students experience many problems both academic and non-academic during online learning. The transition process from face-to-face learning to online learning requires students to adapt quickly to the situation. Differences in student adaptability create problems for certain students, such as lack of motivation to attend classes which result in decreased academic achievement. In dealing with this problem, counselors are required to have critical thinking skills so that they can analyze the root of the problem and provide appropriate alternative solutions for students as their counselors. Therefore, the workshop is carried out to improve the critical thinking skills of counselors in Surabaya with the hope that they will be able to optimize their role in overcoming student problems. The workshop was followed by a focus group discussion to directly practice critical thinking skills in mapping problems and solutions for students.

**Keywords:** *critical thinking, counseling, online learning*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Kabir Syed Muhammad, in [1] states that counselors can guide, advise consultations, recommend and help various problems that can be used as strengths in the counseling process to improve students' development in the academic, personal, social, and career fields to be productive. The role of counselors in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic is often forgotten. Even though their existence can help smooth the teaching and learning process. The application of Learning from Home which was implemented to minimize the spread of the Covid 19 virus in Indonesia has been going on for more than a year. During that time, students also studied online and did not meet face-to-face with the teacher. The impact of online learning is not only in decreasing learning achievement. As a consequence the majority of schools and teachers

focus more on achieving basic competencies and non-academic problems tend to be ignored. The non-academic problem that arises is the decrease in the character value of each student. This can be seen from the way of communication to the teacher and the willingness of students to obey orders when given teaching materials, assignments, and parental reports about the child's attitude while at home. This problem is the responsibility of homeroom teachers and counselors. The role of the counselor cannot be immediately replaced by the other teachers. In addition to the problems of the disciplines mastered, subject teachers also have various activities that make it impossible to focus on student problems. Counselors are very closely related to character education which is the direct or indirect cause of the low achievement of student learning outcomes.

Based on data compiled by [2] regarding the description of the psychological condition of students during the Covid 19 pandemic, it shows that students at the SMA/SMK level who perform BDR show a significantly higher level of trauma symptoms compared to the TM learning method and are not significantly different. by learning the BDR-TM Mixture. The BDR learning model in addition to causing trauma also gave birth to non-academic problems in the form of degradation of student discipline and character problems due to the absence of direct contact between teachers and students. From an academic point of view, the implementation of learning from home causes a decrease in the achievement of learning outcomes. There are indications that this happens because of the psychological impact that ultimately makes students unable to follow the lesson and catch the material well. The lack of control in the BDR learning model more or less affects the disciplined ethos of students in participating in learning, for example, we can look at online learning using the Zoom platform which allows students to turn off video and audio so that their behavior during learning cannot be fully monitored by the teacher. Gradually students will consider their indiscipline as a matter of course.

It has been more than a year that learning from home has been implemented in Surabaya. High school students in Surabaya fully learn online through various learning platforms. Based on the results of questionnaires distributed through counselors in 10 high schools in Surabaya, it was found that students were waiting to return to study together with their friends at school through face-to-face learning. Questionnaires distributed to students also asked about the problems faced by students and students' impressions of online learning. The results of the 150 students' answers showed 4 basic problems they experienced, namely 1) unable to concentrate, 2) unable to understand the material, 3) not enthusiastic about attending class, 4) being bored at home so they felt stressed. In the adaptation process, problems will generally arise, especially concerning habituation of discipline and improvement of student character that changes after the application of learning from home. Counselors in high schools here are required to be more alert and responsive in overcoming these problems to implement better learning to support the achievement of the planned learning.

In the context of counseling services, counselors should be able to think critically in the sense of being able to create a psychological atmosphere so that they can focus and concentrate fully on conversations that involve the counselee, be a good listener, be able to sort through the information received, be able to relate a series of contents of the counselee's conversation, be able to conclude comprehensively. carefully the contents of the counselee's conversation. In this case, counsees are the students of the senior high school who face non-academic problems that have an impact on academic achievement.

Furthermore, according to [3] the implementation of counseling during a pandemic must be based on specific cases experienced by the counselee. The counselor must be able to draw a common thread between the problems faced by the counselee and the pandemic conditions that may be the cause of the problem. Habits changes have occurred dramatically during the pandemic, in this case, the implementation of online schools, inevitably have changed the habit patterns of students who had previously been steady with the habit of going to school offline and face to face with friends and teachers. in this condition, counselors are required to apply critical thinking skills in mapping and formulating solutions to problems faced by students.

For this reason, training is held aimed at improving and training students' critical thinking skills. trainees are high school counselors in Surabaya. The training activities consist of training for critical thinking followed by direct counseling practices and group discussion forums aimed at discussing problems that occur in high school students in Surabaya during online learning. With the upgrading of high school counselors in Surabaya, it is expected to increase the role of counselors in overcoming student problems which in the future will be able to support the achievement of student competence and understanding even though learning will still be carried out online.

## **2. METHODS AND MATERIAL**

In the community service conducted 4 stages are applied as follows :

### **2.1. Preparation**

At the initial stage, observations were made on high school counselors in Surabaya through sending online questionnaires to find out the extent of their understanding of the impact and consequences of online learning.

### **2.2. Coordination**

Coordination is carried out with related parties who will support the implementation of training for high school counselors, namely the association of high school counselors and also speakers and guides of training activities from the Unesa and Unipa Counseling Guidance departments. The speaker for this event is Bambang Dibyo, S.Pd, M.Pd from Unesa and Dr. Cindy Asli Pravesti from Unipa.

### **2.3. Planning**

At the planning stage, the systematic planning of the program is realized in the form of a proposal. This proposal contains the urgency of program implementation, details and scheduling of the

implementation of activities, division of team tasks, and also the required funding.

#### **2.4. Implementation**

The next stage is implementation, which begins with the process of preparing materials, implementing training, and carrying out FGDs.

#### **2.5. Evaluation**

After completing the entire implementation of the activity, an evaluation is held. At this stage, an evaluation of the planning process to the program implementation process is carried out. The deficiencies that occur can be used as material for analysis and improvement for further program activities. At this stage, a final activity report is also prepared which is an activity accountability report.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **3.1. Critical Thinking and Counseling Workshop**

The implementation of the upgrading program is divided into 2 sessions, the first is critical thinking training and the second is a forum group discussion. The training was attended by 35 counselors from 15 high schools in Surabaya. The material provided during the training is classified into 2 parts, namely the theory of critical thinking and the application of critical thinking in the counseling process. Each material is delivered in 2 hours plus a discussion and question and answer section for 1 hour.

In the first material session to train critical thinking skills, participants are given first definitions and models of critical thinking from several experts. It's clearly explained that basically, humans have two different patterns of thinking fundamental, namely critical thinking and creative thinking [4]. Thinking is a human mental activity to respond to various stimuli in the form of problems both internally and from outside in the form of observations. While critical thinking is intended to analyze in depth from various stimuli or information obtained so that it can be believed for the benefit of making a decision. Then the speaker directed the participants to link between critical thinking skills and the participant's profession as counselors in high school. Participants are invited to discuss the extent to which critical thinking skills are needed in their profession. From all participant's opinions, it can be concluded that critical thinking is the ability to analyze facts, generate and organize ideas, defend opinions, make comparisons, draw conclusions, evaluate arguments and solve problems. That's the main reason they have to be able to think critically as counselors because they have to face the student's problems and be able to solve them well. After the participants expressed their opinions, the speaker gave real examples of the application of critical thinking and asked participants to provide other examples

of the application of critical thinking in everyday life to make sure that they already understood the notion of critical thinking and its correlation to their profession.

The second material session was continued with effective counseling material in the pandemic era. The speaker started with the notion of counseling and how the process of counseling has to be done. Counseling is a process of assistance by the counselor to the counselee so that the counselee can understand the problem and be able to solve the problem to find alternative solutions to the right problem according to the counselee's circumstances. For the counselor's help to be effective, at the beginning. In counseling interviews, counselors need to understand well the counselee's problems. Sometimes the counselee has not been able to state the problem clearly, it is still hidden as if the counselee is hiding his problem. That's when the counselor needs to determine the counselee's problem begins with an in-depth analysis. The analysis referred to in this case is the counselor's activity to sort out the information conveyed by the counselee, group the information, so that relevant information can be determined as the basis for making decisions. In this case, the counselor must be able to be a good listener, able to use good questioning techniques to direct the counseling process to be effective and efficient. Before setting the counselee's problem, all the information conveyed by the counselee is studied in-depth, challenging questions are asked to test the counselee's belief in the information conveyed. As a guide to being able to analyze the counselee's problems, a counselor should be able to make meaningful assumptions or hypotheses about the counselee's problems. Allegations submitted will be able to direct the course of the counseling process. The type and content of the questions posed to the counselee is a description of the allegations. The allegation will approach the reality experienced by the counselee if all questions will be answered yes and support the allegation [5].

From the explanation of the counseling process, the speaker asked then why critical thinking has to be involved in the counseling process and in which section critical thinking has to be applied. Most of the participants directly linked it with real examples faced during the counseling process with students at school. Since the identification process, the counselor is required to involve a critical thinking process to be able to identify the counselee's problems appropriately, including analyzing the causes of problems and mapping out effective and efficient solutions. After an explanation about the application of critical thinking in counseling, the speaker explained about counseling in the pandemic era for students, which is rather complicated to carry out. However, as a counselor in high school, the responsibility to assist students who are facing problems must still be done even in online learning situations like today. The speaker offers an alternative that can be implemented in senior high schools in Surabaya, namely online

counseling services. Online-based counseling services are part of the school system that can assist students in overcoming problems encountered during the teaching and learning process to achieve maximum student development. In this case, every effort can be made to establish an emotionally close relationship between the counselor and the participants. educate. This effort was also carried out to apply the counseling service program which has been conceptualized as four types of counseling services service component in the field of guidance and counseling. The four service components of the field are personal, social, study, and career guidance [6]. Planning for the formation of online counseling services will be accompanied by a community service team. The next step that is conducted after the workshops is Focus Group Discussion.

**3.2. Focus Group Discussion**

This step is conducted to help the counselors in senior high school mapping the student’s problems during online learning. 35 teachers were participated accompanied by a team and speaker. From the discussion, the student’s problem can be classified into 2 main problems, namely lack of motivation and unfavorable home situation. These main problems caused other problems that can hinder the student learning process, such as laziness, lateness for online classes, looking for excuses to skip the class, the boredom of learning. All of these problems will complicate students’ comprehension of the materials that are delivered in the class. Based on the analysis conducted during the discussion, the counselors then try to map the causes and the solutions for the occurred problems as shown in Table 1.

According to the counselors present, to overcome this problem, the synergy between classroom teachers, counselors, and parents is needed. During the pandemic, the coordination of teachers and parents must be improved not only in the academic realm but also in the non-academic realm, such as the mental health of students who may experience problems due to changes in the learning system.

**4. CONCLUSIONS**

The main role of counselors during the Covid-19 pandemic is expected to be able to formulate individual counseling services that suit the needs of students nowadays [1]. Therefore an attempt to upgrade the critical thinking skills of counselors in high school in Surabaya can be the first step to provide strategic benefits for counselors in mapping students' problems during online learning. critical thinking skills improve the counselor's analytical ability to students' problems as counselees.

**Table 1.** Problems Mapping By The Counselors

Description of the problem	Cause of problem	Solution
Boredom	Monotonous material delivery, no contact with friends, too many tasks	1) Coordination with the homeroom teachers and suggest the subject teacher create more interactive material, 2) teacher has to implement teaching method that enables students to interact with the other, 3) discuss with the subject teacher about the appropriate amount task given to the students, 4) intensively online counseling with the students to motivate them and give them courage
Lazyness	Monotonous material delivery, lack of motivation due to the home support	1) Coordination with the homeroom teachers and suggest the subject teacher create more interactive material, 2) teacher has implemented more interactive teaching method 3) discuss with the parents to gain the real situation of the home support, 4) intensively online counseling to motivate students
Absence	No. interest towards the material, poor signal, too many tasks, lack of teachers attention	1) Coordination with the homeroom teachers and suggest the subject teacher create more interactive material, 2) teacher has implemented more interactive teaching method 3) discuss with the parents to gain the real situation of the home support, 4) intensively online counseling to motivate students
Lateness	Poor signal, no preparation. Lack of discipline	1) Coordination with the homeroom teachers and suggest the subject teacher create more interactive material, 2) teacher has to implement light punishment 3) discuss with the parents about the discipline that has to be implemented by their children during the class, 4) intensively online counseling to motivate students that they can be a better person by being more discipline in the class

The problems faced by students are part of the consequences of school from home that can directly affect students’ learning achievement. Most of the problems faced by students during online learning are non-academic, but if left unchecked it will cause more academic problems. therefore the role of counselors must be further enhanced during the pandemic. The result of the training and focus group discussions conducted by the community service team with high school counselors was the initiation of online counseling services involving classroom teachers and parents. For the process of establishing online counseling services, further training will be carried out related to IT readiness and the ability of counselors to use IT as a means of counseling.

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