Analysis of Students' Level of Understanding of the Practice of Implementing Group Guidance and Counseling Services

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ABSTRACT

Group guidance and counseling services are fundamental competencies that must be mastered by prospective guidance and counseling (BK) teachers. This study aims to analyze the level of understanding of Medan State University students towards the practice of group guidance and counseling services. The research used descriptive quantitative method with total sampling technique, involving 33 Regular E/Stambuk 2022 counseling students as respondents. The instrument used was an online questionnaire which was analyzed with descriptive tests based on mean and standard deviation. The results showed that the level of student understanding of group guidance practice was mostly in the low category (52%), while understanding of group counseling showed a similar pattern, with 52% of respondents in the low category. This finding indicates the lack of students' ability to understand and practice the stages of group guidance and counseling. This study concludes that there is a need to strengthen practice-based learning, improve professional skills, and master supporting theories. The implications of the research include recommendations for curriculum development that focuses more on intensive practice and real situation-based training. It is recommended to integrate innovative learning methods to improve student understanding.

INTRODUCTION

Group guidance and counseling is one of the fundamental services that prospective counseling teachers must master in schools. This service plays an important role in helping students overcome personal, social, and academic problems, and develop their potential optimally (Prayitno, 2014). In the context of education in Indonesia, the importance of mastering group counseling guidance is increasingly relevant given the role of counseling teachers who are an integral part of the education system in facilitating student development (Hartanti, 2022). For this reason, universities that produce counseling graduates must ensure student competence in understanding and implementing this service, both theoretically and practically (Rahmawati, 2021).

Along with the challenges of education in the millennial era, counseling teachers are required to have professional abilities that are adaptive to the increasingly diverse needs of students. This includes mastering the four foundations of education: pedagogical, social, religious, and psychological, with a special emphasis on the pedagogical foundation (Prayitno & Amti, 2004). One of the efforts to meet these demands is through the practice of group counseling guidance which is required as a course in various counseling study programs, such as at Medan State

University. According to Gazda, this practicum aims to equip students with relevant practical skills in handling student problems effectively through a group approach (Prayitno, 2014).

The main problem faced in the implementation of group guidance and counseling services is students' lack of mastery of the practical aspects of this service. Although students can understand the theoretical concepts of group guidance, their ability to apply this theory in real situations is often limited (Nengseh & Muhroji, 2022). This is exacerbated by less interactive learning methods and the lack of opportunities to practice directly, so that students do not have a full understanding of group dynamics (Widayati & Ristiyana, 2019). This condition can hamper the effectiveness of group guidance services in schools, which in turn has an impact on student development.

The general solution offered to overcome this problem is to improve the quality of learning and training of students in group counseling guidance. Strategies such as simulation, role-playing, and field practicum have been proven effective in improving students' understanding of group dynamics and relevant counseling techniques (Baradja & Oktaviani, 2021). In addition, the use of technology such as e-learning platforms also allows students to access wider resources and support their learning independently (Miftachurohmah, 2024).

In this research, the specific solution proposed is the evaluation of the level of understanding of 3rd semester students of Medan State University who have studied group guidance and counseling practice in semester 2. This research focuses on analyzing the relationship between theoretical learning, practicum implementation, and external factors such as students' digital readiness on their level of understanding (Sembiring et al., 2023). With this approach, it is expected to identify areas that need to be improved to ensure students' readiness to provide counseling services in the future.

Previous research has shown that students involved in group counseling practice have a relatively high level of understanding. Suci (2021) reported that 87% of students who had taken this course showed good competence in service delivery. Another study by Nanda (2021) also indicated that students have a high theoretical understanding, although there are variations in their practical application. Furthermore, Fahdi et al. (2021) found that most students have a good level of suitability in the implementation of group guidance, although there are some that still need to be improved.

The literature review also showed that the use of techniques such as Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in group counseling can increase students' self-confidence and reduce academic anxiety (Fitri et al., 2024). In addition, group discussion techniques have been shown to be effective in increasing students' learning motivation at various levels of education (Amirullah & Syifaurrahmah, 2024). This suggests that an integrated approach between theory and practice can have a positive impact on the effectiveness of group guidance services.

However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the extent to which the integration of theory, practice and technology in counseling education can influence student understanding. Most studies focus more on individual aspects, such as mastery of certain techniques or practicum results, without considering the holistic interaction between these various factors (Muchtar et al., 2022). Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by exploring the factors that influence students' level of understanding of group guidance and counseling practices.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the level of understanding of 3rd semester students of Medan State University towards the practice of implementing group guidance and counseling services that have been studied in the previous semester. This research offers novelty in terms of a holistic approach that integrates aspects of theory, practice, and technology in evaluating student understanding. The results of this study are expected to provide practical recommendations to improve the quality of counseling education in higher education and prepare students to become competent professional counselors.

METHODS

This research uses a quantitative descriptive method designed to analyze the level of student understanding of the practice of implementing group guidance and counseling services. The research was conducted on 3rd semester students of the E-Regular Guidance and Counseling Study Program at Medan State University. The research took place during one academic semester, namely in the Odd Semester of the 2023/2024 Academic Year. The research location focuses on learning and practicum activities carried out at Medan State University.

The population in this study were all BK Regular-E Stambuk 2022 students at Medan State University, totaling 33 people. The sampling technique was carried out using the total sampling method, where all members of the population were used as research samples. The selection of this method is based on the number of population less than 100 people, making it possible to include the entire population as research respondents.

The research procedure begins with the preparation of an instrument in the form of a questionnaire distributed through the Google Form platform. This questionnaire was prepared based on the research variables, namely Group Guidance and Group Counseling, with the aim of collecting data related to student understanding. Data analysis techniques were carried out descriptively by calculating themean and standard deviation, and categorizing the results based on levels with normal distribution theory (B. Syarifudin, 2010). Data analysis used the help of Jamovi application version 2.3.28 to improve the accuracy and efficiency of data processing.

Table 1. Level Categorization Test

Categories	Class Interval
Very High	> M + 1 SD
High	M to (M + 1 SD)
Low	(M - 1 SD) to M
Very Low	< M - 1 SD

RESULT

The results of research data analysis describe the level of understanding of Reg-E/Stambuk 2022 counseling students at Medan State University in group guidance practice (BKP), it is known that the mean is 98.39 and the Standard Deviation is 10.65. Can be seen in the following table:

Table 2: Frequency and Category Distribution of BKP Practice Understanding Score

Kategori	Interval Kelas	Frekuensi	Persentase
Sangat Tinggi	> 109, 047	4	12
Tinggi	98, 393 - 109, 047	9	27
Rendah	87, 740 - 98,393	17	52
Sangat Rendah	< 87, 740	3	9
	Jumlah	33	100

The interpretation results showed that the majority of counseling students of Reg-E/Stambuk 2022 of Medan State University had a Low understanding of group guidance practice (BKP), with 17 people (52%) in this category. In addition, 3 people (9%) were recorded as being in the Very Low category, indicating a significant gap in the level of understanding. However, there were 9 people (27%) in the High category and 4 people (12%) in the Very High category, reflecting that some students were able to achieve good to excellent levels of understanding.

The significance of these results is that there is considerable variation in students' level of understanding of CPA practices. This finding highlights the need for improvements in teaching methods and practicum approaches to reach students with low understanding. On the other hand, the presence of students in the high and very high categories indicates the potential success of certain learning methods, which can be identified and adopted to improve overall understanding. Therefore, these results support the importance of learning evaluation and personalization of approaches to reduce gaps and ensure all students are able to achieve the expected level of competence.

Therefore, the hypothesis that has been proposed is rejected because it was found that the data analysis was dominated by students who had a low level of understanding, namely 17 people (52%) of BKP. Furthermore, the results of research data analysis describe the level of understanding of Reg-E/Stambuk 2022 counseling students at Medan State University in group counseling practice (KKP), it is known that the mean is 114.24 and the standard deviation is 98.34. This can be seen in the following table:

Table 3. Frequency Distribution and Category Score of Understanding KKP Practice

Categories	Class Interval	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	>130,138	5	15
High	114, 242 - 130, 138	8	24
Low	98, 346 -114, 242	17	52
Very Low	< 98, 346	3	9
	Total	33	100

The interpretation results show that the majority of counseling students Reg-E/Stambuk 2022 Medan State University have an understanding of group counseling practice (KKP) which is

in the Low category, as many as 17 people (52%). In addition, there are 3 people (9%) in the Very Low category, which indicates a significant challenge in understanding CTF practice material. However, the results also showed that 8 people (24%) were in the High category, and 5 people (15%) reached the Very High category, reflecting successful learning for some students.

The meaning of this result is that there is a significant difference in the level of student understanding of MPA practices. The majority of those in the low and very low categories indicate the need for improvement in learning methods, such as increasing the intensity of practicum, using educational technology, and personal guidance. However, the presence of students in the high and very high categories also confirms the effectiveness of some learning approaches that can be optimized and applied more widely. This finding confirms the need for more focused strategies to ensure all students achieve an adequate level of understanding in MPA practice.

With this, the hypothesis that has been proposed is rejected because it was found that the data analysis was dominated by students who had a low level of understanding, namely 17 people (52%) towards CTF. Therefore, it can be concluded that BK Reg-E/Stambuk 2022 students at Medan State University have a low level of understanding in the practice of group guidance and counseling. This low level of understanding is due to their inability to understand the concepts and practice each of the stages in group guidance and counseling.

DISCUSSIONS

The results showed that the majority of Reg-E/Stambuk 2022 counseling students at Medan State University had a Low level of understanding of group guidance practice (BKP), with 17 people (52%) in this category. In addition, there were 3 people (9%) who were in the Very Low category, reflecting a significant gap in understanding. However, there were also students in the High (9 people, 27%) and Very High (4 people, 12%) categories, reflecting the success of some students in achieving good to very good levels of understanding. Similar findings were seen in group counseling practice (KKP), with the majority of students in the Low (17 people, 52%) and Very Low (3 people, 9%) categories. In contrast, there were 8 people (24%) in the High category and 5 people (15%) in the Very High category, indicating a variation in students' level of understanding.

This research is consistent with Rianty's findings (2018), which show that counseling students at FIP UNIMED have a level of understanding that tends to be moderate and less able to apply this understanding in real practice. This understanding barrier is in line with Sitra's research (2021), which states that the main obstacle in the implementation of group guidance and counseling services is the lack of knowledge (cognitive), attitudes (affective), and practical skills. In this context, the majority of Reg-E counseling students tend to experience challenges in understanding concepts and applying them, especially in group counseling practices.

In addition, this result is in line with Purwanto (2019), who emphasized that understanding involves not only verbal mastery of concepts, but also the ability to interpret, explain, and apply them. In this study, students in the High and Very High categories indicate the success of certain learning approaches that encourage these abilities. However, the majority of students in the low category indicated the need for strengthening in pedagogical aspects, such as more interactive and practice-based teaching methods (Widayati & Ristiyana, 2019).

This result is also reinforced by Bloom's theory in Budiarti et al. (2017), which states that comprehension is the ability to understand what is taught, including utilizing learning content for real action. In this context, students who have low comprehension tend to have difficulty in translating theory into real practice. Therefore, a more intensive learning approach is needed and focuses on improving applicative skills.

In more depth, the use of educational technology, as expressed by Miftachurohmah (2024), can be a solution to improve students' understanding of group guidance and counseling practices. Digital platforms allow students to access a wider range of resources and support independent learning, thus enhancing their cognitive abilities. In addition, approaches such as simulation and role-playing, as suggested by Widayati and Ristiyana (2019), can help students understand group dynamics more deeply.

To follow up on the results of this study, curriculum revisions are needed that emphasize hands-on practical experiences, with technology integration as the main support. Individual guidance can also be given to students who are in the low and very low categories to overcome the understanding gap. In addition, the development of comprehensive evaluation methods, such as pre-test and post-test (Muchtar et al., 2022), can help identify areas that need improvement earlier.

However, this study has limitations, which only cover BK Reg-E/Stambuk 2022 students at Medan State University. Generalization of the results to a wider population may be less accurate without further research involving various other universities. In addition, the influence of external factors, such as students' digital readiness (Miftachurohmah, 2024), has also not been explored in depth, which could be the focus of future research. Thus, further research is needed to further understand the factors that influence students' level of understanding of group guidance and counseling practices.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the level of understanding of Reg-E/Stambuk 2022 counseling students at Medan State University towards group guidance and group counseling practices is mostly in the low category, at 52% each, with a small proportion in the high and very high categories. This finding highlights a significant gap in students' abilities, particularly in understanding and applying the concepts and stages of group guidance and counseling practices. However, the success of some students in the high and very high categories indicates the potential for certain learning approaches to be effective, which could be applied more widely. The results of this study contribute to the field of counseling education by identifying areas that require improvement in BKP and KKP learning, especially in the aspect of practical pedagogy.

Implications of this study include the need for curriculum development that emphasizes more on practical skills, integration of educational technology, and personalized learning approaches to reach students with low comprehension. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on the factors that influence students' understanding of BKP and KKP practices. However, this study has limitations, such as limited population coverage at one institution, which limits the generalizability of the results to a broader context. Further research is needed to explore the influence of external variables such as students' digital readiness or cross-institutional approaches to extend these findings. As a final statement, this study emphasizes the importance

of holistic and inclusive learning strategies to ensure counseling students are able to master the required practice skills, while strengthening the foundation of counseling education at the tertiary level.

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