



## MICRO-COUNSELING SKILLS MASTERY OF GUIDANCE COUNSELORS AT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of this study was to determine how far the micro-counseling skills mastered by Guidance Counselors (counselor) at the Junior High School (SMP) in Kulon Progo Regency. The subject of the study were guidance counselors/teachers at the Junior High Schools in Kulon Progo Regency with a proportional sample of 33 teachers. Research data were collected using a questionnaire instrument and analyzed using quantitative and qualitative descriptive techniques. The results of the study show: 1) All guidance counselors believe that the use of counseling skills can improve the quality of counseling services, but only the majority of guidance counselors use these skills. The micro counseling skills used by most of the Kulon Progo guidance counselors are attention, opening, acceptance, direction, strengthening, advice, summary, and termination. 2) A small number of guidance counselors admitted that they had never received micro-counseling skills material, either when they were still students in college or when they had entered as practitioners or guidance counselors. Suggestion from this research is that guidance counselors need to take part in training to increase their capacity for mastering micro-counseling skills. The training can be in the form of role-playing with colleagues or practice handling cases directly with the assistance of a competent supervisor. Professional organizations, universities, and schools need to provide support to guidance counselors in efforts to develop and improve the competence of micro-counseling skills.

**Keywords:** mastery of micro-skills, mastery of counseling micro skills, counseling

### **1. Introduction**

Counseling is a long and tiring process. The old theory states that the main task of a counselor is to help to find and solve problems. This happens especially to adolescent clients, when they feel the pressures of life without knowing the root of the problem. By

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coming to the counseling room, they think that they will be able to discuss their problem with someone they believe can take good care of their problem and in the hope that they will then find a solution and feel better after that. Therefore, we need a great counseling process. Counseling involves a special relationship between counselor and client.

Counseling occurs by involving a relationship between the counselor and the person who needs his help (client) and the relationship must be built first. The counseling process begins with communication between the counselor and the client. Relationships don't always have to be face-to-face. It can be through communications media. In the past, a counseling relationship could be established with the help of postal equipment, in the form of correspondence between the client and the counselor. In the modern era like today, relationships can be started with the help of electronic channels. But the most important relationship that must be relied upon is of course face-to-face. By doing face-to-face counselling, both parties, the counselor and the client can understand the gestures.

In addition, both parties can know body language, things that cannot be expressed in words. However, the counselor must remember that each client has a different personality from one another. Personality can be measured through attitude or from the way people speak. To formulate the stages of the counseling process, a counselor has to meet face-to-face with his client. The client-counselor relationship is at the core of the counseling process. A warm relationship is the starting point for a great counseling process.

Wilis (2007) defines counseling as an effort of assistance provided by a mentor who is trained and experienced to individuals who need it, so the individual develops his potential optimally, is able to overcome his problems, and is able to adapt to an ever-changing environment.

Based on the opinion above, it can be concluded that counseling has several meanings. Counseling emphasizes the idea of professional relationships and the importance of optimal self-development and adjustment. In addition, there is also an emphasis on problem-solving through face to face, although currently the trend of counseling without face to face has begun to develop. But ideally, counseling is done face to face between the counselor and the counselee. Therefore, micro-counseling skills are absolutely necessary.

Based on observations in the field, the micro-counseling skills are still not fully mastered by the guidance counselors. Counseling is carried out using very minimal micro-counseling skills, even not using them at all. In addition, some skills are often interpreted differently, so in practice they do not match one another.

It is the skills that will definitely help a counselor to create counseling that is not only effective but also qualified. When a counselor carries out his role, he will find various kinds of problems faced by clients. In addition to mental strength, it also requires a lot of skills to help them face and get through all the problems that burden them. Micro skills are general and basic in counseling. Micro-skills may intersect with ethics when dealing with other people. It is about how to make clients feel confident and trusted to come to the counseling room, how to make the client believe that the problems he is

facing can be solved and not spread anywhere, and how the client feels that he is dealing with people who are always ready to help him overcome the problems he is living. Micro-skills usually have been learned by counselors unconsciously long before they enter the practice of counseling.

When someone is comforting a crying child, when someone accompanies his friend through grief because his parents died when someone is accompanying a friend who is under stress, when someone takes the time to listen to his friend's complaints, all of that unconsciously reflect micro-skills practiced by a counselor. Several references show what micro-skills are needed by counselors. These micro-skills include; Attending, Opening, Acceptance, Restatement, Paraphrasing, Reflection of feeling, Structuring, Leading, Silence, Reassurance, Rejection, Advice, Confrontation, Clarification, Interpretation, Summary, and Termination.

## **2. Literature Review**

The learned counseling practice includes basic techniques or specific techniques of counseling (Suwandi et al., 2014), and ethics in counseling practices (Patrick, 1989) to have a positive impact on clients (Cormier, Hackney, & Segrist, 1974). The objective is to provide competencies for prospective counselors in order to carry out their duties and responsibilities professionally (Aman & Ahmad, 2010; Jaafar, 2011). Competence is a skill that can be observed, measured, and is part of the overall ability for the individual to perform a specific task (Sabella, Poynton, & Isaacs, 2010).

Counseling skill is the ability communication skill of guidance counselors to carry out micro skills in the counseling services. The good basic communication skill will help the counselee to understand well the counseling process so that he/she can feel the benefit of the counseling. The basic communication knowledge influences the counseling competency significantly (Barone, Hutchings, Kimmel, Traub, Cooper & Marshall, 2005; Bernes, 2005). A counselor who has a sufficient communication skill will be able to facilitate the reach of feeling, knowledge, way of rational thinking and client's behavior changes helped by using certain counseling approach. The good communication skill mastery will be a foundation to be able to listen effectively so that the counselor can help the counselee to change and grow up as a genuine person (Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2013). Ivey et al. (2013) said that there are three communication skills that should be mastered by the counselor in the counseling process; they are attending behavior, listening skill and influencing skill.

## **3. Material and Methods**

The research subjects were taken using a proportional sampling technique with a total of 33 counselors for junior high schools located in Kulon Progo Regency. The proportion of the sample is determined based on the Kulon Progo area which is divided into 12 sub-districts. The research data was collected through the Micro Counseling Mastery

Questionnaire. The instrument for mastering micro counseling skills is in the form of a questionnaire, in which research subjects are asked to fill in the type of counseling skills used. There are as many as 17 kinds of micro counseling offered. Research data that has been collected, and then analyzed by quantitative and qualitative descriptive analysis.

**Table 1:** Description of Subject Data

Categories	Grouping	Total	Percentage
Age	<30	8	24%
	31-45	11	33%
	45-55	11	33%
	>55	3	10%
Sex	Man	10	30%
	Woman	13	39%
Working time	<5 years	3	9%
	5-10 years	4	12%
	10-15 years	6	18%
	15-20 years	12	36%
	> 20 years	8	24%
Educational level	Diploma	0	0%
	Bachelor	30	90%
	Master	3	10%
Educational background	Guidance and counseling	27	81%
	Non-guidance and counseling	5	15%

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Based on the data that has been collected, various types of skills that are often used by counselors in Kulon Progo when sorted from the most used to the least used are Attending, Openin, Acceptance, Restatement (repetition) skills, Paraphrasing, Leading, Reassurance (strengthening or support), Advice (suggestion or advice), Confrontation, Interpretation (interpretation), Summary (summary or conclusion), Termination (termination).

The data can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Frequently Used Skill Data

No	Micro Counseling Skill	Total Responses	Rank
1.	Attending	33	1
2.	Opening	29	2
3.	Acceptance	26	3
4.	Restatement	24	4
5.	Paraphrasing	23	5
6.	Leading	20	6
7.	Reassurance	19	7
8.	Advice	16	8
9.	Confrontation	14	9
10.	Interpretation	12	10

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11.	Summary	10	11
12.	Termination	8	12
13.	Silence	6	13
14.	Rejection	5	14
15.	Clarification	4	15
16.	Reflection of feeling	0	16
17.	Structuring	0	17

Table 2 shows that there are some skills that are not familiar to the guidance counselors. Some of them are silence, rejection, clarification, reflection of feeling, and structuring skills. This condition may cause the counseling services not achieving the expected results. Research data shows that in the implementation of counseling, 90% of the guidance counselors have used micro counseling skills. However, only 40% of them stated that they had used this skill optimally. The remaining 60% admit that they have not been able to apply these skills properly. This condition is ironic considering that most of the research subjects (78%) have worked as guidance counselors for more than 1 decade. This condition is influenced by the internal state of each subject research. There were as many as 27% of guidance counselors admitted that they had never received the micro skills material before. This occurs especially to guidance counselors who have worked for more than 20 years.

In fact, all guidance counselors (100%) believe that micro-counseling skills are very influential on the quality of counseling services. However, not all of them understand what the meaning of micro-counseling skills is. There are 6% of guidance counselors who admit that they do not understand at all what micro counseling skills are.

Guidance counselors gain mastery of these micro-skills from variety of sources; from education or college (39%), from PLPG training (24%), from MGBK training (12%), Guidance Counselors Workshop (9%), Self-learning from experience (6%), and not answering (10%)

Micro-counseling skills mastery of the guidance counselors continue to grow because; they apply micro skills every time in a counseling service (37%), they have books and references on micro counseling skills (23%), they have mentors or colleagues who master micro counseling skills and ask them questions (12%), they have enthusiasm and continue to learn through sources in internet, and the rest did not answer (9%). Meanwhile, the conditions that hamper the guidance counselors to develop micro-counseling skills completely are: the decreased enthusiasm for learning (34%), not having adequate facilities and infrastructure (28%), problems which do not really need micro skills (12%), less needed mastery of micro skills (9%), and the rest did not answer (17%).

Micro-counseling skills are very important skills and need to be applied by guidance counselors during the counseling process. However, not all guidance counselors apply these skills. There are a number of reasons from them regarding this condition. The main reason is that they never received any training or material on micro-skills at college. The second reason is that they are satisfied with their current performance or in other words, without using micro-counseling skills, the guidance counselors feel that they have

been able to complete the counseling well. This situation shows that these micro skills have not been fully applied by guidance counselors. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that there are limitations of guidance counselors in carrying out scientific renewal. This is especially true for those who are more than 55 years old.

The data can be seen through Table 3 below.

**Table 3:** Causes of counselors who do not fully function micro skills in counseling session

1. Do not get micro skills material in college	3	9	%
2. There is no facilities and infrastructure (references, system support)	10	30	%
3. Don't have enough knowledge to apply	7	22	%
4. The counseling services that have been carried out so far have been good	10	30	%
5. Limitations of age and ability to learn	3	9	%
Amount	33	100	%

It must be admitted, most guidance counselors, when conducting student counseling service, rarely refer to certain counseling models and techniques. What happen is just “fly by seat of their pants” or working based on instincts without formal guidelines or exact procedures. Then what happen is the absence of directed, measurable, and orderly counseling activities. Guessing and making up solution are conducted in order to give an alternative way for the counselee. They don't have a good model for integrating several techniques, or even implementing one particular technique. But on the other hand, guidance counselors are also aware that micro-counseling skills are closely related to sustainable professional development. The subject data in the research shows that almost all (90%) are undergraduate graduates and the rest (10%) are master graduates. This means that they have a very high awareness of becoming a professional guidance counselors who masters various techniques and skill models. Referring to some data that has been collected in the research, the mastery of micro-counseling skills by guidance counselors in Kulon Progo needs to be improved as a whole. Improvement efforts can be made by conducting training or providing sufficient modules or references.

## 5. Recommendations

Referring to some data that has been collected in the research, the mastery of micro-counseling skills by counselors in Kulon Progo needs to be improved as a whole. Improvement efforts can be made by conducting training or providing sufficient modules or references.

## 6. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that overall, guidance counselors understand that micro-counseling skills are very influential to bring the success of a counseling session. Guidance counselors also agree that it is the micro skills that they need to master. The relationship between guidance counselors and students will be built maximally when

applying micro-counseling skills. Most guidance counselors have already applied these skills. But the new micro skills are used partially, not entirely. Some of the micro skills that are often used are Attending, Opening, Acceptance, Restatement, Paraphrasing, and Leading. Micro counseling skills must be carried out with strong sensitivity and concern. It is very important for the guidance counselors to apply these skills to the client so that the client's adjustment process in the counseling session runs optimally.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Authors**

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