

Eco-Art therapy: Group guidance techniques for recognizing students' emotions

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Abstract: Eco-art therapy as a creative and innovative approach can be applied in guidance and counseling. The aim of this study was to the implementation of eco-art therapy in group guidance. This study used was comparative descriptive research. The participants involved consisted of four counselees at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Bandung. The data collection instruments used in this study were observation and interviews which were analyzed using the data triangulation method and it was undertaken by reducing, presenting and verifying so that conclusions could be gotten. The results of the analysis showed that group guidance could encourage counselees to share experiences and express their emotions, be able to identify and understand needs so that they can make decisions in accordance to their needs independently through objects composed of natural materials. The implementation of eco-art therapy in group guidance provided information for guidance and counseling teachers to provide stimulants that could stimulate counselees to solve problems independently.

Keywords: Eco-art Therapy; Emotions; Group Guidance

Introduction

Students at the senior high school level or the equivalent fall into the youth category. Teenagers are individuals who are closely related to various emotional or mental problems (Novesar, 2020). The emotional or mental problems faced by students are very important to be maintained by all parties where these students are, for example in the family, school and in the community (Flynn et al., 2018). It indicates that the emotional or mental problems of students need to be considered by various parties.

The role of the school counselor is quite important in helping students manage emotions, it does not mean that the problems faced by students cannot be solved alone. But there are many ways to recognize emotions that can be conveyed by counselors as tricks for students to solve their problems or emotional disturbances. The counselor plays an important role in building a therapeutic relationship with the counselee, including the counselee's emotions (Hanafi et al., 2021).

Guidance and counseling is a pedagogical effort to assist the process of developing individuals who are as they are into conditions that should be compatible with their potential (Noya & Salamor, 2020). Therefore, through guidance and counseling activities, counselees can develop optimally as expected. One way to optimize the services provided is to use media so that counselors can be creative and innovative in the counseling service process (Cooley et al., 2020; Spooner et al., 2019). There are various types of creative and innovative approaches related to guidance and counseling and are generally used to assist a counselor when carrying out the counseling process, one of which is eco-art therapy.

Currently, there are many post-modern approaches such as eco-art therapy which are a combination of various approaches. The principles of eco-art therapy involve humanism,

creativity, reconciliation of emotional conflicts, growing self-awareness, and personal growth in Rubin in Nystul, (2016). Eco-art therapy is an approach that offers natural assistance as the main ingredient in carrying out the therapeutic process. Gladding (2016) explains that the emergence of healing using nature has existed since the Greek era which then began to appear in England and Europe. Experts argue that using art can calm the mind and can release the patient's creative energy (Collette et al., 2021).

Eco-art therapy is defined as a holistic and integrative mental health practice in which the client, facilitated by the therapist, uses natural art materials and settings, the creative process, and the resulting artwork to promote mental, physical, and emotional health (Pike, 2021). Pike (2021) explains that the practice of eco-art therapy applies ecopsychological theory to the practice of art therapy. Individual can benefit from the healing and therapeutic powers of nature and the arts.

In several studies, eco-art therapy is used to increase the connection between self and nature, and relieve stress related to work, balance, concentration, as well as creativity, imagination, intuition, and fun (Chang, 2013). Besides, Dimpel (2019) reveals that eco-art therapy can help develop empathy, relationship skills, and self-concept. Cutcher and Boyd (2018) in Miranda (2021) who studied eco-art revealed that creativity helps children's learning processes. This finding is in line with the literature which states that nature and arts-based practices promote creativity and enhance the learning process (Pike, 2021). As a result, incorporating natural elements into art therapy is an innovation in the guidance and counseling approach. However, until now, studies on eco-art therapy have not been widely implemented. Therefore, the research that will be carried out focuses on eco-art therapy which is used as an approach in guidance and counseling where this approach is also expected to be useful in producing many things in guidance and counseling.

Method

This study was exploratory-descriptive research and it described the process of implementing eco therapy in group counseling. The research data was obtained through observing the process of group guidance and interviews with counselees. The questions explored whether the subject's goal is to follow group guidance, how the counselee evaluates himself and the group guidance activities that are being carried out. The subjects in this study were 4 students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Bandung.

In this study, the researcher became the main instrument. The data obtained from the results of observations and interviews was reduced. The results of this reduction were then presented with sub-themes in relatively small groups. Data analysis was undertaken in the stages of developing themes through a series of discussions, negotiations, explorations and consensus building. This open communication model was undertaken to reduce researcher bias and overcome common challenges in the process of drawing conclusions. During the research, the researcher read the transcripts in an open coding process, looking for the concepts, categories, properties, and dimensions that characterized each program path.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study showed that the stages in group guidance and eco-art therapy could be integrated, eco-art therapy still had an essence and was in accordance with the stages that have been fundamentally arranged. Adjustments to the stages of eco-art therapy for group guidance were also undertaken so as not to reduce the content and activities carried out in the two existing stages. Activities that could be compared with other stages have been modified so that they would be focused on implementing eco-art therapy services in the realm of guidance and counseling. The results and stages of eco-art in group guidance are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Results of Group Guidance Stages with the Eco-art therapy Approach

Stages in Group Guidance	Stages in Eco-art therapy	Group Guidance Results
Formation Stage	Set goals and aim	The counselee is able to set goals
Transition Stage	Education and modification	Counselees are able to evaluate themselves and recognize their own emotions
Activity Stage	Assessment to evaluate the results	
Termination Stage	Social skills emphasis Model structure and framework Cusp point with exhibitions	The counselee is able to recognize her/himself

In accordance with the results of group guidance using eco-art therapy, it can be seen that the counselee is able to set goals in group guidance at the formation and transition stages. At the activity stage, the counselee is able to self-evaluate and recognize his/her own emotions. Then at the termination stage, the counselee is able to recognize himself.

The process of group guidance with the eco-art therapy approach in this study used the collage method. Pike (2021) reveals that the collage method is a method of arranging objects or materials into meaningful objects or forms. In the context of this study, this means that the available natural materials are assembled into a form or object that has artistic value where the object or form is a medium for the counselee to express feelings or express the problems he is facing. Thus, the counselee can use various choices of natural materials in compiling an object that has artistic value.

In the stages of formation and transition using eco-art therapy, counselees determine their goals. They understand why they follow the group guidance conducted by the counselor. There is dynamics in the group, individuals can understand their goals by sharing experiences, this is also good for the development of their mental health (Selvaraj & Bhat, 2018).

In group guidance during the activity stage and modified education at the eco-art therapy stage, counselees must pay attention to their five senses. Furthermore, the counselee begins to arrange natural materials into objects that can reflect their relationship with their experiences at school and represent the moods and emotions that have been brought by the selected senses. The counselee is able to understand the emotions that exist within them. Ecotherapy-based experiences have been shown to provide many benefits such as improved cognitive function, increased overall well-being, and improved mental and physical health

(Kras, 2021). Eco-art therapy also provides a platform for counselees to express themselves and reduce stress levels (Kras, 2021; Zweifel, 2022).

The significant results of research on four group guidance participants using the collage method lead to the counselee's ability that objects composed of natural materials that have aesthetic value in group guidance can encourage counselees to learn to tell their experiences and express their emotions, be able to identify and understand needs so that they can make decisions according to their needs independently. By using eco-art therapy individuals are able to express their expressions and imagination according to their wishes (Novak et al., 2022).

At the results evaluation stage, it indicates that objects that have artistic value that are arranged by the counselees from natural materials are able to express the problems faced by the counselees or express the emotions they are experiencing. This is illustrated by the essence of what the counselees convey, as follows: *“Yes, I can, I can express about the problem of circle of friends during PTM at school”* and *“I am able to express, even though at the beginning it was a little difficult to describe the problem with natural materials, however, it doesn't dampen my mind to stop thinking about matching materials to problems.”* It is in line with Pike (2021) who revealed that nature-based art therapy can describe the emotions experienced by an individual or the problems faced by an individual. Further, Dybvik dkk. (2018) also have revealed that proximity to natural objects allows patients who in this context are counselees to see themselves in a different way than usual. These findings provide strong evidence that natural materials arranged into a form or object that has artistic value is a medium capable of expressing the counselee's emotions or expressing the problems faced by the counselee.

This is shown Specifically, at the outcome evaluation stage, the emotions or problems experienced by the counselees are caused by several factors. One of them is the lack of social interaction between counselees in the learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic, as follows: *“problems that have been faced so far, especially in terms of social relations during distance learning”*. Selby (2021) in his literature also argues that social isolation caused by the spread of COVID-19 contributes to individual anxiety, depression, and psychological distress.

The process carried out by the counselee in using natural materials to compose objects, as follows: (1) observing and understanding the materials provided in the guidance and counseling room, (2) searching for and collecting natural materials around the madrasah environment to complement the materials that are already available, (3) identify these natural materials by smelling them, seeing their colors, and studying their shapes, and (4) arranging these natural materials into a meaningful object. This shows that the counselees already understand the workflow in using these natural materials to arrange the objects they want to form.

Some of the experiences that counselees like from this group guidance, namely: (1) the group guidance teaches them to live life independently, (2) the group guidance provides a lot of insight, (3) the group guidance provides knowledge that colors, shapes, and fragrance from natural ingredients can provide a beautiful and interesting aesthetic to look at, and (4) the group's guidance teaches that objects made from natural materials can describe what is thought

and felt. These findings indicate that counselees gain a lot of experience and knowledge from group guidance activities with an eco-art therapy approach.

The experiences that counselees get from group guidance activities can be applied in the following forms of activity: (1) carrying out activities that support the achievement of the intended goals, (2) facing and solving complex problems independently and calmly, (3) solving problems and knowing the characteristics of a problem, and (4) choosing friends according to needs, being neutral when communicating and leaving friends who don't make you feel comfortable. These findings indicate that the experiences counselees gain from group guidance activities make them confident to solve the problems they face independently and calmly. This indicates that group guidance with an eco-art therapy approach can help stimulate counselees to solve the problems they face in life.

At the closing stage and the highlight of the exhibition, each counselee showed the objects they had assembled from natural materials by taking photographs of these objects and then framing them. That one of the lessons learned by the counselees in group guidance with the eco-art therapy approach is that natural materials arranged into an object can express their feelings and thoughts, so that these feelings describe the problems faced by the counselees. In addition, from the guidance of the group, the counselee can get to know himself better, the nature and actions that are hidden in him which are actually the things that stand out in him. Also, the group's guidance makes the counselee more concerned about friends, oneself, and the surrounding environment.

The implementation of eco-art therapy in guidance and counseling is one of the new findings that needs to be implemented. This is a form of counseling creative development that is contained using natural materials. One of the combinations that can be integrated into eco-art therapy guidance and counseling.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The adjustment of the stages of eco-art therapy into group guidance is undertaken to make it easier for counseling teachers and counselors to carry out eco-art therapy for students. So that the implementation of eco-art therapy still has standard stages that are owned according to the stages of existing group guidance. The implementation of group guidance with an eco-art therapy approach is able to encourage the counselee learn to express problems, express the emotions and feelings experienced through objects that are arranged from natural materials. Further, the eco-art therapy approach in group guidance services can encourage counselees to share experiences and express their emotions, be able to identify and understand needs so they can make decisions according to their needs.

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