Strengthening Counselor Competencies in the Independent Learning Era through Training on Non-Cognitive Diagnostic Assessment Development

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Abstract

Purpose: The need for diagnostic assessment in the independent curriculum necessitates school counselors to be able to provide valid and reliable instruments to assess students' conditions. One crucial aspect to consider is the psychological well-being of students. Therefore, training in developing non-cognitive diagnostic assessments is necessary to support counselor competencies in the era of independent learning curriculum.

Method: The training utilized the ADDIE training model, starting from analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. This model was employed to assist in implementing training tailored to the participant's needs. The evaluation was conducted through process evaluation and outcome evaluation.

Practical Applications: The training resulted in the development of a psychological well-being scale by school counselors. Subsequently, the scale underwent construct validation by experts, as well as validity and reliability testing using SPSS 24. A guide for using the psychological well-being scale was then created, including rationale, usage instructions, interpretation guidelines, and sample assessment result presentations.

Conclusion: The training successfully enhanced counselor competencies in developing non-cognitive diagnostic assessments.

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Introduction

The prevalence of increased cases of mental health disorders among students remains a pressing issue, posing a significant challenge that school counselors must promptly address (Addini et al., 2022). Mental health problems experienced by students are a significant factor hindering them from reaching their maximum developmental stages, especially in their learning processes (Nurhaeni et al., 2022). This issue is related to the identity search phase, which should ideally be maximized during their developmental stages. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2020 revealed that 16% of global health problems are related to adolescent health conditions within the age range of 10-19 years (Moor et al., 2020).In Indonesia, adolescents within this age range attend junior and senior high schools. The Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) results in 2018 showed that 157,695 adolescents aged 15-24 experienced depression and emotional disorders (Samarasekera, 2021). These consequences lead to students facing disturbances and failures in their school learning processes.

Addressing the psychological issues experienced by students in schools is one of the responsibilities of school counselors (guidance counselors). This is related to the role and function of guidance counselors in schools, which involves guidance and counseling services aiming to help students develop their potential, adopt positive attitudes and habits in learning, acquire skills, and prepare themselves for life's challenges (Ramadani & Herdi, 2021). The guidance and counseling services programs for students should be tailored to the student's needs and characteristics. Needs assessment is one of the efforts that counselors must perform to create guidance and counseling service programs (both individual and group counseling) (Harahap et al., 2022). In determining the level of students' psychological well-being, counselors can use systemic assessments.

Through systemic assessments, counselors can identify students' broader needs by reaching every subsystem in the school. Assessments and programs designed based on these assessments will ensure the fulfillment of students' needs (Asmadin & Silvianetri, 2022). One of the psychological assessments that can be used is a non-testing, non-cognitive assessment, which is now part of the school transformation, where counselors no longer rely on cognitive subsystems to identify students' needs (Nursalim, 2022). In the case of identifying psychological well-being in schools, counselors need specific instruments that require adjustments based on the characteristics of the students to be tested. However, many counselors in the field still need help to optimize and develop the necessary instruments (Rosadi & Andriyani, 2021).

Therefore, there is a need to strengthen counselors' professionalism, especially in developing non-testing diagnostic instruments to identify students' psychological well-being that aligns with students' characteristics. The goal of this community service is to provide guidance to counselors in conducting non-testing diagnostic assessments and to enhance their understanding, enabling them to create more optimal guidance and counseling service designs that align with counseling characteristics and needs.

Method

The community service training activities conducted at MGBK Senior High School in Malang Regency are carried out in three major stages: 1) preparation, 2) implementation, and 3) evaluation. Specifically, the method used is the ADDIE training model. The ADDIE training model comprises five stages: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. The achievement indicators of the community service implementation are as follows.

Table 1. Achievement Indicators of Community Service Implementation

Stage	Steps	Achievement Indicators
Preparation	*Analysis*	Conduct a forum group discussion with MGBK Senior High School in Malang Regency to identify training needs.
	Design	Compile guidelines, materials, and training worksheets for the training with MGBK.
	Development	Review the guidelines, materials, and worksheets by experts and the community service team.
Implementation	*Implementation*	Carrying out the training activities according to the guidelines.
Evaluation	*Evaluation*	Evaluating the process and outcomes of the training activities.

The evaluation of community service activities through research and development training consists of process and outcome evaluation. The descriptions of process evaluation and outcome evaluation are as follows. Process evaluation is conducted to assess the implementation of the training program according to the planned schedule. The evaluation is carried out through observation using training implementation observation instruments. On the other hand, outcome evaluation is conducted to assess the achievement of the training program's objectives as outlined in the plan. Outcome evaluation is performed by achieving a non-cognitive diagnostic assessment, namely the psychological well-being scale of high school students.

Result

The community service activities have been implemented and are currently ongoing. The activities began with planning. Training sessions are conducted both online and in person. Online sessions are held synchronously via Zoom meetings and asynchronously using an online learning platform. Meanwhile, in-person sessions are conducted twice and held in the FIP UM Hall. The target audience for the training is high school guidance counselors from Malang Regency, with 15 participants. The attendees were selected representatives from each school who willingly committed to participating in the entire training program and covering the associated fees.

The activities commenced on August 4, 2023, online, with an introduction to the development of non-test diagnostic assessment techniques. The online session featured presentations from four speakers. The first speaker, Dr. Abrin Janu Setiyowati, M.Pd, discussed the importance of diagnostic assessment in the independent learning curriculum. The second speaker, Riskiyana Prihatiningsih, M.Pd, talked about the role of psychological well-being in adolescent development. The third speaker, Widya Multisari, M.Pd, explained the procedures for non-test assessment and the blueprint of the psychological well-being scale. The fourth speaker, Dr. Khairul Barriyah, discussed the analysis of instrument validity and reliability tests. Participants were assigned to develop statement items for discussion and review during the in-person meetings.

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Figure 1. Synchronous Training Activities
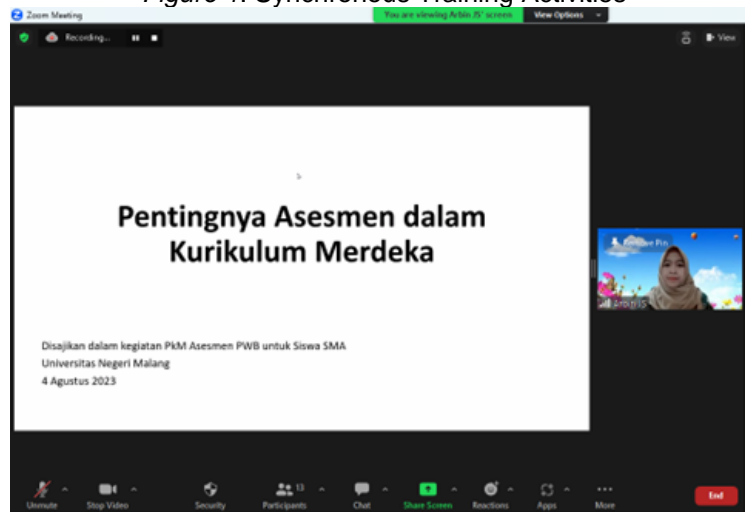
The in-person session was conducted on August 9, 2023, at Building D6, 1st Floor, FIP UM. The activity began with a brief review of the materials yet to be understood. It continued with the review of several items developed by the participants. Each group was assisted by a facilitator to review the items they had developed. The final activity included presentations and extensive group discussions to review the revised items. During this activity, the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB) was developed by high school guidance counselors in Malang Regency. Subsequently, the developed PWB scale was pilot-tested in 15 schools in Malang Regency.

Figure 2. First In-Person Training Activity

The next step involved participants disseminating the developed scale and bringing the results of the scale distribution to the second in-person session. During the second in-person session on September 26, 2023, participants analyzed the results of the validity and reliability tests of the Psychological Well-Being Scale developed using SPSS 24. Subsequently, participants will establish the scale norms as the final stage of the training.

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Figure 3. Second In-Person Training Activity

The outcomes of organizing the Psychological Well-Being Scale and the established scale norms were presented. School counselors were also provided with a simulation on filing for copyright to understand the process of obtaining copyright for the developed work. This ensures that school counselors not only comprehend how to develop a highly anticipated diagnostic assessment in this Independent Learning era but also understand how to safeguard the creations they produce.

Discussion

One of the current necessities for schools is understanding students' conditions, particularly their psychological well-being. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide several achievement indicators, including a healthy and prosperous life. Therefore, to achieve well-being, school counselors must ensure that all students are in a state of good psychological well-being. Unfortunately, the psychological well-being condition must be assessed with a measuring tool to serve as the basis for interpreting students' conditions. Efforts can be made by organizing training on the development of non-cognitive diagnostic assessments, such as the psychological well-being scale, to meet the current needs of school counselors.

Psychological well-being refers to an individual's psychological prosperity, demonstrated by the ability to accept oneself, the belief that life is meaningful and purposeful, personal development and growth, having quality relationships with others, the capacity to manage one's life and surroundings effectively, and the ability to make one's own decisions. Good psychological well-being is expected to enable individuals to live a life of wellness. Wellness condition refers to a state where an individual is not only physically healthy but also mentally sound. This condition undoubtedly brings happiness to an individual's life (Orth & van Wyk, 2021).

Students' psychological well-being can be assessed through non-cognitive diagnostic assessment. As mentioned, one of the objectives of diagnostic assessment is to determine students' psychological well-being (Komalawati, 2020). Non-cognitive diagnostic assessment is one component of guidance and counseling emphasized in the Independent Learning curriculum. Diagnostic assessment aims to understand students' basic abilities and initial conditions to identify the necessary provisions (Nasution, 2022). Assessment in guidance and counseling serves several functions, according to (Cook et al., 2012), such as explaining the actual problems, encouraging students to open up about their issues, and serving as a tool to assist in providing the most appropriate interventions.

However, in this regard, many guidance and counseling units in schools still lack diagnostic assessments that can be used to meet the school's needs in examining students' conditions as an initial part of the needs analysis measured from specific variables. Assessment is an evaluation method used by counselors to identify individual characteristics

(Fadli et al., 2022). Assessment is a tool used to measure a condition as the basis for developing services in guidance and counseling. Non-cognitive diagnostic assessment, within the field of guidance and counseling, falls under non-test psychological assessment techniques. Non-test psychological assessment can be developed by 1) identifying the purpose of instrument preparation, 2) selecting the type of non-test techniques to be used, 3) instrument development, 4) testing validity and reliability, and 5) interpretation development. These steps are taken to produce valid and reliable instruments for accessing students' actual conditions as a basis for consideration or decision-making.

One effort to assist school counselors in strengthening their professional competence in developing non-cognitive diagnostic assessments is by providing training. The purpose and objective of training activities are to provide insights and behavioral changes to enhance optimal performance (Marjaya & Pasaribu, 2019). Thus, the provided training sessions aim to enhance the competitiveness of teachers as educators (Fitria et al., 2019). The training conducted for high school guidance counselors in Malang Regency resulted in a scale that can measure students' psychological well-being. The training process involved understanding concepts related to diagnostic assessment and the variable of psychological well-being. Participants were enthusiastically engaged in the training activities because the training provided was tailored to their needs.

Conclusion

Implementing the training on the development of non-cognitive diagnostic assessment has resulted in the creating of the Psychological Well-Being Scale. This scale, along with its norms and interpretations, can be utilized by school counselors to assess students' psychological well-being, serving as the basis for providing guidance and counseling services. Additionally, within the guidance and counseling teacher discussion groups (MGBK), counselors can continue developing other necessary instruments to support the non-cognitive diagnostics required in this Independent Learning curriculum.

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