



The Ability of Early Childhood Education Teachers in Counseling Communication in East Kalimantan

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Abstract

The background of this research is that Early Childhood Education teachers play an important role in interactions both as teachers in learning and as mentors and counselors for children. PAUD (Early Childhood Education) teachers are expected to have counseling communication skills, including empathy, active listening, and the ability to ask questions. This research aimed to find out the ability of Early Childhood Education Teachers in East Kalimantan in counseling communication. The research design was descriptive qualitative. The subjects in this study were Early Childhood Education Teachers from 8 PAUD institutions in 4 (four) City Districts in the East Kalimantan regions. There are Samarinda, Bontang, Kutai Kartanegara, and Kutai Timur. This subject was taken purposively from two teachers selected in each institution that was used as a place of research. The research object was the teacher's ability to conduct counseling communication by attending, empathizing, asking questions, and active listening skills. From this study, the researcher concluded that most Early Childhood Education Teachers can empathize but have not implemented empathic communication and effective listening in asking questions to explore children's emotions and thoughts. Most teachers used advising, seducing, persuading, and diverting children's problems in counseling communication. For further suggestions, school principals should evaluate the teachers' ability in counseling communication to children and implement teacher counseling communication through tutorials and training among colleagues or peer tutors among teachers.

Keywords: ability, counseling communication, early childhood education

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A. Introduction

The general provisions of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Chapter I article 1 mention that: Educators are qualified education personnel as teachers, lecturers, counselors, tutors, *widyaiswara*, instructors, facilitators, and other appropriate designations with their specialty, and participate in providing education. Educators must have good personal, pedagogic, professional, and social competencies in carrying out their role. Apart from being a teacher, the teacher also acts as a mentor who helps overcome various students' problems, including teachers in early childhood education.

Early childhood education teachers play an important role in interactions as teachers in learning and as mentors and counselors for children. Therefore, PAUD teachers are expected to have the ability to communicate effectively and empathetically. It will make the teacher more effective in carrying out his/her role.

The role of a counselor for children and their families is crucial considering that currently, there is an increasing number of children's problems originating from the children's environment: family backgrounds which do not understand their children's education, unhealthy parenting styles, low economy, and various problems that arise sourced from the family environment. Naturally, the role of an educator must be balanced with a role as a counselor for children with various skills.

It is beyond our expectation that the teacher has not appropriately applied the stages or techniques of empathy through expressions, words, and steps. They have also not had active listening skills. So far, teachers in schools are able to communicate, but not empathy-based communication.

Among the important counseling communication skills PAUD teachers possess are verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening skills, and the ability to ask questions and use media (Arsini, Sutama, Indriani, & Hum, 2014). These various forms of communication skills can be trained. It is based on the basic assumption of Gestalt psychology, which holds that in each person, there is already a desire and drive to grow, in the sense of becoming more mature, more complete, and more skilled.

Based on the author's observations in the field, there are still several PAUD teachers who do not have the skills of empathic counseling communication and the ability to listen actively, the ability to explore the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of children further, the ability to ask further questions and use the media to facilitate changes in children's emotions. Based on the author's experience when teaching undergraduate students, it was found that students who were also PAUD teachers had not done non-directive counseling but still used directive techniques, namely explaining, tutoring, advising, and finding solutions when finding children's problems (Jumiatmoko, Rahmawati, Psi, Rasmani, & Palupi, n.d.).

From that background, the researcher developed research on the development of a counseling communication training model. The training model begins with the initial stage of training needs analysis. It then continued to the literature search stage to get the theoretical basis for preparing the theoretical model. After that, a draft model is prepared, namely the stage of producing a plan or draft of a training development model in the form of a module containing training materials and strategies. Previous studies relevant to this research include a dissertation written by Lilik Sriyanti; this study shows an overview of students' needs for mastery of attending skills, empathy, and minimal encouragement is very large (Sriyanti, 2015). Siti Fatimahtun Zahra's thesis found out that the video prototype developed as a

guidebook and video is proven to be valid and practical to use based on an acceptability test which includes usability, feasibility, and accuracy (Zahra, 2019). Research by Syafrianto Tambunan and Nur Saadah (Tambunan & Saadah, 2021) was conducted qualitatively, and resulted in the guidance of the client-centered counseling model by providing information services, individual counseling, communication, and attention is a solution for teachers during learning from home.

B. Literature Review

Counseling Communication Skills

The term counseling is from the English language "to counsel," which etymologically means "to give advice" (Hornby, n.d.). He/she can solve the problems he/she faces and direct himself/herself to develop his/her potential towards optimal development to achieve personal happiness and social benefits.

...interaction that (a) occurs between two individuals, called counselor and client respectively; (b) occurs in a professional setting (c) is carried out and maintained as a means of facilitating changes in client behavior (Pepinsky & Pepinsky, 1954).

Counseling is a process to help individuals overcome barriers to their development and to achieve optimal development of their abilities; the process can occur at any time. (Division of Counseling Psychology)

...a direct encounter with the individual aimed at helping him or her to adapt more effectively to himself and his or her environment (McDaniel, 1957).

Counseling is a personal relationship carried out face to face between two people in which the counselor goes through the relationship with his/her unique abilities. In this case, counseling helps to understand himself/herself, his/her present situation, and the possible future situation he/she can create by using his/her potential for personal and community welfare. Furthermore, the counselee can learn how to solve problems and find future needs (Tolbert, 1959).

According to (Sutisna, 2009), teachers counsel communication to students in part of counseling communication skills: verbal and non-verbal communication (Kusumawati, 2019), listening (Fensi, 2017), empathy (Cooper, Yap, & O'Brien, 2020), asking questions (Saman & Harum, n.d.), and skills in carrying out various stages, namely the beginning, middle and end of counseling which are a person's basic ability in counseling.

Various skills that need to be possessed by a counselor are the ability to empathize and listen actively.

1. Empathy

Empathy plays an important role in various fields of science and criminology, from psychology, physiology, pedagogy, philosophy, medicine, and psychiatry. In research, empathy is a complex phenomenon that does not have a simple definition. Empathy is from the Greek, *Em* meaning inside, and *Phaty* (derived from *phatos*) feeling or suffering. Empathy is placing ourselves in the position of another person so that we can experience feelings as experienced by that person, but that does not mean we agree with his opinion but understand the point of view of the person concerned (Lickona, 2004), (Asih & Pratiwi, 2010), (Ivey & Daniels, 2016) & (Juhri, Atieka, & AS, 2018). Empathy is different from sympathy. Empathy means understanding other people but not at a deep level. Sympathy means understanding other people and being deeply involved. Empathy is the opposite of apathy, which is not caring. Apathy is different from antipathy in that it has views, desires, and feelings that are opposite to those of others.

Empathy contains respect, warmth, concreteness, spontaneity, sincerity, and authenticity (Rofiq, 2017).

Empathy is a personality that feels and thinks about other personalities to achieve a state of identification (May, 1939). In this identification, fundamental human understanding can occur. In reality, without empathy, there is no understanding.

In addition to verbal expressions, empathy is also shown through non-verbal communication; they are:

- a. Showing body response
- b. Using gestures to show your awareness of the speaker's message and lack of feedback will give the impression that you are bored, anxious, and not paying attention to the speaker's condition.
- c. Body leaning forward shows that you are interested and listening to the speaker's story. In addition, it will make it easier for you to catch non-verbal cues from the speaker.
- d. Showing interest in the content of the conversation.
- e. The body is in an open condition and does not fold arms or legs because such a body position indicates not wanting to express opinions and feelings to others. Other than that, the direction of the body (chest) as much as possible is facing the other person.
- f. A relaxed posture indicates someone feels comfortable talking to them.
- g. Standing or sitting close to this speaker will create an impression of warmth and understanding for the speaker.
- h. Using touch appropriately, for example, holding her hand to express support or understanding of the problem, patting her on the shoulder for encouragement, and using this touch appropriately because not everyone is familiar with touch. This touch can be used when we are close or know the speaker's state beforehand.
- i. Using positive facial expressions and head movements.
- j. Nodding his head or giving a smile as a sign of understanding his feelings
- k. Eye contact.

Thus, it can be said that empathy is a response to the feelings of others, such as pity, sadness, and pain. In empathy there is a sense of someone's emotional involvement that affects others. Empathy is the ability to be aware of another person's feelings and actions to help others. The concept of Empathy is closely related to compassion. Empathy is a complex mental process involving what other people feel, how to put ourselves in someone else's and how to feel someone's feelings.

2. Active listening

Listening is also an important communication skill to have (Aminah, 2018). There is a difference between listening and hearing (Utami & Dewi, 2019). Listening is the process of interpreting the sound heard. In listening, there has been a thought process. While hearing is just the process of hearing a sound and occurs accidentally (for example, hearing the sound of a passing train).

Listening is divided into two, active and passive listening. Active listening is listening with a specific purpose (Yambo & Mudis, 2015). These goals are to obtain information, obtain clues, determine how someone feels, obtain data, understand others, solve problems, share interests, or show support to others. In active

listening, the recipient of the message seeks to understand both the speaker's background and the message's essence. Non-verbal and verbal cues are considered for understanding the message. Meanwhile, passive listening is higher than active listening (Normalisari, Oke, & Keb, n.d.). It occurs when the recipient of the message has few innovations in listening well, for example, listening to music, reading, storytelling, poems, dramatic presentations, and television programs.

Active listening is listening by showing body responses using gestures to show awareness of the message conveyed by the speaker (Utami & Dewi, 2019)&(Weger Jr, Castle, & Emmett, 2010). It is also indicated by the body leaning forward, which shows an interest in the content of the conversation. The position of the body in an open condition and not folding arms or legs because a body position indicates not wanting to express opinions and feelings towards others, besides that the direction of the body (chest) is as much as possible facing the other person. The body position is relaxed and not stiff, indicating a sense of comfort in speaking. Use positive facial expressions and head movements such as nodding, smiling, or raising eyebrows (Weger Jr et al., 2010). Keeping eye contact, sitting near the speaker, and showing physical/body closeness show concern or positive feelings for people.

An active listener will respond verbally, for example, "I understand, and I do not understand." Non-verbally he/she will respond not verbally, such as nodding his/her head, frowning, or sounding like "hmmm." The response of an active listener can also be in the form of giving feedback. According to Carl Rogers, feedback is generally divided into five main categories: evaluative, interpretative, supportive, probing, and understanding (Rogers, 1969).

The obstacles in active listening are:

- a. Self by focusing only on ourselves rather than others in a conversation will lead to confusion and conflict. It is due to the defensive attitude that occurs when someone speaks, so we start thinking about arguments to show the inaccuracy of their opinion.
- b. Another obstacle is the superiority of experience. It occurs when a person has more experience of situations and circumstances than others, making us form a feeling of superiority.
- c. Egocentrism also includes barriers to active listening. It is when people see themselves as the center of exchange or activity. Egocentric people talk more to get the attention of others.
- d. Perception of the message's sender will also be a barrier in active listening. Preconceived attitudes, including status and stereotypes, will influence us to be able to listen actively. For example, we tend to listen uncritically to people of higher status and dismiss ideas from people of lower status (Alwisol, 2004).

Active listening is paying attention and listening to every word or conversation of others (Weger Jr, Castle Bell, Minei, & Robinson, 2014). A focused listening attitude and always provide simple non-verbal and verbal communication responses. An active listening attitude is very useful in everyday interactions, especially in consulting activities or just small talk with friends.

Active listening techniques make others feel more cared for. Thus, the information can be complete because it does not feel underestimated. For listeners, active listening techniques can focus on keywords of the message being

conveyed, ask questions for clarification and explain statements that increase understanding in both the listener and the person speaking. Listening is listening to information conveyed orally. The process of listening also means receiving impulses through the sense of hearing of the ear. Active listening is an activity that requires understanding what another person wants to convey during communication. Thus, active listening is listening with an intensity of empathy, acceptance, and a willingness to take responsibility. Therefore, in the process of active listening, we need the totality of ourselves that we give to the interlocutor. The totality in question is offering physical, feeling, and attention to the interlocutor, whoever he/she is, maybe husband/wife, friends, children, or our students.

How the active listening process is carried out:

- a. Show looking into the other person's eyes and getting closer
- b. Show interest and earnestness in listening
- c. Concentrate and take a break from what you are doing when the children (the interlocutor) start talking.
- d. Listen, see, and feel, use all your senses to understand, not just our ears. In addition, in listening to what he/she says, pay attention to his/her movements. Sometimes the smell also tells you what is going on.
- e. Avoid distractions by not doing two or more activities simultaneously.
- f. Make the person of interlocutors feel like the most important person in the world.
- g. Occasionally repeat specific parts of what he is saying to show you are interested. Do it sincerely.
- h. Ask what is unclear or show that the story is interesting.
- i. Say it in your language by repeating the story more shortly with different words.

Active listening techniques make the interlocutor feel more cared for (Weger Jr et al., 2014). Thus, the information provided can be complete because it does not feel underestimated. For listeners, active listening techniques can focus on keywords of the message being conveyed, ask questions for clarification and explain statements that increase understanding between the listener and the speaker.

In particular situations, listeners can dig deeper into the information provided. For example, someone who has been a bit introvert and shy, finally, without hesitation, talk or answer questions.

Active listening has four intentions that should exist for the person who listens:

- a. Understanding one: a good listener will get an impression as the stage of understanding the person whom he/she speaks to. The more we listen, the more things we understand about the person.
- b. Enjoying Conversations: a genuine desire to listen makes conversations enjoyable.
- c. Learn Something: Not only do clients get something from the process of telling, but as a counselor, you also get the opportunity to learn from the experiences your clients share.
- d. Providing Assistance: when one listens carefully, it helps the person being heard. This help can be in the form of support; the important one is your willingness to listen.

To be a good listener (active listener), someone must also identify several barriers (blocks) in listening. The following will present a list of listening barriers that are often done intentionally or unintentionally but affect the ability or practice to be a good listener.

- a. Comparing: listening becomes difficult when we are busy comparing: "Who is smarter?", "Who is luckier?", "Who works harder? You or me?", etc.
- b. Mind reading: A mind reader ignores the speaker, even what the speaker is talking about. He tries to find out what the person is thinking and feeling.
- c. Repeating: You will not have time to listen when you repeat/rehearse what you are saying. Your mind prepares for your next comment.
- d. Filtering: no complete message is received if the listener filters the speech content.
- e. Accusing: this obstacle is the most often tendency due to certain stereotypes about the people we talk to.
- f. Imagining: Listeners who aren't listening are usually quick and easy to daydream and fantasize about other things while the conversation is running.
- g. Identifying: some of the topics of conversation often coincide with the speaker's identity and often disturb the listener if he/she identifies them with him/herself.
- h. Advice: in this case, the listener acts as if he is the greatest "problem solver", always ready with suggestions, input, tips, etc., without listening carefully because the listener is busy preparing accurate advice. You can't listen to a client's feelings if you're only compelled to give advice.
- i. Arguing: sometimes, because we don't listen, we tend to get other people to argue and even fight. We are unwilling to open our hearts to hear what the speaker means.
- j. Self-righteousness: it is still the same with fighting. The tendency to listen to oneself in a desire to justify oneself and eventually lose the momentum to grasp the real point of the speaker.
- k. Switching topics: because we don't listen, we will get bored, and this boredom will make it easier for us to change the topic.
- l. Reconciling: comforting the person we are talking to quickly so that we don't get into the deeper subject of the conversation because we don't want to listen further.

The process of active listening begins with listening for information, understanding the meaning of the information, remembering the information, interpreting it from various points of view and making conclusions, evaluating the information, and then responding to the information received.

Many important things must be considered in active listening. They are intensity, empathy, the ability to enter the world perceived by others, the ability to understand the feelings of others, and receiving messages and feedback. The benefits of active listening include increasing speaker and listener understanding, encouraging further communication, helping to solve problems, getting to know people's personalities, getting the information they need, and building and improving relationships.

Nothing is perfect. Even in active listening, some obstacles interfere with the active listening process. The existence of an obstacle will make a person try harder and more developed to overcome the obstacles faced. Barriers are divided into two: physical and mental. Physical barriers are health problems, the surrounding

environment, noise, room layout, temperature, lighting, etc. At the same time, mental barriers are speed of thinking, limited insight and knowledge, prejudice, and impatience.

C. Method

The research design was descriptive qualitative. The subjects in this study were PAUD teachers from 8 PAUD institutions in 4 (four) City Districts in the East Kalimantan Region. There are Samarinda, Bontang, Kutai Karta Negara, and East Kutai. The subject was taken purposively. Two teachers were selected from each institution chosen as a research place. The research object is the teacher's ability to conduct counseling communication by attending, empathizing, asking questions, and active listening skills.

The purpose of this study is to describe the ability in communication and teacher counseling abilities. Data collection is done by using in-depth interviews and observations with teachers and school principals. Interview technique was conducted to obtain data on how teachers understand the concepts in Counseling Guidance, such as therapeutic communication terms, attending, paraphrasing, various techniques, and the use of media for counseling and conducting assessments.

D. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

Every teacher, including PAUD teachers, has communication skills in counseling that are consciously or unconsciously carried out when dealing with students at school during learning or outside learning. The examples are verbal and non-verbal communication or counseling skills such as attending, actively listening, empathizing, asking questions, and so on facilitate changes in children (Kusmaryani, 2010). In other words, every teacher in their functions always performs various types of counseling communication.

There are several skills that almost all teachers possess. It is called showing greetings, asking questions, showing cheerful facial expressions, and exploring children's problems further. Greeting or attending with a cheerful face has been done by all teachers even though they do not understand the concept of attending. Asking has become the main activity in communicating with children, although the questions asked have not yet reached the stage of exploring children's perceptions and emotions; this is because of the teacher's limitations on how advanced questioning techniques should be done. The teacher can read the child's facial expressions but does not communicate by naming the various types of children's emotions.

Based on data in the field, almost all teachers have felt that they have done counseling or changes in children, such as overcoming children's emotional problems by using various techniques such as asking, empathizing, listening to children's stories or complaints, advising, persuading, diverting, entertaining children and various forms to facilitate the emotional change of children. However, unconsciously not all teachers have optimal abilities in various skills such as how to listen actively, which can facilitate changes in children so that it stimulates children's independence in solving problems and builds children's ability to communicate with themselves. As a result, children can solve their problems not because they are forced to follow the advice or direction of the teacher but find out themselves. Teachers still rarely have

this ability, which may influence the effectiveness of creating changes in students. Even if there is a change, for example, the child temporarily appears to have no problem, but this will cause new problems such as the inner child in the form of old wounds that have not healed and will carry over into adulthood.

After conducting interviews and observations in 8 PAUD institutions throughout East Kalimantan, the following data were obtained, describing PAUD teachers' communication skills.

a. All teachers do not understand the concepts in counseling guidance, such as individual counseling, therapeutic communication, attending, paraphrasing, exploring and asking questions to explore children's emotions and thoughts, and counseling assessment

Every day the teacher deals with a child who brings problems from home. Children come to school with various expressions, both negative and positive emotions. In this situation, the teacher has done attending or greeting and approaching by asking, "What is wrong? Why, and where is your beautiful face?" and other positive expressions. However, the teachers do not know that this attitude is called attending.

The teacher's ability to show posture of attending to children is by nonverbal attitudes when speaking, by showing their attention to the children, by leaning slightly towards the children, and by touching and eye gaze and relaxed shaking of the head while asking the question "why?". It is in line with the opinion of several experts in counseling skills (Kusmaryani, 2010). The teacher's ability to ask questions is shown through the frequent questions that the teachers use to explore children's problems which are generally brought from home.

However, the question "why?" is not followed up by asking questions exploring the child's feelings and thoughts. The teacher asked the questions only to know what happened to the child and his family. However, the teachers do not ask further about the problem, but they only provide solutions to the problems experienced by the children.

b. Less effective exploration ability

Both verbal and nonverbal communication is always carried out between teachers and children. These two types of communication are alternately and complementary expressed by the teacher and the children. Children will communicate their feelings through verbal and nonverbal communication. Non-verbal communication is a media for children to communicate their feelings and attitudes toward the teacher. Because much non-verbal communication is not clear enough, some individuals have limitations in understanding non-verbal communication.

Teachers mostly use communication to respond well, pay attention to the eyes, look at children's faces and move their bodies closer because it is the teacher's response to the child. Similarly, most PAUD teachers have understood the expression of children's emotions in various types such as happy, sad, moody, silent, and lethargic children.

However, every teacher finds children with various expressions. Not all teachers are able and then try to name children's emotional expressions, communicate them to children, and explore further why children express such expressions. For example, when children come to the school and show a sad expression, the teacher asks why he/she is sad, and then if the children do not

answer, the teacher entertains and distracts them through playing or singing so that the children become entertained and forget the problem, so they do not show sadness anymore.

It can be concluded that the teachers are not accustomed to exploring children's feelings. They only find solutions by advising, entertaining, distracting, and seducing children.

c. Some Teachers Use the Technique of Advising, Persuading, and Diverting Children's Problems.

Almost all teachers can empathize by feeling what the child is going through, but the teachers cannot restate it with words. What most teachers do is when they meet children who show a negative expression, the teacher immediately asks, "why?" or "what is wrong?". Then, the teacher immediately advises the children not to be sad anymore, not to be angry and lethargic.

The teacher's actions in advising and diverting the child's emotions are not followed up by digging or asking further questions. The teacher does not continue taking further action by naming the emotion, for example, "oo Nanda is currently sad or angry or annoyed". Almost all teachers provide direct guidance by telling children to do something more positive, for example, playing with their friends so that children forget the problem. The teacher also tells the children to behave better. Almost all teachers also do not name the emotions experienced by children, for example, irritation, sadness, disappointment, anger, etc. In general, the teacher directs the children's emotions that the children experience must be immediately forgotten and diverted by playing, singing, or forgiving the mother or the source of the problem.

The teachers have been able to ask "why?" to the children but by not delving further into the children's feelings and thoughts. Almost all teachers cannot yet explore what children feel by asking whether children experience certain emotions. Almost all teachers do not understand how to ask further questions, for example, by asking "why" and "how the process of children's problems with people at home influences their feelings". Teachers often provide solutions without digging further into what they feel. At the same time, correcting negative behavior (*assadiyah*) by directing and acting as parents who protect and reassure children.

If the children have a problem, for example, fighting with a friend, the teacher reconciles and asks them to apologize or immediately switch to playing together; after what happens, as if there is no problem, peace and cheer will return.

d. The teachers have not used various game as tools or media that can be used when conducting counseling communication.

All media in the institution of PAUD are not perceived as counseling media. In this case, when approaching children, the teachers do not intentionally program to choose media and do not understand how to use play media as a tool to facilitate children's change. It happened to most of the teachers in the eight research sites.

The condition surprised researchers when observing games that are almost unavailable in TK Al Rahmah Kutim. It is as stated by the teacher at Al Rahmah Sangatta Kindergarten in Kutim, that:

"kami belum memiliki sarana bermain bahkan untuk pembelajaran kami belum menggunakan berbagai media APE dan dalam melakukan konseling kami juga belum menggunakan media, kami hanya memanggil orang tua siswa manakala menemui

masalah lalu mengajak komunikasi orang tua dan bersama mencari solusi masalahnya. Masalah yang sering kami temui adalah seputar kesibukan orang tua.”

2. Discussion

Analysis of Teacher Skills in Empathy and Active Listening

After examining the problem background, theoretical studies, and conducting an exploratory study of potential problems in the field, it appears that the problem in the researcher's opinion is severe. There was a gap between what should be theoretically and ideally and what is happening in the field. There are demands for ideal abilities or practices that PAUD teachers should have regarding counseling abilities and how reality or what happens to teachers. It is the background of the need to develop a training model for teachers to improve skills in terms of active listening skills (Weger Jr et al., 2014), empathy (Hurlock, 1999), and follow-up questions (Kusmaryani, 2010).

These three abilities are a potentially serious problem where almost all teachers have not done what they should. Interviews with school principals show that teachers have never received training on how to carry out individual counseling for children. The kind of training has also not been part of the tiered training courses or training materials carried out by the National Education Office or other education and training institutions.

Basically, every teacher has carried out empathy skills for children, but this has not been done correctly, which is also in line with previous research (Kusmaryani, 2010); this can be seen from the teacher's feelings that have not been expressed as felt by children. For example, when a children feel scolded by his mother at home, the teacher only directs the feelings of the children who are being scolded, not stating how the teacher also feels sad about what the children are experiencing or the teacher states that he/she will experience it if it happens to him/her. In other words, the teacher has not used empathy skills properly and has not behaved in an empathic manner as it should, as in the research conducted by Saman & Harum (Saman & Harum, n.d.).

a. Empathy skills

Empathy involves respect, warmth, concreteness, spontaneity, sincerity, and authenticity. It is not empathy when the teacher sees a children's problem and then diverts, advises, or entertains. Applying empathy means that the teacher accurately recognizes the children's feelings and actively expresses the same experiences and feelings if they experience the same thing. It is in line with the opinion (Cooper et al., 2020). Teachers should show a sense of warmth as someone children need to fill the void of security and acceptance. Warm feelings are expressed both physically and verbally spontaneously and sincerely.

b. Active Listening Skills

The teacher's ability to listen to children's problems is very good, but it is still not accompanied by the ability to do what should be done after hearing the problems faced by children. Not only advise, but ask further, divert or become an active listener (Weger Jr et al., 2010).

Being an active listener is still very rare for PAUD teachers. They are still only hearing, not listening, and become active listeners and listening to obtain information, obtain instructions, determine how a child feels, obtain data, understand children, solve problems, share interests, or show support for children. It aligns with the theory (Rogers, 1969) regarding active listening.

Active listening is done with the body relaxed and not stiff, indicating a sense of comfort in speaking. Using positive facial expressions and head movements such as nodding the head or giving a smile or raising the eyebrows, maintaining eye contact, sitting and standing near the child, and showing physical/body closeness shows concern or positive feelings for the children.

Why do teachers still not use active listening skills? There may be obstacles in active listening because they have been patterned using directive or direct communication and not non-directive or indirect communication due to a more self-focused attitude. Likewise, it is influenced by the children's perception of a person who deserves direction, input, advice, and suggestions. It will be a barrier to active listening.

Theoretically, attitudes formed by status and stereotypes will affect active listening. For example, we tend to listen uncritically to people of higher status and dismiss ideas from people of lower status (Alwisol, 2004).

Several things prevent active listening, among others, because they do not enjoy the conversation. They feel that they do not get something valuable, or learn something from being listened to. Whereas, on another hand, active listening has helped the children lighten their burden and as a form of respect.

The habit that prevents someone from actively listening is advising. In this case, the teacher as listener acts as if he/she is the greatest 'problem solver' that always ready with suggestions, input, tips, etc., without listening carefully because the listener is busy preparing accurate advice. A teacher cannot listen to a children's feelings if only driven to give advice.

Diverting the topic because they do not listen will create boredom, making it easier for someone to change the topic. Another habit is the desire to reconcile the meaning, comforting the children they are talking to quickly so that they do not get into the conversations deeper because the teacher does not want to listen any further.

There are important things that must be considered in active listening: intensity, empathy, the ability to enter the world perceived by others, the ability to understand the feelings of others, and receiving messages and feedback. The benefits of active listening include increasing speaker and listener understanding, encouraging further communication, helping to solve problems, getting to know people's personalities, getting the information they need, and building and improving relationships.

To overcome the problems in the field, developing a training model that includes the stages of training needs, training program planning, preparation of training materials, and training implementation is necessary. The basic development elements are developed or modified using learning objectives to improve empathy skills and active listening. In this case, the training materials were developed by considering the learning principles commonly applied to adults. This training is an education for adults with a humanistic approach. Training for adults uses games or creative games as one of the methods. Training materials are developed by focusing on the learning principles commonly applied to adults.

E. Conclusion

Based on the results, this research concludes that not all teachers understand the concepts in counseling guidance, such as individual counseling and therapeutic communication, attending, paraphrasing, exploring, asking questions to explore children's emotions and thoughts, and counseling assessment. The exploration ability of all teachers is less effective, and there is a tendency for teachers to use techniques of advising, seducing, persuading, and diverting children's problems. The teachers have also not used various games as tools or media that can be used when conducting counseling communication. In addition, a description of the skills training model to improve empathy skills and active listening should be prepared based on an analysis of the expected ability indicators, materials, procedures, and evaluations. Therefore, the training is developed by considering the usual learning principles applied to adults with a humanistic approach.

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