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Effects of Group Guidance Activities On Students' Self-Concept

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ABSTRACT

This study is to identify the enhancement of students' self-concept through the implementation of group guidance. A group guidance activity was conducted in accordance with the group guidance structured activities, aiming to improve the self-concept of primary school students. A total of 64 fifth year students were selected for this study through simple random sampling. They were randomly assigned to a treatment group ($n = 31$) and a control group ($n = 33$). Both groups were given the Tennessee Self-Concept Children:2 (TSCS: 2) to measure their level of self-concept before and after the intervention. The experimental group went through a seven-week group guidance module with two sessions per week. Analysis shows that there is a significant difference in the mean score of the self-concept of post-intervention between the treatment group and the control group. The implementation of group guidance has helped to improve the self-concept of primary school children through adaptive activities.

Keywords: Group Guidance, Students, Self-Concept

Introduction

Self-concept is an important agent that creates an individual's personality. Generally self-concept is a subjective overview of the person about himself, of the impact of experience, his significant viewpoint and the integration of knowledge through the process of cognitive, affective and linguistic (Larsen & Buss, 2008; Azizi & Halimah, 2010). The process of recognizing and describing oneself begins at an early age of one's life. As a topic, self-concept has been widely discussed from the developmental and practical theories.

Self-concept encompasses the aspects of student care that include personal, social, intellectual, and spiritual (Berk, 2008). Self-concept can help in building students' character to be successful in life (Eerford, 2007). Previous researchers found that self-concept has its own roles as catalysts for individual, behavior, motivation and career achievement (Marsh & Andrew, 2011; Brown, 2003). Hence, counselors and guidance teachers are required to promote and enhance positive self-concept development among school students.

Recognizing the importance of positive self-concept in supporting the development and enhancement of students personality, Malaysia Ministry of Education *KPM* through a Released Letter has innovated the counselors' and guidance teachers' responsibilities to give emphasis to four major areas in guidance and counseling services in schools (*KPM Release Letter*, 16 April 2012). The first focus of the guidance and counselling services in school is to build and develop students' character, especially in the development of students' personality and self-esteem by cultivating positive growth of self-concept. It clarifies that *KPM* attempts to groom students to have well-respected character and strong personality so they can be competitive at the national and international levels.

Literature Review

Various theories and literature review have emphasized the importance of having a high and positive self-concept, but not all students have positive self-concept. Several studies were conducted to identify the self-concept level among different grades of school students. The researchers found that 41% of 227 Form 6 students had a low self-concept, with 11.8% of them having low self-concept in all eight sub-domains of self-concept (Zulazan, 2003). Another study revealed that 61 (34%) of 177 Year 5 and Year 6 students in a national school have low self-concept (Azman, 2000; Rosli, 1998). Students with low self-concept faced the risk of having low academic achievement, low self-motivation, engaging in behavioral problems and having a less healthy lifestyle (Riffat-Un-Nisa et al., 2011), De Vos & Louw, 2009). As a consequence these students failed to develop as a balanced individual from physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual aspects as envisioned by the National Education Philosophy 1996.

Previous study on self-concept tends to focus on the relationship between self-concept and some aspects of self-concept. Among the focus of foreign and local studies were to identify the relationship between self-concept with academic achievement and anxiety, relationship between self-concept and cognitive beliefs, relationships between self-concept with satisfaction and commitment, and self-concept differences across cultures. (Ahmed, 2012; Zuria et al. 2010; Lewandowski, 2010; Norlizah, 2008; English, 2007). Aside from merely adding a number of studies aimed at identifying self-concept relationships with other variables, it is better if the findings could be empirically evaluated in term of the effects and consequences on the development of positive self-concept. This is because the development of self-concept is a life-long process that can be constructed or changed, to be better and more positive (Franken, 2007).

Past researchers have empirically applied the experimental design by using counselling approach to develop or enhance self-concept (Kenny & Mc Eachern, 2009; Azman, 2000; Noor Azniza, 2001). The results generally found that individual or group counseling treatments from various theoretical approaches can generate in more positive self-concept (Othman, 2006). However, previous studies were more inclined to improve the self-concept of adolescents, especially among the secondary school students aged 14, 15, and 16 years old (Othman, 2006). Up to now, studies on improving the self-concept of primary school students are still not fully explored in Malaysia, though the development theories and some *KPM* documents emphasize that the growth and development of self-concept begins during childhood years (Standard Document *KSPK*, 2010; Standard Document *KSSR*, 2011; Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2006; Reardon, Sampson & Peterson, 2006; Zunker, 2006).

To improve the self-concept of primary school students, the approach employed should be different from the method used for high school students. It is desirable for a research to implement and study the impact of group approach in improving the self-concept of primary school students. Such research shall be able to improve the knowledge regarding the effect of group treatment on the self-concept of primary school children. There has been mentioned in past studies that group activities may help student in many ways (Michaelson, Davidson & Major, 2014), such as develop meta-cognition (Sandi, Urena , Coper & Steven, 2012). Group works also allow students to work together and support each other and enhance several elements of learning like knowledge, ideas and self explaining (Brown, Roediger & Mc Daniel, 2014).

Research Objectives

The study was to identify the treatment effect of group guidance on improving the self-concept of primary school children.

Research Question:

Are there any effects of group guidance activities on the self-concept of primary school children?

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify the effect of group guidance activities as an intervention in enhancing students' self-concept. The experimental research design as suggested by Campbell and Stainley (1963) was employed to investigate the effects of treatment by exposing the experimental group to intervention plan. The researchers then compared the treatment results with the control group. The design of the experimental study is as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Research Design

Group	Pre-test	Independent variable (Treatment)	Post-test
E1	O1	X	O2
C1	O1	-	O2

Note:

E = Treatment group

C = Control group

X = Treatment - group guidance activities

O1 = Measurement before the session started - pre test.

O2 = Measurement after treatment completed - post test

Sample of Study

The participants were randomly selected from a population of 64 year five students, from a national school, with an average age of 11.4 years old. The number of subjects for the experimental design is sufficient for having 30 people in the treatment group and the control group as suggested by Wiersma & Jurs (2009). The researchers obtained a name list of year five students from the school. All the students were given the Tennessee Self-Concept Children version 2. Based on their scores, 64 participants were randomly assigned into a treatment group (n=31) and a control group (n=33).

Treatment Group

This experimental research required a treatment group to be compared to a non-treatment or control group. This group treatment utilized the group guidance activities adapted from the Self-Concept Group Guidance Module by Chua (2011). This module aimed to build and enhance positive self-concept in primary school students. The module activities were planned around the six domains of the self-concept as described in the Tennessee Self-Concept Children version 2 (TSCS: 2; Fitts & Warren, 2003). The six independent domains include self, physical, personal, moral, family and academic. The activities in the module were designed from the group perspective by integrating the physical movements, social, emotional and cognitive aspects. The module consisted of 14 group guidance sessions and all participants from the experimental group must complete all the sessions.

Research Procedures

Two groups had been assigned randomly as an experimental and a control group. Both groups sat for pre-test, the scale of Children Tennessee Self-Concept version 2. Then, the experimental group went through the group guidance structured activities for seven weeks with two sessions per week. Guidance teachers in schools acted as facilitators and implement the treatment for this study. While the control group went through the normal activities (yearly activities which had been scheduled by guidance teacher). At the end of the seventh week, both groups took the Tennessee Self-Concept Children version 2 to measure their level of self-concept.

Instrument

The study used the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale for Children version 2 (Children TSCS: 2) to measure self-concept. The instrument was developed by Fitts and Warren (2003) and contained 76 items. The TSCS 2 has been translated into Malay language by researcher and went through back to back translation. This scale was pilot tested before being used in this study. The instrument has a reliability of .743.

Research Findings

Prior to comparing the treatment and the control groups, the equivalency test was performed to ensure both groups were similar. The results of the independent t-test for the pre-test for both groups are as shown in Table 2. The test results are $t(62) = 5.96$, $p > 0.05$ which is not significant. The mean score for the treatment group is 49.13, sd 5.57, while it is 48.40, sd 4.27 for the control group. There is no significant difference in the mean score of the self-concept for the treatment and the control groups. This means the mean score of the self-concept for the treatment group and the control group is the same before the treatment was introduced. The results allowed for comparison of the treatment effect between the treatment group and the control group.

Table 2: Results of independent t-test for pre-test

	Group	n	mean	Means differences	sd	df	t	Sig. p
Self-concept	Treatment	31	49.13	.735	5.57	62	.596	.554
	Control	33	48.40		4.26			

*Significance level .05

The results show that there is a significant difference between the mean score of the self-concept of the treatment group and the control group in the post test with $p < .05$ ($p = .031$). The analysis finds that the mean score of the self-concept of the treatment group is higher than the control group. The mean score of self-concept for the treatment group is 52.5 and sd 6.93, while the mean score for the control group is 48.55 and s.d 4.74. The difference in means shows that the increase in self-concept is caused by the group guidance intervention. This is explained in Table 3

Table 3: Mean scores comparison in post test

	With pre-test		Without pre-test			n
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Sig	
Experimental Group	52.55	6.93	-	-	.031*	31
Control Group	48.55	4.74	-	-		33

*Significance level at .05

Discussion

Findings show that group guidance activities enhance self-concept among the primary school students. The main factor for the treatment effectiveness is probably due to the implementation of guidance activities through group approach. The findings show that group activities are likely to be the contributing factor to help the students reformulate their thoughts, thus increase their self-confidence to view themselves more positively. Even though the involvement of primary school children in group activities is still questionable due to their level of thinking, designing the guidance activities according to their age and stage of development has succeeded in improving the students' thinking to know themselves better. This is in line with the established group goals, namely to make cognitive and behavioural changes as stated by Brown et. al. (2014); Sandi et. al. (2012) & Choi (2005). In the studies conducted by Othman (2006), group activity is believed to be able to initiate changes in individuals. This study supports that group goals should not be contained to disseminate information and discussion but also for preventive measure as well (Gladding, 2003).

The second factor that may contribute to treatment effectiveness is that the group activities are designed for 11- year-old elementary school students with a focus to identify themselves positively. As Capuzzi (2006) states children who are attending school started to be aware of social life and

slowly learn social skills. Group activities are seen as helping children to learn quickly and effectively, especially when they are placed with same-age group members. The experience of performing activities together indirectly creates the students' confidence that they are able to cooperate well with fellow group members (Michaelsen, Davidson & Major, 2014). It not only gives them new experiences, but also builds their unity, better thinking, as well as seeing and believing in their own abilities. As a result, the positive viewpoints and confidence in themselves improve.

Franken (2007) states that self-concept can be built, enhanced and redesigned. Consequently, enhancing self-concept means improving individual positive views or thoughts through the six domains of the self-concept. The study believes that forming positive thoughts about oneself can increase individual beliefs and confidence towards themselves. Although variety of models and modules have been introduced that able to shape and improve thinking, researchers believe that the CBT method is appropriate to form positive thinking among 11-year-old children. Having a positive self-concept may help student perceive themselves as a good individual. When individual believes that he/she is good, a lot of positive ideas, good responses and good manners will be produced. Positive thinking is the factor to make a person be the better one.

Recommendation

The present study uses group guidance approach to nurture and enhance self-concept among the primary school students. The researchers believe group approach has more to offer in the development of children personal growth as well as serve to prevent many social problems. It is highly recommended that future research will continue to utilize group approach in their work with children. In term of research on self-concept, researchers hope creative approach or methods, will be introduced to promote its positive self-growth among the primary school children.

In addition, this study involved 64 respondents with two groups, one treatment and one control. For future study, it is suggested researchers recruit more respondents as well as select respondents to represent different ethnic groups. To strengthen the study, researchers should employ different research designs like longitudinal studies or qualitative studies. With different group of respondents utilizing creative approaches and methods, more meaningful inputs will be generated. Thus, the new findings will contribute to better understanding of the development of positive self-concept among the young population.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings show that group guidance activity can improve the primary school students' self-concept. The benefit of group guidance is it helps nourish the children's self-concept as a group thus it saves time as guidance teacher can provide intervention to group of students rather than to an individual student. The enhancement of positive self-concept amongst school students can help reduce disciplinary problems. This will allow more space for students to focus on other areas to promote positive self-growth.

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