

ONLINE PEER COUNSELOR TRAINING TO OPTIMIZE SEXUAL EDUCATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Ikfina Hida Maula Anami¹, Dewi Shinta Putri Rachmadany², Nina Aula Niswah³

¹*Semarang State University, ikfinabida1@students.unnes.ac.id*

²*Semarang State University, dewishintaputri@students.unnes.ac.id*

³*Semarang State University, nilhaulaniswab@students.unnes.ac.id*

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Abstract

Peer relationships have a strong role in the lives of adolescents because these relationships can lead to mutual trust in peers compared to teachers or parents. Based on some research results, students need the help of others to optimize their development. One of the needs of high school students to complete their developmental tasks is sex education. The urgency of sex education is very important, but it is still considered by society. One of the efforts that can be made to campaign for sex education is through the process of peer guidance and counseling. Sex education can utilize peer relationships through peer counselors. The purpose of peer counselors is to help socialize the role and function of guidance and counseling, one of which is to guide the form of sex education socialization. With the advancement of technology, it is easier for peer counselors to provide services through online platforms. Of course, peer counselors need to be given training from professionals such as guidance and counseling teachers. Therefore, this article is written using the literature study method to describe the urgency, effectiveness, and benefits of online peer counselor training to optimize sex education in high school students.

Keywords: Peer Counselors, Sexual Education, Online Training.

1. Introduction

One of the most important phases in human life is adolescence. Adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood. Significantly in this period, there are several changes in the behavior, psychology, and mindset of adolescents. The physical development of adolescents occurs faster than their psychological development and hormonal functions in adolescents begin to develop. In addition, physical changes begin to appear in the form of the process of sex maturity in adolescents biologically.

Adolescents or students need to get sexual education early on, especially from their family environment. Dewiani (2019) explains that reproductive health or sexual education should be implemented early by parents to their children. However, Indonesian society considers that it is still taboo to discuss. It is known that great curiosity in adolescents makes them consumptive of the information received. If their curiosity about sexual education is not well facilitated, teenagers will seek information from the internet or social media whose truth cannot be ascertained precisely. Therefore, special handling is needed from counseling teachers as an element of education to prevent this from happening.

BK teachers play a role in providing comprehensive sexual education to students, but some students have a bad perception of guidance and counseling teachers. This is evidenced in a study conducted by Simatupang (2018) that many students of SMA Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan harbor their problems in the personal, social, or learning fields. Sometimes students prefer to share their problems with friends rather than with counseling teachers who may not be able to help solve their problems. This situation shows the low self-confidence of students toward counseling teachers. The causes of poor perceptions of counseling teachers are several factors,

such as the lack of information about counseling as a place to help students solve their problems, students' views of counseling teachers as school police, and the age gap that students feel when talking to counseling teachers. Not only that, students sometimes still feel reluctant to ask for help from guidance and counseling teachers at school to ask for advice, tell problems, and feel embarrassed to tell things related to sexuality. Therefore, there is a need for other parties to help students to maintain their psychological condition, be able to complete their developmental tasks, and solve increasingly complex problems.

The characteristics of adolescents with a very strong interest and bond with peers can be implemented for the implementation of Guidance and Counseling services (Sarmin, 2017). So far, students have assumed that it is only guidance and counseling teachers or counselors who are in charge of helping overcome adolescent problems at school. Whereas peers can be used as reinforcement of Guidance and Counseling services implemented by guidance and counseling teachers. Peers can be equipped with the basic skills of peer counselors to be able to provide services like guidance and counseling teachers to their friends. Peer counseling is a process of assisting in the form of peer counseling carried out by students (Shohib, 2016). Peer counselors are students who voluntarily want to help peers through peer counseling activities. The use of the term peer counselor is often interpreted the same as a facilitator or junior counselor (Suranata, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to elaborate on peer counselors. Peer counselors can be interpreted as agents assisting guidance and counseling teachers in implementing Guidance and Counseling services at school.

Peer groups as a social environment for adolescent students have a significant role in the development of their personality. This role is increasingly important, especially when there have been changes in the structure of society in recent decades, namely (1) changes in family structure, from large families to small families, (2) gaps between the older and younger generations, (3) expansion of communication networks among young people, and (4) long periods or delays in entering adult society (Yusuf, 2016). Peer relationships lead to a trusting relationship between peers. This relationship can lead to a behavior in adolescents, where adolescents trust their peers more than their parents or teachers. Although a teenager still needs parents and teachers as mentors, especially when facing a serious problem.

From the description above, it is explained that peers can be parties who can help solve problems or just help complete one's developmental tasks. This is an alternative solution that is quite effective. However, there is a need for training for adolescent students so that they can become peer counselors for their peers, especially to socialize sexual education. Training provided by counseling teachers to students who are qualified to become peer counselors can be carried out online. Training provided online is certainly beneficial for counseling teachers who have a lot of busyness and activities. This is because online training can be carried out anywhere and the time is quite flexible. Nevertheless, this peer counselor training must still be carried out with full responsibility and full commitment from the counseling teacher as the organizer or students as participants.

Some of the effectiveness of online peer counselor training has been tested in various studies. One of them, Trisiswati, et.al (2022) in their research results showed that online peer counselor training was able to increase understanding of reproductive health in college students. According to the participants, the peer counselor training was very educational about

reproductive health and also about peer counseling. The role of a good peer counselor can also improve adolescent reproductive health knowledge (Utami, 2017). Based on the results of these studies and the description above, this article will discuss the urgency, benefits, and role of online peer counselor training for high school students to optimize sexual education.

2. Method

According to Mirzaqon & Purwoko (2018), a literature study is a series of research activities carried out by collecting literature sources, reading, processing, and reviewing literature based on the topic being explored. This article was prepared by utilizing research articles, books, guides, modules, teaching materials, documents, and others for the procedures in preparing this article adapts the literature study stage developed by Mirzaqon & Purwoko (2018). The stages in question are a) topic selection, (b) exploration of information, (c) determining the focus of the study, (d) collection of data sources, (e) preparation of data presentation, and (c) preparation of reports in the form of articles.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Sexual Education

According to Ratnasari, I & Alisa (2016) sexual education is an effort to teach, realize, and provide information about sexual problems. The information provided includes knowledge about the function of reproductive organs by instilling morals, ethics, commitment, and religion so that there is no "abuse" of these reproductive organs. In addition, sexual education is the provision of guidance, direction, and knowledge about the function of reproductive organs by instilling morals and ethics related to sex to students so that they understand the meaning, function, and purpose of sex so that there is no misuse of reproductive organs (Meiyasinta, M., 2017).

From some of the above definitions, it can be concluded that sexual education is an effort to guide, realize, and provide information about reproductive organs accompanied by moral cultivation so that there is no misuse of reproductive organs. Therefore, sexual education is referred to as one of the life sciences that must be taught from an early age.

Providing information on sexual problems, for now, is even more important considering that adolescents are in an active sexual potential because it is related to sexual urges that are influenced by hormones and often do not have sufficient information about their sexual activities (Handbook Psychology Science Psychology in Faswita, W., & Suarni, L., 2018). Moreover, the rampant cases of sexual violence that have occurred recently can be clear evidence of a lack of knowledge about sexual education.

The purpose of sexual education varies depending on the age range. However, the general goal is to produce adult humans who live a happy life because they can adjust to society and their environment, and are responsible for themselves and others. Especially high school / equivalent students who are in the age range 19 years need this sex education because they have been equipped with knowledge about what reproductive organs and their functions are so that explained explanation of harmful sexual behavior. So that with this sexual education can help adolescents deal with various problems stemming from sexual urges.

3.2. Peer Group

Peer groups are groups that usually consist of more than two people of the same age or age. According to Vembrianto, peer groups are groups consisting of a number of individuals who have something in common (Puspasari & Wahyudin, 2015). This similarity is usually in the form of a similar age range. Groups that have the same age range usually have similar thoughts to each other. From the similarities that are owned, there will be intensive interactions compared to when they have nothing in common or minimal similarities with each other. In other words, peer groups can also influence each other. This is in line with research conducted by Saputro and Pardiman (2012), that there is a positive influence when someone has a peer group that has high motivation, then that person is also influenced to have high motivation as well (Puspasari & Wahyudin, 2015).

As described earlier, peer groups usually have similarities, especially in the age range. So, the high school environment can also be said to be a peer group, which has the same age range, namely between 15-18 years. Apart from being the same in terms of age range, another similarity is the education taken. The mindset will also tend to be the same. So, the high school environment can be an example of a peer environment.

The age of high school students is usually in the range of 15-18 years, at that age teenagers are moving towards early adulthood. Someone who is at that age certainly has more complex problems than in the previous age phase. The increasing aspects and functions of life make more demands, and more fiery idealism, but are still unstable because they are not fully mature they are still in the transitional phase so they often cause anxiety, both reasonable and excessive anxiety.

3.3. Peer Counseling

Counseling is an activity that involves experts who act as counselors, and clients who act as counselees. Counseling is carried out to help counselees overcome the problems they face by trying to understand the problem, identify it, and ultimately make decisions to overcome the problem. This is in line with the definition compiled by Pietrofesa (1978), which states that counseling is a process involving an expert who aims to help others solve the problems they face (Latipun, 2017).

Meanwhile, peer counseling according to Tindall & Gray (1985) is a service that aims to assist others carried out by someone who is at the same level, either educationally or in age (Husna, 2021). A peer counselor should ideally have attended relevant training to be able to provide peer counseling. Although not carried out by an expert, peer counseling can be said to be effective to help overcome problems and educate students so that the level of openness in sharing matters related to sexuality increases.

Then, research conducted (Febriana, A., 2022) shows the results that peer counselor training is effective as an appropriate solution in handling reproductive health problems and adolescent sexual behavior. Some of the reasons that make peer counseling effective are that peers can be said to be a substitute for family, can be a stabilizing influence in times of transition, and become a source of self-esteem (Hamachek in Husna, 2021).

3.4. Peer counselor online training

Peer counselor training is an activity to provide students with the knowledge and skills to become peer counselors. When they can carry out peer counseling, it will make it easier for students or college students who have problems to be able to pour out their problems and get initial help from peer counselors. This is important because the fact is that not all students or college students are comfortable when they have to tell professionals about their problems, either because they feel unfamiliar or do not have enough closeness to share their problems.

Research from Down to Zero Indonesia and ECPAT Indonesia states that girls who experience sexual violence online prefer to talk to their peers rather than their parents or professionals. Therefore, providing training for peer counselors is an important alternative to providing sexual education to students. In this digital era, peer counselor training is mostly done online. Although it may not be as effective as in-person training, online training is also quite effective. Especially in terms of time, cost, energy, and space efficiency. Research conducted (Syafitri & Rahmah, 2021) shows that peer counselor online training can increase knowledge and skills in participants regarding the material that has been provided.

3.5. Online peer counselor training for sexual education

Sexual education is not only about sexual intercourse but also explains the importance of maintaining healthy reproductive organs. Insights and knowledge about good sexual education for peer counselors, especially adolescents, are important to master. One of the urgencies is that adolescent reproductive health is currently quite alarming. Based on research conducted by Pranata (2018), only 18.3% of respondents had good knowledge about reproductive organs, 26.7% had good knowledge about adolescent sexual behavior, 8.3% had good knowledge related to knowledge about pregnancy, 21.6% had good knowledge related to knowledge about risky sexual behavior and 11.7% had good knowledge related to knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). This shows that most adolescents do not have good knowledge about sexual education.

It is hoped that peer counselors who master sexual education can optimize other students' understanding of sexual education. Of course, peer counselors who will educate other students need to be given training on sexual education first, because Permatasari (2013) explained in the results of his research that 30.3% of respondents he studied were still not good at implementing adolescent reproductive health counseling. Therefore, peer counselor training on sexual education is important because peer counselors have good potential to educate other students regarding sexual education. This is evidenced in research conducted by Utami (2017) that the role of good peer counselors can improve TRIAD KRR.

The urgency of online peer counselor training is not only an effort to optimize existing technological developments, but also to save in terms of cost, time efficiency, and training venues. This can be an alternative solution for busy counseling teachers. In addition, the many features that can be used through online training, for example Quiz, Kahoot, Mentimeter, attractive videos, break out rooms in Zoom, chat features, and others can attract student attention in training. The existence of these features is suitable for overcoming the problem of lecture pattern training which is deemed inappropriate.

Permatasari (2013) emphasized that the lecture method in training can cause adolescents to be passive as listeners so that relatively little knowledge is absorbed. The training can be provided through several online meetings, both synchronous (face-to-face directly through the Zoom meeting application or the like) and asynchronous (indirectly, through chat or doing assignments). Sexual education training for high school students can be conducted in several sessions which generally include the provision of material (theoretical), supervised practice, and assignments. The achievement of training results can be seen from the increased understanding of students participating in sexual education training and also the increased ability of students to provide counseling services to peers.

4. Conclusion

Every human being during his life must experience several phases, one of which is adolescence, in which changes occur both physiologically, psychologically, and biologically. With these changes, of course, it is also related to sexual education in adolescents. Sexual education is an effort to guide, realize, and provide information about reproductive organs accompanied by moral cultivation so that there is no misuse of reproductive organs. Therefore, sexual education is referred to as one of the life sciences that must be taught from an early age.

Guidance and counseling teachers play a role in providing comprehensive sexual education to students, but some students have a poor perception of Guidance and counseling teachers. The cause of the poor perception of counseling teachers has several factors, such as the lack of information about counseling as a place to help students solve their problems, students' views of counseling teachers as school police, and the age gap that students feel when talking to counseling teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to have other parties to help students so that their psychological condition is maintained, able to complete their developmental tasks, and solve increasingly complex problems. One of them is the existence of peer counselors.

Peer counselors can be interpreted as agents assisting Guidance and counseling teachers in implementing Guidance and Counseling services at school because of the characteristics of adolescents who have very strong bonds with their peers because they have similarities in several aspects. Peer relationships lead to a trusting relationship between peers. This relationship can lead to a behavior where adolescents trust their peers more than their parents or teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to hold training provided by counseling teachers for students who are qualified to become peer counselors. Providing training for peer counselors on insights and knowledge about good sexual education is also important to master because it is one of the alternatives that can be done in providing sexual education to students.

The widespread development of the times, especially in technology, has opened up opportunities for online-based activities and one of them is online peer counselor training. The urgency of online peer counselor training is not only an effort to optimize existing technological developments, but also to save in terms of cost, time efficiency, and training venues. Especially for now, many features can be used to hold online training, for example Quizizz, Kahoot, Mentimeter, attractive videos, break out rooms in Zoom or other meeting applications, chat features and others that can attract student attention in training.

Through this article, it is hoped that in the future, training activities for peer counselors in high school, especially about sexual education, will be organized by professional counselors or counseling teachers. This service activity in the form of training is still very much needed by students in high school in particular.

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