

Enhancing Kindergarten Teachers' Competence in Detecting and Managing Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Early Childhood through Guidance and Counseling Training

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Abstract

Emotional and behavioural problems in early childhood are often overlooked, even though they can hinder children's overall development. Kindergarten teachers play a vital role in identifying such issues and providing appropriate support. This community service project aimed to strengthen the competencies of teachers at TKITQ Bakkah Martapura through a one-day participatory training in guidance and counselling. The method involved pre-test, material presentation, group discussions, simulations, and post-test. The results revealed a significant improvement, with the average score increasing from 62.18 in the pre-test to 74.50 in the post-test. Beyond the numbers, teachers reported greater confidence in using simple tools for early detection as well as a better understanding of preventive and intervention strategies. In conclusion, a short yet practical training can have a meaningful impact on teachers' competence. Nevertheless, ongoing support and follow-up programs are essential to ensure that the skills gained are consistently applied in classroom practice.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a critical stage in human development. According to [Dariyo \(2011\)](#), the first three years of life represent a crucial period during which the child's brain develops up to 80% of its adult capacity. This stage is often referred to as the *golden age* because both positive and negative experiences during this period leave lasting impressions and influence an individual's quality of life in the future.

One of the most important aspects of child development is emotional competence. [Rahmawati and Basri \(2023\)](#) state that a child's ability to recognize, express, and regulate emotions forms the foundation for social skills and healthy personality development later in life. However, not all children navigate this phase successfully. Emotional and behavioral disorders such as excessive tantrums, social withdrawal, or aggressive behavior frequently emerge and, if left unaddressed, may persist into adolescence.

In the context of early childhood education, teachers occupy a strategic position. [Yuliani \(2021\)](#) emphasizes that kindergarten teachers are uniquely positioned to conduct early detection of emotional and behavioral disorders because of their daily interactions with

children. Nevertheless, limited knowledge and skills often hinder teachers from fulfilling this role effectively.

Preliminary observations at TKITQ Bakkah Martapura revealed several real challenges. Some teachers acknowledged frequently encountering children who display difficult behaviors, such as frequent crying, irritability, or reluctance to interact with peers. However, these symptoms are often perceived merely as misbehavior or developmental phases that will disappear over time. One teacher reported difficulty distinguishing whether a child's withdrawal was due to shyness or an indication of a more serious emotional problem.

This situation is further reinforced by teachers' perspectives that tend to prioritize cognitive aspects, such as reading, writing, and numeracy, while emotional and behavioral development receives less attention. [Indriawan and Wijiyo \(2020\)](#) argue that without targeted training, teachers are more likely to focus on academic outcomes and neglect children's emotional development. As a result, early detection is frequently missed, and early intervention is not implemented.

External factors also contribute to children's emotional conditions. Changes in parenting styles, excessive use of digital devices, and early academic pressure increase psychological stress. As noted by [Daulay et al. \(2023a\)](#), changes in family environments and high academic demands are often major triggers of emotional and behavioral disorders in children. Similar conditions were observed among children at TKITQ Bakkah Martapura, who appeared increasingly vulnerable to anxiety and maladaptive behaviors.

The prevention and management of behavioral disorders and emotional problems can be achieved by addressing underlying causes and improving observable symptoms. For instance, providing education to pregnant women about the dangers of alcohol consumption is essential in preventing fetal alcohol syndrome. In classroom settings, teachers can apply behavior management techniques to support children experiencing emotional and behavioral difficulties, preventing problems from escalating. Strategies involving parents, teachers, and the surrounding environment are crucial to ensuring that children's psychological development is well understood and appropriately supported.

Given these conditions, the need for kindergarten teacher training in early detection of emotional and behavioral disorders is increasingly urgent. A realistic look at kindergarten classrooms reveals that many teachers face children who are emotionally explosive, withdrawn, inattentive, or exhibit repetitive behaviors without knowing whether these behaviors represent normal developmental phases or early signs of more serious issues. Administrative burdens, high teacher-student ratios, and limited screening tools often result in reactive responses-temporary calming measures without structured follow-up plans. This is where early detection training becomes essential: equipping teachers with trained observation skills, appropriate terminology, and clear referral pathways, rather than relying on intuition or waiting for problems to worsen.

[El Fiah \(2017\)](#) emphasizes that guidance and counseling for early childhood should focus on preventive efforts, early detection, and developmentally appropriate support. Training in the detection and management of emotional and behavioral disorders is expected to provide teachers with simple instruments and observational skills.

This community service activity was therefore designed not only on theoretical grounds but also to address practical needs in the field, particularly the limited competencies of TKITQ Bakkah Martapura teachers in identifying and managing emotional and behavioral disorders in early childhood.

METHODS

This community service program employed lecture, demonstration, intensive guidance, and mentoring methods. These approaches were designed to enhance kindergarten teachers' capacity to detect and manage emotional and behavioral disorders in early childhood. According to [Creswell \(2014\)](#), participatory, practice-based training designs are more effective in improving skills than purely theoretical instruction. Therefore, the training incorporated not only lectures but also simulations, group discussions, and hands-on practice.

The training was conducted in one day, on Saturday, September 6, 2025, at TKITQ Bakkah Martapura. The stages of the activity included a pre-test to measure participants' initial knowledge, delivery of material on basic concepts of emotional and behavioral disorders, and discussions on emotional disorders in children and their management. This approach aligns with [Yin \(2018\)](#), who states that pre-test and post-test evaluations enable more objective assessment of intervention effectiveness.

The instruments used included teacher knowledge questionnaires, observation sheets, and child behavior checklists. Training materials were developed based on literature reviews in child developmental psychology and early childhood counseling practices. This approach corresponds with [El Fiah's \(2017\)](#) recommendation to use play-based, storytelling, and symbolic media in early childhood counseling to better align with children's developmental characteristics.

The training was attended by 22 kindergarten teachers who interact daily with children. A team of lecturers from the Guidance and Counseling Department of Universitas Lambung Mangkurat facilitated the training. During practice sessions, teachers learned to identify behaviors that may indicate disorders, such as withdrawal, tantrums, or difficulties in peer interaction.

The combination of lectures, demonstrations, intensive guidance, and mentoring was designed to address teachers' knowledge gaps regarding children's psychological aspects. Consequently, the methods applied were comprehensive, practical, and aligned with teachers' real needs in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The training process began with welcoming remarks from the head of the institution (TKITQ Bakkah Martapura), followed by an explanation of the objectives, benefits, and overall flow of the training activities. This was followed by an ice-breaking session to create a positive atmosphere and encourage participant engagement. The next session involved the delivery of training materials on the detection of emotional disorders in children and appropriate management strategies. Participants were presented with real-life case examples of children experiencing emotional and behavioral disorders. Teachers then practiced acting as counselors, while other participants assumed the roles of children or parents. Group discussions were conducted to analyze and discuss appropriate intervention strategies. Participants also practiced simple counseling techniques, including active listening, empathy, and non-verbal communication. A collective reflection session followed, during which teachers shared their experiences and challenges. The training concluded with feedback from the facilitators for improvement.

The training successfully enhanced teachers' abilities to detect and manage emotional disorders in early childhood. The pre-test and post-test results showed an increase in the average score from 62.18 to 74.50 (see Figure 1). This improvement indicates a significant enhancement in teachers' knowledge and skills.

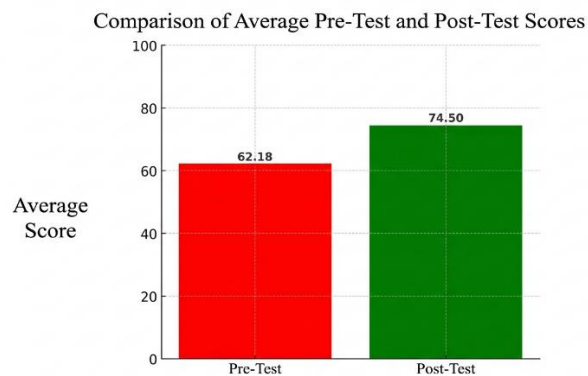


Figure 1 Pre-test and post-test scores

Analysis of the pre-test and post-test data revealed several important findings. First, the average pre-test score of 62.18 fell within the high category, although at the lower threshold. After the training, the average score increased to 74.50, remaining in the high category and approaching the very high category.

Second, in terms of score range, pre-test scores ranged from 51 to 85. Following the training, the range widened to 24–96. Although one or two participants remained in the lower category, the majority demonstrated a significant increase in scores, with several participants achieving scores close to the maximum.

Third, in terms of improvement, the average participant score increased by 12.32 points after the training. These results indicate that the training was effective in enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills, particularly in the early detection and management of emotional and behavioral disorders in children. Kindergarten teacher training activities are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2 Kindergarten teacher training activities

Fourth, from a practical perspective, teachers who previously had only a general understanding now demonstrated increased confidence, improved ability to use simple assessment instruments, and better comprehension of prevention and intervention strategies. This effectiveness is particularly important because kindergarten and early childhood education teachers serve as the front line in detecting potential emotional and behavioral problems before they develop into more serious issues.

Early childhood is a critical developmental phase in which emotional and behavioral aspects form the foundation of future character development and social competence. Emotional and behavioral disorders that go undetected during this stage may lead to learning difficulties, impaired social relationships, and an increased risk of mental health

problems in adulthood. In early childhood education settings, teachers act as the primary observers of children's behavior within formal social environments.

However, field realities indicate that many kindergarten teachers still lack adequate competence in detecting and managing emotional and behavioral disorders. A study by [Daulay et al. \(2023b\)](#) reported that changes in family environments and high academic pressure are often major triggers of emotional and behavioral disorders in children, posing serious challenges to mental health development. This highlights the need for systematic and applicable interventions to enhance teachers' capacity to address these challenges.

This community service activity was carried out by a team of lecturers from the Department of Guidance and Counseling, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, in collaboration with TKITQ Bakkah Martapura. The training was conducted intensively over one day using a participatory and practice-based approach. The training materials covered the following areas:

The training addressed the fundamentals of emotional and behavioral disorders in early childhood. Participants learned to recognize definitions, types, and common characteristics of disorders frequently observed in children. Through interactive discussions, teachers shared real-life experiences encountered in their classrooms.

Teachers were trained to conduct early detection using simple tools, such as behavior checklists, emotional rating scales, and interviews with children. As stated [by Indriawan and Wijiyo \(2020\)](#), appropriate stimulation during this developmental period is crucial for maximizing children's potential, making early detection a critical initial step.

Prevention and intervention strategies were introduced using a guidance and counseling approach. Teachers were trained to apply age-appropriate counseling techniques, including play counseling, narrative counseling, and positive reinforcement techniques. These approaches aim to foster supportive teacher-child relationships and create emotionally safe learning environments.

Evaluation was conducted through pre-tests and post-tests to measure improvements in teachers' knowledge and skills. The results showed in Figure 3.

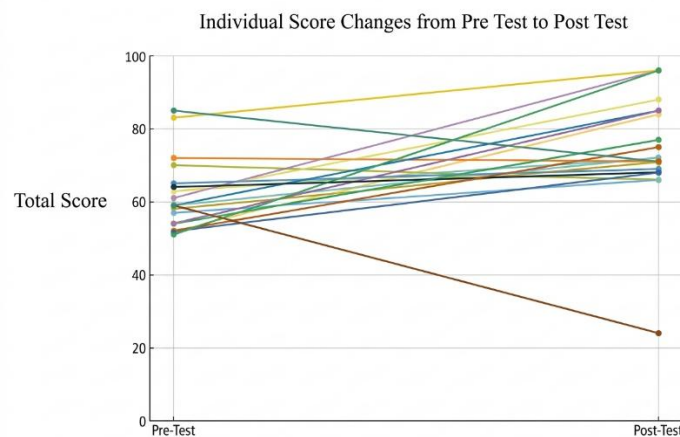


Figure 3 Score change graph

1. Average pre-test score: 62.18 (*High category, lower threshold*)
1. Average post-test score: 74.50 (*High category, approaching Very High*)
2. Pre-test score range: 51–85
3. Post-test score range: 24–96
4. Average increase: 12.32 points

The graph illustrates a consistent upward trend in individual scores. Teachers who previously possessed only general knowledge were able to use simple detection instruments and implement more appropriate intervention strategies. One participant stated, *“I have just realized that a child who is often quiet and withdrawn may be experiencing emotional difficulties, not merely being shy. This training has broadened my perspective.”*

This activity demonstrates that short, intensive training programs can have a significant impact. Despite challenges such as time limitations and diverse participant backgrounds, the training produced broadly positive outcomes. Teachers reported increased confidence and practical skills in managing classroom situations.

The humanistic approach emphasizes viewing children as unique individuals with diverse emotional backgrounds. Teachers serve not only as educators but also as companions in children’s psychological development. This training highlighted the importance of empathy, patience, and listening skills in addressing emotional and behavioral issues. Teachers must be trained to understand the emotional causes behind children’s behavior rather than merely correcting the behavior itself. In addition, collaboration among teachers, parents, and professional practitioners is essential in managing emotional and behavioral disorders. Teachers who have completed the training are expected to become agents of change within their schools and to promote more inclusive and supportive approaches for children experiencing emotional difficulties.

Based on the outcomes of this activity, several recommendations can be proposed:

1. One-day training provides a strong initial impact but should be followed by in-depth sessions and periodic supervision.
2. The instruments used should be adapted to local characteristics and cultural contexts.
3. Guidance and counseling strategies should be integrated into early childhood education curricula rather than treated as supplementary interventions.
4. Teachers require support from parents who understand the importance of children’s emotional well-being; therefore, similar training should be extended to parent communities.
5. Local governments, education authorities, and psychological institutions should collaborate to provide systematic services for the detection and management of children’s emotional disorders.

CONCLUSION

The training on detection and management of emotional and behavioral disorders in early childhood at TKITQ Bakkah Martapura represents an important initial step in building an educational environment that prioritizes children’s mental health. Early childhood education teachers play multiple roles—as educators, caregivers, companions, and primary observers of children’s emotional and behavioral development. Therefore, enhancing teachers’ competence in this area is essential.

The training results demonstrate that the guidance and counseling approach successfully provided teachers with new insights. Teachers not only gained theoretical understanding of emotional and behavioral disorders but also developed the ability to recognize early symptoms and apply appropriate intervention strategies for young children. The increase in evaluation scores from an average of 62.18 to 74.50 reflects the tangible impact of the training. More importantly, changes in teachers’ attitudes and perspectives toward children with diverse behaviors represent the most meaningful outcome.

This activity confirms that training can have a substantial impact even when conducted over a short duration. With appropriate approaches, relevant materials, and a supportive atmosphere, a one-day training program can initiate meaningful change among educators. However, this training should be followed by sustainable programs such as supervision,

discussion forums, or advanced training to continuously support teachers in applying their knowledge. Ultimately, consistent support from schools, parents, academics, and government institutions can help transform these changes into a comprehensive system that supports children's emotional and social development. Early childhood education that prioritizes psychological well-being is an achievable vision through collaboration among stakeholders, particularly Universitas Lambung Mangkurat and TKITQ Bakkah Martapura.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

To ensure the integrity of this scholarly work, the authors declare the following contributions: Conceptualization was carried out by Noor Ainah and Nina Permata Sari; methodology was developed by Asih Nor Zahidah; formal analysis was conducted by Shoofi Syammari; and original draft writing and preparation were completed by Hani Nurrofifah. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript. Authorship is limited to individuals who made substantial contributions to the entire community service activity and manuscript preparation.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors used Gemini AI during the preparation of this manuscript to assist with sentence structure development, grammar checking, and lexical enhancement in the initial draft. After using the tool, the authors thoroughly reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the publication's content, data accuracy, and scientific integrity.

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