
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Incorporating Traditional Games in Group Counseling: Its Impact on Social Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

The present work explores the impact of incorporating Gorontalo traditional games in group counseling on the social intelligence of students. It employed a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test. Variable X and Y refer to traditional game-based group counseling and social intelligence, respectively. The subject involved 15 students of SMPN 1 Tapa, Bone Bolango Regency. All data were retrieved from questionnaires and were further analyzed using the T-test. The result of hypothesis testing reveals that $t_{count} (18.917) > t_{table} (2.98)$. In other words, Gorontalo traditional games in group counseling are significant to the social intelligence of the students.

KEYWORDS

Group Counseling, Gorontalo Traditional Game, Social Intelligence.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 February 2023

PUBLISHED: 16 February 2023

DOI: 10.32996/jhsss.2023.5.2.5

1. Introduction

Humans cannot rely on themselves alone to survive as social creatures. They need support and help from others, thus encouraging them to establish social bonds. Such a task requires high social intelligence, enabling a person to provide empathy-based feedback. In this case, the feedback takes multiple forms, such as giving help, showing attention, cultivating mutual trust, and establishing a mutual partnership.

For millennials, social intelligence needs to be developed continuously, given the complex problems resulting from rapid information and technology progress. This advancement is perceived by many as something detrimental to millennials' social interactions. Overreliance and over-engagement of millennials in technology have hindered these young generations from developing their social competencies. A preliminary study on students at SMPN 1 state junior high school in Tapa, Bone Bolango Regency, has shown that 80 percent of class VIII students demonstrate poor social skills. This is seen in students' poor cooperation, lack of attention to others, extremely-selective behavior in befriending others, and awkwardness in interacting with their peers. To worsen the situation, many students are incapable of referring back to their local wisdom of Gorontalo in social interaction. Immediate solutions are essential to tackle the issue; otherwise, poor social skills and a low understanding of local culture will make the problem grow rampant, resulting in the future generation's inability to recognize their root.

Culture-oriented guidance and counseling programs are one of the approaches to better social skills and local wisdom comprehension among young generations. This is because culture-related activities are integral to a persons' social skills (Rahim, Bin Smith & Abas, 2019.1). Such a concept corresponds to the argument by Locke (as cited in Flurentin, 2001:9), claiming that individuals and culture are inseparable as social life is a manifesto of people's culture and beliefs. From this concept, it is safe to assume that culture-oriented guidance and counseling (focusing on group activities) are expected to produce students with high social skills.

From the research question, the present work explores the impact of incorporating Gorontalo traditional games in group counseling on the social intelligence of students. It focused on SMPN 1 state junior high school students in Tapa, Bone Bolango Regency.

2. Methodology

The researcher employed a quasi-experimental design by using a one-group pre- and post-test analysis. Variable (Y) represents social skills, which were classified using the indicator by Goleman (as cited in Rahim et al., 2017: 313-314): (1) basic empathy, (2) empathic accuracy, (3) alignment, (4) social understanding, (5) synchronization, (6) self-presentation, (7) influence, and (8) caring attitudes. Meanwhile, variable Y refers to traditional game-based group counseling, which consists of several phases below: (1) formation, (2) transition, (3) activities, and (4) concluding activities. All 178 students of class 1984 in SMPN 1 Tapa were the population of this study. The sample consisted of 15 students of the total population, which were selected by using purposive sampling. This method refers to a sample selection method in which a particular consideration is used as the grounding (Sevilla; Jesus; Twila; Regala; Uriarte, 1984). The data were generated from questionnaires and observations; the validity and reliability of the two instruments were confirmed before proceeding to data collection. Furthermore, the research hypothesis was examined using a T-test.

3. Result

Provided in the figures below are the students' pre-test and post-test.

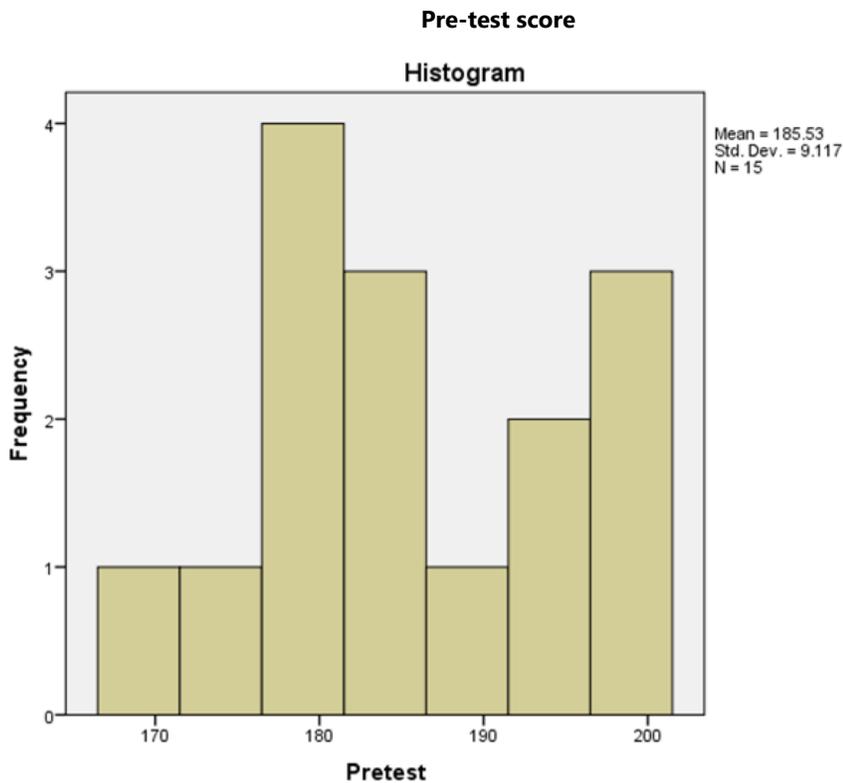
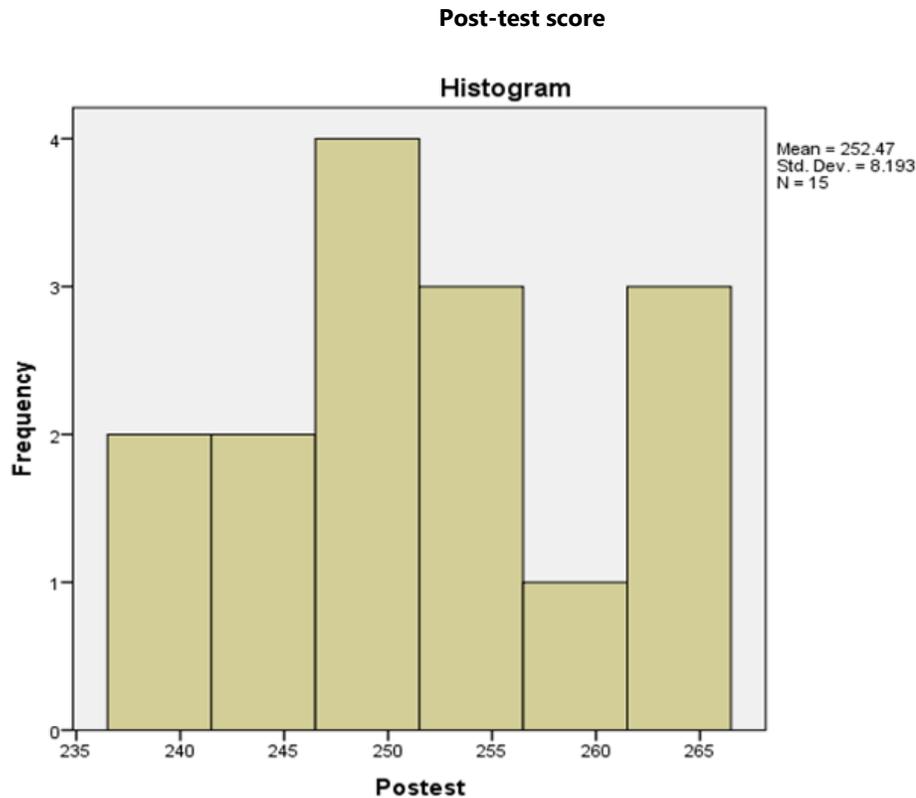


Figure 1. Students' Social Intelligence (Pretest)



The results reveal that the tcount accounts for 18.917. Meanwhile, the list of t-distribution on the significant level of 5% obtains $t_{0.955}$ of 2.98. In other words, the value of tcount is not within the acceptance area of H_0 ; therefore, H_0 is rejected, and H_1 is accepted. By that, a hypothesis that "the traditional game-based group counseling contributes to the social intelligence of the students at grade VIII in SMPN 1 Tapa, Bone Bolango Regency" is accepted.

The detail is provided in the following curve:

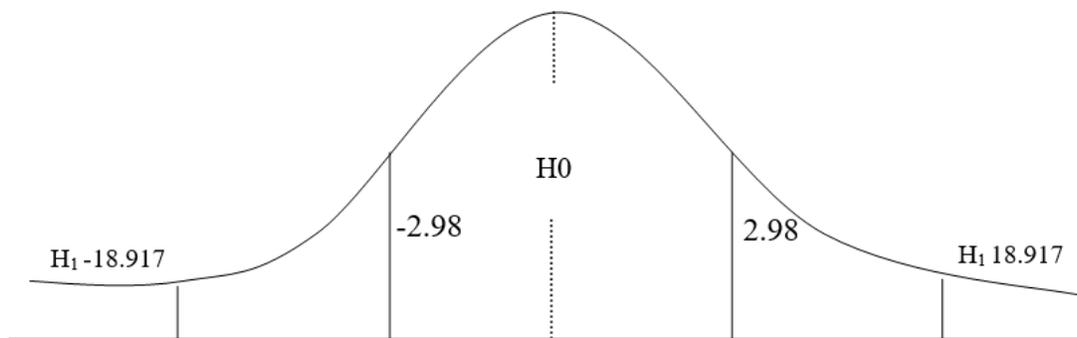


Figure 2. Acceptance and Rejection of Hypothesis Curve

4. Discussion

The present work reveals that incorporating Gorontalo traditional game activities in group counseling sessions improves students' social skills. In other words, such a strategy is applicable to hone social skills from zero, which is significant to maximizing student counseling.

Social skill-oriented counseling allows the students to express their opinions on a given topic, culminating in a meaningful discussion. Furthermore, each student is required to foster collaborative skills by respecting ideas from their peers, showing attention and affection, helping others, and other activities that shape social skills.

Games have been used extensively in group counseling activities (Rusmana, 2009) since these tools are one of the applicable instruments to investigate social relationships. Children find it easier to learn about their environment, explore every phenomenon, and express their emotions through games (Debora & Amann, as cited in Iswinarti, 2017:1). Moreover, games create an engaging and relaxing learning atmosphere that is central to children's problem-solving (Barner & Smith, as cited in Iswinarti, 2017:1). It is also revealed that games are of paramount importance in children's abilities in getting involved in a specific learning activity, especially the one requiring social skills (Skainer, Roger & Bundy, as cited in Iswinarti, 2017:1). Simply put, children engaged in such activities are stimulated to adjust with their surrounding by socializing with their peers, resulting in continuous learning and development as a social entity. The activities also mediate children's interaction with others, which fosters collaboration.

Among the important aspects of games is local wisdom or cultural virtues; the incorporation of the two later results in the creation of traditional games. These games have been used to introduce and familiarize individuals with social norms in their surroundings. Such a concept serves as a solid basis for social skill enhancement. In Gorontalo, familiarizing the modern generation with traditional games has been claimed as an effective instrument for enhancing social skills. At the same time, this activity enables related stakeholders to preserve local wisdom, preventing the extinction of the cultures caused by an abnormal advancement of information and technology.

4.1 Social Intelligence

Social intelligence is a set of skills enabling an individual to interact and establish relationships with others. This intelligence also includes the skills to understand and process the feelings of oneself and others and adapt to the environment in interaction (Thorndike, as cited in Suyono, 2009:103). Goleman (as cited in Rachmawati et al., 2018:3) adds that social intelligence represents how people empathize with their peers and respond to different situations. The concept underpins the formulation of skillsets, covered within the umbrella term social intelligence that is central to effective social interaction (Goleman, as cited in Rachmawati et al., 2018:3). Furthermore, this type of intelligence is a conscious process in nature, where people's awareness of their feeling towards others serve as the basis to respond accordingly (Goleman, as cited in Putra and Nurhajaranti, 2017:216).

Cultivating collaborative processes among peers is also a social skill set (Albrecht, as cited in Putra and Nurhajaranti, 2017:216). This is because collaboration is crucial to individuals' capacities to comprehend a specific phenomenon, culminating in effective social interaction with their environment (Suyono, 2007:104). In conclusion, social intelligence is a manifesto of skillsets that are significant to be fitted to the environment, which involve aspects, e.g., empathy, altruism, cooperation, and positive interaction with other people and their environment to create and maintain harmonious relationships.

There are two components of social intelligence proposed by Goleman (as cited in Rahim, Puluhulawa & Usman, 2017: 313-314). Each component consists of several subcomponents, as mentioned below. (1) The first component is social awareness, which includes: (a) basic empathy, i.e., the ability to read non-verbal cues signaled by others. When a person stops talking, s/he cannot stop conveying their feeling through tone of voice and facial expressions. (b) Alignment, i.e., the ability to listen and pay full attention to what people are saying to others. This indicates that the person focuses only on the interlocutor, resulting in two-way interaction and appropriate responses instead of one-sided conversations. (c) Empathic accuracy, i.e., the ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of other people through non-verbal language. The ability to read non-verbal language helps people be informed of other people's thoughts and feelings. (d) Social cognition, i.e., the ability to understand and choose what is right to do in different situations where unspoken rules apply. This cognition is significant in addressing dilemmatic social problems, e.g., getting new friends in a new environment. (2) The second component is a social facility, which involves: (a) synchronization, or the ability to interact using nonverbal language, which is significant for communicating with other people. (b) Self-presentation, i.e., how a person presents oneself when interacting; one of the components of this aspect is charisma. (c) Influential, i.e., how an individual influences others in their action based on rational decisions and good self-control. (d) Caring attitudes; these attitudes refer to altruistic qualities, showing selfless concern for the well-being of others.

4.2 Group Counseling

Group counseling is a form of counseling activity covering more than one student involved in one simultaneous session led by a counselor. The session is basically similar in terms of its goal to improve students' well-being and shape decision-making skills (Sukardi, as cited in Kurniawan, 2018:87). Salahudin (as cited in Kurniawan and Pranowo, 2018: 129) delineates the application of group counseling in enhancing students' problem skills. Furthermore, group counseling enables counselees to retrieve more information through group dynamics and discuss everything they have retrieved and learned from a teacher (Asmani, as cited in Kurniawan and Pranowo, 2018:54). The discussion topics revolve around real-life problems that are specifically selected to improve social skills as an individual (social context) and as a learner (academic context).

In other words, group counseling emphasizes social issues as the activities mostly cover practical skills to foster students' collaboration in addressing a specific problem, shaping students' collective mindset and positive social interaction.

There are several objectives of group counseling. Wibowo (as cited in Kurniawan and Pranowo, 2018: 54) argues that group counseling is designed to cultivate students' skills as solutionist. Other studies have reported that the goal of group counseling is the development of social skills, particularly interpersonal skills, among the group members. These skills are the basis to grow as mature individuals, reflected in their feeling, thought, perception, insight, and attitudes (2018:88). In the same tune, Winkel and Hastuti (as cited in Kurniawan Suminar 2018:88) argue that the focal point of group counseling is the enhancement of social skills and teamwork of counselees through a series of meaningful activities. The objective of group counseling is divided into two categories: general and specific (Tohirin, as cited in Kurniawan and Suminar 2018:88). In a broader sense; group counseling aims to develop communication skills in a social context. Group counseling shapes the counselees' feelings, thoughts, perceptions, insights, and attitudes to act and behave maturely in verbal and nonverbal communication. In conclusion, group counseling is the key to developing individuals' social skills, which are the key to positive interpersonal communication.

Effective group counseling should be conducted through several phases. Four stages underpin the application of group counseling (Gladding, as cited in Rusmana, 2009:86): (1) beginning stage, (2) transition stage, (3) working stage, and (4) termination of a group. Gladding's stages resonate with the stages of group dynamics proposed by Tuckman (as cited in Rusmana, 2009:86), consisting of: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

Prayitno (as cited in Zaidi, 2019:93) formulates four phases in group counseling: establishment, diversion, main activities, and denouement. Each phase is discussed below.

- a. The first phase, establishment, introduces the counselees to the concepts and objectives of group counseling. This aims to promote counselees' active involvement in all activities of the counseling session.
- b. The diversion phase symbolizes the transition from the establishment to the main activities. The goal is to ensure that all counseling session participants will not be reluctant (due to doubt and distrust) to proceed to the next phase.
- c. Each student discusses their problems in the main activities while others carefully listen to the story. This activity intends to stimulate students' collective mindset in formulating practical solutions to their peers' problems and social communication skills.
- d. The last phase comprises two activities: assessment and follow-up. This phase concludes the whole counseling session, culminating in creative solutions to the problem of each counselee.

4.3 Defining Game

Many have claimed that games correlate with entertainment purposes. However, games positively affect children's development (Hurlock, 1980). Games are central to children's involvement in learning, especially regarding applying social skills (Hurlock, 1980).

A study has suggested the implication of games as an adjustment mechanism, which is significant to coping with anxiety and conflict (Freud and Erickson, as cited in Husna and Sutoyo, 2017:33). Games, specifically multiplayer, are also claimed to help foster cooperation and social skills of the players, shaping their communication, emotional management, and self-confidence to build a strong identity and solidarity of each team member. There are several games that promote the players' cooperation and responsibility. Such can be applied in the classroom since the positive implications of the game highlight character-building virtues.

Incorporating games in shaping social skills is applicable. Relaxing and fun atmosphere that students experience will help them formulate problems, make decisions, devise plans, and communicate their ideas, resulting in positive characters (Agus, as cited in Astuti, 2017:4). In conclusion, multiplayer games mediate students' cooperation and enhance social skills.

Games are not only impactful for students' cognitive skills but also their physical health. This concept is elucidated in several contemporary studies (Zaini, 2015:127; Wiryasumarta, as cited in Zaini, 2015:128-129), which propose the contribution of games to students' physical health.

- a. Strengthen children's bodies through muscle movements. Children aged 4 to 6 years tend to constantly move (running or jumping), which expresses their happiness. Engaging such children in some games, such as playing tag, soccer, moving objects, and ular naga. These games help build children's muscle development.
- b. Games shape positive personalities, e.g., sportive, honest, cooperative, and well-mannered. These qualities improve children's initiative.
- c. Games improve children's communication skills, establishing quality relationships with their peers, parents, and teachers.
- d. Improving social skills is another highlight of the significance of games. Children are required to follow the regulation of the games, understanding their rights and obligations. There are consequences for children who violate the regulation; one example is that such children will be marginalized by their peers. Such a social consequence forces all players to respect others, keep their egos in check and practice risk management skills.

- e. Games are the media to recognize the surrounding environment. For instance, teachers can utilize resources available in the class to help children identify objects using children's five senses. The more the teachers introduce the objects, the faster the children perceive development in object recognition.
- f. Many psychologists have utilized games in therapy sessions. It is argued that games are the initial step in treating children experiencing stress. Games help children release their emotions, signaling the coping mechanism.
- g. Games are one of the meaningful learning resources. Incorporating appropriate games in a specific learning activity significantly broadens children's basic understanding of a particular subject through creativity enhancement.

From the above discussion, several advantages of incorporating games in the class involve: improving physical well-being, instilling positive characters, enhancing communication and social skills, understanding the surroundings, preventing and treating stress, and providing learning resources.

4.4 Traditional Games

Technology development has made traditional games almost forgotten. Another cause is the competitiveness of learning activities, which frequently urge children to access online resources. Consequently, they have no time to learn the traditional culture, including games that were popular in the past before the introduction of digital platforms (Bishop and Curtis, as cited in Nurastuti, 2015:2-3).

In Gorontalo, traditional games have long been played by children. Some games have different names, although the rules are the same; the spread of the games relied on verbal communication (Nadjamuddin, 2016:77-78). The present work incorporates six traditional games of Gorontalo: *tapula*, *tumbawa*, *tulawota*, *momatahu*, *ti bagogo*, *tolode*.

- a. *Tapula*: *Tapula* (literally "to find") was introduced in 1927 during the Dutch colony. This role-playing game was played by indigenous children who were unable to attend schools due to the poor economy. Children play two roles: one child acts as a teacher while the others are the students. The 'teacher' conceals a coin in their palm, and the students should guess which hand the coin is under. A student winning this game is considered to pass the exam; thus, s/he can move forward to the next lane. This game improves how children observe people's behavior (playmates) and surroundings. It also practices children's honesty and solidarity.
- b. *Tumbawa*: In this game, players should match an object, e.g., a bowl, with its cover. The game was originally played in coastal areas, where its players should identify matching clamshells as much as possible. It is said that the game was introduced by Ternate merchants arriving in Sumalata. The players' meticulousness in finding perfect matches is the key to winning the game. The game consists of three to five players. Each player should find a perfect match of an object from a stack of the objects' covers placed three meters away. On the count of ten, the players then run towards the stacked covers to find the perfect matches as much as possible to be the winner. These activities improve children's agility and accuracy.
- c. *Tulawota* (literally 'to choose) is a game where its players collect woven mats made by a plant called *ti'ohu* and *peya-peya*. The game has long been played since the introduction of the two plant species to Gorontalo people. Players collect pieces of colorful woven mats or rags, which are placed in a medium. Then, the players should find mats and rags with the same colors. This game was commonly played in classroom learning during the folk school era.
- d. *Momatahu* (literally 'to aim') is a game introduced in the past where almost every household grows candlenut trees. Children used the candlenut fruit as a shooting target using a rubber band. Children spend their leisure time playing *Momatahu* at school and at home. This game is significant in shaping its players' sportsmanship and communication skills.
- e. *Ti bagogo*: The word 'bagogo' is associated with menacing evil, but the game *ti bagogo* is not that terrifying; this game shares some similarities with tag. Players decide which acts as the *bagogo*, the one chasing other players in a circle. *Bagogo* must "tag" and mark other players out of play, usually by touching with a hand. The player tagged by the *bagogo* will then chase other players, replacing the previous *bagogo*. Kinship and honesty are the characteristics highlighted in this game.
- f. *Tumbu-tumbu Balanga*: This game was originally a poem recited while patting tables or chairs to calm babies since the patting sound diverts babies' attention. This game is played in groups, where players stack their clenched hands. Whoever's hand is on the bottom of the stack removes their hand when the players finish reciting the poem: "*Tumbu-tumbu balanga, balanga limasoyi/ Soyi-soyi leke, leke kambu-kambu/Bu'ade tibawa/Tutuiyo Hulawa. Tumbu-tumbu Balanga* instills self-confidence and solidarity to children through a series of balance exercises.
- g. *Tolode*: This game is basically clog racing. The players wear a pair of clogs made of coconut shells. A string is tied into a hole on the top of the shell, where the player should hold the tie in racing. One player acts as a group leader who

coordinates his or her team to win the race. Teamwork is the key to winning, as the group should maintain their balance when running while wearing the clogs. Children can practice solidarity in this *tolode* or *tenggedi lo buawu* game to enable them to complete every challenge.

- h. *Awuta* is similar to *congklak* or count and capture game. Initially, the game was played to comfort grieving families; currently, it can be played on any occasion. *Awuta* can be applied in counseling sessions to develop honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and social and emotional maturity.

Hulukati and Rahim (2016:183) argue that some traditional games, e.g., *awuta* and *tumbu-tumbu balanga* are meaningful in promoting the psychological and physical well-being of counselees.

It is also implied that such games help students cope with their problems, enabling them to optimize their skills in social interaction and prevent social conflicts. Guidance and counseling teachers play a significant role in actualizing such goals by providing continuous support in group counseling.

The above traditional games are claimed to be effective in group counseling activities. Characteristics of each game match with the goal of the counseling sessions, i.e., improve social intelligence, where players are encouraged to interact, cooperate, show affection, demonstrate solidarity, and respect the strengths and weaknesses of each other. These attributes are central to social adaptation skills in schools and society. In other words, Gorontalo traditional games impact group counseling in enhancing social skills.

5. Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate the impact of incorporating Gorontalo traditional games in group counseling on the social intelligence of Class VIII students in SMPN 1 State Junior High School in Tapa, Bone Bolango Regency. The findings of this study revealed that incorporating Gorontalo traditional games in group counseling positively impacted the students' social intelligence. After participating in the traditional games, the students reported increased social skills, such as communication, cooperation, and empathy. This study's significance lies in its contribution to the existing literature on the use of traditional games in counseling. The results of this study support the idea that traditional games can be used as an effective tool for improving social intelligence in students. This study adds to the evidence suggesting that incorporating traditional games in counseling sessions can provide a fun and engaging way for students to learn and practice important social skills. However, it is important to note that the study has some limitations, such as the small sample size and the lack of a control group. Future research can build on the findings of this study by conducting larger and more controlled studies to confirm further the positive impact of traditional games on social intelligence. Future research can also explore the use of traditional games in counseling for different age groups and in other cultural contexts.

In conclusion, incorporating Gorontalo traditional games in group counseling can effectively improve social intelligence in Class VIII students. The results of this study highlight the potential of traditional games as a tool for promoting social skills in students and provide a foundation for future research in this area.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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