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**Improving Rapport Building skills and Active Listening for 'Aisyiyah Sakinah Family Consultation
Information Bureau (BIKKSA) Gresik Volunteers**

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ABSTRACT

The 'Aisyiyah Sakinah Family Consultation Information Bureau (BIKKSA) is one of the bureaus of the Regional Leadership of Aisyiyah Gresik. which has the task of identifying and recognizing individuals who are experiencing family problems; encouraging and motivating individuals to express their problems openly, and encouraging individuals to consult their problems to find solutions. The problem is, the members of this bureau consist of volunteers who have heterogeneous educational backgrounds. Therefore, it is necessary to hold training to improve basic counseling skills, namely building rapport and active listening. The method used in the training was Participatory Action Research (PAR). This training was attended by 26 people from 14 sub-districts on June 26, 2022, in Gresik Regency. The results obtained were that there was an increase in the skills of BIKKSA volunteers after attending the training. This training concludes that this training can improve the skills of building rapport and active listening. The suggestion of this training is the need for further training.

Keywords: Rapport Building, Active Listening, Basic Counseling Skills, Rapport Building, Role Play, Training, Volunteer

1. INTRODUCTION

Faced with the increasing cases of problems of families, women, and children that occur, the Regional Leadership of 'Aisyiyah Gresik Regency formed the 'Aisyiyah Sakinah Family Consultation Information Bureau (BIKKSA). One of the elements contained in the organizational structure is the BIKKSA volunteer. There are several duties and responsibilities of BIKKSA volunteers, namely finding and recognizing someone who is indicated to be experiencing family problems; encouraging, and motivating someone to share their problems openly; encouraging someone to consult their problems to BIKKSA to find solutions; providing client assistance during the consultation process at BIKKSA or to other professionals; making case reports according to case forms, maintaining client confidentiality. The main problem is that not all volunteers who are members of BIKKSA have counseling knowledge and skills. Only 35% of volunteers understand counseling because they have a teaching background. In addition, they have heterogeneous educational backgrounds. They work solely because of the soul's calling. Minimal knowledge about how to carry out counseling is limited. That is why volunteers' counseling skills need to be improved.

Based on the description of duties and responsibilities of BIKKSA, the main key to the success of volunteers in carrying out their duties and responsibilities lies in the ability of volunteers to build closeness (Utami et al., 2024), trust and openness of clients. The skill of building interpersonal communication between clients and volunteers affects client satisfaction (Elliott et al., 2020; Laurens et al., 2024; Risnawaty et al., 2019). If there is closeness, trust, and openness, clients will feel safe, and comfortable and voluntarily share their problems with volunteers (English et al., 2022).

A good relationship between the counselor and the client is the key to the counselor's success in exploring the problems faced by the client. It requires sensitivity to the situation, being able to appreciate feelings, and being able to express understanding appropriately. The ability to build a good initial relationship is referred to as rapport. This process will help clients or their families think positively.

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This rapport-building process will be more effective if balanced with verbal and non-verbal communication (Schwab-Reese et al., 2024). Nonverbal communication, in this case, facial expressions play an important role in the counseling process (Givens & White, 2021; Waibel, 2022). Clients can express their emotions when telling their problems (Mitzkovitz et al., 2022).

In counseling sessions, active listening plays an important role. Volunteer active listening skills need to be trained because through active listening we can explore the core problems faced by clients (Narayanan, 2022; Zhang et al., 2024). Research by Tustonja et al (2023) shows active listening creates a safe and stimulating environment, encouraging clients to express freely both the way they think, and feel (Rabathya et al., 2024) and their needs, so that trust, self-esteem, self-worth, and self-confidence will be built (Nadya et al., 2024; Tustonja et al., 2024).

Before carrying out their duties, BIKKSA volunteers have been given a briefing. The task of the volunteers to assist clients has not been able to run optimally. This is because first, the volunteers do not have sufficient experience as volunteers; second, the volunteers have various levels of education and educational backgrounds. In general, they are high school and undergraduate graduates from various disciplines including education, law, psychology, religion, and economics. On the other hand, efforts to approach clients are qualified with psychological content. Therefore, volunteers also need assistance to improve their competence as BIKKSA volunteers to carry out their duties and responsibilities effectively.

The novelty of this community service is: (1) most previous research has focused on teachers, professional counselors, or general companion volunteers. There are not many community service programs specifically designed for volunteers based on religious organizations such as 'Aisyiyah, which has special needs because it involves spiritual, socio-cultural, and gender values; (2) experiential learning design that is tailored to real cases and local values; (3) Integration of Islamic principles and humanistic psychology in the delivery of materials and simulations. The purpose of this training is to improve rapport building and active listening skills BIKKSA Volunteers.

2. METHOD

The implementation of community service activities uses the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method. This approach aims to solve problems and provide practical solutions for the community. The PAR approach includes: identification of common problems, collaborative action planning, implementation of actions, joint evaluation, reflection and learning (Alim et al., 2023; Humaidi et al., 2024; Nucifera et al., 2024; Soesantari & Mutia, 2024).

The implementation of this community service activity was carried out on the campus of Muhammadiyah Gresik University on June 26, 2024, which started at 08.00 to 16.00 WIB. Participants who attended consisted of 26 BIKKSA volunteers from 14 sub-districts in Gresik Regency, which included: Duduk Sampeyan 2 people, Bungah 2 people, Sedayu 2 people, Ujungpangkah 3 people, Manyar 1 person, GKB 1 person, Gresik 1 person, Dukun 2 people, Panceng 2 people, Kebomas 2 people, Benjeng 2 people, Wringin anom 2 people, Menganti 2 people, and Driyorejo 2 people. This community service is carried out in the following stages.

1. Providing rapport-building material, given by presenters, through seminars and discussions.
2. Providing active listening material, given by speaker 2, through seminars and discussions.
3. Practice applying rapport building and active listening through role-play. (Newcomb et al., 2021; Sikveland et al., 2023). Conducted by the facilitator.
4. Provide feedback from the role-play performed.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Basic counseling skills are essential for BIKKSA volunteers, as they are the first point of contact with clients. Sincerity to help clients is not enough. The counselor-client relationship can improve rapport, trust, and effective communication (Ramadhani et al., 2024). The varied educational backgrounds of these volunteers need to add basic counseling skills.

The stages of implementation are as follows:

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1. identification of common problems

At this stage, the community service team identified problems that occurred to BIKKSA volunteers. They complained that they could not solve the problems faced by clients. After being identified, it appeared that 90% of the volunteers did not have a counseling education background. They are moved by their hearts when they see the problems faced by the client.

2. collaborative action planning,

In the next stage, the community service team plans to implement training to improve basic counseling skills, namely rapport building and active listening. The community service team then collaborated with the Aisyiyah Gresik Regional Management to gather BIKKSA volunteers in the Gresik area, then set a time and location for the training at the University of Muhammadiyah Gresik Campus.

3. implementation of actions

3.1. Rapport Building with Clients

The provision of rapport-building material with clients aims to increase the knowledge of BIKKSA volunteers about the concepts and techniques of rapport-building with clients. The provision of material is done by lecture and discussion methods.

The material provided includes an understanding of rapport. Rapport is a good relationship between counselor and client (Muthmainna et al., 2023; Wulandari et al., 2024). The counselor should be sensitive to the situation faced by the client, be able to appreciate the client's feelings and be able to express feelings appropriately. The importance of building rapport to build client trust (L. Ramadhani et al., 2024; N. Ramadhani & Umaroh, 2024). Then explained the steps of building rapport, namely: observation, pacing, calibration, paying attention, showing interest, and showing good faith (Figure 1)



Figure 1: the provision of rapport-building material

Pacing is the process of establishing harmony with the other person. Some types of pacing are: (1) pacing breath: equalizing breath and breath rhythm, (2) pacing gestures: equalizing body position, (3) pacing preferences: equalizing visual, audiotorial, or kinesthetic preferences according to the preferences of the interlocutor (4) pacing predicates: equalizing words (5) pacing interests: equalizing hobbies and favorite habits (6) pacing habits: equalizing habits.

Building rapport can also be done through nonverbal communication. There are 6 types of nonverbal messages that can be utilized to build rapport, namely: gestures, paralinguistic (voice), proxemics (spacing), olfaction (smell), skin sensitivity (touch), and artifactual (appearance).

After the presentation of the material, time was given for discussion. Participants were enthusiastic about sharing their experiences when dealing with clients.

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3.2. Provision of Active Listening Material

The next material is active listening. Through active listening counselors can explore the core problems faced by clients (Pujiana et al., 2024; Saputri et al., 2024). Active listening is the process of listening attentively when others speak, paraphrasing and reflecting back on what is said, and withholding judgment and advice. When one practices active listening it makes the other person feel heard and valued (figure 2).



Figure 2: giving active listening material

Research by Tustonja et al (2023) shows that active listening is a crucial component of empathic communication of helping professionals because it can improve the quality of the relationship between the helper and the client which will make it easier to see the needs, feelings, and perspective of thinking of the client (Tustonja et al., 2024). In this active listening skill, one is trained how to ask questions, paraphrase, reflect feelings, and interpret the atmosphere (Schwab-Reese et al., 2024).

3.3. Participant discussion about experiences in the field

To gain an in-depth understanding, participants were allowed to discuss (Figure 3).



Figure 3: participant discussion

Through this discussion method, participants got a clearer picture of the material presented and even shared cases that had been experienced (Munandar et al., 2024; Nasir & Hanum, 2024; Suwardi et al., 2024).

3.4. Role Play the material that has been given.

In the next stage, participants practiced by means of role-play to improve the skills that had been obtained from the seminar given (Aura et al., 2023; Baharuddin et al., 2024; Daif-Allah & Al-Sultan, 2023; Saputri et al., 2024). To increase the effectiveness of learning, role-play activities are divided into 2 classes. The role-play was conducted in pairs alternately as counselor versus client as shown in Figure 4.

This stage aims to train volunteers to practice handling client cases in accordance with procedures and theories that have been understood.

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Figure 4: Role-play

At this stage, volunteers are asked to choose 1 (one) case that has been provided by the service team. Participants are asked to handle the case using the techniques that have been taught.

Based on the results of role-play, 75% of participants were not used to using rapport building techniques and active listening. Participants are stuck with solutions to the given case. Participants are encouraged to directly ask questions about the problems faced by the client, so they have not had time to do a building report. This is in line with research that states that a counselor needs basic counseling skills, including building rapport (Risnawaty et al., 2019). Participants have not maximized non-verbal language to build rapport (50%).

In addition, participants tend to give advice to clients. Participants forgot to apply active listening. 40% of participants are dissolved by the problem the client is facing. Participants forgot to apply empathetic communication. This is in line with research that states that active listening can improve the quality of communication, build stronger relationships, and achieve a deeper understanding of the problems faced by clients (Nadya et al., 2024)

4. joint evaluation

At the evaluation stage, the participants were presented to explain what they did during the role play. Feedback is given so that participants understand the points techniques that still need to be improved and which points are in accordance with the and skills that have been taught.

At the end of the training session, participants were asked to fill in questions on what cases had been handled by BIKKSA volunteers (table 1).

Table 1: Cases that have been experienced by BIKKSA volunteers.

No.	Problems
1.	Household economic problems
2.	Family feud
3.	Divorce
4.	Domestic violence
5.	Sexual harassment
6.	Domestic infidelity
7.	The mother's abusive behavior toward the child
8.	A student's growing pains

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9. Complaints from wives experiencing problems with their husbands
10. Husband remarries

To determine whether the workshop had an impact on the participants' knowledge, before and after the workshop participants were given a pre-test and post-test. Pre-test and post-test results are presented in Table 2.

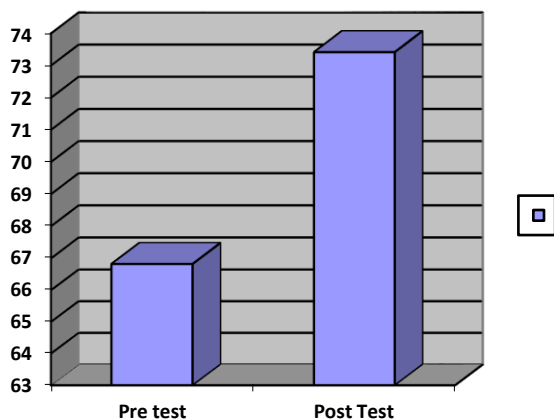


Figure 1 : Graph of pre and post-test

Based on Figure 1, it appears that there is an increase in participants' skills about building rapport and active listening. Therefore, it can be said that this training has met the material target by the community service activity plan.

5. Reflection and learning

At the end of the session, participants were invited to reflect on what counseling methods they had done. This is done so that between the learning process of the material and the role practice carried out, participants can do self-evaluation, what things have been done. Whether the counseling method carried out on the client is correct or not. What things should be improved, or eliminated. This reflection process will make it easier for participants to learn.

Based on the results of the overall evaluation survey, responses from participants were obtained as follows (table 2) :

Table 2: Participant responses

Description
1. Request for routine activities
2. Follow-up meeting
3. The curriculum vitae form is too voluminous and detailed
4. Role play is increased
5. Requires listening training

To find out whether the training provided was in accordance with what the participants needed, the service team conducted a training evaluation survey (table 3).

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Table 3: training evaluation

No.	Aspects evaluated	Material 1	Material 2
1	Are the materials appropriate for the training objectives	Very suitable	Very suitable
2	Is the material useful in carrying out duties as a volunteer	Very Helpful	Very Helpful
3	Does the material match your interests	Very suitable	Very suitable
4	Is the material covered in depth	Deep	Very Deep
5	Is the material presented in a clear manner that is easy to understand	Easy to Understand	Very Easy to Understand
6	Does the material increase your knowledge	Greatly Improved	Greatly Improved
7	Does the material improve your skills	Increased	Increased
8	How is the evaluation in general	Very good	Good

4. CONCLUSION

This community service activity can run smoothly in accordance with the activity plan. The partners felt very helped to get increased skills in building rapport and active listening. In addition, the partners need further training to further strengthen the counseling skills of BIKKSA volunteers.

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