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IMPROVING CAREER MATURITY THROUGH GROUP GUIDANCE USING ROLE PLAY TECHNIQUES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Career maturity is an essential developmental competency that enables students to make realistic educational and occupational decisions. However, many senior high school students continue to demonstrate low levels of career maturity, characterized by limited self-understanding, inadequate career planning, and uncertainty regarding future educational and occupational pathways. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of group guidance using role-play techniques in improving the career maturity of students at SMA BOPKRI 1 Yogyakarta. The study employed a Guidance and Counseling Action Research (GCAR) design based on the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral model, consisting of two intervention cycles involving planning, action, observation, and reflection. Twelve eleventh-grade students with low career maturity scores were selected through purposive sampling from an initial population of 70 students. Data were collected using a 72-item Career Maturity Questionnaire developed from Super's career maturity dimensions, supported by observation sheets, interviews, and process evaluation forms. Instrument reliability testing produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.709, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman's Rank Correlation. The findings demonstrated a continuous improvement in students' career maturity, with the mean score increasing from 95.83 at the pretest stage to 149.33 after Cycle I and 163.25 after Cycle II. Statistical analysis indicated that these improvements were highly significant ($p < .001$). The iterative action research process also enhanced students' engagement, confidence, career exploration, and decision-making abilities through experiential learning activities. These findings suggest that group guidance employing role-play techniques represents an effective intervention for strengthening career maturity among senior high school students and may serve as an evidence-based strategy for school counselors seeking to improve students' readiness for future educational and occupational transitions.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is not merely a process of transferring knowledge but also a means of preparing students to become independent individuals capable of making appropriate life decisions, including decisions regarding their future careers. In Indonesia, this principle is reflected in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes that education should develop learners' potential to become knowledgeable, competent, responsible, and productive citizens. Consequently, schools are expected to facilitate not only students' academic achievement but also their personal and career development. Career preparation has become increasingly important because students are required to compete in

an employment market characterized by rapid technological advancement, globalization, and continuously changing occupational demands (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2023; International Labour Organization [ILO], 2024).

Career readiness during adolescence is commonly reflected in the concept of career maturity, which refers to an individual's readiness to accomplish career developmental tasks appropriate to his or her developmental stage (Super, 1990). Career maturity encompasses both attitudinal and cognitive dimensions, including career planning, career exploration, occupational information, decision-making competence, and realistic career orientation (Sharf, 2016). Students with high career maturity generally demonstrate greater confidence in selecting educational pathways, possess clearer career goals, actively seek occupational information, and are more capable of making realistic career decisions than students with lower career maturity (Brown & Lent, 2020; Savickas, 2013).

The importance of career maturity has become increasingly evident in the twenty-first century because occupational environments continue to evolve rapidly. Technological innovation, digital transformation, and industrial restructuring require young people to possess adaptive career competencies and lifelong career planning skills rather than relying solely on academic qualifications (ILO, 2024; OECD, 2023). Adolescents who fail to develop adequate career maturity often experience uncertainty regarding university majors, career pathways, and employment opportunities, ultimately reducing their employability and career satisfaction (Patton & McMahon, 2021). Consequently, career maturity has become one of the essential developmental outcomes expected during senior secondary education.

Career maturity consists of two interrelated dimensions: career attitudes and career competencies. Career attitudes include students' involvement in career planning, commitment to occupational choices, independence in career decision-making, and orientation toward future employment. Career competencies involve self-appraisal, occupational knowledge, career planning skills, goal selection, and problem-solving abilities related to career decisions (Super, 1990; Sharf, 2016). These dimensions indicate that career maturity requires both psychological readiness and sufficient knowledge to support informed career choices.

Despite its importance, empirical studies indicate that many adolescents have not yet achieved satisfactory levels of career maturity. International evidence suggests that a considerable proportion of high school students remain uncertain about future educational and occupational choices because of limited career information, inadequate self-understanding, and insufficient career planning skills (Brown & Lent, 2020; Hirschi, 2018). Similar findings have been reported in Indonesia, where numerous senior high school students continue to experience confusion regarding university majors, occupational aspirations, and career planning due to inadequate guidance services and limited opportunities for career exploration (Supriatna, 2020; Yusuf & Nurihsan, 2019).

Preliminary observations conducted at SMA BOPKRI 1 Yogyakarta revealed comparable conditions. School counseling records and informal interviews indicated that many students remained uncertain about their educational and occupational futures. Several students demonstrated limited understanding of their interests, talents, and personal strengths, while others lacked confidence in selecting university majors or occupations after graduation. Most students relied primarily on parental expectations or peer influence rather than systematic self-exploration when making career decisions. These findings suggest that many students

have not yet developed the level of career maturity expected during late adolescence.

School counselors play a strategic role in addressing this issue through comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019), comprehensive counseling services should facilitate students' academic, personal-social, and career development simultaneously. Among various counseling services, group guidance has been widely recognized as an effective preventive intervention because it encourages active participation, peer interaction, collaborative learning, and mutual support among students (Corey et al., 2018). Through group dynamics, students are provided opportunities to exchange experiences, discuss career aspirations, and develop greater confidence regarding future educational and occupational decisions.

To enhance the effectiveness of group guidance, experiential learning techniques are highly recommended. One of the most effective techniques is role play, which allows students to simulate realistic situations while practicing communication, decision-making, problem-solving, and interpersonal interaction within a structured environment (Joyce et al., 2015). Rather than passively receiving career information, students actively experience situations resembling real career decision-making processes, enabling them to evaluate alternatives, reflect upon consequences, and develop greater confidence in making career choices (Kolb, 2015). Experiential learning through role play therefore facilitates deeper understanding because knowledge is constructed through direct experience and reflective practice.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that career interventions contribute positively to students' career development. Brown and Lent (2020) reported that structured career counseling significantly improves career decision-making self-efficacy and career adaptability. Likewise, Hirschi (2018) found that experiential career interventions strengthen vocational identity and career planning among adolescents. However, empirical research specifically examining group guidance using role play techniques to improve career maturity among Indonesian senior high school students remains relatively limited. Most previous studies have focused primarily on career information services or individual counseling without integrating experiential group learning through structured role-playing activities.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of group guidance using role play techniques in improving the career maturity of students at SMA BOPKRI 1 Yogyakarta. This study is expected to contribute theoretically by extending the literature on experiential career guidance within secondary education and practically by providing school counselors with an evidence-based intervention that enhances students' career maturity through active participation, collaborative learning, and reflective experience.

METHOD

This study employed a Guidance and Counseling Action Research (GCAR) design using a quantitative approach. The research followed the spiral action research model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), consisting of four sequential stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The intervention was implemented over two action cycles, with each cycle designed to improve the effectiveness of group guidance services in enhancing students' career maturity. During the planning stage, the researcher prepared the Group Guidance Service Plan (GGSP), developed structured role-play scenarios, and designed evaluation instruments. The action stage involved the implementation of group guidance

sessions consisting of group formation, transition, core activities through role-play simulations, and termination. Simultaneously, observations were conducted to monitor students' participation, behavioral changes, and engagement throughout the intervention, while reflections at the end of each cycle were used to evaluate outcomes and refine the subsequent cycle (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The participants consisted of 12 eleventh-grade students (seven males and five females) from SMA BOPKRI 1 Yogyakarta, selected through purposive sampling based on their low career maturity scores obtained from the pretest (Sugiyono, 2019). Career maturity was measured using a 72-item Career Maturity Questionnaire developed according to Super's Career Maturity Theory (Super, 1990), covering six dimensions: career planning, career exploration, decision-making knowledge, world-of-work information, knowledge of occupational groups, and career decision realization. Responses were rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Additional data were collected through observation sheets, interviews, and process evaluation forms to document students' learning experiences during the intervention. Instrument reliability was examined using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.709, indicating acceptable internal consistency (Bland & Altman, 1997; Taber, 2018). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to compare pretest and posttest mean scores across the two cycles, while the effectiveness of the intervention was further examined using the Spearman's Rank Correlation Test, considering the relatively small sample size (Field, 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study began with a preliminary assessment to identify students with low levels of career maturity before the implementation of the group guidance intervention using role-play techniques. A total of 70 eleventh-grade students completed the Career Maturity Questionnaire, and the 12 students with the lowest scores were purposively selected as research participants. The pretest results revealed that participants' scores ranged from 70 to 104, indicating that they had not yet achieved adequate readiness for career planning and decision-making. According to Super's career development theory, adolescents at the exploration stage are expected to begin developing realistic self-concepts, explore occupational alternatives, and formulate future career plans (Super, 1990). The relatively low scores therefore indicate that these developmental tasks had not been fully accomplished, highlighting the need for systematic career guidance interventions (Sharf, 2016; Brown & Lent, 2020).

Table 1.
Participants with the Lowest Career Maturity Scores

No.	Student Code	Score
1	XI-F6 (9)	70
2	XI-F8 (13)	79
3	XI-F7 (31)	96
4	XI-F8 (29)	96
5	XI-F7 (49)	97
6	XI-F7 (30)	99

No.	Student Code	Score
7	XI-F6 (25)	100
8	XI-F8 (12)	101
9	XI-F6 (14)	102
10	XI-F8 (1)	103
11	XI-F8 (48)	103
12	XI-F6 (10)	104

The descriptive analysis further confirmed that the participants' overall career maturity remained in the low category, with a mean score of 95.83, reinforcing the necessity of intervention through structured group guidance activities.

Table 2.
Pretest Career Maturity Scores

Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Category
95.83	70	104	Low

The first action cycle produced a substantial improvement in students' career maturity. As presented in Table 3, the mean score increased from 95.83 at the pretest stage to 149.33 following the first cycle of group guidance using role-play techniques. Every participant demonstrated higher posttest scores, suggesting that the intervention successfully promoted career awareness, career exploration, and confidence in career decision-making. These findings support experiential learning theory, which argues that students acquire deeper understanding through direct participation and reflective experiences rather than passive instruction (Kolb, 2015). Likewise, role play encourages students to experience realistic career situations, thereby strengthening vocational identity and career decision-making skills (Joyce et al., 2015).

Table 3.
Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Scores (Cycle I)

Student	Pretest	Posttest Cycle I
XI-F6 (9)	70	153
XI-F8 (13)	79	166
XI-F7 (31)	96	140
XI-F8 (29)	96	155
XI-F7 (49)	97	146
XI-F7 (30)	99	147
XI-F6 (25)	100	147
XI-F8 (12)	101	150
XI-F6 (14)	102	152
XI-F8 (1)	103	143
XI-F8 (48)	103	143
XI-F6 (10)	104	150
Mean	**95.83**	**149.33**

The statistical analysis confirmed that this increase was highly significant ($p < .001$), demonstrating that the intervention effectively enhanced students' career maturity during the first cycle.

Table 4.
Effectiveness Test (Cycle I)

Stage	Mean	p-value
Pretest	95.83	< .001
Posttest Cycle I	149.33	< .001

Although the quantitative findings were encouraging, classroom observations indicated that several participants remained dependent on written scripts during role-play activities and experienced difficulty expressing characters naturally. Consequently, reflective evaluation after Cycle I resulted in several modifications for Cycle II, including deeper character exploration, structured reflection sessions, and relocation of activities to a quieter classroom environment. These improvements are consistent with the action research framework proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), which emphasizes continuous refinement through iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection.

Following these revisions, students' career maturity continued to improve during Cycle II. As shown in Table 5, the mean score increased further to 163.25, representing an overall improvement of 67.42 points from the baseline measurement. Although two participants demonstrated slight decreases during the second cycle, the overall group trend remained strongly positive. These minor fluctuations are likely attributable to individual psychological conditions or situational factors unrelated to the intervention itself.

Table 5.
Comparison of Pretest, Posttest Cycle I, and Posttest Cycle II

Student	Pretest	Cycle I	Cycle II
XI-F6 (9)	70	153	149
XI-F8 (13)	79	166	138
XI-F7 (31)	96	140	145
XI-F8 (29)	96	155	198
XI-F7 (49)	97	146	155
XI-F7 (30)	99	147	155
XI-F6 (25)	100	147	193
XI-F8 (12)	101	150	155
XI-F6 (14)	102	152	146
XI-F8 (1)	103	143	192
XI-F8 (48)	103	143	145
XI-F6 (10)	104	150	188
Mean	**95.83**	**149.33**	**163.25**

Prior to hypothesis testing, normality testing indicated that all datasets were normally distributed ($p > .05$). Nevertheless, because the sample consisted of only 12 participants, the effectiveness of the intervention was evaluated using Spearman's Rank Correlation, which is

considered more robust for small sample sizes (Field, 2022).

Table 6.
Normality Test

Variable	p-value
Pretest	0.204
Posttest Cycle I	0.424
Posttest Cycle II	0.935

The overall statistical findings demonstrated consistent improvements throughout the intervention. Every comparison between the pretest and posttest scores yielded statistically significant differences (**p < .001**), indicating that the observed improvements were unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Table 7.
Summary of Career Maturity Improvement

Measurement	Mean	p-value
Pretest	95.83	< .001
Posttest Cycle I	149.33	< .001
Posttest Cycle II	163.25	< .001

These findings reinforce Super's (1990) proposition that career maturity develops progressively through experiences that encourage self-exploration, career planning, and vocational decision-making. The role-play technique provided students with opportunities to experience authentic career situations, evaluate alternatives, communicate ideas, and reflect on the consequences of career choices. Such experiential learning strengthens both the attitudinal and competency dimensions of career maturity (Kolb, 2015; Sharf, 2016).

The present findings are also consistent with previous studies demonstrating that experiential career guidance interventions significantly improve students' career readiness (Brown & Lent, 2020; Hirschi, 2018). Compared with earlier Indonesian studies employing conventional career guidance or one-group pretest–posttest designs, the current study offers additional evidence that Guidance and Counseling Action Research (GCAR) enables continuous improvement through reflective cycles. Rather than merely demonstrating statistical effectiveness, the two-cycle design facilitated refinement of the intervention process, including improved role immersion, deeper reflective discussions, and a more supportive learning environment. These refinements likely explain the substantial increase observed during the second cycle.

Overall, the findings suggest that group guidance using role-play techniques is an effective intervention for improving career maturity among senior high school students. Beyond producing statistically significant gains, the intervention enhanced students' confidence, self-awareness, career exploration, and decision-making readiness. Consequently, this study contributes practical evidence supporting the integration of experiential learning strategies into comprehensive school guidance and counseling programs, particularly for assisting adolescents in preparing for future educational and occupational transitions (ASCA, 2019; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that group guidance using role-play techniques effectively improves the career maturity of senior high school students. Following two cycles of Guidance and Counseling Action Research, participants showed a substantial increase in career maturity scores, from a mean of 95.83 at the pretest stage to 149.33 after the first cycle and 163.25 after the second cycle, with all improvements reaching statistical significance ($p < .001$). These findings indicate that experiential learning through structured role-play activities enables students to strengthen career planning, career exploration, self-understanding, and career decision-making competencies.

The iterative implementation of action research also revealed that continuous reflection and refinement of counseling practices enhanced the effectiveness of the intervention. Improvements introduced during the second cycle, including deeper role exploration, structured reflection, and a more conducive learning environment, contributed to greater student participation and more meaningful learning experiences. Accordingly, group guidance integrating role-play techniques can be recommended as an evidence-based counseling strategy for promoting career maturity among senior high school students. Future studies are encouraged to employ larger samples, control groups, and longer follow-up periods to further examine the long-term effectiveness and generalizability of this intervention across diverse educational settings..

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