

# Integrating reality counseling with the creative arts as a counselor's professional practice: A review literature

Herman Titing

Department of Christian Guidance and Counseling, Universitas Agama Kristen Negeri Toraja, Toraja, Indonesia  
[hermantiting@gmail.com](mailto:hermantiting@gmail.com)

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history

Received: January 28, 2023

Revised: April 7, 2023

Accepted: June 1, 2023

### Keywords

Creativity

Creative art

Reality counseling

WDEP system

## ABSTRACT

Counselor creativity is one aspect that needs to be strengthened by counselors in providing counseling services. The creativity of this counselor can encourage the emergence of meaningful counseling services and significantly impact changes in counselee behavior. This article explains the integration of reality counseling with the creative arts. This article is a structured and systematic literature review of the development of ideas and reality counseling research related to the creative arts. This article is an analysis of 51 articles published from 2013 to 2022. In addition, four scientific articles directly relate to combining creative arts and reality counseling. A study of these articles found that creative arts can increase the effectiveness of reality counseling with the WDEP (wants, doing, evaluation, planning) system pattern. Creative arts supporting the efficacy of the WDEP system pattern of reality counseling are drawings, puppets, metaphors, and sand trays. The combination of reality counseling by utilizing creative arts such as drawing, puppets, metaphors, and sand trays produces operational guidelines for counselors consisting of four counseling sessions. Integrating creative arts into reality counseling is a form of professionalism for counselors in counseling services. Operating procedures for combining reality counseling with creative arts are discussed in this article. The findings of this study provide recommendations for further research to identify the effectiveness of counseling empirically in overcoming specific problems in counsees.

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## 1. Introduction

Counseling is one of the services that impact the achievement of educational goals. Several studies have shown a strong relationship between counseling services and the achievement of educational goals (Collins & O'Rourke, 2010). Counseling services also support school character education programs, where counseling services help encourage student character development at school (Bassar & Hasanah, 2020; Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016). Students through counseling services also demand a dimension of counselor creativity so that students can take many lessons from counseling services at school (Farozin et al., 2020). Based on the explanation above, it provides an important point that creativity is an essential element in the effectiveness of counseling services (Bradley et al., 2013). Creativity is the answer for society, especially school counselors, to the increasingly complex problems experienced by counsees (Lawrence et al., 2015). Research recommends training counselors on creativity in counseling services (Buser et al., 2011; Smith, 2011). Counselors who can apply elements of creativity to themselves will get two advantages, namely, the counselor appreciates the principle of a creative process and learns about creative efforts in counseling (Gladding, 2016).

**Innovative counseling introduces new strategies for counselors when looking for different** ways according to the needs and characteristics of the counselee's problems (N. L. Davis & Voirin, 2016). Counselors can use various media, including creative arts, as a tool to innovate counseling services (Alhadi et al., 2016). The modalities used by counselors include music, visual arts, writing, imagery, and so on (Gladding, 1992, 2011, 2016). Counselors conduct counseling services differently to motivate counsees to join counseling services. In connection with these innovative ways of counseling, the advantage is that the counselee becomes more focused on counseling activities (Gladding, 2016). Innovation in counseling services also facilitates the development of problems in the current era of globalization, where the issues of counsees today are becoming more complex.

One form of counselor creativity is optimizing elements of creative art in counseling services. Creativity and the creative arts are integral to counseling services (Gladding, 2011). Almost everyone knows the concept of art, and this art can provide well-being for them (Rosen & Atkins, 2014). Art is an ideal medium for counselors who support counseling interventions because the material is always available around counselors and counsees (Chibbaro & Camacho, 2011). With the use of creative arts, it can also facilitate counsees who have difficulty expressing their problems verbally (Gladding, 1992, 2016). Therefore, the artistic dimension is one of the components that can support the effectiveness of the counseling service itself. Counselors can provide counseling services using a variety of approaches, from psychoanalytic to postmodern counseling. The counseling approach guides the counselor in determining the point of view of the counselee's problems. One of the counseling approaches that help counselors facilitate counsees out of their problems is reality counseling. Counselors who use reality counseling help clients become more aware of their core motivational drives, which include survival, belonging and love, power, freedom, and pleasure (Corey, 2018; Wubbolding, 2016).

Counselors use reality counseling to help counsees get out of their problems. Counselors can use reality counseling to increase multiple intelligence and motivational achievement in students in Indonesia and Malaysia who experience internet use disorders (Shafie et al., 2019). Counselors can also use reality counseling to reduce student bullying behavior (Sari et al., 2020). In addition, counselors can also use reality group counseling to reduce academic procrastination and student self-regulation (Berber Çelik & Odacı, 2018; Hajhosseini et al., 2017). The results of the research above show that reality counseling can be a strategy of choice for counselors to help counsees get out of their problems. However, several technical obstacles to the implementation of reality counseling also require answers so that counseling results are maximized and significantly impact changes in counselee behavior. One of the technical problems that arise is the counselee's lack of openness in expressing his problems or the counselee's difficulty in uncovering the problems that exist in him (Gainau, 2012). Moreover, counselors who use reality counseling require active collaboration between counselors and counsees to achieve goals (Corey, 2018; Wubbolding, 2016). Student's difficulties in expressing complaints and problems are often related to introverted characters, and Indonesian culture significantly influences this condition (Hasan et al., 2018).

Counselors need solutions when they meet counsees who have difficulty expressing their problems. This solution has the goal that the implementation of counseling can significantly impact changes in counselee behavior. One element that can overcome this problem is integrating creative arts into counseling. The counselee conveys issues and complaints in specific creative arts, and the counselor can elaborate on the creative art results compiled by the counselee (Gladding, 2011, 2016; Saputra & Sofiana, 2017). Counselors have not fully welcomed recommendations for reality counseling innovation by utilizing creative arts. So, there are still technical constraints that can reduce the effectiveness of reality counseling. This article describes the integration pattern of reality counseling with creative arts. This article uses the theory and results of previous research to formulate a pattern of integration of reality counseling and creative arts so that this article can explain the integration of reality counseling and creative arts, which is a reference for other researchers to make more in-depth identification of the integration of reality counseling and creative arts.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research design

This study aims to describe the pattern of reality counseling services assisted by creative arts. A literature review is the design chosen in this study. Previous research results were identified and utilized through a literature review design to describe patterns or models of creative arts-assisted reality counseling.

### 2.2. Participants

This article was compiled with a systematic review of articles on combining reality counseling with the creative arts published between 2013-2022. The results found that 51 articles were published from 2012 to 2023. Of the 51 articles, four were selected with the criteria for the counseling theme, a combination of reality counseling and creative arts. Selected articles are analyzed independently by applying strict procedures to determine the relevance of the articles to the themes studied.

### 2.3. Data collection tools

The data in this study are scientific articles compiled by search engines. The articles used in this study were selected through Taylor and Francis publishing search engines (<https://www.tandfonline.com/>), Wiley Online (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/>), SAGE Publication (<https://journals.sagepub.com/>), and other search engines. The keywords used in these search engines are reality counseling, creative arts, and art reality therapy.

### 2.4. Research procedure

This research aims to describe the pattern of reality counseling services assisted by creative arts through several procedures. Our first step is formulating research objectives. In the third step, we collect several scientific articles filtered through the specified search engine. After the scientific articles have been collected, the next step is to reduce the articles by looking at the abstract and full paper. Finally, the articles that have been selected are identified by synthesizing the content of the articles to answer the pattern or model of creative arts-assisted reality counseling.

### 2.5. Data analysis

Research using literature reviews through the stages of analysis, starting from data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. Data was reduced by selecting the articles that best fit the research objectives—the results of a literature review of various scientific research articles present data. Furthermore, the conclusion synthesizes several contents, including research findings from selected scientific articles. The implementation pattern of reality counseling assisted by creative arts was obtained through several stages of data analysis.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Exposure to article data used as the basis for research findings is tabulated in table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Summary of research article data

Source	Type	Design	Instrument	N	Results	Implication
1	ES	QL	I	18	Counselors can overcome children's problems by implementing reality counseling based on art therapy	Integration between reality counseling and art therapy
2	ES	QL	I	8	Counselors can integrate reality counseling with play therapy to deal with children's problems	Integration between reality counseling and art therapy
3	NES	QL	N/A	N/A	Counselors can use reality counseling combined with the metaphor to deal with counselee sadness	Integration between reality counseling and art therapy
4	NES	QL	N/A	N/A	Counselors can use reality counseling combined with the metaphor to deal with counselee sadness	Integration between reality counseling and art therapy

In this study, type of research is empirical study (ES) and non-empirical study (NES). Research design is qualitative method (QL), quantitative method (QT), and mixed method (MM). Instrument of research is questionnaire (Q), interview (I), test score (T), categorization (C), observation (O), and survey (S). If there is no information, we will mention it not available (NA).

The study results revealed that the combination of counseling with creative arts has an advantage in the success of the counseling service itself. The combination of reality counseling by utilizing creative arts such as drawing, puppets, metaphors, and sand trays produces operational guidelines for counselors consisting of four specific counseling meetings. At the first meeting, the counselor and counselee discuss wants, needs, and perceptions. At the second meeting, they discussed the direction and doing. At the third meeting, they discussed self-evaluation. The fourth stage discusses planning that meets SAMIC3 aspects (simple, attainable, measurable, immediate, involved, controlled by the planner, committed to, and consistently done).

Creative arts integrated into reality counseling seek to meet the needs of people in Indonesia who tend to close themselves off when they have problems. They convey their complaints and problems with simple sentences (Ginting, 2018). Evidence that the Indonesian people like to close themselves is the results of research showing that students who do not always shut down have worse speaking skills than students who do not shut down (Samand et al., 2019). Some want to express their complaints and problems in different conditions but have difficulty conveying them verbally (Gladding, 2011, 2016). These conditions certainly become obstacles for counselors in implementing reality counseling. Counsees who close themselves to their problems hurt the counseling services' effectiveness.

What's more, active collaboration between counselor and counselee in reality counseling significantly impacts the success of counseling. Reality counseling emphasizes patterns of supportive or therapeutic relationships as the basis for the effectiveness of counseling services (Corey, 2018). On this basis, the counselee's active participation is also an important element that determines the success of counseling services. It will be an obstacle if the counselee does not work optimally in counseling, especially in conveying problems and learning to strengthen himself to design the best plan to get out of his problem (Sharf, 2012). Therefore, a conducive alliance between counselor and counselee needs to be built by counselors who have a reality counseling orientation. Counsees who have difficulty expressing their problems verbally can express their issues in certain creative arts. For example, students can express complaints and problems that are difficult to express through music (Armstrong & Ricard, 2016; Saputra, 2017; Situmorang, 2018). In addition, counsees can also express problems and complaints that are difficult to express through visual arts (Alhadi & Saputra, 2017; Chibbaro & Camacho, 2011). Counselors can also use poetry as a medium to help counsees get out of problems that burden counsees (Mazza & Hayton, 2013; McNichols & Witt, 2018). They can choose creative art to represent their current condition, so they try to relieve the tension related to their problems.

The counselee's overflowing with problems in certain creative arts is one way to understand his subconscious (Perryman et al., 2015). Through creating art in counseling, counsees will increase their awareness of self-problems, stress and traumatic experiences, and their cognitive abilities (Dilawari, Kanchan; Tripathi, 2014). The counselee will try to create symbols for his subconscious, and these symbols will be the material for discussion with the counselor (Bronstein, 2015; Levine, 2011). So, they can slowly construct the problems they are experiencing and have a behavioral plan to get out of the problem. The counselee's awareness of the problems latent in the counselee is important because a reality-oriented counseling counselor needs to identify irresponsible behavior in the counselee. Then the counselor tries to encourage the counselee towards responsible behavior to achieve his basic psychological needs (Corey, 2018; Wubbolding, 2016).

Art is an important variable supporting the success of reality counseling services. The study's results also prove that counseling involving art can effectively help counsees escape various life problems (Slayton et al., 2010; Wahlbeck et al., 2020). The use of art in counseling encourages the counselee's engagement in counseling sessions so that the counselee's active participation supports the success of the counseling service itself (Ziff et al., 2012). Moreover, the application of reality counseling by the counselor requires the counselee's active participation in counseling services (Corey, 2018; Sharf, 2012; Wubbolding, 2016). The combination of counseling

with creative arts provides an advantage for the success of the counseling service itself. The advantages of counselors using creative arts in counseling include making activities more enjoyable, increasing collegial relationships, improving communication, helping counsees express themselves in various ways, and encouraging counsees to take more meaning from counseling (Gladding, 2016). These advantages provide recommendations for school counselors to maximize creative arts as a medium for counseling services. It is hoped that combining creative arts and counseling can provide a different and artistic color to counseling services.

Counselor creativity is a requirement to maximize the use of art in counseling. All counseling that maximizes creativity encourages counselors to dedicate art, creativity, and aesthetic experiences to enhance human well-being (Rosen & Atkins, 2014). Creativity itself is often defined as an experience that involves two main things, namely originality, and functionality (Gladding, 2016). The originality here means that how counselors provide counseling services have never been done before. In addition, counselors create new ways that others may not have considered. While functionality means that the counseling methods carried out by the counselor function optimally and significantly, impacting changes in the counselee's behavior.

Reality counseling is a counseling model developed by Glasser. In the 1980s, Glasser added control proteins as a theoretical basis for real practice. Because Glasser was interested in control theory, he read William Powers' book *Behavior: The Control of Perception* (Corey, 2018). Powers' theory of how the brain functions as a control system provides the theoretical basis for Reality Counseling. In 1996, Glasser changed the name of the theory underlying Reality Counseling from control therapy to Choice Theory, whose most basic concept is "we can control only our behavior" (Corey, 2018). Based on the perspective of reality counseling, humans have five basic needs that simultaneously exist in human life. The five basic human needs are love and belonging, power, freedom, fun, and survival (Corey, 2018; Mabeus & Rowland, 2016; Sharf, 2012). Reality counseling aims to help the counselee responsibly achieve his basic needs. Behaving responsibly is crucial for a child's development to achieve a "success identity." The counselor works in the counseling session to express empathy for the counselee's experience while identifying ways the counselee fulfills his five basic needs. The counselor can provide the counselee with a phenomenological experience that can enhance the relationship and security that the counselee feels with the counselor when the counselee's problems and basic needs are explored (Portrie-Bethke, 2011).

Reality counseling has operational procedures to guide counselors in counseling interventions, namely the WDEP system. W is a representation of wants, needs, and perceptions. D is a representation of direction and doing. E is a representation of self-evaluation. At the same time, P represents planning (Corey, 2018; Sharf, 2012). This reality counseling stage is a counselor strategy for changes in the counselee. Counselors who use a reality counseling perspective can combine operational procedures from reality counseling, namely the WDEP system, with creative arts. This aims to facilitate counsees who have difficulty interacting with counselors in verbal form so that they can express it in certain forms of creative art (Portrie-Bethke, 2011). Combining reality counseling with creative arts such as drawing, puppets, metaphors, and sand trays produces operational guidelines for counselors consisting of four specific counseling sessions (E. S. Davis et al., 2015, 2018; Goldberg & Stephenson, 2016).

At the first meeting, the counselor and counselee discuss wants, needs, and perceptions. Counselors with a reality counseling perspective help counsees find their desires and hopes (Corey, 2018). It is useful for counsees to find out what they expect and wants from the counselor and themselves. The wishes and expectations of the counselee in the counseling session are related to the fulfillment of the five basic human needs. Some counsees have difficulty conveying their wishes and hope when experiencing certain situations. Therefore, the counselee can express it in creative arts as a representation of wishes and hopes that are difficult to express (Portrie-Bethke, 2011). Counselors can use creative arts such as drawing, puppets, metaphors, and sand trays to express the wishes and expectations of counsees when experiencing certain problems (E. S. Davis et al., 2015, 2018; Goldberg & Stephenson, 2016).

Counselors can use creative art in the form of drawing to support the identification of the counselee's wishes and hope when experiencing certain problems. Drawing activity itself is a type of visual art that has the potential and opportunity to increase the effectiveness of counseling services

(Chibbaro & Camacho, 2011; Samadzadeh et al., 2013; Whisenhunt & Kress, 2013). Drawing allows the counselee to express desires and hopes that cannot be expressed verbally. In addition, drawing activities in counseling can reveal secret conflicts in the counselee's internal world in a unique, real, and powerful way (Gladding, 2016). Through drawing activities, counsees can be involved in visual reality counseling to continuously evaluate and process desires, choices, and new behavioral choices (E. S. Davis et al., 2015).

Counselors can also use puppets as a tool to facilitate counsees to express their wishes and hope when experiencing certain problems. Puppets are compatible counseling media for children. Using puppets gives children many opportunities to externalize feelings, thoughts or experiences that are difficult to express and can symbolize them uniquely (E. S. Davis et al., 2015; Ray et al., 2013). The children are also used to using puppets as their daily game tools, so the counseling process becomes more fun. Puppets can be used as a creative way to examine aspects of reality counseling, such as total behavior and how these four components can influence a child's choices (E. S. Davis et al., 2015).

The use of sand trays is a way of expressive and projective counseling that involves processing personal problems through special materials as a counselee's media to express his problems in the nonverbal form (Stark & Frels, 2014). Typical materials that support using sand trays include trays, sand, and various miniatures such as people, animals, buildings, vehicles, fences, and natural objects that combine fantasy and reality components (Homeyer & Sweeney, 2016). In using sand trays in reality counseling, children are asked to create scenes on the sand tray using miniatures that express the counselee's internal world. Sand trays can be used to explore the child's quality world and to process how the counselee fulfills his basic needs.

Metaphor is one of the creative arts which is an integral part of reality counseling (Rapport, 2019; Wubbolding, 2016). Metaphor is also a modality in the creative arts that supports the success of reality counseling services. Metaphor is the counselee's everyday language to describe themselves, other people, or certain difficult situations (Goldberg & Stephenson, 2016). Usually, counsees express themselves, others, or certain situations in the abstract using metaphors. It is important for the counselor to understand the abstract and symbolic nature of the counselee's language and appreciate that metaphors are rich in clues about the counselee's emotional experiences (Goldberg & Stephenson, 2016). Thus, these instructions become material for discussion when wanting to understand the counselee's hopes and desires in certain difficult situations.

At the second meeting, they discussed the direction and doing. At the beginning of counseling, it is important to discuss with the counselee the overall direction of their life as symbolized by their chosen creative art. The results of the counselee's creative art creations become material for discussion for the counselor and the counselee to explore the counselee's problems. This exploration is a precursor to further evaluating whether it is the desired direction. The counselor asks specifically what the counselee is doing. Perspective in reality counseling, the root of the counselee's problem stems from his behavior (doing), not his feelings (Corey, 2018; Wubbolding, 2016).

At the third meeting, they discussed self-evaluation. The counselor's responses include asking whether what the counselee is doing can help him get out of trouble or vice versa. The counselor asks the counselee whether his behavior is based on the belief that it is good for him. The counselor's function is not to judge the correct or wrong of the counselee's behavior but to guide the counselee to assess his current behavior (Corey, 2018; Wubbolding, 2016). At this third meeting, the counselor tries to carry out various confrontations so that the counselee can understand that his current behavior is irresponsible and cannot achieve the counselee's goals and expectations.

The fourth stage is discussing planning. The counselee concentrates on making plans to change behavior. Plans emphasize the actions to be taken, not the behaviors to be eliminated. The counselee also controls the plan, which is sometimes stated as a written contract that mentions accountable alternatives. The counselee is then asked to commit to the action plan. A good plan is a plan that meets the SAMIC3 components, namely simple, attainable, measurable, immediate, involved, controlled by the planner, committed to, and consistently done (Corey, 2018; Sharf, 2012; Wubbolding, 2016).

The findings of this model of integrating reality counseling with creative arts can be a reference for counselors to help counsees with unique characteristics, such as difficulty expressing

their problems verbally. Counselors need to pay attention to the characteristics of the problem and the counselee's personality when using certain creative arts to support the success of reality counseling. The findings in this article require further research that can empirically identify the effectiveness of creative arts-based reality counseling in overcoming certain problems in students.

#### 4. Conclusion

Creativity is an important element for counselors to carry out innovative counseling services. One form of counselor creativity is trying to optimize creative arts to support the success of counseling services. One indicator of successful counseling services is achieving a change in behavior following the counselee's goals. Counselors can combine creative arts with one of the counseling approaches, namely reality counseling to increase the success of counseling services. Some creative art forms supporting reality counseling are drawings, puppets, metaphors, and sand trays. This creative art can strengthen the operational procedures for reality counseling, namely the WDEP system, to strengthen the counselee's involvement and openness in counseling services. The combination pattern of reality counseling with creative arts can be a reference for counselors to apply innovative reality counseling services in helping counsees get out of their problems. In addition, further research can empirically identify the influence of creative arts-based reality counseling to address certain problems of counsees.

#### Acknowledgment

We thank Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Toraja Indonesia, which has provided moral and material support to publish this scientific article.

#### Declarations

- Author contribution** : Herman Titing, designing the research publication, preparing the data, focusing the research, exploring research data, compiling scientific articles, and data analysis.
- Funding statement** : Not available for this paper.
- Conflict of interest** : The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.
- Additional information** : No additional information is available for this paper.

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