



“EXPLORING THE MEANING OF STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES IN GROUP COUNSELING USING KETOSZONE MEDIA (STRESS TOLERANCE SKILLS ZONE)

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Abstrak

This reserach aims to describe the meaning of the experiences of eleventh-grade high school students in participating in group guidance using the "Ketoszone" (Stress Tolerance Skills Zone) media. This study is a qualitative descriptive study with a case study method. Data collection techniques used interviews, documentation, and observation. The informants of this study were eleventh-grade high school students who participated in group guidance services. The data analysis technique used was qualitative descriptive with the Miles and Huberman method. Regarding the validity of the documentation data used: Checking the validity of the data through research diligence, reobservation, source triangulation and data triangulation. Based on the results of the data analysis of this study, it is known that the implementation of group guidance with interactive and fun media helps students in recognizing the stress conditions they experience and feel emotional relief. This encourages students to be more aware of and deal with stress, both mild and severe, even though previously they did not fully understand or realize the condition. It is recommended that guidance and counseling teachers can apply and develop the Ketoszone media more widely in group guidance services at school to increase the effectiveness of guidance in helping manage stress faced by students. For further research, it is hoped that the use of ketoszone media can be explored at different educational levels or age groups.

Kata kunci: group guidance; stress tolerance; high school students

1. Introduction

In an era of globalization marked by the rapid advancement of science and technology, education plays a crucial role in the effort to create a competent generation. Education influences the nation's progress in improving the quality of human resources. This aligns with the statement by Nashruddin & Padil (2021) that education plays a crucial role in the current era because without it, the process of transformation and actualization of modern knowledge will be difficult to realize. One crucial component of education that plays a role in actualizing students' potential in the school environment is guidance and counseling services that support optimal student growth and development.

Providing good guidance and counseling services is a factor in the success of educational activities. Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 111 of 2014 explains that guidance and counseling services are systematic, objective, logical, and sustainable efforts carried out by counselors/guidance and counseling teachers to facilitate students' development in achieving independence in their lives. One of the guidance and counseling services provided to students is group guidance. Group guidance aims to help students develop optimally through social interaction in a directed and structured group setting. In addition to developing social skills, the goal of group guidance is to encourage the development of feelings, thoughts, perceptions, insights, and attitudes that support the realization of more effective behavior (Hartanti, 2022). Another purpose of group guidance services is to be used as an effort to help someone manage the stress they experience, including activities providing information on various matters related to adolescent stress. Therefore, group guidance techniques are techniques that can be used to help students manage stress (Armila, 2020).

Stress can occur at any age with varying causes (Kaisar Gusti et al., 2023). High school students also face this stress because at this stage, they experience numerous demands in both academic and non-academic areas. Sources of stress for students are diverse, for example, at school, students feel pressured to complete assigned assignments and follow established rules (Desmita, 2009). Student responses to academic stress also vary, encompassing cognitive aspects (such as low self-confidence, fear of failure, difficulty concentrating, anxiety about the future, and intrusive thoughts), behavioral (e.g., social withdrawal, disturbed sleep and eating patterns, and excessive crying), physical (including sweating, heart palpitations, headaches, decreased immunity, nausea, and stomachaches), and affective (such as anxiety, irritability, sadness, and fear) (Rohmatillah & Kholifah, 2021).

Based on observations conducted at a public high school in Kepanjen District, many students still experience stress and have difficulty coping. This is indicated by the presence of symptoms that point to academic stress in students, such as discomfort, anxiety, and complaining when faced with a constant stream of assignments. Academic stress in children arises when expectations for academic achievement increase, whether from parents, teachers, or peers. These expectations often do not match their abilities (Shahmohammadi, 2011 in Taufik et al., 2013).

This research is important because high school students are in the transition phase from adolescence to adulthood. They face academic pressures, social demands, and the search for identity. If they cannot tolerate stress, students are susceptible to emotional disorders, anxiety, and even depression. Poorly managed stress can reduce concentration, motivation, and academic performance. In the long term, stress also impacts students' mental health. Having stress tolerance allows students to cope with pressure more calmly and think clearly when making decisions. This also has the potential to positively impact academic achievement, social relationships, and self-confidence.

Not all students possess stress tolerance skills, therefore, it is crucial for counselors/guidance teachers to provide group guidance services that provide a more engaging and less monotonous learning atmosphere. This aligns with Nurrita's (2018) statement that learning media is a tool that can be used to assist the learning process, ensuring clarity of meaning and achieving learning objectives effectively and efficiently. This study aims to describe the meaning of students' experiences participating in group guidance using KETOSZONE.

2. Method

This research is a qualitative descriptive research with a case study research design. In this study, the researcher is the key instrument for collecting data. The stages of data collection include interviews, observations, and documentation. The main data source in this study is 6 students of grade XI high school who participated in group guidance. The data analysis technique in this study uses the Miles and Huberman method, namely: (1) collecting data; (2) reducing data; (3) categorizing data into each research focus; and (4) concluding the data. Documentation used: Checking the validity of data through research diligence, re-observation, source triangulation and data triangulation.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Result Students' Perceptions and Understanding of the KETOSZONE Media

The implementation of group counseling services using the KETOSZONE media (Stress Tolerance Skills Zone) provided students with a new experience in understanding the material interactively. In general, KETOSZONE is not merely a game, but serves as a medium for recognizing stress and learning how to respond to it in a more positive manner. Based on interviews with six informants—AM, DR, OZ, NZ, SR, and AV—regarding their understanding of the KETOSZONE media, students expressed that the format, which is not as monotonous as typical lessons, made the activity more enjoyable and less stressful. The

students' statements in the interviews regarding their understanding of the KETOSZONE media are as follows:

"The KETOSZONE media talks about how we can manage feelings of stress." (DR, interview, 2025).

"It's a game-based media, and the cards talk about stress tolerance." (AM, interview, 2025).

"The media used in the session was fun and easy to understand while playing it." (OZ, interview, 2025).

"It's a media that discusses skills for managing stress—because I usually still tend to have emotional outbursts." (AV, interview, 2025).

Through the interviews conducted with the six informants, the media was understood by students as a reflective tool that helped them recognize their own stress conditions and how they managed their stress. Students also mentioned that the nonmonotonous format of the media, unlike typical classroom lessons, made the activity more enjoyable and less tense. One participant even stated that they felt a sense of relief (*"plong"*) after participating in the activity and found it easier to express the stress they had previously struggled to communicate, thanks to the KETOSZONE media.

Students' Awareness of Stress and Their Coping Strategies

Stress is a situation of inconsistency or gap between expectations and reality that makes an individual feel pressured. In line with what was stated (Barseli et al., 2017), stress is a pressure that arises from a mismatch between reality and expectations. Stress arises when an individual feels their abilities do not match the excessive demands of the environment, so that this situation is perceived as dangerous, disruptive, or threatening.

The students weren't fully aware that what they were experiencing was a form of stress before participating in group guidance services through KETOSZONE. This was based on interviews with informants NZ and AM, namely:

"Before I joined group counseling, I didn't even know, ma'am. I didn't understand how to tolerate stress, how to deal with it, and I was confused about who to talk to and how to channel it into other things. So, with this group guidance, I have a better understanding of how to manage stress." (Interview, 2025).

On the other hand, some students are already aware of their symptoms, such as insomnia, mood swings, difficulty concentrating, and emotional instability. This is based on interviews with informants DR and AM: yaitu:

"When I feel stressed, it's hard to focus on daily activities, especially studying. Because stress is inherently distracting, my thoughts wander, making it difficult to concentrate and lose my appetite, and sometimes even leading to emotional instability." (Interview, 2025).

This answer shows that when feeling stressed, the individual's response is: (1) physiological response, in the form of a pounding heart, dizziness and trembling, and (2) psychological response, in the form of feelings of fear, difficulty concentrating, anxiety and being easily offended (Bariyyah & Latifah, 2015).

In group guidance some students identified strategies for managing stress:

1. Calm down

Trying to make time for yourself demonstrates the importance of implementing relaxation strategies as an initial step in reducing stress (Sari, 2020). This is based on the results of an interview with informant DR, namely:

"When I have problems and stress, I can calm down first" (Interview, 2025).

2. Talking to other people

Social support is one way for individuals to receive support, thereby reducing symptoms and conditions of stress (Saputri & Surawan, 2025). This is based on the results of an interview with informant DR, namely:

"Telling other people about problems makes me feel better" (Interview, 2025).

3. Doing activities you like

When feeling stressed, it's important to distract yourself from the situation by engaging in activities you enjoy. This can help you feel better, reduce your emotions, and become

an effective coping strategy. This is based on the results of an interview with informant DR, namely:

"When I'm stressed, I can divert my thoughts to activities I enjoy" (Interview, 2025).

4. looking for a solution

Students are not only taught to experience stress, but also to seek solutions, reflecting on it and taking proactive action to mitigate its impact. This is based on an interview with informant NZ:

"I try to improve on the areas I am lacking when my grades drop" (Interview, 2025).

Students' Emotional and Social Responses to the KETOSZONE Media"

Based on interviews conducted with six informants—AM, DR, OZ, NZ, SR, and AV—regarding the meaning of their experiences in participating in group counseling using the KETOSZONE media, the researcher found that all six informants gave similar responses. In general, they stated that the group counseling activity provided an enjoyable experience, created an open space to share stories about stressful situations they had experienced, and helped them gain self-awareness of stress that they had often overlooked. In addition, from both interview results and direct observations during the implementation of the group counseling using the KETOSZONE media, students expressed that the service and the use of a medium like KETOSZONE made them feel more open, comfortable, and closer to their peers. This is reflected in the interview responses from informants DR, AM, and NZ as follows:

"I really enjoyed it—felt comfortable and closer to my friends after joining and playing with the KETOSZONE media, which discusses how to manage stress. It also felt relieving because I could express what I was feeling through the statements on the cards. I got to share my story, learn about my friends' points of view or problems, and hear others' opinions too. Normally, I keep things to myself, but this time I was able to express them here (Interview, June 2025)

In addition, students also realized that each individual has their own problems and their own ways or strategies to cope with them. This awareness strengthened their sense of togetherness and deepened their understanding of one another among peers. This is based on interview results with informants AM, DR, and NZ:

"I felt closer to them and got to know what kinds of problems they were dealing with. I became more understanding and empathetic—it turns out they're really good at hiding what they feel. When I got the card about academic grades, I felt a bit uncomfortable because I don't really like being asked about my grades. To me, that's private." (Interview, June 3, 2025).

Consistent with the findings of Wewengkang and Moordiningsih (2016), empathy plays a crucial role in fostering understanding and positive social behavior, serving as the foundation for relationships, coping with stress, and conflict resolution. Based on the interview statements, the group counseling service using the KETOSZONE media was found to be effective in creating a psychologically safe atmosphere and supporting the counseling process for students. This aligns with the suggestion of Gysbers and Henderson (2014), who state that meaningful guidance and counseling services should be able to integrate students' cognitive, emotional, and social aspects into a unified whole.

3.2 Discussion Students' Perceptions and Understanding of the KETOSZONE Media

Media in guidance and counseling services serve as tools to facilitate the delivery of material and interaction between the counselor and students. Prasetyawan (2018) explains that guidance and counseling media can take the form of both digital and nondigital tools that support the implementation of guidance and counseling services more effectively. In the implementation of group counseling services using the KETOSZONE media, the group sessions were conducted separately in three groups, with each group consisting of six students and facilitated by a different counselor assigned to each group.

Based on interview results and direct observations during the implementation of group counseling using the KETOSZONE media, students perceived KETOSZONE as a reflective tool that helped them recognize their own stress conditions and how they managed them. In addition, students stated that through the group counseling service using KETOSZONE, they gained a better understanding of stress tolerance skills in a more positive way. This is particularly important, as many students admitted they still struggled to manage stress effectively and positively, often finding it difficult to control feelings of anger and sadness when faced with stressful situations.

Based on the interview results, the informants who participated in the group counseling sessions understood that the KETOSZONE media is related to students' skills or abilities in tolerating stressful situations they encounter. KETOSZONE (Stress Tolerance Skills) consists of a spin wheel and three types of cards: the Recovery Zone Card, the Resilience Zone Card, and the Challenge Zone Card, which are used in turns by group members. Through these cards, a reflective discussion space is created, allowing students to express their experiences, emotions, and ways of responding to stress-inducing situations. Each card is designed to encourage students to think and become more aware of their internal states, thereby not only helping them recognize stress but also stimulating them to consider alternative strategies for managing it. This aligns with the study by Martunus, Bariah, & Husen (in Kadir, 2017), which states that card-based media can encourage students to think deeply, generate new ideas, and develop creative and critical thinking skills in responding to presented situations or problems.

In this way, the media acts not just as a technical aid in group counseling, but as a valuable tool for developing stress tolerance skills. The peer interaction facilitated through the cards enhances group cohesion and builds a comfortable emotional space that encourages openness.

Students' Awareness of Stress and Their Coping Strategies

Adolescence is a developmental stage that is vulnerable to psychological stress, especially for high school students who are facing various academic, social, and personal demands. These pressures can trigger stress that will impact the mental and emotional wellbeing of students. Stress is a situation of inconsistency or gap between expectations and reality that makes individuals feel depressed. In line with what was stated (Barseli et al., 2017) that stress is a pressure that arises from a mismatch between reality and expectations, stress arises when individuals feel their abilities do not match the excessive demands from the environment, so that this situation is considered dangerous, disruptive, or threatening. This condition is very relevant to the lives of students, especially at the high school level, who are vulnerable to facing various pressures or demands in their daily lives.

Stress in students is caused by various factors, including school stress, social stress, and family stress. School stress arises from the pressure to achieve good academic performance, social stress arises from bullying or the need to maintain appearance, while family stress arises from conflict within the family or financial problems (Baresin, 2022). This is supported by research conducted by the Organization for Co-operation and Development (OECD) on 540,000 respondents aged 15 years in 72 countries, which found that school is a major source of stress in adolescents. The study revealed that the biggest cause of stress in schools is students' anxiety about academic performance, with 66% of students feeling stressed due to low exam scores. Furthermore, 59% of students experience anxiety when taking exams they find difficult, and 55% of students remain anxious despite having prepared well for the exam. This suggests that academic pressure is a significant factor influencing psychological wellbeing in adolescence (OECD, 2020). Therefore, student awareness of stress is crucial for recognizing symptoms of stress as early as possible, enabling them to develop adaptive coping strategies.

Through interviews with several informants who participated in the KETOSZONE group guidance service, it was found that students' awareness of stress varies. Several students stated that before participating in the group guidance service, they were not fully aware that what they were experiencing was a form of stress. This is evident in statements by informants NZ and AM, who stated that they previously lacked understanding of how to recognize and deal with stress. However, after participating in the group guidance service, they have a better

understanding of how to manage stress and how to tolerate existing pressures. On the other hand, there are also students who have realized the symptoms of stress they are experiencing, as conveyed by informants DR and AM who said that the stress they feel has a significant impact on them, starting from difficulty sleeping, mood swings, difficulty concentrating, and emotional instability. This shows that group guidance services with the KETOSZONE media have a role in increasing students' understanding of stress, both for students who are not yet aware of stress or who are aware of stress but are not yet fully able to manage stress and those who are not yet aware of stress.

Stress awareness is crucial for students to apply appropriate coping strategies to the stress they experience. These strategies include cognitive and behavioral approaches that can help students deal with stress adaptively, such as time management, social support, relaxation techniques, and problem-solving skills (Ulpa, 2015). Interviews with several informants who participated in group guidance services using KETOSZONE revealed that students have implemented several strategies for dealing with stress, including:

1. Calming down/Relaxation

Taking time for oneself is the first step in a relaxation strategy to reduce stress. Individuals give themselves the opportunity to calm down from the various pressures and demands of life. According to (Sari, 2020), this effort reflects an awareness of maintaining mental and emotional balance in students and serves as a foundation for relaxation practices. This also aligns with the results of an interview with informant DR, who, when experiencing stress, chooses to calm down first.

2. Social support

Peer social support is a form of support provided through emotional, instrumental, and informational support. This support can reduce stress in adolescents. This is also consistent with the results of an interview with informant DR, who said that when experiencing stress, she chose to talk to others. An individual needs good relationships with others, such as friends, who can support them in developing their identity and socializing. If they receive a lot of support, this can increase their self-confidence (Sutjiato, Kandou & Tucunan, 2015).

3. Doing activities you like

Engaging in activities you enjoy is an effective positive coping strategy for reducing stress. These activities include hobbies, sports, art, or any activity that distracts you from stressors and improves your mood. Through engaging in enjoyable activities, students can reduce emotional tension, improve happiness, and improve mental health.

4. Looking for solutions/problem solving

Finding solutions or solving problems is a form of problem-focused coping that aims to address sources of stress. Students who are able to identify problems and find effective solutions tend to experience reduced stress levels.

Students' Emotional and Social Responses to the KETOSZONE Media

The implementation of group counseling services using the KETOSZONE media not only provided an understanding of stress tolerance skills among students, but also elicited affective and social responses directly experienced by the students during the sessions. Affective response refers to an individual's reaction that reflects their feelings or attitudes toward something, based on emotional experience and personal evaluation, or in other words, a response that expresses what a person feels or thinks about a particular matter (Rafikayuni, 2017). Based on the interview results, students' affective responses were reflected in how they felt happy, relieved, and comfortable during the activity. These positive emotions indicate that the media was able to create a supportive atmosphere, allowing students to be more open in expressing their experiences and feelings.

Several students also expressed that they felt calmer and more accepted while participating in the group counseling sessions using the KETOSZONE media, as the atmosphere within the group was warm and nonjudgmental. One of the informants, AM, stated that he felt a sense of relief ("plong") after the session because he was able to share the mental burden he had

previously found difficult to express. This emotional response indicates that the use of KETOSZONE not only helps students understand stress but also provides a safe space for releasing suppressed emotions. In addition to affective responses, the implementation of group counseling using KETOSZONE media also elicited positive social responses.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that group guidance services using the KETOSZONE (Stress Tolerance Skills Zone) media have a positive influence in helping students recognize, understand, and manage stress more adaptively, especially academic stress. This media is able to create an interactive and enjoyable service atmosphere, making it easier for students to open up and freely express their feelings.

Through KETOSZONE, students become more aware of their stress symptoms and begin to recognize and understand strategies for managing stress, such as calming themselves, talking to others, engaging in activities they enjoy, and finding solutions. Furthermore, the use of this medium also increases emotional and social connectedness among group members, allowing them to feel closer, understand each other's problems, and develop empathy for one another.

Thus, group guidance services using KETOSZONE media have proven effective in integrating students' cognitive, emotional, and social aspects, as well as providing a psychologically safe and comfortable space for students to develop and manage stress adaptively. Since this study was only conducted on high school students, it is recommended for future researchers to expand the scope of subjects to other levels of education. This aims to see the effectiveness of KETOSZONE media broadly and comprehensively.

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