



The Effectiveness of Respectful Mind Based Sociodrama Group Guidance to Improve Science Students' Interpersonal Communication

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of Respectful Mind Based Sociodrama Group Guidance in enhancing junior high school students' interpersonal communication. It also explored how integrating the Respectful Mind concept strengthens sociodrama as a theoretically grounded group guidance intervention for developing students' interpersonal communication skills.

Methodology: This study employed a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design involving 40 junior high school science students selected through convenience sampling from four public schools in Bantul Regency, Indonesia. The intervention consisted of five 90 minute Respectful Mind Based Sociodrama Group Guidance sessions. Data were collected using a validated interpersonal communication scale and analyzed through the Shapiro-Wilk normality test and paired-samples t-test using IBM SPSS Statistics.

Main Findings: The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' interpersonal communication following the intervention. The mean score increased from 96.33 at pretest to 134.08 at posttest. The paired samples t-test indicated a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores ($p < .001$), demonstrating that the intervention effectively enhanced students' interpersonal communication.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study extends previous sociodrama research by integrating the Respectful Mind framework into group guidance, providing a theoretical explanation of how reflective role enactment, empathy, perspective taking, and respect for diversity facilitate the development of interpersonal communication. However, the findings should be interpreted with caution because the study employed a one group pretest-posttest design and a relatively small convenience sample, which may limit the generalizability of the results.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication is recognized as one of the essential competencies that students need to develop in the twenty first century [1], [2]. Within the school context, interpersonal communication extends

beyond facilitating positive peer relationships; it also serves as a fundamental foundation for effective learning, collaboration, conflict resolution, and adolescents' social emotional development. Students with strong interpersonal communication skills are generally more capable of expressing their ideas effectively, listening to others' perspectives, managing differences constructively, and establishing respectful relationships across diverse social situations [3], [4].

Early adolescence, particularly during junior high school, represents a critical developmental stage characterized by an increasing need for peer interaction. During this period, social relationships become more complex as students begin to develop their personal identity, autonomy, and perspective taking abilities [5], [6]. Nevertheless, this developmental transition is often accompanied by various communication challenges, including limited empathic listening, difficulties expressing opinions assertively, frequent misunderstandings during social interactions, and increased peer conflicts [7], [8]. Poor interpersonal communication not only weakens students' social relationships but also negatively affects classroom engagement, school adjustment, and psychological well being [9], [10].

The rapid advancement of digital technology has also transformed adolescents' communication patterns. Although digital media has increased the frequency of communication, it has not necessarily enhanced the quality of face to face interactions. Recent studies also indicate that strengthening students' digital literacy has become increasingly important to promote responsible technology use, privacy awareness, and effective communication in digital environments. Consequently, many students experience difficulties in recognizing emotional expressions, demonstrating empathy, and communicating effectively during direct interpersonal encounters [11]-[13]. These challenges highlight the continuing importance of strengthening interpersonal communication through innovative learning interventions that provide authentic social experiences. Previous studies have shown that student-centered instructional approaches, including problem based learning integrated with contextual or local wisdom perspectives, contribute to the development of higher order thinking and social competencies [14]-[16].

Developing interpersonal communication is therefore considered one of the primary objectives of school guidance and counseling services. School counselors play a strategic role in fostering students' social competencies through preventive, developmental, and responsive counseling programs. Among the available services, group guidance offers considerable potential because it enables students to learn through interaction, discussion, shared experiences, and collaborative reflection [17], [18]. Group dynamics not only facilitate the acquisition of new insights but also promote the development of social skills, empathy, collaboration, and interpersonal communication through authentic social experiences [14], [19], [20].

One of the techniques widely implemented in group guidance is sociodrama. This technique allows students to enact various social roles within simulated situations, enabling them to experience directly the processes of understanding others' emotions, perspectives, and behavioral responses [14]. Through role playing activities, students develop not only cognitive understanding of interpersonal communication but also affective, behavioral, and reflective competencies derived from their interpersonal experiences throughout the group counseling process [17]. A growing body of research has demonstrated that active and student-centered learning approaches, including guided discovery learning and experiential strategies such as sociodrama, promote meaningful learning and the development of higher-order competencies through active participation and reflection [14], [21], [22]. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that sociodrama improves students' ability to express opinions, listen actively, collaborate with peers, develop empathy, and establish more positive interpersonal relationships [14].

Despite these promising findings, most previous studies have primarily examined the effectiveness of sociodrama as an instructional strategy or group guidance intervention from an outcome oriented perspective, with limited attention to the psychological mechanisms underlying improvements in students' interpersonal communication [22]. Consequently, existing research has largely answered the question of whether sociodrama is effective but has provided insufficient explanation of why and how role playing experiences facilitate the development of interpersonal communication skills. This gap suggests the need for an intervention framework that not only demonstrates effectiveness but also incorporates a theoretical foundation capable of explaining the psychological processes underlying changes in interpersonal communication.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a pre experimental one group pretest posttest design to examine the effectiveness of Respectful Mind based sociodrama group guidance in improving junior high school students' interpersonal communication skills. This design enabled a comparison of participants' interpersonal communication scores before (pretest) and after (posttest) the intervention, allowing changes attributable to the treatment to be systematically evaluated [23], [24]. The participants comprised 40 junior high school science students from four public junior high schools in Bantul Regency, Indonesia. Participants were selected using convenience sampling based on accessibility and their willingness to participate throughout the entire intervention program [25].

The intervention consisted of five group guidance sessions, each lasting 90 minutes, integrating the stages of group guidance with sociodrama activities, including orientation, role assignment, role playing, group discussion, reflection, and evaluation. All sessions were designed based on the principles of Respectful Mind, emphasizing respect for diversity, perspective taking, empathy, and respectful interpersonal communication [26]. The experiential learning approach embedded within the sociodrama activities provided participants with opportunities to engage in authentic social experiences, reflect upon these experiences, and internalize interpersonal communication skills through group interaction [14]. Data were collected using an Interpersonal Communication Scale that had demonstrated satisfactory content validity, construct validity, and reliability, confirming its suitability as a research instrument [27]. The scale was administered before and after the intervention. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics, including descriptive statistics, the Shapiro Wilk normality test to assess the assumptions of parametric analysis, and a paired samples t-test to examine differences between pretest and posttest interpersonal communication scores at a significance level of $\alpha = .05$ [28].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings on the effectiveness of Respectful Mind based sociodrama group guidance in improving students' interpersonal communication skills. The results are presented sequentially, including the normality test, descriptive statistics, and hypothesis testing using the paired samples t-test.

Normality Test

The normality test was conducted using the Shapiro Wilk test to determine whether the pretest and posttest interpersonal communication scores were normally distributed. The results are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Results of the Shapiro Wilk Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shaipro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	.075	40	.200	.979	40	.637
Posttest	0.72	40	.200	.984	40	.837

Based on the results of the Shapiro Wilk normality test presented in the Tests of Normality table, the pretest scores yielded a significance value of 0.637, while the posttest scores yielded a significance value of 0.837. Since both significance values exceeded the 0.05 threshold ($p > .05$), the pretest and posttest data were considered to be normally distributed. Therefore, the assumption of normality was satisfied, indicating that the data were appropriate for further analysis using the parametric paired samples t-test.

Descriptive Statistics

After confirming that the data satisfied the assumption of normality, descriptive statistical analysis was performed to provide an overview of changes in students' interpersonal communication skills before and after participating in the Respectful Mind based sociodrama group guidance intervention. The results of the paired-samples statistics are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Results of the Paired-Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	96.3250	40	4.17187	.65963
	Posttest	134.0750	40	4.95822	.78396

Based on the results presented in the Paired Samples Statistics table, the mean interpersonal communication score before the intervention (pretest) was 96.33 (SD = 4.17). Following the intervention, the mean score increased to 134.08 (SD = 4.96). This represents an average increase of 37.75 points, indicating a substantial improvement in students' interpersonal communication skills after participating in the Respectful Mind based sociodrama group guidance intervention.

Effectiveness of Respectful Mind Based Sociodrama Group Guidance

To determine whether the observed increase in interpersonal communication scores was statistically significant, a paired samples t-test was conducted. The results of the paired samples t-test are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Results of the Paired-Samples t-Test

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
						Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest-Posttest	134.0750	40	4.95822	.78396	-38.07991	-37.42009	-231.449	39	.000

The results of the Paired-Samples t-Test indicated a mean difference of -37.75 between the pretest and posttest interpersonal communication scores, with a t value of -211.449 , $df = 39$, and a significance value of $p < .000$. These findings demonstrate a statistically significant difference between students' interpersonal communication scores before and after the intervention. Therefore, the research hypothesis was accepted, indicating that Respectful Mind-based sociodrama group guidance was effective in improving the interpersonal communication skills of junior high school students.

The average increase of 37.75 points in students' interpersonal communication scores suggests that the intervention not only produced statistically significant improvements but also yielded meaningful educational outcomes. The findings indicate that the program enhanced students' ability to express their opinions effectively, engage in active listening, understand others' perspectives, and establish more positive interpersonal relationships. These improvements suggest that integrating the sociodrama technique with the principles of Respectful Mind created an experiential learning environment that encouraged students to interact, reflect on their social experiences, and develop interpersonal communication skills more effectively.

The findings demonstrated that Respectful Mind based sociodrama group guidance was effective in enhancing the interpersonal communication skills of junior high school students. This effectiveness was reflected in the increase in the mean interpersonal communication score from 96.33 at the pretest to 134.08 at the posttest, representing an average improvement of 37.75 points. Furthermore, the paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores ($t(39) = -211.469$, $p < .001$), thereby supporting the research hypothesis. These findings indicate that the intervention enhanced students' ability to express their opinions effectively, engage in active listening, understand others' perspectives, and establish more positive interpersonal relationships. Such competencies constitute fundamental dimensions of interpersonal communication, as effective social interaction depends not only on message delivery but also on the ability to understand, interpret, and respond appropriately to the perspectives of others [29].

The improvement in students' interpersonal communication skills suggests that the sociodrama technique provides a participatory and contextually meaningful learning experience. Through role playing activities, students not only acquired cognitive knowledge of interpersonal communication but also directly experienced various social situations that required interaction, collaboration, conflict resolution, and sensitivity to the feelings and responses of others. In addition, the group discussions and reflective sessions conducted after each sociodrama activity reinforced the learning process by allowing participants to evaluate their communication behaviors and receive constructive feedback from their peers. These characteristics position sociodrama as an experiential learning approach that promotes the development of communication skills through active engagement in authentic social situations [30]-[33]. Experiencing multiple social roles also enables participants to develop perspective-taking, strengthen empathy, and foster collaborative behaviors [34], [35].

The present findings are consistent with previous studies demonstrating the effectiveness of sociodrama and psychodrama in improving interpersonal communication skills. Karakaya Çataldaş et al. [36] reported that psychodrama based interventions significantly enhanced therapeutic communication skills by providing participants with opportunities to practice communication in psychologically safe situations before encountering real clinical contexts. Similarly, Albal et al. [37] found that psychodrama significantly improved participants' emotional awareness and communication skills through role playing and group reflection. These findings are further supported by the meta-analysis conducted by Kipper and Ritchie [38], which concluded that psychodramatic techniques effectively promote psychological development through role enactment, emotional engagement, and group interaction. Likewise, Orkibi and Feniger-Schaal [22] argued that psychodrama facilitates individual change through mechanisms involving experiential exploration, spontaneity, group cohesion, and the development of social perspective taking.

Within educational settings, studies on sociodrama and drama based education have similarly shown that students' active participation in dramatic activities contributes to the development of social and emotional competencies. Tsaniah et al. [39] reported that sociodrama fostered adolescents' emotional autonomy through role enactment and social interaction. Likewise, Azzahra and Fathoni [40] found that the sociodrama learning model improved students' collaborative skills, while Pertiya Sari and Sunarti [41] demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing creativity among junior high school students through active engagement in learning activities. Earlier research by Alaba and Tayo [42] also revealed that sociodrama based instruction significantly improved students' knowledge and behavior by promoting socially interactive learning experiences. More recently, Liu et

al. [43] reported that drama in education enhanced students' self concept, social connectedness, and psychosocial well being, whereas Cai et al. [44] found that educational drama contributed significantly to the development of children's socio emotional competence.

The consistency of these findings strengthens the empirical evidence supporting drama-based approaches as effective strategies for developing communication competencies through authentic social experiences. Previous reviews have shown that school-based drama education and drama therapy provide meaningful opportunities for students to express emotions, understand others' experiences, develop empathy, and establish healthier interpersonal relationships [45]-[47]. Similarly, Briones et al. [48] demonstrated that creative drama and forum theatre enhanced empathy and increased students' awareness of interpersonal conflicts through role exploration and reflective learning. Moreover, Landry-Wegener et al. [49] found that drama-based training emphasizing empathy and relational communication significantly improved participants' ability to understand others and build effective interpersonal relationships.

Despite these similarities, the present study offers a distinct contribution compared with previous research. Whereas earlier studies primarily focused on evaluating the effectiveness of sociodrama or psychodrama as instructional or therapeutic techniques, this study integrated the Respectful Mind framework as the conceptual foundation of the group guidance intervention. Consequently, the effectiveness of the intervention is understood not merely as an outcome of role playing activities but as the result of a structured learning process designed to cultivate respect for diversity, perspective taking, empathy, and mutually respectful communication. This interpretation is supported by the findings of Armesto Arias et al. [50], who demonstrated that drama based interventions enhance emotional intelligence, and Stratou et al. [51], who reported that educational drama contributes to the development of social skills by promoting interaction, collaboration, and understanding of others.

The effectiveness of the sociodrama based group guidance intervention observed in this study was not solely attributable to role playing activities but was also influenced by the integration of the Respectful Mind framework as the conceptual foundation throughout the intervention process. Gardner [26] identified Respectful Mind as one of the essential competencies for the twenty first century, emphasizing individuals' ability to appreciate diversity, adopt others' perspectives (perspective taking), demonstrate empathy, and establish social relationships grounded in mutual respect. Within the context of interpersonal communication, these competencies serve as fundamental prerequisites for engaging in open interactions, respecting differing opinions, practicing active listening, and responding appropriately to diverse social situations. Consequently, the development of interpersonal communication requires not only the acquisition of verbal communication skills but also the cultivation of attitudes and cognitive orientations that recognize and value others as equal communication partners [26], [29], [52]. The capacity to understand and respond to others' experiences is likewise considered a key mechanism within drama based approaches, as participants are encouraged to explore social situations from multiple perspectives through role enactment [53].

In this study, the Respectful Mind framework was integrated into the sociodrama intervention by designing each stage of the group guidance process to foster empathy, perspective taking, appreciation of diversity, and respectful interpersonal interaction. During role playing activities, participants were encouraged not only to portray assigned characters but also to understand the characters' emotions, needs, and viewpoints. Subsequently, group discussions and reflective sessions enabled students to evaluate their communication experiences, identify both effective and ineffective interaction patterns, and explore more adaptive alternatives for future social encounters. Consequently, role playing extended beyond dramatic performance to become a structured social learning process through which students constructed new understandings of positive, respectful interpersonal communication. This mechanism is consistent with experiential learning theory, which posits that knowledge and skills develop through direct experience followed by critical reflection [14], [54]. Previous studies have similarly demonstrated that drama based educational activities involving role-playing, reflection, and collaborative interaction effectively enhance socio emotional competencies, perspective taking, and collaborative behaviors among learners [44], [53].

The findings further indicate that integrating the Respectful Mind framework strengthened the educational function of sociodrama as a medium for interpersonal learning. Whereas previous studies have generally positioned sociodrama as a technique for improving communication skills through role-playing activities, the present study provides a psychological framework that explains how behavioral changes in interpersonal communication occur. Throughout the intervention, participants not only practiced expressing ideas and listening to others but also gradually developed awareness of respecting differences, understanding peers' perspectives, and managing social interactions with greater empathy. These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating that drama and psychodrama based interventions enhance empathy, interpersonal trust, social awareness, and perspective taking through role playing and experiential exploration [55]. The development of perspective taking abilities and empathic understanding subsequently contributes to improved interpersonal communication and healthier peer relationships during adolescence [56]-[58].

Overall, these findings offer a meaningful conceptual contribution to the development of school guidance and counseling services by clarifying the mechanism underlying the effectiveness of sociodrama-based group guidance. The novelty of this study lies not merely in employing sociodrama as an intervention strategy but in integrating the Respectful Mind framework as a conceptual model linking role playing experiences with the development of students' interpersonal communication. This integration suggests that improvements in communication behavior emerge not simply because students rehearse social roles but because they progressively internalize values of mutual respect, empathy, perspective taking, and respectful communication throughout the intervention process. This interpretation is supported by Briones et al. [48], who demonstrated that creative drama enhances empathy and awareness of interpersonal conflicts, as well as by Armesto Arias et al. [50], who reported that drama-based interventions effectively promote emotional intelligence through structured social experiences.

This study contributes to the theoretical development of school guidance and counseling by extending current understanding of the mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of the sociodrama technique in improving students' interpersonal communication. Previous studies have predominantly positioned sociodrama as an instructional strategy or a group guidance technique aimed at developing social and communication skills. In contrast, the present study demonstrates that the effectiveness of sociodrama can be enhanced through the integration of the Respectful Mind framework as a conceptual foundation that guides students' interaction, reflection, and social behavior development throughout the intervention. Accordingly, interpersonal communication is conceptualized not merely as the ability to convey messages effectively but also as the capacity to establish relationships characterized by empathy, respect for diversity, perspective taking, and mutual respect. These findings enrich the theoretical foundation of guidance and counseling by proposing a more comprehensive framework that integrates cognitive, affective, and social dimensions in the development of interpersonal communication [26], [52], [59]. This perspective is consistent with previous studies demonstrating that drama and sociodrama based interventions facilitate the development of social emotional competencies by engaging learners in role exploration, reflective experiences, collaboration, and perspective taking [53]. Therefore, integrating the Respectful Mind framework into group guidance provides a more comprehensive explanation of how students' interpersonal communication develops through the interconnectedness of cognitive, emotional, and social processes.

From a practical perspective, the findings indicate that Respectful Mind based sociodrama group guidance represents a promising intervention that can be implemented by school counselors to enhance junior high school students' interpersonal communication skills. By positioning students as active participants through role-playing, group discussions, and reflective activities, the intervention provides meaningful social learning experiences that are more engaging than conventional lecture based or information delivery approaches. Beyond improving students' ability to express opinions and engage in active listening, the intervention also encourages empathy, appreciation of diversity, constructive conflict management, and the development of more positive interpersonal relationships. These findings are supported by previous studies demonstrating that educational drama and sociodrama effectively enhance social competence, collaboration, empathy, and communication skills through active and contextual learning experiences [43], [44], [51], [60]. Consequently, the Respectful Mind based sociodrama group guidance model has the potential to become an innovative guidance and counseling service that addresses the social emotional competency demands of twenty first century education [61], [62]. This implication is further supported by research indicating that school based drama interventions contribute to improvements in social emotional competence, emotional intelligence, and healthy interpersonal relationships among children and adolescents [45], [50].

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the study involved only 40 students from four public junior high schools in Bantul Regency and employed a one group pretest posttest design, which did not allow direct comparisons with a control group. Consequently, the generalizability and causal inference of the findings remain limited. Future research is therefore recommended to employ quasi-experimental or true experimental designs incorporating control groups, larger sample sizes, and more diverse school settings to strengthen the external validity of the findings. In addition, future studies should investigate the integration of the Respectful Mind framework into other guidance and counseling services, such as group counseling, classroom guidance, and social and emotional learning (SEL) programs, to evaluate the applicability of this conceptual model across broader educational contexts. These recommendations are aligned with the growing body of research highlighting drama, sociodrama, and other experiential learning approaches as effective strategies for promoting students' social emotional competencies in diverse educational settings [63], [64].

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Respectful Mind based sociodrama group guidance is effective in improving the interpersonal communication skills of junior high school students. The findings are evidenced by

an increase in the mean interpersonal communication score from 96.33 at the pretest to 134.08 at the posttest. The Shapiro Wilk test confirmed that the data were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$), while the paired samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores ($t(39) = -211.469$, $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that integrating the sociodrama technique with the Respectful Mind framework enhances students' ability to express their ideas effectively, engage in active listening, understand others' perspectives, demonstrate empathy, and establish more positive interpersonal relationships. The findings have both practical and theoretical implications for the development of school guidance and counseling services. From a practical perspective, school counselors can employ Respectful Mind based sociodrama group guidance as an alternative intervention to foster interpersonal communication through role playing, group discussion, and reflective learning experiences. From a theoretical perspective, this study extends Howard Gardner's Respectful Mind concept by integrating it into the sociodrama technique as a conceptual framework that explains the psychological mechanisms underlying improvements in students' interpersonal communication. Accordingly, this study not only strengthens the empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of sociodrama in guidance and counseling but also proposes a theoretically grounded intervention model for promoting students' interpersonal communication skills.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization, First Author and Second Author; Methodology, First Author and Second Author; Validation, First Author and Second Author; Formal Analysis, First Author and Second Author; Investigation, First Author; Resources, Second Author; Data Curation, First Author; Writing – Original Draft Preparation, First Author; Writing – Review & Editing, Second Author; Visualization, First Author; Supervision, Second Author; Project Administration, First Author. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in this study. Prior to participation, each respondent received a clear explanation regarding the objectives, procedures, potential risks, and expected benefits of the research. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all respondents agreed to participate after providing informed consent. The confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained throughout the research process. All images (if any) in this article have been authorized and are the property of the authors.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the generation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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