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The Effectiveness of Implementing the *Role-Playing* Technique through Group Counseling to Improve Junior High School Students' Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of implementing the role-playing technique through group counseling in improving the emotional intelligence of students in Class VIII E at UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang in the 2025/2026 academic year. This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest-posttest design. The study population consisted of 27 students in Class VIII E at UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang. The research sample comprised 8 students with low levels of emotional intelligence, selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected using an emotional intelligence questionnaire. Data analysis was conducted using a paired-samples t-test with the assistance of SPSS version 22. The results showed that, before the intervention, the students' total emotional intelligence score was 737. Following the intervention involving the implementation of the role-playing technique through group counseling, the total score increased from 737 to 1,185, representing an increase of 448 points. Therefore, the implementation of the role-playing technique through group counseling was found to be effective in improving the emotional intelligence of students in Class VIII E at UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang in the 2025/2026 academic year.*
Keywords: *Role playing; group counseling; emotional intelligence*

Abstrak: *Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui efektivitas penerapan teknik role playing melalui konseling kelompok dalam meningkatkan kecerdasan emosional siswa kelas VIII E UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang Tahun Pelajaran 2025/2026. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain pra-eksperimen (one group pretest-posttest design). Populasi penelitian berjumlah 27 siswa kelas VIII E UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang. Sampel penelitian terdiri atas 8 siswa yang memiliki kecerdasan emosional rendah dan dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah angket kecerdasan emosional. Teknik analisis data menggunakan uji paired sample t-test dengan bantuan program SPSS versi 22. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebelum diberikan perlakuan, total skor kecerdasan emosional siswa sebesar 737. Setelah diberikan perlakuan berupa penerapan teknik role playing melalui bimbingan kelompok, total skor meningkat dari 737 menjadi 1.185, sehingga terjadi peningkatan sebesar 448 poin. Dengan demikian, penerapan teknik role playing melalui konseling kelompok terbukti efektif untuk meningkatkan kecerdasan emosional siswa kelas VIII E UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang Tahun Pelajaran 2025/2026.*
Kata kunci: *Role playing; konseling kelompok; kecerdasan emosional*

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Introduction

Education plays an essential role in optimizing students' potential, not only in the cognitive domain but also in the social and emotional dimensions. One aspect of development that deserves attention in the educational process is emotional intelligence, given its contribution to shaping behavior, managing feelings, and establishing healthy interpersonal relationships.

Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and regulate personal emotions while maintaining positive relationships with others. Students with high emotional intelligence tend to be better able to regulate their behavior, demonstrate empathy, and adapt positively to their social environment. Conversely, limited emotional intelligence may contribute to various problems, including social conflicts, deviant behavior, and difficulties in establishing interactions with peers (Anisa et al., 2025).

Despite its important role in students' lives, emotional intelligence has not yet developed optimally among some students, particularly at the junior high school level. This condition can be observed in difficulties in regulating emotions, limited concern for other people's feelings, and inadequate social skills. Such circumstances may contribute to negative behaviors, including conflicts among students, limited cooperation, and disrupted social harmony within the school environment.

Dewi et al. (2013) explain that adolescence encompasses the age range of 10–18 years for females and 12–20 years for males. The transition from childhood to adulthood is a developmental period characterized by relatively unstable emotional conditions. During this stage, adolescents are expected to develop the ability to regulate their emotions; therefore, emotional intelligence is necessary for managing and controlling emotional states. Consistent with this perspective, Latifah & Yarni (2024) argue that adolescence is a crucial developmental phase that is susceptible to physical, emotional, and social changes. An inability to adapt to these changes may lead to problems such as juvenile delinquency and difficulties in emotional regulation. These developmental challenges highlight the importance of implementing targeted and systematic interventions through school-based guidance and counseling services to help students develop emotional management skills and optimize their emotional intelligence.

One service that can be utilized to improve students' emotional intelligence is group counseling. Supriatna, as cited in Esty et al. (2019), describes group counseling as a form of assistance provided to students within a group setting that focuses on prevention and remediation while facilitating individual development and growth. In line with this perspective, Lestari, as cited in Ramadhan et al. (2025), explains that group counseling is a form of assistance delivered in a small-group setting to help individuals address social and emotional problems through group dynamics and interactions among members.

The implementation of group counseling requires techniques that are engaging and appropriate to students' developmental characteristics. One technique that can be applied is role playing. *Role playing* is a method that involves students in acting out particular situations, thereby providing them with opportunities to understand various social circumstances through direct experience. This technique allows students to practice expressing emotions appropriately, understanding other people's feelings, and developing communication and problem-solving skills (Anisa et al., 2025).

Previous studies have indicated that the application of *role playing* in group counseling services can support students' personal and social development. Role-playing activities provide students with opportunities to recognize and understand emotions, improve communication skills, enhance their ability to interact socially, and develop self-confidence and positive behavior (Rahma et al., 2026). These findings suggest that learning experiences involving the enactment of social situations can serve as a means of developing various skills necessary for students' interpersonal relationships.

A study conducted by Anna & Margaretha (2024) also demonstrated that *role playing* was effective in improving students' emotional intelligence. The findings revealed an increase in emotional intelligence after students received an intervention using the role-playing technique. Based on these findings, the implementation of *role playing* through group counseling can be considered an alternative intervention to support the development of students' emotional intelligence.

This study was motivated by the need to obtain empirical information regarding students' emotional intelligence, particularly among Class VIII E students at UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang. Based on preliminary observations conducted by the researcher while participating in the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program at the school, the most prominent problems among Class VIII E students were associated with emotional regulation, as reflected in their tendency to become easily angered and their difficulties in establishing positive social relationships with others. In addition to conducting observations, the researcher interviewed the homeroom teacher and the guidance and counseling teacher. The interview findings

indicated that several students continued to experience difficulties in regulating their emotions, demonstrating concern for their peers, and establishing positive social relationships.

These limitations in emotional regulation may cause students to become easily angered, struggle to control their emotional reactions, and experience difficulties in establishing positive interactions with their classmates. Under these circumstances, guidance and counseling teachers play an important role in providing assistance that addresses students' developmental needs. One possible approach is to implement role playing through group counseling as a means of practicing emotional recognition, understanding other people's perspectives, and developing more adaptive patterns of social interaction. The effectiveness of this technique needs to be established through empirical research involving the students targeted by the intervention.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the research question addressed in this study is whether the implementation of the *role-playing* technique through group counseling is effective in improving the emotional intelligence of Class VIII E students at UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang during the 2025/2026 academic year. Accordingly, this study aims to determine the effectiveness of implementing the *role-playing* technique through group counseling in improving the emotional intelligence of Class VIII E students at UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang during the 2025/2026 academic year.

Method

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest-posttest design, in which a single group was studied without a comparison group. Measurements were taken before and after the intervention to identify changes in students' emotional intelligence. The study was conducted at UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang, located on Supul Raya Street, Pasir Panjang, Kota Lama District, Kupang City, from October 2025 to June 2026.

Participants, Sample, or Data Sources

The study population consisted of 27 students in Class VIII E at UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang during the 2025/2026 academic year. The research sample comprised 8 students with low emotional intelligence, selected using purposive sampling based on the results of the initial emotional intelligence assessment (*pretest*).

Instruments and Measures

Data were collected using a closed-ended emotional intelligence questionnaire with a four-point Likert scale comprising Strongly Appropriate (SS), Appropriate (S), Inappropriate (TS), and Strongly Inappropriate (STS). The instrument was adapted from a questionnaire developed by Nanga et al. (2025), based on the concepts of emotional intelligence proposed by Goleman and Salovey and Mayer. The questionnaire consisted of 46 items, with total scores ranging from 46 to 184. Emotional intelligence was classified into three categories: low (46–91), moderate (92–137), and high (138–184). Previous instrument testing indicated that all items were valid and that the instrument demonstrated good reliability. In addition to the questionnaire, the study employed an intervention guide for implementing the role-playing technique through group counseling, developed based on the stages of group counseling and the steps involved in role playing.

Procedure and Research Ethics

Data collection consisted of three stages: pretest, treatment, and posttest. The pretest was administered on May 21, 2026, to assess students' initial emotional intelligence and identify those who met the sample selection criteria. The intervention was delivered through five group counseling sessions conducted on May 22, June 2, June 4, June 5, and June 9, 2026. Each session addressed one of five aspects: self-awareness, self-management, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The counseling sessions followed four stages: formation, transition, working, and termination. Role-playing activities included scenario preparation, role assignment, enactment, feedback, reenactment, and reflection. After the intervention was completed, the posttest was administered using the same questionnaire to measure changes in emotional intelligence scores. The study was conducted after permission had been obtained from the school, with support from the guidance and counseling teacher.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a paired-samples t-test to determine differences in emotional intelligence scores before and after the intervention, with the assistance of SPSS version 22 for Windows. This test was used when the data met the assumption of normality. If the data were not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used as a nonparametric alternative. The effectiveness of the intervention was assessed by comparing pretest and posttest scores, with an increase in scores after the intervention indicating a positive change in students' emotional intelligence.

Results and Discussion

Results

Pre-test Results

The results of the emotional intelligence *pre-test* for students in Class VIII E at UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang during the 2025/2026 academic year are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Pre-test* Results

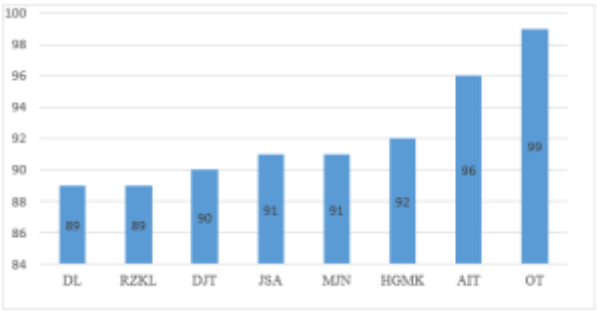
No.	Name	Total Score	Description
1	Adeliya M. Nggelon	141	HIGH
2	Aficha Sofia Mamon	142	HIGH
3	ALexander J. Setia Budi	140	HIGH
4	Arya I. Tkela	96	MODERATE
5	Avril Priscilia Feroh	143	HIGH
6	Cahaya Ribka Henuk	153	HIGH
7	Darius E . I Detaq	142	HIGH
8	Denada Letami	89	LOW
9	Deviana Jonae Tanehe	90	LOW
10	Diana	141	HIGH
11	Dreyzhan E.L Fanggi	150	HIGH
12	Eno C. Malle	139	HIGH
13	Hilery G.M Kadja	92	MODERATE
14	Inggryt Irawaty Bukang	142	HIGH
15	Irene Yedija Wahi	140	HIGH
16	Jeanna Mariance Lopung	146	HIGH
17	Jefan Stefanus Atti	91	LOW
18	Jordi Aryanto Taniu	142	HIGH
19	Madino Johanis Natonis	91	LOW
20	Maikal Ariyanra Tanaem	142	HIGH
21	Marfin Modok	141	HIGH
22	Marselina Pulanga	152	HIGH
23	Martin J.P Saudale	139	HIGH
24	Noelitha Gizhela Awola	140	HIGH
25	Noya Liuname	134	HIGH
26	Okran Tabelak	99	MODERATE
27	Rivaldo Zevanya Koro Lulu	89	LOW

Of the 27 respondents, 5 were classified as having a low level, 3 as having a moderate level, and 19 as having a high level of emotional intelligence. The 8 respondents classified in the low and moderate categories were selected as the research participants (Table 2).

Table 2. Research Participants' Scores

No.	Name	Total Score	Description
1	AIT	96	MODERATE
2	DL	89	LOW
3	DJT	90	LOW
4	HGMK	92	MODERATE
5	JSA	91	LOW
6	MJN	91	LOW
7	OT	99	MODERATE
8	RZKL	89	LOW

The *pre-test* emotional intelligence scores of students in Class VIII E are illustrated in the following graph:



Graph 1. *Pre-test* Emotional Intelligence Scores of Class VIII E Students

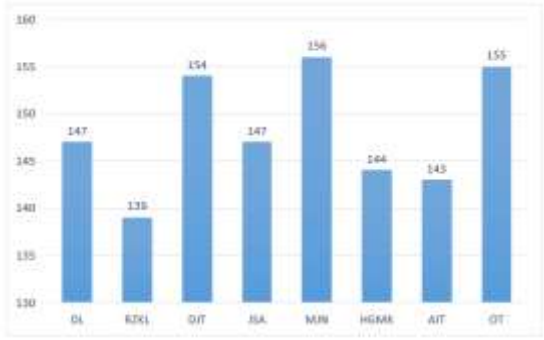
Post-test Results

The *post-test* data on students' emotional intelligence in Class VIII E at UPTD SMPN 16 Kota Kupang are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Post-test* Results

No.	Name	Total Score	Description
1	AIT	143	HIGH
2	DL	147	HIGH
3	DJT	154	HIGH
4	HGMK	144	HIGH
5	JSA	147	HIGH
6	MJN	156	HIGH
7	OT	155	HIGH
8	RZKL	139	HIGH

The *post-test* emotional intelligence scores of students in Class VIII E are illustrated in the following graph:



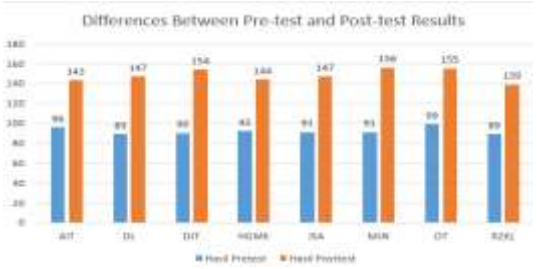
Graph 2. *Post-test* Emotional Intelligence Scores of Students

Differences Between *Pre-test* and *Post-test* Results

Table 4. Differences Between *Pre-test* and *Post-test* Results

No	Name	*Pre-test* Score	*Post-test* Score	Difference
1.	AIT	96	143	47
2.	DL	89	147	58
3.	DJT	90	154	64
4.	HGMK	92	144	52
5.	JSA	91	147	56
6.	MJN	91	156	65
7.	OT	99	155	56
8.	RZKL	89	139	50
TOTAL		**737**	**1.185**	**448**

The differences between the *pre-test* and *post-test* emotional intelligence scores of students in Class VIII E at UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang are illustrated in Graph 3.



Graph 3. Differences Between *Pre-test* and *Post-test* Emotional Intelligence Scores of Class VIII E Students

Hypothesis Testing

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	*Pretest* - *Posttest*	-55.75000	7.57345	2.67762	-62.08156	-49.41844	-20.821	7	.000

Singgih (2016) stated that the decision-making criterion for the paired-samples t-test is based on the significance value (Sig.). The SPSS output is interpreted as follows:

a) If the Sig. (2-tailed) value is less than 0.05, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted.

b) Conversely, if the Sig. (2-tailed) value is greater than 0.05, H_0 is accepted and H_a is rejected.

Based on the aforementioned hypothesis-testing criteria, the Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, indicating that H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that the implementation of the role-playing technique through group counseling is effective in improving the emotional intelligence of students in Class VIII E at UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang during the 2025/2026 academic year.

In addition to comparing the significance value (Sig.) with the probability threshold of 0.05, another method for testing the hypothesis using the paired-samples t-test is to compare the calculated t-value (t) with the critical t-value (t).

The decision-making criteria are as follows:

1. If the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted.
2. Conversely, if the calculated t-value is less than the critical t-value, H_0 is accepted and H_a is rejected.

Based on the "Paired Samples Test" output table presented above, the calculated t-value is negative, at −20.821. This negative value occurs because the mean score obtained from the pre-test is lower than the mean score obtained from the post-test. In this context, the negative calculated t-value indicates an increase in emotional intelligence scores following the intervention. Therefore, the absolute value of the calculated t-statistic is 20.821.

The next step is to determine the critical t-value, which is obtained based on the degrees of freedom (df) and the significance level (a/2). The output indicates that the df value is 7, while the significance level is 0,05/2 = 0,025. These values are used to determine the critical t-value, which is 2.36462.

Based on the t-distribution table, the critical t-value is 2.36462. According to the established

decision-making criteria, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted because the absolute calculated t-value (20.821) exceeds the critical t-value (2.36462). This finding indicates a difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores. Thus, the implementation of the role-playing technique through group counseling can be considered effective in improving the emotional intelligence of students in Class VIII E at UPTD SMPN 16 Kupang during the 2025/2026 academic year.

Discussion

The pre-test results showed that, among the 27 students in Class VIII E, 5 students were classified in the low category and 3 students in the moderate category. These eight students were subsequently selected as the research participants. The *pre-test* results indicated that the students' emotional intelligence scores remained within the low and moderate categories, with a total score of 737 and a mean score of 92.13. This condition suggests that the students still experienced difficulties in recognizing their own emotions, regulating their emotions, motivating themselves, understanding other people's feelings, and establishing social relationships with their peers.

Following the intervention involving the *role-playing* technique through group counseling, the post-test results demonstrated a substantial improvement. The total *post-test* score increased to 1,185, with a mean score of 148.13. All respondents experienced an increase in their scores and were classified in the high category. The individual score increases ranged from 47 to 65 points, resulting in a total increase of 448 points.

This improvement indicates that implementing the *role-playing* technique can help students develop their emotional intelligence. Through *role-playing* activities, students are given opportunities to enact specific situations related to everyday life. These activities enable students to express their feelings, understand other people's emotions, practice emotional regulation, and learn to resolve problems appropriately. Furthermore, the group counseling environment allows students to share experiences, provide feedback, and learn from the experiences of other group members.

The improvement in students' emotional intelligence in this study can also be explained through Goleman's theory, which identifies five main components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. Through the implementation of the role-playing technique in group counseling, these five components can develop concurrently. When students enact particular roles, they learn to recognize and understand the emotions they experience (self-awareness) and practice regulating those emotions to respond appropriately to different situations (self-management). In addition, students are encouraged to complete the assigned scenarios, fostering motivation to improve their behavior and make better decisions. The role-playing process also requires students to understand the perspectives and feelings of other characters, thereby strengthening their empathetic abilities. Furthermore, interactions among students during group counseling provide opportunities to practice communication, cooperation, respect for others' opinions, and the development of positive social relationships. Thus, the research findings, which demonstrate an increase in emotional intelligence scores following the intervention, are consistent with Goleman's theory, which emphasizes that emotional intelligence can be developed through learning experiences involving social interaction, self-reflection, and direct practice in emotional regulation.

Theoretically, *role playing* is a technique used in group counseling that provides direct learning experiences through the enactment of specific situations. This technique can help individuals understand their own and others' feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. Consequently, students may become better equipped to regulate their emotions, demonstrate empathy, and improve their social interaction skills.

The findings of this study are further supported by the hypothesis test conducted using the paired-samples t-test, which yielded a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000. This value is below the significance threshold of 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$); therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. In addition, the calculated t-value was −20.821, while the critical t-value was 2.36462. Because the absolute calculated t-value (20.821) exceeds the critical t-value (2.36462), it can be concluded that a statistically significant difference exists between the pre-test and post-test results.

The findings demonstrate that implementing the *role-playing* technique through group counseling is effective in improving the emotional intelligence of students in Class VIII E at UPTD SMPN 16 Kota Kupang during the 2025/2026 academic year. With improved emotional intelligence, students are expected to regulate their emotions more effectively, demonstrate empathy toward others, and establish positive social relationships both within and beyond the school environment. These findings indicate that implementing the role-playing technique through group counseling not only improves students' emotional intelligence scores statistically but also supports the development of Goleman's five emotional intelligence components: self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. Therefore, this study provides empirical evidence that role playing is an effective guidance and counseling strategy for helping students develop

the emotional competencies necessary for their personal and social lives.

The findings are consistent with the research conducted by Khusnul & Djanah (2021), who reported that the role-playing technique through group counseling was effective in improving students' emotional intelligence. Their study identified this technique as an effective method for enhancing the emotional intelligence of junior high school students.

Therefore, implementing the role-playing technique through group counseling can serve as an effective alternative guidance and counseling service to help improve students' emotional intelligence.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings regarding the effectiveness of implementing the role-playing technique through group counseling to improve the emotional intelligence of students in Class VIII E at UPTD SMPN 16 Kota Kupang during the 2025/2026 academic year, it can be concluded that implementing the role-playing technique through group counseling is effective in improving students' emotional intelligence.

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Conflict of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions (Optional)
The authors contributed to the conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data collection, formal analysis, and preparation of the original manuscript. All authors contributed to reviewing the manuscript and approved the final version for publication.

Generative AI Disclosure
Generative AI tools were used to assist with language refinement and manuscript preparation. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and final content of the article.

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AUTHOR QUALITY CHECK

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