Enhancing Social Skills in University Students through Strengths-Based Counseling: A Literature Review Utilizing the Strengths Perspective Framework

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Abstract: Strength-based counseling are grounded in the principles of positive psychology, emphasizing the recognition and development of individual strengths to enhance personal and interpersonal achievement. This approach fosters self-awareness and better relationships by encouraging individuals to recognize their strengths and those of others. Research indicates that a strengths-based approach can lead to a 50% increase in social relationships. The theory encompasses ten key propositions, including the ability to adapt and self-improve, the relationship between strengths and basic psychological needs, and the capacity for ongoing strength development influenced by various factors. Additionally, it highlights the variability of strength levels based on environmental context, the dialectical nature of strengths arising from challenges, and the importance of encouragement and effort recognition in motivating change. Ultimately, this model reinforces the significance of hope as a catalyst for transforming dysfunctional behaviors, fostering resilience, and promoting social competence.

Keywords: Social Skills, University Students, Strengths-Based Counseling

INTRODUCTION

Education is a crucial aspect for every nation. Various efforts have been made to enhance the quality of education, including curriculum improvement and teacher competency enhancement through training, seminars, and workshops (Riadi, Akhmad, 2017). The existence of an ideal teacher is a hope for all parties, reflected in their excellence in teaching, relationships with students, relationships with other teachers, interactions with external parties, knowledge, attitudes, and professional skills (Surya, Mohamad, 2015). For a teacher to possess good professional skills, they must have competencies in pedagogy, personality, professionalism, and social skills, as articulated in Law No. 14 of 2005 Article 1, which states: "A teacher is a professional educator whose main duties are to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and evaluate students."

Higher education institutions, as formal entities in the education world, are not only responsible for developing students' cognitive academic abilities but also for enhancing their social skills. In line with the views of various researchers, the essential abilities to be developed include cognitive, social, and personal skills, which play a critical role at every stage of human development from childhood to adulthood (Buchs, C., & Butera, F., 2015; Newman Kingery, J., Erdley, C. A., & Scarpulla, E., 2020; Nurasiah in Sukmawati, F., & Nashir, M. J., 2021).

Life skills education is not merely about vocational skills; the WHO (1997) defines life skills as the abilities that enable an individual to adapt and behave positively, allowing them to effectively face various demands and challenges in life. Life skills encompass five types: 1. self-knowledge; 2. thinking skills; 3. social skills; 4. academic skills; and 5. vocational skills. Social skills are a part of life skills that guide individuals to achieve success in their social lives by enabling them to interact and respond appropriately to others (Ananto, P., 2018; Rachmah, 2018).

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Skills are examined in three sub-categories of soft skills (Achmadi, T. A., Anggoro, A. B., Irmayanti, I., Rahmatin, L. S., & Anggriyani, D., 2020), namely thinking skills, social skills, and personal skills. Thinking skills include creativity and innovation, critical and logical thinking, flexibility, problem-solving, analytical skills, communication literacy, collaboration, and interdisciplinary skills. Social skills encompass teamwork, perspective-taking, professional ethics, tolerance, self-awareness, interpersonal skills, and cross-cultural competence. Personal skills involve responsibility and accountability, lifelong learning, leadership, emotional intelligence, negotiation, and entrepreneurship. One essential skill that students need to possess is social skills, which involve communicating and interacting effectively with peers, educators, administrative staff, parents, and the community (Notanubun, Z., 2019). However, it is important to note that each individual has different levels of social skills, especially when entering their first year of college. Students face tasks such as completing academic assignments, managing stress during their studies, and adapting socially to overcome feelings of loneliness and isolation (Agustini, N. M. Y. A., & Andayani, B., 2017).

Socialization abilities are divided into eight areas: 1) influence - using effective tactics to persuade others; 2) communication - listening and responding to others; 3) conflict management - managing disagreements through negotiation; 4) leadership - inspiring and guiding others, both individually and in groups; 5) change catalyst - instilling or managing change; 6) relationship building - cultivating instrumental relationships with others; 7) collaboration and cooperation - working together with others toward a common goal; and 8) teamwork - promoting group efforts to achieve common objectives (Goleman in Praditsang, M., & Hanafi, Z., 2015). Therefore, these academic and non-academic issues impact students' efforts to develop their potential and acquire skills necessary for their lives. The phenomenon observed is that not all students recognize the importance of understanding themselves, understanding others, and meaningfully interacting with others to enhance their quality of life. In general, they are projected to become educators who will be in constant contact with or serve humans after completing their studies (Supriatna, M., 2010).

Based on several research findings, there are ten key soft skills needed by students in the 21st century, which include: 1) social responsibility and accountability; 2) literate communication; 3) professional ethics; 4) adaptability; 5) collaboration skills; 6) complex problem-solving; 7) creativity and innovation; 8) self-awareness; 9) critical and logical thinking; and 10) understanding of diversity. Among these ten soft skills, Arnata highlights the ability to work in teams, while Taylor emphasizes communication skills, and the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) focuses on problem-solving abilities, which are highly demanded in the workforce (Achmadi, T. A., Anggoro, A. B., Irmayanti, I., Rahmatin, L. S., & Anggriyani, D., 2020).

For higher education institutions, it is essential to have students with social skills, as this is an important indicator for quickly and easily finding desired jobs aligned with their professional backgrounds. Students with strong social abilities are also considered more productive in the workplace, as socially adept individuals tend to promote responsibility, job orientation, and conflict resolution skills in their work environment (Reynani, S., 2023). Data collected from two private universities in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, indicate that 43.5% of students exhibit deficiencies in social skills, evidenced by low scores related to self-assertion regarding positive influence and self-esteem, as well as difficulties in social interactions related to student adaptation (Pereira et al., 2014; Bolsoni-Silva et al., 2010, in De Almeida Santos, Z., & Benevides Soares, A., 2018).

Izzati (Ani, K., & Lestari, P., 2022) states that students with high social skills tend to have positive social environments and receive support from many individuals due to their self-regulation, ability to articulate ideas effectively, participation in discussions, collaboration, active listening, and appreciation for others, as well as involvement in organizational activities. In the context of campus learning, communication and cooperation skills play a significant role in achieving learning objectives. Furthermore, social skills hold crucial importance in community life, particularly for adolescents and adults (Ohrt, J. H., Clarke, P. B., & Conley, A. H., 2018; Sukmawati, F., & Nashir, M. J., 2021). Additionally, important predictors of students' life satisfaction include self-esteem, social skills, academic achievement, socioeconomic status, social engagement in political and religious activities, health, race, age, social participation, and culture (Diener & Diener; Dorahy et al.; Duran-Oguz & Tezer; Pavot; Tuzgöl-Dost; in Ozben, S., 2013).

The development and maintenance of social skills remain significant throughout the lifespan. Although much of the current literature has focused on the early development of social skills, social interactions continue to play a critical role in early, mid, and late adulthood. In fact, several studies show that social interaction and support actually enhance the physical and mental health of adults (Campbell, C., Hansen, D. J., & Nangle, D. W., 2010). Research conducted by Walker, Calvin, and Ramsey (Caldarella, P., & Merrell, K. W., 1997) indicates that

individuals who have difficulty adapting to social interactions with teachers or peers are at a higher risk of experiencing academic, social, and emotional problems, which may lead to future delinquent and aggressive behaviors. These findings align with the perspectives stated by Segrin & Flora; Ward, Sylva, & Gresham (Burke, T. J., Woszidlo, A., & Segrin, C., 2012), which assert that individuals with low social skills are vulnerable to psychosocial problems, such as loneliness in the face of stress and inadequate conflict management abilities.

Thus, it is essential to possess good social skills in order to express a range of feelings and to read the emotional states of others more easily, significantly within ongoing relationships, and to successfully manage relational issues by considering others' perspectives (Demir, M., Jaafar, J., Bilyk, N., & Mohd Ariff, M. R., 2012). Social skills are defined as the abilities that enable individuals to communicate, seek assistance, meet their needs appropriately, interact with others, form friendships, and develop healthy interpersonal relationships (Yuniar, N. F., 2021). Therefore, social skills are a crucial determinant of adequate psychosocial adjustment, necessitating their healthy development and maintenance throughout life (Riggio, R. E., Watring, K. P., & Throckmorton, B., 1993). Individuals with social skills and good communication competence tend to succeed in both organizational and interpersonal contexts (Segrin, C., McNelis, M., & Swiatkowski, P., 2016) and achieve success in social, emotional, and cognitive development (Bellini, S., Peters, J. K., Benner, L., & Hopf, A., 2007).

When individuals lack good social skills, it can result in low self-esteem, feelings of embarrassment, unhappiness, dissatisfaction, loneliness, difficulty in joining groups, and adapting to social environments. The impact of inadequate social skills can hinder adaptation to adult life, potentially harming their psychological well-being, and can be a significant factor contributing to depression, social anxiety, schizophrenia, and unhappiness in marriage (Argyle & Henderson in Argyle, M., & Lu, L., 1990; Riggio, R. E., Watring, K. P., & Throckmorton, B., 1993; Segrin, C., & Flora, J., 2000; Ozben, S., 2013). Low social skills can also lead to disruptions in social spheres, including decreased academic performance, difficulties in peer interactions, feelings of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and other psychological issues. Moreover, low social skills can impede an individual's ability to develop meaningful social relationships, often resulting in social isolation and withdrawal from social interactions (Bellini, S., Peters, J. K., Benner, L., & Hopf, A., 2007). Social anxiety may manifest in an individual's inability to initiate conversations, speak effectively, comprehend verbal communication from others, and express their desires while in social groups, often leading them to become merely good listeners (Bolsoni-Silva, A. T., & Loureiro, S. R., 2014; Qadaruddin, M., 2022).

Communication and collaboration skills are crucial points in individual skill development, along with knowledge mastery, as they play a significant role in an individual's success in competing in the 5.0 society—particularly concerning academic achievement, interpersonal relationships, individual well-being, and facilitating interpersonal interactions, generating effective work outcomes, and impacting career and job success (Wu, Y. H. S., 2008; Burke, T. J., Woszidlo, A., & Segrin, C., 2012; Pasiali & Clark in Sumani, S., Kadafi, A., Purnomosasi, L. K. D., & Prasasti, P. A. T., 2022).

As a result, individuals with a lower cultural orientation tend to use direct communication in their interactions, while those from cultures with a higher orientation often rely more on non-verbal communication (Chen and Starosta in Wawra, D., 2013). People accustomed to direct communication styles may be less trained in interpreting non-verbal and emotional cues during their enculturation processes. Therefore, there is a need for intensive social awareness training in the context of intercultural communication to improve their ability to decode and interpret non-verbal and emotional messages. Consequently, social skills training is essential, which identifies the unique social difficulties of individuals and provides them with the knowledge and skills required to interact effectively across various situations and to utilize interpersonal competencies appropriately. Thus, social skills encompass the ability to communicate well, accurately, and effectively with others (Chapdelaine, R. F., & Alexitch, L. R., 2004; Purwadi, M. S., 2021).

A variety of strategies and counseling models have been developed by experts in an effort to enhance life skills, particularly those related to social life, including: social skills training programs (Affouneh, S., Mahamid, F. A., Berte, D. Z., Shaqour, A. Z., & Shayeb, M., 2021), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) (Affouneh, S., Mahamid, F. A., Berte, D. Z., Shaqour, A. Z., & Shayeb, M., 2021; Alsubaie, S. M., 2023), group counseling (Qana'a, M., & Nawangsih, E., 2018), Social Skill Training (Witarso, L. S., & Utoyo, D. B., 2018), psychoeducational techniques, living activities, relaxation, and cognitive restructuring (Bortolatto, M. D. O., Wagner, M. F., & Lopes, F. M., 2022); and self-management training programs utilizing cognitive techniques (Chudari, I. N. M., 2016).

Social skills, according to Stephen's theory (Cartledge & Milburn, in Qana'a, M., & Nawangsih, E., 2018), consist of four aspects: (1) Environmental Behavior, which reflects an individual's social behavior in recognizing and interacting with their environment; (2) Interpersonal Behavior, which demonstrates an individual's social behavior in recognizing and establishing relationships with others (friends or teachers); (3) Self-Related Behavior, which indicates an individual's social behavior towards themselves; and (4) Task-Related Behavior, which represents an individual's behavioral response to academic tasks. The Stephens theory (Cartledge & Milburn, in Qana'a, M., & Nawangsih, E., 2018) explains that social skills involve two dimensions: cognitive and affective, which are critical determinants of social function. First, the cognitive dimension serves to regulate emotions and behaviors in alignment with the environment, encompassing social perception and cognitive restructuring. Second, social perception is an individual's ability to accept and assess occurring situations while determining appropriate behaviors in response to the actions of others, including problem-solving skills and self-regulation.

The strengths-based approach offers hope that can serve as a powerful motivator for individuals to achieve success both academically and interpersonally (Karl Menninger in Jones-Smith, E., 2011). In other words, the development of strengths influences relationships with others by enhancing self-awareness and awareness of others. When recognizing one's own strengths, it is also important to acknowledge the strengths of others. The development of these strengths involves self-awareness of personal potential, recognition of others' strengths, and the ability to manage one's own strengths. This is further supported by the findings of Holt-Lunstad, Smith, and Layton (Rashid, T., 2015), who, through a meta-analysis of 148 studies involving 308,849 participants, discovered a 50% increase in social relationships through a strengths-based approach.

Social skills that encompass strength-based cognitive-behavioral aspects are employed by individuals during their interactions with others, beginning with non-verbal behaviors such as eye contact and body language, and extending to more complex verbal behaviors such as delivering solutions to fulfill the needs of others. Thus, social skills—including constructive dialogue, effective communication, and rational thinking—represent one of the main pillars in forming a normally and mentally healthy personality (Alsubaie, S. M., 2018). Therefore, the development of social skills through guidance and counseling is grounded in developmental and social learning theories or cognitive social learning theories (Cubukcu and Gultekin in Gökel, Ö., & Dağlı, G., 2017). In social cognitive theory (imitation, modeling, and observation), behavior is the result of continuous interaction between personal conditions and the environment. The environmental conditions shape behavior through learning, while individual behavior also shapes the environment. One aspect of social skills related to cognitive dimensions is cognitive restructuring, which rebuilds the belief system from irrational to rational by understanding often negative thoughts and confronting feelings of helplessness through a more positive and realistic self-perception (Cartledge & Milburn in Qana'a, M., & Nawangsih, E., 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strength, according to Elsie Jones-Smith (2011), is defined as something or an aspect that supports an individual in facing life's challenges or enhancing the quality of life for themselves and others. Strength is not a static personality trait; rather, it is the result of a dynamic process influenced by an individual's cultural context. This strength serves as a perspective that assists individuals in understanding information, interacting with others, viewing time and structure, adapting to or making changes in life, and establishing communication. Meanwhile, Buckingham and Clifton (Jones-Smith, E., 2011) define strength as "consistent performance that approaches perfection in an activity," achieved through a combination of three key elements: talent (natural patterns of thought, feelings, or behaviors that recur), knowledge (facts and lessons learned), and skills (steps taken to perform an activity). This aligns with Linley's assertion (Galloway, R., Reynolds, B., & Williamson, J., 2020) that the term "strength" refers to an individual's ability in various activities, ways of thinking, and character traits believed to be authentic, energizing, and high-performing.

The stages in a strengths-based guidance and counseling approach (Smith, E. J. in Suranata, K., Atmoko, A., & Hidayah, N., 2017) include: 1) Building Rapport: Establishing a good relationship between the counselor and the client (This stage serves as an essential foundation in the counseling process, where the counselor creates a trusting and comfortable relationship with the client. The focus is on fostering a positive atmosphere that allows the client to feel accepted during counseling sessions); 2) Identifying Strengths: The counselor helps the client view themselves from a strengths-based perspective, highlighting their physical, emotional, social, cultural, economic, or environmental capabilities. The client is encouraged to regard themselves as a resilient survivor rather than a victim; 3) Conducting Problem Assessment: The counselor explores how the client perceives their

problems, ensuring mutual understanding to produce effective solutions; 4) Fostering Motivation: The counselor provides positive reinforcement rather than subjective praise, as praise tends to create hierarchical relationships, suggesting that the client must do something to please the counselor and prove themselves worthy of praise. Positive reinforcement can affirm the value of the client's participation, contributions, and cooperation, while the counselor demonstrates encouragement by listening without interruption until the client has finished speaking. During this stage, the counselor helps the client instill hope and view difficulties as opportunities to discover solutions. Tools such as a hope bag can be used to trigger reflections on future aspirations (the counselor instructs the client to create three wish papers, then asks the client to select one paper and reflect on how that wish could change their life and what they would like to change); 5) Framing Solutions: The counselor uses techniques such as exception questions to explore exceptions in the client's problems and seek practical solutions by identifying and evaluating how the client has coped with their challenges in the past and present. This process involves delving into the client's life story and collaborating to develop realistic action plans. Techniques such as reframing—particularly forgiveness techniques—help the client see the positive aspects of the negative experiences they have endured; 6) Developing Strengths and Skills: At this stage, the counselor builds the client's awareness that they are capable of addressing problems or challenges in their lives. The counselor motivates the client to enhance their self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. This process includes the development of social competencies, the ability to make positive decisions, and nurturing healthy relationships with others. 7) Empowering: Empowering is the process of recognizing and encouraging the client's competencies through active collaboration between the counselor and the client during counseling sessions. Throughout this process, the counselor works alongside the client to develop critical awareness of the interconnectedness in the client's life reality, exploring the origins of the client's actions, and focusing on the context of the problems they face. The counselor acknowledges that the client has made efforts to seek solutions, even if the results vary. 8) Changing Perspectives: The counselor facilitates the client in changing their viewpoint regarding life events through meaning alteration and reframing to recognize positive aspects of negative life events. The client is encouraged to find new meanings in life experiences that enhance their resilience through acknowledgment, acceptance, understanding, and learning that there are always choices in every difficulty. 9) Developing Resilience: The counselor assists the client in building a positive mindset, adaptive coping skills, and realistic expectations for themselves and others; 10) Evaluation and Termination: The counselor reviews the achievement of counseling goals, analyzes the factors leading to changes in the client, and assesses whether further counseling is necessary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strength-Based Therapy rests on the principles of positive psychology, which views individuals positively. This approach assumes that every individual possesses potential that should be recognized and developed by themselves. As a relatively new approach in the field of guidance and counseling, this therapy emphasizes uncovering and strengthening that potential. Strengths-based guidance and counseling is a counseling approach that assists individuals in recognizing and identifying their strengths while shifting the focus from problems to assets in facing everyday life challenges (Smith, E. J., 2011). The strengths-based approach is a strategy that identifies, applies, and develops individual strengths to enhance learning and well-being (Galloway, R., Reynolds, B., & Williamson, J., 2020). Nevertheless, the concept of strengths-based guidance and counseling aligns with the developmental guidance and counseling concept, which comprehensively emphasizes the development of individual potential to achieve optimal growth at each stage of development (Galassi, J. P., Griffin, D., & Akos, P., 2008).

The strengths-based model, according to Elsie Jones Smith (2011), refers to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, which explains human motivation to develop and express strengths divided into two groups: deficiency needs and growth needs. Deci and Ryan proposed three needs that do not necessarily need to be fulfilled sequentially: the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In comparison, the strengths-based theory posits that individuals have an innate need to recognize their strengths as part of the drive to fulfill basic psychological needs, such as belonging, affiliation, competence, feeling secure, autonomy, and finding meaning and purpose in life. Additionally, these psychological needs encompass relational aspects, namely the need to feel connected and have relationships with others. Frankl's logotherapy serves as a foundation for strengths-based therapy by emphasizing the importance of the search for meaning in facing difficulties. Furthermore, the strengths-based model references concepts from multicultural literature, asserting that each culture has unique strengths. Some cultures, such as collectivist cultures in various Asian regions, emphasize certain values, such as social competence

and connectivity skills. These values play a crucial role in protecting individuals from adverse environmental effects, including racial discrimination (Smith, E. J., 2011).

This strengths-based approach is also grounded in phenomenology, which emphasizes that individuals actively shape their own realities rather than passively responding to environmental influences (Rashid, T., 2015). The strengths-based model developed by Smith aligns with the four stages in Adlerian psychotherapy or individual psychology, which are: 1) Establishing relationships based on empathy; 2) Understanding the individual's lifestyle, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors; 3) Developing insights or deep understanding of oneself; and 4) Committing to change and initiating new behaviors. In Adlerian therapy, the process begins with an interview to evaluate the individual's strengths and weaknesses, as well as to gather information about their family and social environment.

Strength is defined as the intrinsic potential possessed by each individual, which can be leveraged to enhance or optimize personal abilities across various aspects, including personal-social development, learning, and career planning, such as education, social life, personal problem-solving, and career planning. For certain groups, strength is defined as a process of constructing and developing individual potential through recognition of one's strengths, acting as a psychological element or mechanism that contributes to forming excellence or positive values within oneself (Galassi, J. P., Griffin, D., & Akos, P., 2008; Herawati, A. A., & Supriatna, M. M., 2023).

Meanwhile, Bellack and Hersen (Sumantri, Y. K., 2010) define social competence as an individual's ability to express both positive and negative feelings within personal contexts without losing social reinforcement/support. In other words, social competence is influenced by the situations individuals face, which can affect their success or difficulties in interacting. The situational characteristics that influence the development of social competence include: 1) The level of intimacy that can shape positive or negative feelings; 2) Human characteristics based on status, age, and gender; 3) Norms that determine how individuals should respect one another; 4) The people involved in those situations.

Social competence encompasses a set of behaviors that can be learned, providing individuals with the ability to establish meaningful relationships and avoid irrational social reactions. This competence includes the ability to interact with others in social contexts that are deemed appropriate and aligned with societal values and norms. Slawmouski and Dann add that knowledge and social competence enable individuals to understand, predict, and control the behaviors of others in social interactions. A new theory associated with social competence is the social information processing theory explained by Crick and Dodge, which highlights the importance of accurately understanding social motivations to enhance competence and interaction success (Daraee, M., Salehi, K., & Fakhr, M., 2016).

Social competence can be acquired through training in social presentation, social scanning, and social flexibility. Social presentation teaches individuals to understand and apply appropriate social norms to behave according to specific cultures. Meanwhile, social scanning involves the ability to observe non-verbal messages and understand the meanings of those cues during interactions, demonstrating that understanding verbal messages alone is not sufficient for effective communication. The competence of social flexibility is crucial, as interpersonal interactions are dynamic and must be adjusted to different social contexts. Combining all these skills helps individuals adjust their behavior based on information obtained from social scanning (Wu, Y. H. S., 2008).

When linking the Values in Action (VIA) from positive psychology with the framework of social competence theory, Peterson and Seligman (Rahman, A. A., 2019) mention several important character strengths, including: love of learning (the ability to master new knowledge and skills both independently and formally), perspective (the ability to provide viewpoints understood by others), teamwork (the ability to work effectively in groups, loyalty, and contribution), leadership (the ability to organize and build good relationships within groups so that all members can work optimally), honesty (speaking truthfully, presenting oneself authentically, and taking responsibility for one's words and actions), love (focusing on the importance of close relationships with others), kindness (exhibiting good behavior toward others, helping, and showing compassion), and social intelligence (awareness of one's own and others' emotions and the ability to position oneself appropriately in social environments).

This aligns with Rachmahana's assertion (Herawati, A. A., & Supriatna, M. M., 2023) that the primary goal of the strengths-based approach is to help individuals enhance their understanding of themselves and their surrounding environment while strengthening their ability to leverage awareness of strengths in facing various situations. This also includes the capacity to follow internal guidance and take responsibility for every decision made. The connection between social competence and strengths-based guidance and counseling is explained by Elsie Jones-Smith (2011) in her book "Spotlighting the Strengths of Every Single Student" as follows: 1)

Currently, deficit-based educational systems tend to focus on individuals' weaknesses, neglecting the significant potential they possess, including social skills such as communication, empathy, and collaboration. In contrast, the strengths-based approach helps individuals recognize their potential, understand themselves, and build better relationships with others; 2) The strengths-based mindset emphasizes appreciation of individuals' strengths, including interpersonal abilities such as building good relationships and resolving conflicts constructively; 3) Scientific understanding of brain development, emotions, and learning provides a strong foundation for educators and counselors to implement strength-based practices in education; 4) Emotional conceptualization shows that aspects of social competence such as empathy, communication, decision-making, cooperation, and conflict management result from proper emotional "nurturing"; 5) The strengths-based approach in the academic realm also reinforces social competence. Through collaboration, discussion, and sharing ideas in a supportive environment that encourages the exploration of strengths, individuals learn to interact effectively; 6) Empathy is at the core of social competence. A caring and empathetic classroom helps individuals develop healthy relationships, understand others' perspectives, and feel connected to the community; 7) The strengths-based approach often involves developing social competencies such as resilience, stress management, and teamwork. By understanding and being in their "zone of strength," individuals can find the best ways to succeed in their social environments; 8) Educators who understand their strengths can serve as effective role models in social competencies such as empathy, communication, and leadership, inspiring others to develop similar skills.

Strength-based guidance and counseling can provide hope that serves as a powerful motivator for individuals to achieve success both academically and interpersonally (Karl Menninger in Jones-Smith, E., 2011). In other words, the development of strengths influences relationships with others because it enhances self-awareness as well as awareness of others. When recognizing one's strengths, we also begin to acknowledge the strengths possessed by others. The development of these strengths involves self-awareness of personal potential, recognition of others' strengths, and the ability to manage one's own strengths. This is also supported by the findings of Holt-Lunstad, Smith, and Layton (Rashid, T., 2015), who, through a meta-analysis of 148 studies with 308,849 participants, found a 50% increase in social relationships through a strengths-based approach.

The strengths-based theory encompasses ten main propositions that serve as the theoretical framework in strengths-based guidance and counseling. Below is a summary of each proposition: 1) Adaptive Abilities and Self-Improvement: Humans possess the ability to improve themselves and continuously engage in adaptive patterns toward their environment, whether healthily or unhealthily. Individual strengths develop alongside efforts to self-improve during the adaptation process with their surroundings. Everyone has self-improvement mechanisms, although their effectiveness may vary. These mechanisms allow individuals to develop strengths for survival, which can be archetypal and possibly embedded in their genetic structure; 2) Strengths as Responses to Basic Needs: Human strengths arise from a combination of internal and external factors that help fulfill basic psychological needs such as safety, belonging, and a sense of meaning and purpose in life. For example, social competency develops to meet relational and connectivity needs (connecting with others); 3) Capacity for Strength Development: Every individual has the potential for strength development throughout life, influenced by genetic heritage and social, cultural, economic, and political environments. Resilience plays a crucial role in strength development; 4) Variability of Strength Levels: The level of individual strengths varies based on environmental context, social interactions, and available resources. Individuals raised in resource-poor environments may develop different types of strengths compared to those in resource-rich supportive environments; 5) Strengths as the Result of Dialectics: Strength often emerges from struggles faced in overcoming difficulties, such as balancing happiness and sadness. Counseling helps individuals achieve optimal balance between these dialectical elements; 6) Strengths as a Buffer for Mental Health: Awareness of internal strengths helps individuals overcome obstacles and serves as a safeguard against mental disorders. This awareness enhances authentic self-esteem and self-efficacy, aiding individuals in maintaining their mental health; 7) Focusing on Strengths to Enhance Motivation: Individuals are more motivated to change when those around them focus on their strengths rather than their weaknesses or problems; 8) Encouragement as a Change Factor: Encouragement is a primary resource and form of positive reinforcement intentionally provided by those around, both verbally and relationally, serving as a key driver for behavioral change. Strengths-based educators utilize various encouragement techniques to motivate behavioral change; 9) Value Efforts: In the strengths-based approach, the counselor respects the client's efforts in facing challenges. This philosophy creates a classroom atmosphere of mutual respect and builds self-confidence; 10) Hope as a Trigger for Change: Hope for better outcomes motivates individuals to change dysfunctional behaviors. This sense of optimism helps clients remain positively engaged in the educational process and achieve their goals.

CONCLUSIONS

Strength-based guidance and counseling represent a transformative approach rooted in positive psychology, focusing on the inherent strengths of individuals to enhance their capacity for personal and interpersonal success. By fostering self-awareness and recognizing the strengths of others, this approach empowers individuals to navigate life's challenges effectively. The ten propositions outlined in this framework underline the significance of adaptation, the relationship between strengths and basic psychological needs, and the potential for continuous development influenced by environmental factors. Furthermore, the emphasis on encouragement, acknowledgement of efforts, and the promotion of hope reinforces the role of social competence and resilience in achieving optimal outcomes. Overall, integrating strengths-based methodologies into counseling practices not only supports individuals in their personal growth but also cultivates a more positive and supportive social environment.

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