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## Factors Affecting Competence of School Counselors in South Sulawesi

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**Abstract:** This article aims at exploring the profile of school counsellor's competency in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, and factors that affected it. The study used quantitative approach, involving four independent variables, age, work experience, educational background, and professional certification experience of the school counsellor, and one dependent variable, the score of the competency test. The population of the study was 1949 school counsellors who took competency test administered by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2015. There were 322 samples taken using proportional random sampling technique, representing school counsellors from SMP (junior high school), SMA (senior high school), and SMK (vocational schools). The result of the study showed that the average score of the competency test was still below the minimum standard set by the Government. The study also presented that there was a negative influence between age and the score, and positive influence between educational background and teacher certification program, and the results of competency test. Yet, it was found there was no significant influence between working experience and the results of competency test.

**Keywords:** Competency Test; School Counsellors; Indonesia

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### INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Laws No. 14 Year 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers has been increasingly strengthening the state recognition to teacher as a professional work. It is stated that teachers are professional educators, and their main task is to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and to evaluate learners. The implication of this Law is,

teachers are required to hold qualification and level of competences that are equivalent with the professional standard available. A good teacher is an important factor to improve the successful opportunities to all students (McArdle, 2010).

School counselor is one kind of educator in school. They are also required to master the competences according to professional standard of counselor. in the Regulation issued by the



Minister of National Education No. 27/ 2008 on Standard of Academic Qualification and Counselor Competencies, it is stated that school counselors must hold at least Bachelor Degree qualification and master four areas of competence, namely pedagogical competence, professional competence, personal competence, and social competence. School counselor requires unique training that is different from those of clinical mental health counselors (Kozlowski, & Huss, 2013). They must be prepared to function in various roles to support students in their academic life, career, and personal/social development (Kozlowski, & Huss, 2013).

In order to map teacher competencies, including school counselors, the Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia has conducted competency tests in 2015 to all registered teachers. The teacher competency test is known as Uji Kompetensi Guru (UKG). The competency test is intended to (1) obtain information about teacher's competency, especially pedagogical and professional competence based on the standard determined by the Government; (2) provide recommendation to design the type of training and education for teacher professional education; and (3) give consideration for policy formulation on teachers' reward and appreciation (Directorate General of Teachers and Education Personnel, 2015).

The results of the UKG conducted by MoNE shows that the national average score of teacher competency is 56.69 (Surapranata, 2016). There were only 15.95% teachers who gained 71 or above, and 12.54% scored below 40. In South Sulawesi, the average score was only 52.55, and ranked 18 of 34 provinces in Indonesia. The average score for school counselor nationally got only 59.41 for senior high school counselors and 58.34 for vocational counselors (Directorate General of Teachers and Teachers, 2016).

These results raise concerns for educational stakeholders. Eleven years after the Teacher Law was issued, and after teacher certification program introduced in 2007, teachers' competence on pedagogy and professional is still low. Especially when these results were compared with the targeted minimum standard which is constantly being increased every year. This article focuses on examining aspects of each competence to find out which part of it requires further development. It also aims at understanding factors influence the

competence and what is the most appropriate strategy used to improve those competences.

### School Counselor as a Professional Educator

As a professional educator, school counselors are required to master competence according to the standard of Indonesian professional counselor competency. According to the Minister of National Education Regulation No. 27/2008 on Standard of Academic Qualification and Counselor Competencies, there are four areas of competence for school counselors, namely pedagogical competence, professional competence, personal competence, and social competence. The Minister of Education and Culture only examines two aspects of competence, pedagogical and professional competence.

Pedagogical competence includes three core competencies. They are (1) Mastering theory and education praxis, (2) Applying physiological and psychological development and counselee behavior, and (3) Mastering the essence of guidance and counseling service in path, type, and level of education unit. Professional competence consists of seven core competencies: (1) mastering the concept and praxis of the assessment to understand the condition, needs, and problems of the counselee, (2) mastering the theoretical framework and praxis guidance and counseling, (3) designing Guidance and counseling programs, (4) implementing comprehensive Counseling and Counseling program, (5) assessing process and the results of Guidance and counseling activities, (6) having awareness and commitment to professional ethics, and (7) mastering the concepts and praxis of research in guidance and counseling.

In order to achieve these competences, The Indonesian National Qualification Framework states that these competences can be achieved through four pathways, namely, independent learning experience, working experience, formal education, and certification program (Directorate General of Higher Education, 2010; Sailah, 2011 ). These four possible ways are themselves also determinant factors that allegedly influence the achievement of the competency level of school counselors.

Studies on teachers' competences show that there are various factors related to teacher competences. It is indicated that there is an influence of gender and age to teacher



competence (Anbuthasan, & Balakrishnan, 2013). It is also revealed there was a tendency that the highest score achieved by teachers who were in the age of 30s, and it began to decrease when they reached the age of 40 and over (Gultom, 2013).

Another factor is related to working experience. For instance, it is showed that there was significant influence of working experience to the pedagogical competence of Madrasah Aliyah teachers in Kudus District (Ismanto, 2007). In addition, it is found that working experience as school counselors and admiration of the profession became predictor that significantly influenced the effectiveness of school counselor (Moyer, & Yu, 2012). Teachers' experiences had formed their ideology that consisted of idea about whom and what should be done to be a teacher (Kenyon, 2017).

Educational background was also considered as an influential factor. Some studies found that teachers' educational background had influenced teachers' competences. The researchers (Ismanto, 2007, Mustaqim, 2014, Syaikhul Alim, 2010) also found that teachers' educational background affected not only their competences, but also improve their professional identity.

A study conducted in the United States. They found that teacher certification programs significantly affect teacher performance (Darling & Bransford, 2007). The study also concluded that a properly managed teacher certification program would have an important contribution in improving the quality of education in a country. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of (Bond, 1998) about the impact of certification on teacher performance. Other study revealed that professional competences of SMK teachers were significantly influenced by principal's leadership, teachers' attitude towards the profession, and teachers' motivation (Saripudin, 2017).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Profile of Counselor Competency Test Result

The results of the analysis showed that the average score of UKG for school counselor was 56.10. The results of the analysis as summarized in Figure 1 also showed that most of school counselors' score were between 50 and 59. There were only 6 (1.85%) counselors who score  $\geq 80$ , while those who scored below 50 were

around 28.88%. The result also showed there were 80 (24.84%) counselors who met the passing standard.

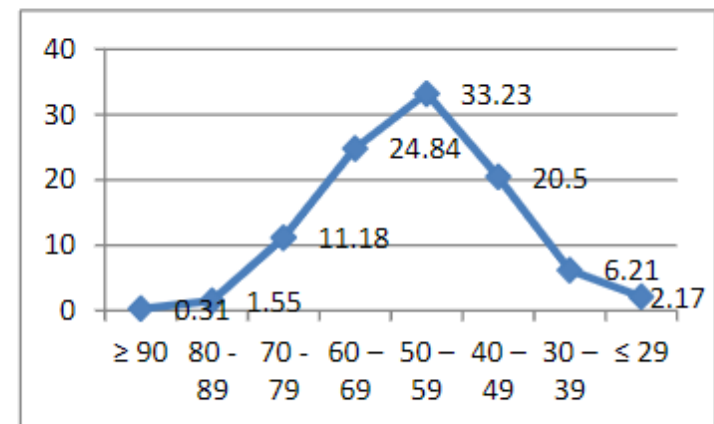


Figure 1 UKG Score of School Counselor

### The Influence of Age, Work Experience, Educational Background, and Certification Experience on School Counselor Competence

Table. Summary of Multiple Regression Test Results for Research Hypotheses

Variables Tested	Statistic values	p. Value	Ho Status
1. Age $\rightarrow$ UKG Score	t = -5.593	0.000	Rejected
2. Work experience $\rightarrow$ UKG Score	t = 0.286	0.775	Accepted
3. Educational Background $\rightarrow$ UKG Score	t = 11.048	0.000	Rejected
4. Certification $\rightarrow$ UKG Score	t = 5.968	0.000	Rejected
5. Age, Educational Background, Certification $\rightarrow$ UKG Score	F = 84.706	0.000	Rejected
R-Square	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.666		
Adjusted R-Square	Adj.R <sup>2</sup> = 0.439		

The following statistical test shows the effect of four independent variables (age, work experience, educational background, and certification experience) to the results of counselor competence test, along with exposure of descriptive analysis results on each independent variable.

### Age and UKG Result

Table 1 shows the results of statistical analysis to test the hypothesis. It can be seen that there was a negative relationship between age and the competence score, where  $t = -5.593$  with  $p < \alpha 0.05$ . It can be said that the older the counselor, the lower the competence score.

Figure 2 show the same pattern between the score of pedagogical and professional competence and the overall UKG score. The lowest score were found in the aspect of pedagogical competences. For school counselors who were in the age  $< 25$ , the average score for UKG was 58.50. The UKG score started to incline at the age of 36 – 40 (UKG score = 57.17). The highest score achieved by the counselor at the age 41 – 45, which UK average score was 62.10. It began to decline for school counselor older than 45 years. The lowest score was found for school counselors who were in the age  $> 56$ , where the UKG average score was only 47.51. These patterns occurred in the score of pedagogical and professional competence, as well as in overall UKG score.

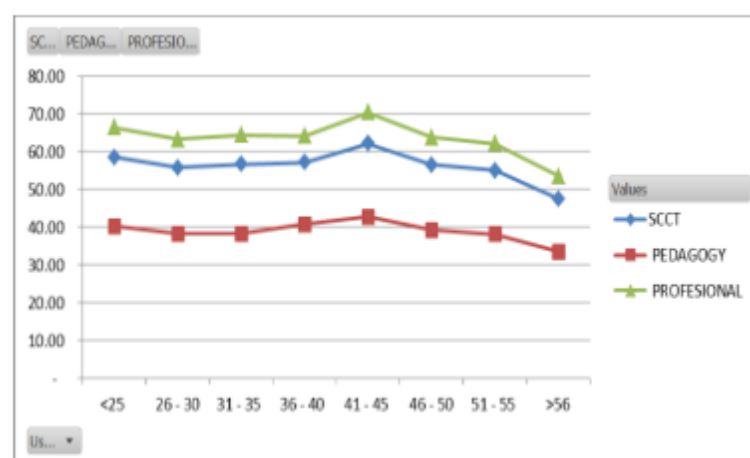


Figure 2. Average UKG Score and Age Range

### Work Experience and UKG Result

The statistical results shown in Table 1 shows that working experience did not influence significantly to school counselors' competence. It can be seen from the analysis where  $t = 0.286$  with  $p > \alpha 0.05$ . It can be concluded that the work

experience variable has no significant effect on the results of the SCCT.

The result of the descriptive analysis as shown in Figure 3 presents that the highest score was achieved at the 16-20 years of service, and decreased in line with the increasing employment. Professional competence scores tended to be in line with the total UKG score, while the highest pedagogical competence scores were found in 21-25 years of service.

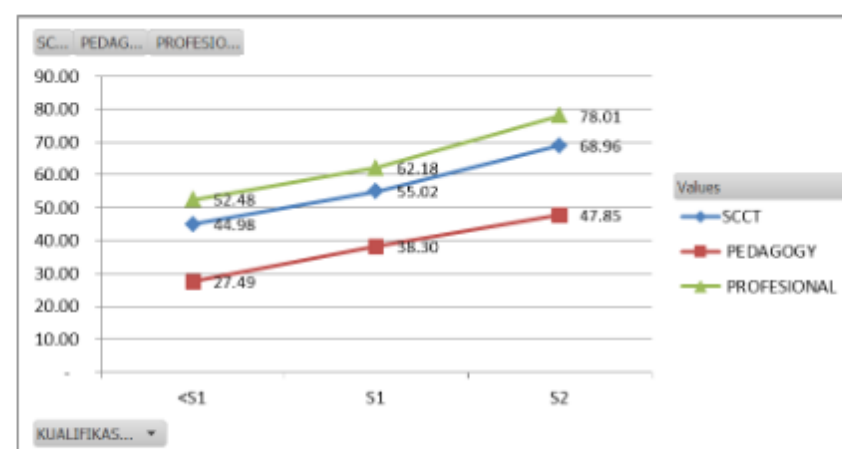


Figure 4 UKG and Educational Qualification

### Teacher Certification Program and UKG Results

The statistical results shows  $t = 5.968$  with  $p < \alpha 0.05$  which indicates positive influence of teacher certification program to UKG results. It can be seen there is a significant positive effect of the certification experience to the result of UKG. The participation of counselors in certification program contributes positively to their UKG score.

The results of the descriptive analysis as shown in Figure 5 indicates that school counselors who have joined certification program and hold teacher professional certification, showed higher average UKG score (59.13) than those who have not yet participated or have not passed teacher professional certification (average UKG Score = 52.20). This tendency applies not only to UKG score, but also to professional and pedagogical competency score.



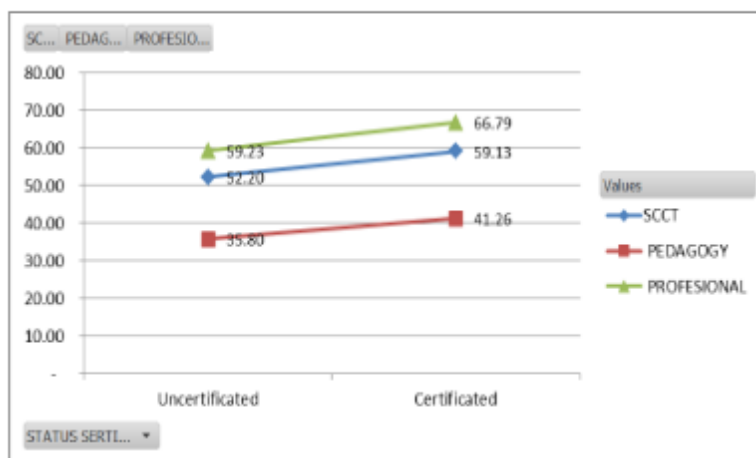


Figure 5 UKG and Teacher Certification Program

### Simultaneous effects of all variables to UKG Score

The statistical results for simultaneous effect of all variables found  $F = 84.706$  with  $p < \alpha 0.05$ . The result of determination test yield  $R^2 = 0.666$ . It can be concluded that there is a significant influence alongside the age variables, educational background, and teacher certification to UKG Score of school counselor in South Sulawesi, with a relative contribution of 0.666 or 66.6%.

### Discussion

The average UKG score achieved by the school counselor in South Sulawesi was only 56.10, which was still below the national average score of teacher competency test, 56.69 (Surapranata, 2016). The score was also below national average score of school counselor who worked in senior high school, 59.41, and those who were in vocational school, 58.34, (Directorate General of Teacher and Education Personnel, 2016). This score was also far from the target set in the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture (2016), where the minimum score for competency test were 65 in 2016, 70 in 2017, 75 in 2018, and 80 in 2019. This indicates the need for endeavor to improve the competence of counselors in South Sulawesi.

The result of analysis shows the tendency of negative influence of age factor to UKG Score. This is in line with the result of national mapping of teacher competence test in 2015 conducted by Directorate General of Teacher and Education Personnel. However, these results are inconsistent with the findings of (Anbuthasan, & Balakrishnan, 2013), who found that age had positive effect to teacher competence.

The negative influence of age to UKG score is thought to be related to school counselors' learning experience. Young

counselors are mostly university graduates who completed their study from university. Studying in university has allowed them to learn and explore more up to date curriculum and issues on guidance and counseling. These latest concepts become the reference in the compilation of the testing material for school counselor competence. Older counselors are the product of old education system. It affected the curriculum, and the learning outcomes. If these counselors do not upgrade themselves through independent learning, they will be left behind in understanding the aspects of pedagogical and professional competence measured in the competency test.

Surprisingly, this study found there is no significant influence of work experience to school counselor UKG score. This finding is different from what (Ismanto, 2007, Kanto, 2008, Yon, 1991). found in their study. The different results may be due to the differences in the indicators measured in the work experience variables. In this study, work experience is only measured by the working period (tenure) of the school counselor. It is found the longer the tenure does not necessarily mean to improve teachers' quality. It is necessary to explore more to examine the effect of work experience to school counselor competency.

The analysis also found that there is a significant influence of educational background to school counselor UKG score. This finding is in line with the findings of (Ismanto, 2007, Mustaqim, 2014, Syaikhul Alim, 2010) and teacher competence test results 2015 (Directorate General Teacher and Education Personnel, 2016). This result also supports the arguments regarding the need to increase the qualifications of school counselors. It also highlights the importance of education linearity in order to work as a professional school counselor.

Teacher certification program was also found to be influential to school counselor UKG score. This is in line with the results of the national mapping conducted by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2016. These results are also in line with studies conducted by (Bond, 1998, Darling & Bransford, 2007). This result implies that certification program has contributed positively to school counselors. According to the studies conducted by (Boyd, D., Goldhaber 2007, Kane, 2008) certified teachers can show better performance and have a positive impact on students which they serve than those who were not certified. It is found that certified school counselors showed higher work motivation and



had better job satisfaction than uncertified school counselor (Kanto, 20015).

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGEST

The average score of counselor competency test results in South Sulawesi is still far from the minimum competency standard set by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Government has set the score target (80), to be achieved this by the end of 2019. Seeing the result, it needs serious efforts to provide tailor made educational and training activities to improve the competence of school counselors.

There is a significant negative influence of age to school counselor UKG Score in South Sulawesi. The older the age, the lower their UKG Score. Work experience does not show significant influence school counselor UKG score. Yet, educational background and certification program do have a positive influence school counselor UKG score.

This study recommends that it is deemed necessary to give more serious attention to strengthen and improve school counselor capacity in South Sulawesi. It is critical to be done for the effectiveness and quality improvement of education service in schools. It is necessary to develop a sustainable professional development system in the field of counseling guidance in a more comprehensive and coherent manner involving an approach that supports independent learning and activities of school counselors.

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