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Development Of An Empathy Instrument For Junior High School Students

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Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengembangkan instrumen empati yang valid dan reliabel untuk peserta didik SMP. Penelitian menggunakan metode Research and Development (R&D) dengan mengadaptasi model Borg dan Gall. Instrumen dikembangkan berdasarkan empat aspek empati menurut Davis, yaitu perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, dan fantasy. Hasil validasi ahli menunjukkan persentase kelayakan sebesar 96,87% dan 87,50% dengan kategori layak. Hasil uji validitas menunjukkan seluruh 29 item dinyatakan valid, sedangkan uji reliabilitas menunjukkan instrumen memiliki reliabilitas tinggi. Hasil pengukuran terhadap 120 peserta didik menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas peserta didik berada pada kategori empati cukup (75 peserta didik). Dengan demikian, instrumen empati yang dikembangkan dinyatakan valid, reliabel, dan layak digunakan untuk mengukur empati peserta didik SMP.
Kata kunci: Empati, instrumen empati, peserta didik SMP

Abstract. This study aimed to develop a valid and reliable empathy instrument for junior high school students. The study employed a Research and Development (R&D) method by adapting the Borg and Gall model. The instrument was developed based on four dimensions of empathy proposed by Davis, namely perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy. The expert validation results showed feasibility percentages of 96.87% and 87.50%, both within the highly feasible category. The validity test revealed that all 29 items were valid, while the reliability test indicated high internal consistency. The results of administering the instrument to 120 students showed that the majority of students were in the moderate empathy category (75 students). Therefore, the developed empathy instrument is considered valid, reliable, and appropriate for measuring empathy among junior high school students.
Keywords: Empathy, empathy instrument, junior high school students

A. INTRODUCTION

Junior high school students are a group of early adolescents who are

experiencing physical, mental, social, and emotional changes and development. Hurlock (1989) states that most early adolescents experience emotional instability, such as being easily angered, having difficulty controlling their emotions, and tending to be sensitive. Research by Dewi & Yusri (2023) shows that some adolescents are not yet able to control and regulate their emotions. Similarly, Saputro (2022) found that adolescents are not yet able to regulate their emotions appropriately, which has an impact on their personal and social lives.

Empathy is one of the important abilities in adolescents' social-emotional development. Amseke & Radja (2023) state that adolescents who have self-understanding and are able to regulate their emotions will have high motivation and demonstrate concern for others. Khodijah (as cited in Damayanti et al., 2021) explains that emotional intelligence consists of five main components, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social skills, and empathy. Empathy encourages individuals to put themselves in situations experienced by others (Virly et al., 2023), as well as enabling individuals to understand the mental state of others (Auliyah & Flurentin, 2016).

However, previous studies indicate that empathy among adolescents and students remains an important area for development. Research has examined empathy-related interventions among adolescent students, including experiential learning, empathy training, and role-playing approaches (Nirmala et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2022; Mustakim et al., 2024).

The results of a preliminary study conducted at a junior high school in Bengkalis Regency showed that, out of 120 students, 75 scored between 81 and 101 (41–60%) on the empathy scale, which falls into the moderate category. The interview results revealed behaviors such as teasing one another, laughing at classmates who fell down, mocking classmates during classroom activities, taking classmates' belongings, and showing little concern for peers experiencing difficulties. Data obtained from the school counselor also indicated that some students were reluctant to share, frequently mocked one another, were unwilling

to cooperate, showed a lack of respect toward teachers, and displayed little sympathy for classmates experiencing difficulties.

Davis (1983) explains that empathy is an individual's ability to respond to the experiences of others by understanding their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, encompassing both cognitive and affective aspects. The inability to perceive or share the suffering of others may lead to deviant behavior (Nirmala et al., 2020). Therefore, empathy needs to be developed from an early age, as it plays an important role in adolescents' social lives.

A lack of empathy has a negative impact on adolescents' social relationships. Empathy requires awareness, attention, and practice, and it does not develop automatically (Nirmala et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2022). In the educational context, school counselors play an important role in enhancing students' empathy through guidance and counseling services (Virly et al., 2023). However, based on the conditions observed in the field, the services that have been implemented, such as classroom guidance and individual counseling, have not yet produced optimal results in improving students' empathy (school counselor interview, 2024).

Based on these problems, an instrument is needed to accurately and systematically measure students' level of empathy. Therefore, the development of an empathy instrument for junior high school students is essential. An empathy instrument is needed as a tool to measure students' level of empathy more accurately, so that it can be used as a basis for planning guidance and counseling services in schools.

The empathy instrument developed is expected to describe students' empathy based on the cognitive and affective dimensions (Davis, 1983). In addition, a good instrument should be easy to understand, appropriate for the characteristics of junior high school students, and capable of producing valid and reliable measurement results. This is important because the existing instruments are not yet fully aligned with the needs of students in the field.

Therefore, the development of an empathy instrument for junior high school

students is an important necessity in education, particularly in guidance and counseling services. This instrument is expected to assist school counselors in objectively identifying students' levels of empathy, thereby providing a basis for delivering appropriate services to enhance students' social-emotional development.

B. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Empathy is one of the important aspects of an individual's social-emotional development, particularly during adolescence, which is a stage characterized by identity development and the enhancement of social interaction skills. Davis (1983) defines empathy as an individual's ability to understand and share the emotional state of others, encompassing both cognitive and affective aspects. Thus, empathy is not only related to the ability to understand another person's perspective but also includes emotional responses to the experiences of others.

According to Davis (1983), empathy consists of four main dimensions, namely perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy. Perspective taking refers to an individual's tendency to cognitively understand situations from another person's point of view. Empathic concern refers to feelings of care and sympathy toward others who are experiencing difficulties. Personal distress describes an emotional reaction in the form of anxiety or discomfort when an individual witnesses another person's suffering. Meanwhile, fantasy refers to an individual's tendency to identify with the feelings of characters in stories, films, or other imaginative situations.

These four dimensions are interrelated in forming an individual's overall capacity for empathy. Individuals with a high level of empathy are not only able to understand the conditions of others but also demonstrate concern and appropriate emotional responses to those situations. In the educational context, empathy plays an important role in fostering positive social relationships within the school environment, enhancing cooperation among students, and reducing the

occurrence of negative behaviors such as bullying and conflicts among students.

The development of empathy during adolescence is influenced by various factors, including the family environment, social interaction experiences, and individuals' cognitive and emotional development. Therefore, measuring empathy is important to determine students' level of empathy as a basis for providing guidance and counseling services in schools. The instrument used for this measurement must meet the criteria of validity and reliability in order to produce accurate and trustworthy data.

Based on the above description, the development of the empathy instrument in this study is based on Davis's (1983) theory as the primary theoretical framework. The instrument is constructed based on the four dimensions of empathy and is developed in the form of a Likert scale. Thus, the instrument is expected to comprehensively measure students' level of empathy and serve as a basis for planning guidance and counseling services in schools.

C. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed the Research and Development (R&D) method, which aims to develop a valid and reliable empathy instrument for junior high school students. The instrument was developed by adapting the Borg and Gall model, which was simplified into seven stages: preliminary study, preparation of the instrument blueprint, development of instrument items, expert validation, instrument revision, field testing, and final product refinement.

The preliminary study stage was conducted through a literature review and a needs assessment regarding the measurement of empathy among junior high school students. The findings indicated that the empathy instrument to be developed should comprehensively accommodate the dimensions of empathy in accordance with the developmental characteristics of junior high school students. Therefore, the development of the instrument was based on Davis's (1983) theory of empathy, which consists of four main dimensions: perspective taking, empathic

concern, personal distress, and fantasy.

Table 1. Blueprint of the Empathy Instrument for Junior High School Students

Empathy Dimensions	Indicators
Perspective Taking	Understanding other people's perspectives in various social situations
Perspective Taking	Being able to view a problem from another person's perspective
Empathic Concern	Showing concern for the condition of others
Empathic Concern	Having sympathy for the difficulties experienced by others
Personal Distress	Feeling discomfort when seeing others experience difficulties
Personal Distress	Showing emotional responses to the suffering of others
Fantasy	Imagining oneself in another person's position
Fantasy	Experiencing the feelings of a character in a story or a particular situation

Based on the blueprint, the researcher developed statement items using a four-point Likert scale. The scores for each response alternative are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Scores for the Response Alternatives of the Empathy Instrument

Response Alternative	Score for Positive Statements	Score for Negative Statements
Strongly Agree (SA)	4	1
Agree (A)	3	2
Disagree (D)	2	3
Strongly Disagree (SD)	1	4

The research subjects consisted of three expert validators and junior high school students. The expert validation involved two Guidance and Counseling lecturers with expertise in instrument development and developmental psychology, and one language expert with expertise in educational instrument development. The instrument was pilot-tested on junior high school students

selected using purposive sampling.

The research data were collected using expert validation sheets and the developed empathy questionnaire. Expert validation was conducted to assess the content, construct, and language appropriateness of the instrument before it was administered in the field trial.

Table 3. Expert Validation Assessment Aspects

Validator Group	Number	Assessment Aspects
Guidance and Counseling / Content Experts	2	Indicator appropriateness, construct accuracy, and relevance of the items to the aspects of empathy
Language Expert	1	Sentence clarity, grammatical accuracy, and instrument readability

The data were analyzed quantitatively. For each validator, the feasibility percentage was calculated using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = Percentage of feasibility

F = Total score obtained

N = Maximum possible score

The percentage results were then classified based on the feasibility criteria presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Instrument Feasibility Criteria

Percentage	Criteria
82%–100%	Highly Feasible
63%–81%	Feasible
44%–62%	Less Feasible
25%–43%	Not Feasible

The reliability of the instrument was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The SPSS output gave a Cronbach's Alpha value of [INSERT EXACT VALUE FROM SPSS OUTPUT]. Because this value must meet or exceed the study criterion of 0.70, the instrument was considered reliable and demonstrated high internal consistency.

The results of the validity and reliability analyses were used as the basis for refining the instrument, resulting in a final product in the form of a valid and reliable empathy instrument for use with junior high school students.

D. RESEARCH RESULTS

Empathy Instrument Development

The empathy instrument was developed based on Davis's theory, which consists of four aspects: perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy. The instrument was constructed using a four-point Likert scale and consisted of both favorable and unfavorable items. Before being used, the instrument was validated by three expert validators.

Table 5. Expert Validation Results of the Empathy Instrument

Validator	Percentage	Category
Validator I	96.87%	Highly Feasible
Validator II	87.50%	Highly Feasible

Instrument Validity Test

The validity test was conducted on 29 respondents as a preliminary pilot test before the field administration of the instrument to 120 students. The pilot sample was selected using purposive sampling. The analysis used the Pearson Product–Moment correlation with the assistance of IBM SPSS version 26. The r-table value used was 0.367 at the 0.05 significance level. All 29 items had calculated r values greater than 0.367; therefore, no items were dropped. The limited pilot sample is a limitation of the study and should be considered when interpreting the item-

level validity evidence.

Table 6. Summary of Validity Test Results

Number of Items	Valid Items	Dropped Items	Calculated r
29	29	0	All r > 0.367

Instrument Reliability Test

The reliability of the instrument was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The results of the analysis showed that the instrument had a high level of reliability, indicating that it was able to produce consistent measurements.

Table 7. Results of Instrument Reliability Test

Criteria	Result
Number of Items	29
Cronbach's Alpha	[INSERT EXACT VALUE FROM SPSS OUTPUT]
Interpretation	Reliable (α ≥ 0.70; high internal consistency)

Empathy Profile of Junior High School Students

The results of administering the empathy instrument to 120 students showed that most students were in the moderate empathy category. Based on the categorization reported in the study, an empathy score of 81–101 was classified as moderate. A total of 75 students (62.5%) fell into this category, while the remaining 45 students (37.5%) were classified into other categories. The complete cut-off scores and separate frequencies for the other categories were not reported in the original scoring output available for this manuscript and should be added before

final submission.

Table 8. Empathy Profile of Students

Category	**Number of Students**	**Percentage**
Moderate Empathy (score 81–101)	75	62.5%
Other Categories	45	37.5%
Total	**120**	**100%**

E. DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the empathy instrument developed based on Davis's theory has met the feasibility criteria as a measurement tool after undergoing expert validation, validity testing, and reliability testing. In the expert validation stage, the instrument obtained a percentage of 96.87% from the first validator and 87.50% from the second validator, both categorized as highly feasible according to the criteria in Table 4. These results indicate that, in terms of substance, construct, and language aspects, the instrument is consistent with the empathy concept used as the basis for its development, namely the four dimensions of empathy, which include perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy. This consistency is important because it serves as the main foundation showing that the instrument is not only technically well-constructed but also has a strong theoretical basis, making it appropriate for use in the context of junior high school student assessment.

The validation results also show that each aspect of the instrument has been assessed in accordance with the empathy indicators intended to be measured. The difference in percentages between the first and second validators remained within the same category, namely highly feasible, indicating that the instrument has consistent expert judgments. This suggests that the developed items are sufficiently representative of the empathy construct, although there is still room for minor improvement, particularly in refining the wording of the items to make

them easier to understand for junior high school respondents.

At the validity testing stage, the results of the analysis using the Pearson Product–Moment correlation showed that all 29 items were declared valid because their calculated r values were greater than the r-table value (0.367). The summary in Table 6 shows that 29 of 29 items were retained, with no items dropped. This finding indicates that each item in the instrument has good discriminating power in measuring the empathy construct. Since no items were found to be invalid, it can be interpreted that the item development process was conducted carefully and in accordance with the previously established operational indicators. This condition also shows that the instrument has a good level of consistency between the theory used and the indicators developed in the form of statements. The use of a 29-respondent pilot sample is a limitation and should be considered when interpreting the item validity evidence.

Furthermore, the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient yielded [INSERT EXACT VALUE FROM SPSS OUTPUT], which exceeded the study criterion of 0.70. This indicates good internal consistency among the 29 items and supports the consistency of the items in measuring the empathy construct. Cronbach's Alpha assesses internal consistency; it does not establish stability of scores over time. Evidence of temporal stability would require a test–retest analysis.

At the stage of measuring students' empathy profiles, the results of the study showed that out of 120 respondents, 75 students (62.5%) were in the moderate empathy category, corresponding to scores of 81–101 as reported in the study. This finding indicates that, in general, students' empathy skills are at a moderate level, meaning that they already possess basic abilities to understand and feel others' conditions, but have not yet reached an optimal level. This condition can be understood as the result of various factors influencing the development of empathy, such as family environment, social interaction patterns at school, friendship experiences, and emotional development during early adolescence,

which is still in the stage of identity exploration and self-regulation development.

In the context of guidance and counseling, these results indicate that students still require reinforcement in empathy, particularly in their ability to understand others' perspectives and respond appropriately to others' emotional conditions. Guidance and counseling teachers can use these findings as a basis for designing more targeted services, such as group guidance, social skills training, and activities that encourage empathic interaction among students. Thus, the development of empathy is not only carried out through measurement but also through continuous intervention within the school environment.

The results of this study indicate that the developed empathy instrument has met good psychometric criteria in terms of validity, reliability, and content feasibility based on expert judgment. In addition, the instrument is also able to provide an empirical description of the empathy conditions of junior high school students, most of whom fall into the moderate category. This shows that the instrument does not only function as a measurement tool, but also has practical value in helping guidance and counseling teachers understand students' conditions more objectively, thereby serving as a basis for making more targeted service decisions.

F. CONCLUSION

This study successfully developed an empathy instrument for junior high school students consisting of 29 items based on the dimensions of perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy. The results of expert validation showed that the instrument obtained a feasibility percentage of 96.87% from Validator I and 87.50% from Validator II, both categorized as highly feasible for use. The validity test results indicated that all 29 items had calculated r values greater than the r-table value (0.367), so all items were declared valid. In addition, the reliability test results showed that the instrument had high internal consistency based on Cronbach's Alpha; the exact coefficient should be reported

from the SPSS output. The measurement results of 120 junior high school students showed that the majority of students were in the moderate empathy category, with a total of 75 students. Thus, the developed empathy instrument has met the criteria of validity, reliability, and feasibility for use as an empathy measurement tool for junior high school students in research activities as well as school guidance and counseling services.

The developed empathy instrument can be used by guidance and counseling teachers as an assessment tool to identify students' levels of empathy so that the services provided can be adjusted to students' needs. Future researchers are suggested to test the instrument on a wider sample and involve various educational levels in order to strengthen the generalizability of the research findings. In addition, further studies may employ more in-depth psychometric analyses, such as Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), to obtain stronger evidence of construct validity and improve the quality of the developed instrument.

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