

“One Session for Every Student, No Student Left Behind for SDG 4”: Rapid Counseling with Single-Session Music Therapy as a Model for Inclusive and Quality Education

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ABSTRACT

Securing inclusive and equitable quality education for all is a global challenge, especially in the context of mental health support provision to students in educational institutions (SDG 4). Mental health needs, emotional turmoil, and lack of access to counseling services commonly present as hidden obstacles to learning engagement and academic achievement. This concept paper suggests Rapid Counseling with Single-Session Music Therapy (RC-SSMT) as a novel and pragmatic approach for bolstering SDG 4 through the delivery of brief, accessible and engaging mental health support within schools. Using narrative and focused literature, including extant empirical and clinical studies on rapid counseling and single-session music therapy as examples, this paper posits that one-session, solution-focused, music-based sessions can meaningfully decrease psychological distresses in learners cultivating emotional regulation while promoting engagement without confines of long-term therapeutic models. The conversation places RC-SSMT in the context of inclusive education discussion, emphasizing its potential for any number of student populations—such as those that are socio-emotionally at-risk, have limited access to services or cultural boundaries to help-seeking. By recasting counseling as an approachable, inventive, and student-centered intervention, RC-SSMT provides a scalable response to quality education, learner well-being and institutional accountability under SDG 4.

Keywords: *SDG 4; Inclusive Education; Rapid Counseling; Single-Session Therapy; Music Therapy.*

INTRODUCTION

SDG 4 is all about the importance of making sure that inclusive and equitable quality education is promoted and that it includes lifelong learning for everyone. In addition to infrastructure, curriculum and pedagogy, current education research increasingly acknowledges that student mental health and psychosocial well-being are pre-conditions for meaningful educational engagement and success (Rieckmann, 2017). Anxiety, depression, emotional distress, and crisis experiences can impede cognitively engaged persistence—and academic success more generally, especially in complex and demanding higher education climates.

In spite of the increasing consciousness, many institutions of education are still challenged in delivering accessible care for mental health at a time when it is needed. Institutions often respond to risk with conventional counseling and psychotherapy models that are multi-session, time-consuming, resource-intensive and have the unintended consequence of being exclusive of students who require an immediate or culturally responsive or low-threshold approach (Pacheco., 2025).

Consequently, unmet psychological distress may also lead to disengagement, drop out and inequitable educational outcomes.

As a consequence, brief and creative counseling methods have become more and more of interest in mental health and educational science. Single-Session Therapy (SST) has been theorized as practice in its own right and not merely a cut-down version of longer interventions, stressing volition, making solutions, and empowering clients over one focussed meeting (Dryden, 2023; Talmon, 1990). Concomitantly, music therapy scholars have shown strong effects on stress reduction, emotional modulation and well-being among both clinical and non-clinical populations (De Witte et al., 2022; Dileo, 2006).

Moreover, a new law in case of Indonesia, one hour for school counselor gets five study groups as minimum workload standard from the government (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2024; Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Republik Indonesia, 2025) so that school counselors are regarded to have been fulfilled their main duty hours instead of the old regulation referred to students' number and this is part of fulfilling requirements of the certification or professional allowances requirement for school councilors in Indonesia. This of course places a growing weight on school counselors, who cannot serve every student personally at school, which means that a lot of students fall through the cracks and some are not treated.

Extending these beliefs, along with an appreciation for the role of music as something that is felt rather than understood, Rapid Counseling with Single-Session Music Therapy (RC-SSMT) weaves together solution-focused brief therapy tenets and uses music experiences to integrate on-the-spot creative interventions to offer express psychological care (Cannistrà & Hoyt, 2024). It has been previously shown to be effective in decreasing psychological distress in emergency contexts, e.g., through tele-psychotherapy and in acute emotional states (Situmorang, 2022; Situmorang, 2025). Its role in advancing inclusive and quality education for SDG 4 has nevertheless not been systematically explained.

This article seeks to develop the concept of RC-SSMT as a model that integrates mental health support with the goals of inclusive education, and proposes that "*one session per student*" can be used as a practical approach for addressing unmet psychosocial needs such that no child is excluded from quality learning.

METHODS

This paper engages in narrative and focused literature review-based research (Snyder, 2019) rather than a systematic or comprehensive review. Its aim is to bring together theoretical, empirical and conceptual discourse that intersects rapid counseling, single-session therapy, music therapy, and inclusive education in SDG 4.

This methodological approach resonates with debate and point of view essays included in international peer-reviewed journals, that favour conceptual consistency and critical commentary over comprehensiveness.

The literature was discovered through searches of databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and PubMed with the application of keywords such as rapid counseling, single-session therapy, music therapy, student mental health, and inclusive education. Attention was given to peer-reviewed academic journal articles, academic books, and authoritative reports. The conceptual articles were underpinned by two key empirical publications of the first author (Situmorang, 2022; Situmorang, 2025) along with relevant international literature. Every reference cited is publicly available and can be found in academic databases.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In its own way, once-only therapy challenges the automatic assumption that 'more of the same' is best when it comes to therapeutic outcome. It has been found that clients often come to only one session despite therapists' intentions and, therefore, that it is both ethically and behaviorally important to co-create each session as being potentially complete and transformative in itself (Dryden, 2023; Talmon, 1990). SST focuses on clarification of goals, building solutions and empowering clients and so has been well-matched to education environments where time and entry are more limited.

Rapid counseling leverages this premise by positioning the intervention as responsive, focused, and timely. In an educational context, this may benefit students in both early and peak phases of distress, or those experiencing reactive crises or transition-related stress without the structural burden of long-term therapy.

The Role of Music Therapy in Emotional Accessibility

Music therapy has been well-researched as a powerful modality for emotional expression, regulation, and sense-making. Meta-analytic data show that music therapy notably decreases stress and enhances psychological well-being in a wide range of target groups (De Witte et al., 2022; Dileo, 2006). In therapeutic settings music is able to transcend language barriers and is ideal for students who may have difficulty describing feelings or are from a variety of different cultural backgrounds.

Adopting a one-session approach of music therapy increases emotional fealty without losing efficiency. Listening to a favored song, singing along with the lyrics or making up new ones may act as therapeutic metaphors and coping anchors, facilitating insight and emotional release within relatively close temporal proximity.

RC-SSMT as a Model for Inclusive and Quality Education

RC-SSMT is aligned to SDG 4 by focusing on mental health as an essential requirement for inclusive education. By providing a low-threshold, culturally

flexible, and time-effective intervention; the RC-SSMT broadens access to psychosocial support for students who might otherwise not have received help. Counseling is thus re-framed as open educational resources for everybody, rather than a specialist service for the few.

In terms of quality education, RC-SSMT further enhances students' emotion related to readiness to learn as well as their sense of self-efficacy and resilience. From an equity perspective, it eliminates time, stigma and resource barriers. In this way, the rapid counseling (Situmorang; 2022; Situmorang, 2025) is becoming a stimulation of educational participation rather than peripheral support. This certainly supports the latest Indonesian government policies (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2024; Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Republik Indonesia, 2025), which mandates that every student be served without exception.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

It was the contention of this paper that RC-SSMT is a promising, under-researched contribution to SDG 4. Combining the tenets of brief counseling and music-based interventions, RC-SSMT presents a model to provide equitable, available and adaptive student mental health support in education contexts. The model confronts deficit-based and exclusionist assumptions about service delivery handed down through traditional models of education generation, instead advancing a conception of education that is in which psychoeducational support is evocative, imaginative, and person centered.

It is recommended that further research empirically examines the adoption of RC-SSMT within a range of educational environments and assesses its impact on the engagement, retention and well-being of students in the long term. However, as a theoretical framework, perhaps RC-SSMT provides a bold answer to the demand for an educative agenda in diversity and quality within the context of complex modernity.

The conceptualization of RC-SSMT presents several important implications for education practice, policy, and institutional responsibility with respect to the achievement of SDG 4. First, on the level of educational practice, RC-SSMT presents a pragmatic and ethically responsible replied to the growth in quantity demands for students served by school counselors and educational psychologists when situated in regulatory contexts characterised by numerical coverage over personal service. By framing one purposeful session as a full and substantive intervention, RC-SSMT allows counselors to address more students while maintaining therapeutic fidelity. This method helps the therapist to treat rapid affect states, transition crises, and cognitive learning constraints in a time-limited humanistic way.

Second, in respect to inclusive education, RC-SSMT helps to minimize structural and cultural obstacles connected with mental health help. Thoughtful students who for social, time-related or cultural reasons would prefer not to begin traditional therapy may well find music intervention that lasts just one session more approachable and much less scary. Since music is a universal language and cultural phenomenon, RC-SSMT is especially suited for multicultural educational contexts in which emotional expression can be influenced by spiritual, communal and cultural values. In this view, counseling is rendered not as a service for "deficient" youth but a universal form of educational support compatible with equity and dignity.

Third, RC-SSMT offers a counterpoint to current policy and regulatory infrastructure within which counselors' work and services are conceptualized. As broad as its scope area RC-SSMT goes beyond legal requirements focusing also on the qualitative effect and immediate reaction. In conclusion, for policy makers and educators, it could be worth including brief evidence-based interventions like RC-SSMT as part of formal guidance structures to assist in meeting the requirements at a regulatory level while protecting the psychosocial well-being of students. This alignment reinforces institutional responsibility for SDG 4 by integrating the provision of mental health support into quality education rather than considering it as an auxiliary service.

A few directions are recommended to enhance the conceptual and empirical grounding of RC-SSMT. Further investigation is needed to empirically understand how the RC-SSMT can be operationalized in diverse educational settings, such as middle and high schools, colleges or universities, and religious educational environments. Combined qualitative and quantitative methodology, as well as experimental longitudinal designs would be especially useful in this context to not only measure psychological outcomes shortly after dragon training but also to assess long-term effects on engagement, integrity and student well-being. Comparative research of RC-SSMT to traditional multi-session counseling models might further explore its comparative utility and applicability.

In practice, it would be valuable in the training of brief and creative interventions used with individual if counselor education programs would incorporate RC-SSMT. It would prepare coming counselors with tools to create purposeful single-session experiences, based on solution-focused conversation and music-based methodologies, in an ethical way. There is a need for ethical standards to be devised to ensure that single-session interventions are conducted in ways that involve legitimate assessment, informed consent and referral protocols for students who actually do require more intensive help.

Last, upcoming research may investigate the inclusion of RC-SSMT in digital and hybrid counseling approaches, thus extending reach with maintained relational

depth. Thoughtfully adapted, these solutions may have potential to meet unmet psychosocial needs in resource-constrained contexts and enhance the role of counseling services in achieving SDG 4 on inclusive, quality education.

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