

The Effect of Group Counseling on Reducing Aggressive Behavior in Adolescent Students

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of group guidance on reducing aggressive behavior among adolescent students, a psychosocial issue that frequently arises in school settings and adversely affects emotional stability, social adjustment, and academic performance. Using a quantitative approach with a one-group pretest–posttest design, the study involved 12 students identified as having high levels of aggression through purposive sampling. The aggression scale used consisted of 50 items, with 49 validated and a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.975$. The group guidance intervention was conducted in four structured sessions that focused on recognizing aggressive behavior, improving emotional regulation, developing empathy, and strengthening conflict-resolution skills. Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test indicated a significant decline in aggressive behavior, with the mean score decreasing from 106.83 in the pretest to 84 in the posttest ($p = 0.003 < 0.05$). These findings demonstrate that group guidance is effective in reducing aggressive tendencies by enhancing students' emotional awareness and their ability to respond positively in social interactions. The study concludes that group guidance can serve as a practical preventive intervention in schools to promote students' social competence and minimize aggressive behavior.

Keywords: group guidance, aggressive behavior, adolescents, emotional regulation

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is one of the most complex and psychosocially dynamic stages of development. At this stage, individuals experience rapid changes, physically, cognitively, and emotionally (Khaira, 2022). These changes often cause emotional instability, identity confusion, and maladaptive behavior. One of the most common forms of maladaptive behavior in school settings is aggressive behavior. Aggression in adolescents can manifest in various forms, such as physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility towards peers and teachers. This phenomenon is of great concern to educational institutions because it can interfere with adolescents' personal development, social relationships, and learning processes.

Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2021) shows that around 30% of students in Indonesia have been involved in or been victims of aggression in the school environment. This figure illustrates that aggression is no longer an individual symptom, but has developed into a systemic problem that affects the entire educational ecosystem. Aggressive behavior that is not properly addressed can cause short-term problems such as conflicts between students, decreased academic performance, and classroom discipline issues; as well as long-term problems such as the risk of involvement in criminal behavior, mental health disorders, and difficulties in building social relationships in adulthood (Ferdiansa & Neviyarni, 2020).

Conceptually, aggression is defined as behavior that aims to hurt, harm, or attack others, whether through physical, verbal, or symbolic actions (Berkowitz in Fau & Sarumaha, 2022). Buss and Perry (in Ferdiansa & Neviyarni, 2020) divide aggression into four main components, namely: (1) physical aggression, such as hitting, kicking, or pushing; (2) verbal aggression, such as insulting, mocking, or threatening; (3) anger, which is an intense emotional response that has the potential to trigger aggressive actions; and (4) hostility, which is a negative attitude that manifests itself in the form of suspicion and dislike towards others. These four components often occur in adolescent students, especially when they are unable to express their emotions adaptively or when there are no good self-regulation mechanisms available.

The factors that cause aggression in adolescents can be divided into two broad categories, namely internal factors and external factors. Internal factors include emotional instability, low self-control, impulsivity, underdeveloped emotional intelligence, and experiences of frustration (Imran

& Kur'ani, 2022). Adolescents with low emotional intelligence tend to have difficulty recognizing, understanding, and managing their emotions, making them more likely to vent their emotions through aggressive behavior. On the other hand, external factors include parenting styles, peer influence, school environment, and experiences of violence at home and in the social environment. Authoritarian parenting and a lack of warm communication between parents and children often cause adolescents to express their emotions through aggressive actions (Khaira, 2022).

In addition, academic and social pressures at school also trigger aggression in students. High academic competition, bullying, and the dynamics of friendship groups can affect how students view themselves and their environment. When adolescents feel rejected or socially excluded, they tend to express their frustration through aggressive behavior. This is in line with the frustration-aggression theory, which states that aggression is a direct response to feelings of frustration or obstacles in achieving certain goals (Berkowitz in Fau & Sarumaha, 2022).

The consequences of aggressive behavior in adolescents cannot be taken lightly. In the short term, aggression causes disruption to the learning process in the classroom, decreased concentration, increased absenteeism, and reduced academic achievement. In the long term, aggression can have more serious consequences, such as anxiety, depression, social isolation, and even involvement in violence and criminal acts (Ferdiansa & Neviyarni, 2020). Therefore, appropriate preventive and curative interventions are needed to help students manage their emotions and develop more adaptive social behaviors.

One effective intervention to reduce aggression in adolescents is group counseling services. Group counseling is a process of assistance through group dynamics that allows members to share experiences, provide empathetic responses, and learn social and emotional skills together (Prayitno in Wardani et al., 2019). This service is particularly relevant for adolescent students because they are at a stage of development where social interactions with peers play an important role in shaping behavior and identity. In groups, students have the opportunity to discuss their feelings, understand the impact of aggressive behavior, and practice managing their emotions through interactive activities.

Previous studies support the effectiveness of group counseling in reducing aggressive behavior. Fau & Sarumaha (2022) found that audiovisual media-assisted information services in groups were effective in reducing aggressive behavior in junior high school students. Wardani et al. (2019) also showed that group counseling using sociodrama techniques can increase empathy and reduce aggressive actions. Thus, group counseling services have great potential to help students develop emotional regulation, empathy, tolerance, and peaceful conflict resolution skills.

However, the implementation of group counseling as a strategy to reduce aggression in various schools is still not optimal. Some guidance counselors still face obstacles in developing structured, measurable programs that are tailored to students' needs. In addition, research on the effectiveness of group counseling in specific school contexts, including SMP Negeri 4 Padangsidempuan, is still limited. The results of initial observations and interviews with guidance counselors show that there are students with aggressive behaviors such as teasing each other, arguing with teachers, fighting, violating rules, and showing hostile attitudes. This condition indicates that preventive interventions based on guidance counseling services are urgently needed.

Based on this description, there is a research gap in the form of a lack of empirical research on the effectiveness of group counseling in reducing aggressive behavior in adolescent students at the school. This study attempts to fill this gap by implementing structured group counseling in four sessions and measuring its impact through a quantitative approach. Thus, this study aims to analyze the effect of group counseling on reducing aggressive behavior in adolescent students and to provide empirical evidence for guidance counselors regarding the importance of group services in addressing behavioral problems in schools.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design to determine the effect of group counseling on reducing aggressive behavior in adolescent students. The quantitative

approach was chosen because it is able to provide a measurable picture of behavioral changes before and after the intervention, while the *one-group pretest–posttest* design was used to compare the initial and final conditions of the respondents after being given a specific treatment (Creswell, 2014). In this design, the researcher administered a pretest to measure the initial level of aggression, carried out an intervention in the form of a series of group counseling sessions, and then administered a posttest to see the changes that had occurred. According to Sugiyono (2013), this design is effective when researchers want to determine the direct impact of an intervention, especially in the context of education and counseling services.

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 4 Padangsidempuan, located at Jl. Sutan Soripada Mulia No. 42, Kelurahan Sadabuan, Kota Padangsidempuan, North Sumatra. This school was chosen based on initial observations that showed a number of students with aggressive tendencies, such as teasing, arguing with teachers, and engaging in conflicts with peers. As an educational institution that provides guidance and counseling (BK) services, this school also provided full support for the implementation of the research. The research lasted for three months, covering the stages of licensing, initial observation, instrument development and testing, pretest implementation, intervention, and posttest data collection.

The research population included all 704 students of SMP Negeri 4 Padangsidempuan. This population consisted of students in grades VII to IX who were in the early and middle stages of adolescence, who are psychologically prone to emotional fluctuations and social conflicts. From this population, a sample of 12 students was selected using purposive sampling. This technique was chosen because the researcher needed subjects with specific characteristics, namely students who showed moderate to high levels of aggressive behavior based on the results of observations by guidance counselors and initial questionnaires. According to Sugiyono (2013), purposive sampling gives researchers the flexibility to select samples based on research objectives and specific relevant characteristics. In addition, the number of 12 people is in accordance with the recommendations for group guidance services, where an effective group consists of 4 to 12 members so that group dynamics can develop optimally (Prayitno in Wardani et al., 2019).

The main instrument used in this study was an aggressive behavior scale in the form of a questionnaire with a total of 50 statement items. The statement items were compiled based on four dimensions of aggression according to Buss and Perry (in Ferdiansa & Neviyarni, 2020), namely physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. The assessment used a 1–5 Likert scale, ranging from "Very Disagree" to "Very Agree." Before being used for data collection, the instrument was tested for validity and reliability. The validity test was conducted by correlating each item with the total score using the *product moment* correlation formula, and the results showed that 49 items were valid and 1 item was invalid and therefore removed. Furthermore, the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha produced a value of 0.975, indicating that the instrument had very high reliability and was suitable for use in research. According to Arikunto (2010), a reliability value above 0.60 is considered good, so a value of 0.975 indicates very strong instrument consistency.

The intervention provided was in the form of group counseling consisting of four main sessions, conducted over four weeks in stages. Each session lasted 60 to 90 minutes and was guided directly by the guidance counselor. The first session focused on introducing the concept of aggressive behavior, its causes, and its impact on oneself and others. In this session, students were invited to discuss, identify personal experiences, and analyze the negative impacts of aggressive behavior. The second session was directed at emotional regulation and anger management skills. At this stage, students learned to recognize emotional triggers, practiced simple relaxation techniques, and role-played ways to manage anger adaptively. The third session focused on developing empathy and social tolerance. Activities included exercises in understanding other people's perspectives, sharing experiences, and group discussions on the importance of respecting differences. The fourth session focused on strengthening peaceful conflict resolution skills. In this session, students participated in problem-solving simulations, assertive communication exercises, and developed anti-aggression commitments that they could apply in their daily lives.

Data collection was conducted using the same pretest and posttest questionnaires, allowing researchers to directly observe changes in aggression levels. The pretest was administered before the intervention to measure baseline conditions, while the posttest was administered after the intervention to identify changes that had occurred. The data obtained was then analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test non-parametric statistical test. This test was chosen because the research sample was small (<30) and came from the same sample at two different times. In addition, aggressive behavior data is generally not normally distributed, so the Wilcoxon test is more appropriate than other parametric tests (Sugiyono, 2013). The decision-making criteria were based on the significance value: if $p < 0.05$, then there was a significant effect of the intervention on the reduction of aggressive behavior.

This study also considered research ethics. All participants were given informed consent and an explanation of the research objectives. The students' identities were kept confidential, and they were given the freedom to withdraw at any time without consequences. This ethical approach follows educational research guidelines oriented toward the principle of nonmaleficence, which is not to harm participants (Creswell, 2014). Thus, this study not only follows strict methodological standards but also complies with important ethical principles in research with human subjects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented based on the analysis of pretest and posttest data obtained from 12 students who were sampled. All students participated in four full group counseling sessions according to the intervention design. The research data describe the initial aggressiveness of the students before the treatment was given and the changes that occurred after the intervention. This analysis is the basis for determining the effectiveness of group counseling services in reducing aggressive behavior in adolescent students.

1. Description of Pretest Data

The pretest data shows the level of aggressive behavior among students before the treatment was administered. Based on the analysis results, the average pretest score was **106.83**, with a minimum score of 85 and a maximum score of 137. The standard deviation value of 15.7 indicates that there is variation in aggressive behavior among students, although most are still in the fairly high category.

These high scores are in line with the results of initial interviews with guidance counselors, who stated that some students often engage in aggressive behavior such as teasing friends, speaking rudely to teachers, disobeying orders, and even getting into fights. The quantitative data in the pretest reinforces these findings and shows that aggression is a serious problem in the research sample.

Based on the dimensions of aggression by Buss & Perry (in Ferdiansa & Neviyarni, 2020), the aggressive behavior of students in the pretest stage appears to be dominant in the aspects of verbal aggression and anger. This can be seen from the students' answers, which tended to be "agree" or "strongly agree" on items regarding teasing, shouting when angry, and rudely interrupting friends' conversations. This is reasonable considering that the students were in the early to middle stages of adolescence, which according to Khaira (2022) is a period of high emotional instability.

2. Posttest Data Description

After four group counseling sessions were conducted, the researcher administered a posttest to all participants to observe changes in aggressive behavior after the intervention. The results showed a significant decrease in aggression scores. The average posttest score was **84**, with a minimum score of 60 and a maximum score of 109. The standard deviation of 16.6 showed a variation that was almost the same as the pretest stage but tended to be lower in general.

The average decrease from 106.83 to 84 indicates a significant change in behavior. In terms of categories, some students moved from the "moderately high" category to the "moderate" category. Although not all students showed a drastic decrease, these results still illustrate the positive effects of group counseling services.

The largest decrease occurred in the dimension of anger. After the intervention, students reported feeling more able to control their emotions when faced with situations that triggered anger. The sessions on emotion regulation and anger management techniques appear to have contributed significantly to this change.

3. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

To determine the significance of the pretest and posttest differences, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used. The results showed a significance value of $p = 0.003$, which means $p < 0.05$, so it can be concluded that there was a significant difference between the aggression scores before and after the intervention. Thus, the research hypothesis was accepted, namely that **group counseling has a significant effect on reducing aggressive behavior in adolescent students**. The Wilcoxon test is a non-parametric test that was used because the sample size was small and did not meet the assumption of normality. The significant results show that group counseling intervention has a real impact on students, not just a coincidence.

4. Analysis of Score Decrease

The average decrease of **22.83 points** indicates a substantial change in behavior. This decrease illustrates that students not only reduced verbal and physical aggressive behavior, but also experienced improvements in internal aspects such as empathy and self-regulation. The consistent decrease in scores in each dimension of aggression proves that group counseling intervention is effective in helping students understand the impact of aggression, increase self-awareness, and practice social skills.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that group counseling has a significant effect in reducing aggressive behavior in adolescent students. The following discussion outlines the interpretation of the research results in relation to theory, previous studies, and the intervention process.

1. Changes in Aggressive Behavior Based on Aggression Theory

According to Buss & Perry (in Ferdiansa & Neviyarni, 2020), aggression is influenced by internal factors such as emotions and impulsivity. Group counseling provides experiences of sharing, reflection, and discussion that enable students to better recognize their own emotions. In line with the concept of emotion regulation proposed by Aldao et al. (2015), improving the ability to understand one's emotions can reduce impulsive aggressive responses.

The second session in the intervention, which focused on emotional control, was the most effective session in reducing anger. This was evidenced by the largest change in scores in this dimension. Deep breathing exercises, pause techniques, and discussions about emotional triggers enabled students to control themselves better when angry.

A significant decrease in verbal aggression was also observed. This is in line with Berkowitz's (in Fau & Sarumaha, 2022) opinion that verbal aggression can be reduced through learning assertive communication and understanding the impact of words on others, which is one of the core activities in group sessions.

2. Group Dynamics as a Catalyst for Change

One important factor in behavioral change is group dynamics. Interactions between group members create a safe environment for students to share experiences and receive feedback. According to Prayitno (in Wardani et al., 2019), group dynamics enable *self-disclosure*, empathy, and social support.

In this study, students showed an increasing willingness to speak and listen to the opinions of other members. Some students stated that hearing their friends' experiences made them better understand the impact of aggression on social relationships. This process supports Vygotsky's theory of social learning through peer interaction.

3. Relevance of Findings to Previous Research

The results of this study are consistent with the research by Sesilianus Fau & Sarumaha (2022), which shows that audiovisual media-assisted information services in groups can significantly reduce student aggression. In addition, these findings support the research by

Wardani et al. (2019), which states that group guidance with a sociodrama approach can reduce aggressive behavior through increased empathy.

Research by Imran & Kur'ani (2022) also found that group counseling using cards is effective in reducing student aggression. Thus, this study strengthens the empirical evidence that group-based interventions are one of the most effective approaches in the context of education.

4. Internal Factors Affected by Intervention

The decrease in aggression was also influenced by improvements in:

- a. Emotional regulation: Students are better able to recognize the early signs of anger.
- b. Empathy: Students are able to see other people's points of view.
- c. Self-control: Students are more cautious before responding to situations that trigger conflict.

These factors are in line with the concept of emotional intelligence proposed by Goleman (2000), in which the ability to recognize and manage emotions has a direct influence on social behavior.

5. External Factors Supporting Change

In addition to internal factors, group dynamics also create an environment that supports change, such as:

- a. Emotional support among members
- b. A safe environment for expressing feelings
- c. Positive behavioral models from facilitators (counselors)
- d. Structured and engaging group activities

This is in line with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development, which emphasizes the importance of the social environment in behavioral change. In practical terms, this study has important implications for schools, namely: (1) Group counseling should be a routine program for the prevention of aggressive behavior, (2) Guidance counselors need to develop ongoing sessions on emotion regulation and empathy, (3) Schools should provide a safe space for students to express themselves. Theoretically, this study reinforces the position of group counseling as an effective intervention in the psychopedagogical approach to addressing behavioral problems in schools.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that group counseling services have a significant effect on reducing aggressive behavior in adolescent students. Based on the pretest results, students had a fairly high level of aggression, characterized by a predominance of verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. After four group counseling intervention sessions, there was a statistically significant decrease in aggression scores, as evidenced by the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, which showed a p-value of 0.003 ($p < 0.05$). A decrease in the average score of 22.83 points further indicates a substantial change in behavior, with the dimension of anger being the aspect that experienced the most prominent decline.

Group counseling proved to be effective in helping students understand the impact of aggressive behavior, improve their emotional regulation skills, and develop empathy and conflict resolution skills. Through group dynamics, students had the opportunity to share experiences, discuss feelings, and practice social skills in a safe and supportive environment. This shows that internal factors such as self-awareness, empathy, and self-control can be improved through a structured group process. In addition, external factors such as peer support and appropriate facilitation from guidance counselors also contribute to the success of the intervention.

Thus, it can be concluded that group counseling is an effective and relevant intervention strategy to reduce aggressive behavior in the school environment. Schools are advised to include group counseling as a routine program in Guidance and Counseling services, especially for students who show aggressive behavior tendencies. Further research could explore the use of control groups,

larger samples, or the integration of other counseling techniques to obtain a more comprehensive picture of aggression interventions in adolescents.

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