The Effectiveness of Group Counseling with a Motivational Interviewing Approach to Improve Students' Academic Engagement

Muh Nurhidayat HL ✉, Edy Purwanto, Mulawarman

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

Article Info	Abstract
	Low academic engagement negatively affects students' academics, such as poor attendance, lateness, lack of participation in learning, boredom, and some other problems which can cause students dropped out from a school. This study strived for examining the effectiveness of group counseling with a motivational interviewing approach to improve students' academic engagement and comparing the effects when the intervention as given to students with high career maturity. It used a randomized pretest-posttest comparison group design and involved 30 students grouped into three selected using a random assignment. Their data were taken using academic engagement and career maturity scales with the alpha coefficients of 0.88 and 0.91 respectively. To analyze the data, mixed ANOVA was used. Findings showed that the group counseling with a motivational interviewing approach was effective to improve the academic engagement of students with both high and low career maturity. Further, the improvement was greater in the students with high career maturity. Lastly, implications and limitations are discussed in the discussion section.

✉ Correspondence address:
Jl. Inspeksi PAM Pannara, Manggala, Kota Makassar
E-mail: hidayathaling@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Academic engagement becomes a quite big concern in the world of education. This engagement explains who someone is happy, satisfied, motivated, or bored of participating in activities related to school. Low academic engagement has been attracting researchers and educators because it is a significant predictor in portraying gradual process by which students drop out of school (Appleton et al., 2008; Fall & Roberts, 2012).

Academic engagement is a state in which students feel they are part of the school. In this way, they will feel responsible for their role as a student so that they will come to class punctually, focus on teacher's explanation, complete every assignment, be active in discussion and give responses, as well as various school activities. Active participation, commitment, and identification with school will increase the learning quality and positive personal development, so progressive engagement will enhance academic achievement (Alrashidi et al., 2016; Appleton et al., 2008).

Enhancing students' academic engagement is a must in order to create good learning atmosphere. Therefore, it is important to consider factors influencing it. Motivational factor is said to be a significant factor to it (Alrashidi et al., 2016; Gedera et al., 2015). Alrashidi et al (2016) explain that growing student motivation is one way to foster student's proactive involvement in academic-related activities. Maulana et al. (2016) add that autonomous motivation is significantly and positively related to academic engagement. The higher the level of motivation, the higher the level of academic engagement is.

Another influencing factor to the improvement of academic engagement is career maturity. It is a concept developed by Super that describes one's career development stages. It has a broad coverage, such as individual readiness to make proper career decisions in line with age and information as well the ability to counter career developmental tasks (Savickas, 1984). By having career maturity, students will have plans,

exploration, information, and career decisions which ten lead to their desire to learn and develop themselves. Career maturity will surely distinguish individuals because it enables them to know why they must engage at school. Oppositely, students with low career maturity will act ambiguously, have no idea, and feel lost, so they somehow have no reason to school.

It is supported by a Kenny et al's study (2006) that students with advanced career planning and positive hopes will develop the sense of respect and belonging to school. It implies that school engagement makes student realize the importance of school for their future career. If students know an overview of their future career and are able to estimate their grades, their motivation to achieve their goals will improve (Lapan, et a., 2022). Further, students with high career maturity will tend to show their readiness, plans, information, and precise career decisions. These have been enough to support students in understanding school roles as a key to achieve their dreams.

Several studies have investigated ways to increase students' learning engagement with which focusing on reinforcing extrinsic components. In the present study, the main focus was potential empowerment/ individual own strengths. Motivational interviewing (MI) is a strength-based intervention that focuses on individual's strength and potential, triggers motivation to change, and consider present and future as the main foundation and goals. It is a short counseling style with the basis of arousal, collaboration, unconditional positive regard, and compassion (Miller & Rollnick, 2012). Regarding this issue, MI has the potential to increase academic engagement, as Alrashidi (2016) provides support for intervention directions that foster student motivation as a path to increase student proactive involvement in academic activities.

Motivational interviewing aims to resolve counselee's ambivalence and strengthens motivation to change. In MI, individuals are said to be problematic when ambivalence occurs within themselves (Mulawarman & Afriwilda, 2020). An ambivalence concept is a significant

discussion in motivational interviewing. Here, some students know the importance of learning, meet deadlines, and avoid being lazy, but at the same time they still want to relax, postpone, and set aside academics. It is important to understand and accept counselees' ambivalence because it often becomes the main problem.

MI effectiveness and efficiency have been proved widely to adults, and it seems that it may work well on adolescents. Mostly, studies focusing on MI observed people older than 17 years old. Even so, MI is expected to work well on children and adolescents as basic principles, including assessing individual autonomy and using a collaborative approach, aligned with the needs of adolescents for independence and identity formation (Kaplan, 2014).

There is emerging evidence that MI is increasingly being used in schools and educational institutions. Several studies that support the use of MI in schools include school mental health by (Frey et al., 2011), separated elementary school-aged children by (Cryer & Atkinson, 2015), bullying behavior by (Cross et al., 2018), motivation academic performance by (Gutierrez et al., 2018), dropout students by (Iachini et al., 2016), and academic performance by (Strait et al., 2012, 2019; Terry et al., 2013). Those studies have showed some indications that MI may work on adolescents and give initial support in the context of education. Despite a surge in interest in student-focused uses of MI, there is a need for further research in this area (Snape & Atkinson, 2016).

The use of MI in academic engagement was predicted to have a positive effect/ by focusing on motivation, readiness to change, and assistance to solve ambivalence problems, MI was expected to increase various kinds of academic engagement from students' point of views. Until now, there has been a study which discusses the effectiveness of MI in increasing students' academic engagement. However, previous studies regarding the support of MI at school create an assumption that MI seem to be able to increase students' academic engagement in terms of the dimensions of behavior, emotion, and cognition.

The counseling setting used in this study was a group setting. It aimed at examining the effectiveness of a motivational interviewing approach to increase students' academic engagement. It is expected that the findings can enrich and strengthen the effectiveness of motivational interviewing group counseling in the school adolescent setting.

METHODS

There were 30 subjects of this study from the total 88 students being sampled at SMA Buq'atun Mubarakah, Makassar. Then, a random assignment was performed to place those 30 students into experimental group I, experimental group II, and comparison group. Each consisted of 10 students.

In collecting the data, the instruments of academic engagement and career maturity were used. The academic engagement scale has 23 items and three indicators. In terms of reliability, its cronbach' alpha coefficient was 0.88. Meanwhile, the career maturity scale has 26 items and four indicators. In terms of reliability, its cronbach's alpha showed 0.91.

The current study used a quantitative approach with a randomized pretest-posttest comparison group design and involved three groups, namely experimental group I, experimental group II, and comparison.

Some steps were carried out in this study. First, the researchers determined the subjects by asking students to fill out the scales. Second, the students with low academic engagement were selected. Third, the subjects were grouped randomly. Fourth, the intervention of the group counseling with a motivational interviewing approach was given to the experimental group A & B for four sessions (with the steps of engaging the group, exploring perspectives, broadening perspectives, and moving to action) with the time allotment of 60 minutes. Meanwhile, the comparison group got the conventional counseling. Fifth, the posttest was given to all groups after the intervention as done. Sixth, follow-up as conducted by asking students to fill in the academic engagement

scale. Then, the collected data were analyzed using mixed ANOVA to see any changes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the descriptive statistic data, all groups had similar conditions, namely low level in the pretest and high levels in the posttest and follow-up. In details, the results of descriptive data can be seen in table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistical Analysis

		Eks I	Eks II	Pemb
Pretest	M	48.60	49.00	49.60
	SD	3.34	2.90	3.20
Postest	M	103.20	94.20	86.10
	SD	5.09	2.39	3.31
FU	M	104.50	95.10	87.30
	SD	5.29	4.25	3.19

Mixed ANOVA analysis was conducted to test the effectiveness of motivational interviewing group counseling to increase student's academic engagement in the pretest, posttest, and follow-up. The results of the analysis can be seen in table 2.

Table 2. Results of Mixed Anova Analysis

Efek	F	P
Time	2451.38	< 0.01
Group	35.71	< 0.01
Time*Group	31.83	< 0.01

Figure 1. Academic Engagement Graph
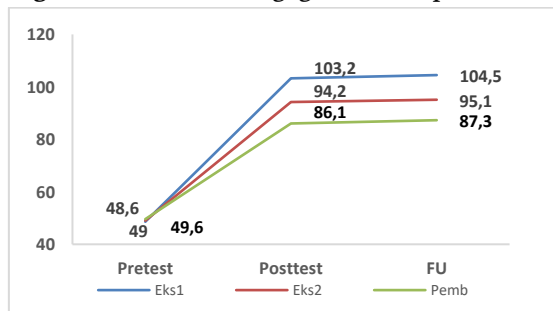
According to table 2, the effect of group on the academic engagement increase was (F= 35,718, p < 0.01), a time effect was (F= 2451,380, p < 0.01), and a time and group interaction effects were (F(2.46). .33.23) = 31.836, p < 0.01). In addition, the data in figure 1 showed that the increase in the engagement

happened in posttest and follow-up. It proved that there were the effects of group, time, and interaction between time and group on academic engagement.

Table 3. The Pairwise Comparison of Experimental Group I

Waktu	MD	SE	P
TI-T2	54.60	1.93	< 0.01
T1-T3	55.90	1.78	< 0.01
T2-T3	1.30	0.63	> 0.05

Table 4. The Pairwise Comparison of Experimental Group II

Waktu	MD	SE	P
TI-T2	45.20	1.25	< 0.01
T1-T3	46.10	1.75	< 0.01
T2-T3	0.90	0.67	> 0.05

Table 3 and 4 above show the comparison between the effects of time (T1-T2), (T1-T3), and (T2-T3). From these results, it was known that following the implementation of the group counseling with a motivational interviewing approach, there occurred significant increase in both experimental groups. Then, in the next measurement, the level of academic engagement remained in the high category, indicating that the academic engagement can be maintained.

Table 5. Multiple Comparisons

Kelompok	MD	SE	P
Eks I – Eks II	6.00	1.315	< 0.01
Eks I - Pemb	11.00	1.315	< 0.01
Eks II - Pemb	5.10	1.315	< 0.01

Based on the multiple comparisons in table 5, the experimental group 1 garined higher result than the II, namely (MD= 6.00, P < 0.01). However, both experimental group I and experimental group II had higher academic engagement than the comparison group (MD= 11.00, P < 0.01; MD= 5.10, P < 0.01, respectively).

With regard to the above descriptions, this study has confirmed the effectiveness of group counseling with a motivational interviewing approach in increasing academic engagement.

The group which received the motivational interviewing approach got their scores increased from pretest to posttest and posttest to follow-up with high category. It assured that after the frequent treatment, students' engagement could be realized. Besides, the stable level from the posttest to follow-up indicated that the students could maintain their attitudes. Another finding was the group that consisted of students with high career maturity obtained the highest mean. Meanwhile, the comparison group scores were always below the experimental groups.

The above findings reinforce the effectiveness of the group counseling with a motivational interviewing approach in the context of school adolescents. A similar study by Gutierrez et al (2018) concludes that a motivational interviewing group counseling service can increase extrinsic motivation, while the control and comparison groups (with learning skills) show no statistical significance.

Strait et al (2012) in their study provides support for the effectiveness of motivational interviewing on academic behavior. Their study found that students who attended the MI single session gain a positive effect on math scores and several academic behaviors which then lead to the improvement in the academic performance, such as class participation and other positive academic behaviors. Moreover, Terry et al (2013) in their study tested the effectiveness of motivational interviewing group counseling on students' academic behavior. Similar to Strait's study, there found an effect on academic behavior as well as a positive increase in students' math scores.

Career maturity becomes readiness capital for students to understand how involvement is needed in achieving their future career. Wijaya (2010) supports this theory because his inquiry about the relationship between career maturity and academic aspects found out that career maturity makes a major contribution to learning motivation, while the other contributes are given by other factors. Ham (2017) in his study explains that students with higher career maturity will show a greater increase in school satisfaction after they participate in career exploration programs. This study is in line with Ham's in the way students with high career maturity showed far away better academic engagement increase than the ones with low career maturity. It might be because students with career maturity have attained motivation to achieve something within themselves, but this drive happened to be disrupted by other negative drives which made them comfortable with status quo.

CONCLUSION

Regarding the findings, it can be concluded that the group counseling with a motivational interviewing approach is effective to increase the academic engagement of students at SMA Buq'atun Mubarakah, Makassar. Another finding concludes career maturity helps increase the engagement during the intervention. Thus, an implication for guidance and counseling teachers is they can use a strength-based approach to deal with students' academic engagement issue given motivation is the major drive to any kind of involvement. Further, the future researchers can expand the coverage of subjects by involving higher or lower level of education than the present study. Apart from its fruitful contributions, this study is limited in the investigation of one gender, namely male. Hence, there is a further need to conduct studies with different gender of the subjects.

REFRENCES

Alrashidi, O., Phan, H. P., & Ngu, B. H. (2016). Academic Engagement: An Overview of Its Definitions, Dimensions, and Major Conceptualisations. *International Education Studies*, 9(12), 41–52. http://dx.doi.org/ 10.5539/ies. v9n12p41

Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., & Furlong, M. J. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 369–386.Association) reference style is

required. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20303

Cross, D. S., Runions, K. C., Resnicow, K. A., Britt, E. F., & Gray, C. (2018). Motivational interviewing as a positive response to high-school bullying. *Psychology in the Schools*, 55(5), 464–475. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22120

Cryer, S., & Atkinson, C. (2015). Exploring the use of motivational interviewing with a disengaged primary-aged child. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 31(1), 56–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2014.988326

Fall, A.-M., & Roberts, G. (2012). High school dropouts: Interactions between social context, self-perceptions, school engagement, and student dropout. *Journal of Adolescence*, 35(4), 787–798. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2011.11.004

Frey, A. J., Cloud, R. N., Lee, J., Small, J. W., Seeley, J. R., Feil, E. G., Walker, H. M., & Golly, A. (2011). The promise of motivational interviewing in school mental health. *School Mental Health*, 3(1), 1–12. https://archives.joe.org/joe/2006june/rb7.php

Gedera, D., Williams, J., & Wright, N. (2015). Identifying factors influencing students' motivation and engagement in online courses. *In Motivation, leadership and curriculum design* (pp. 13–23). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007 /978-981-287-230-2_2

Gutierrez, D., Foxx, S. P., & Kondili, E. (2018). Investigating the Effectiveness of a Motivational Interviewing Group on Academic Motivation. *Journal of School Counseling*, 16(14), 1–25. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1185874

Ham, K., & Lim, H. (2017). Career Maturity and Quality of Life in Korean Adolescents: A Cross-Lagged Panel Design. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 65(3), 250–263. https://doi.org/10.1002/cdq.12096

Iachini, A. L., Rogelberg, S., Terry, J. D., & Lutz, A. (2016). Examining the feasibility and acceptability of a motivational interviewing early intervention program to prevent high school dropout. *Children & Schools*, 38(4), 209–217. https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdw033

Kaplan, S. G. (2014). Motivational Interviewing with children and young people: an overview. *Motivational Interviewing: Further Applications with Children and Young People*, 49–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/1754730X.2012.736789

Kenny, M. E., Blustein, D. L., Haase, R. F., Jackson, J., & Perry, J. C. (2006). Setting the stage: Career development and the student engagement process. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 53(2), 272. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-0167.53.2.272

Lapan, R. T., Kardash, C. M., & Turner, S. (2002). Empowering students to become self-regulated learners. *Professional School Counseling*, 5(4), 257. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2004-14034-000

Maulana, R., Helms-Lorenz, M., & van de Grift, W. (2016). The role of autonomous motivation for academic engagement of indonesian secondary school students: A multilevel modelling approach. *In The psychology of Asian learners* (pp. 237–251). Springer. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-576-1_15

Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2012). *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change*. Guilford Publications.

Mulawarman, & Afriwilda, M. T. (2020). *Motivational Interviewing: Konsep dan Penerapannya*. Pranada Media.

Savickas, M. L. (1984). Career maturity: The construct and its measurement. *Vocational Guidance Quarterly*. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2164-585X.1984.tb01585.x

Snape, L., & Atkinson, C. (2016). The evidence for student-focused motivational interviewing in educational settings: a

review of the literature. *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion*, 9(2), 119–139. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/ 10.1080/1754730X.2016.1157027

Strait, G. G., Smith, B. H., McQuillin, S., Terry, J., Swan, S., & Malone, P. S. (2012). A Randomized Trial of Motivational Interviewing to Improve Middle School Students'academic Performance. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 40(8), 1032–1039. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21511

Strait, G. G., Williams, C., & Peters, C. (2019). Classroom-Based Motivational Interviewing for Improving College Students' Academic Performance: A Randomized Trial. *Teaching of Psychology*, 46(2), 164–167. https://doi.org/ 10. 1177/ 0098628319834216

Terry, J., Smith, B., Strait, G., & McQuillin, S. (2013). Motivational Interviewing to Improve Middle School Students' academic Performance: A Replication Study. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 41(7), 902–909. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21574

Wijaya, F., & Taganing, N. (2010). Relationship Between Career Maturity Class Students with Learning Motivation X MAN Beneits. https://www.researchgate.net/publicatio n/277105321_relationship_between_care er_maturity_class_students_with_learning _motivation_x_man_beneits