

TERANG : Discover Your Passion, Ignite Your Academic Enthusiasm Through Group Counseling

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humanistic approach

Abstract

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of group counseling program TERANG (Discover Your Passion, Ignite Your Academic Enthusiasm) in improving academic motivation of vocational high school students. Using a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test, five students from accounting major in SMK X Semarang participated. Data were collected using Academic Motivation Scale (AMS), interviews, and observations. Results of paired sample t-test revealed a significant increase in academic motivation ($p = 0.018$), with three students achieving high category after intervention. The findings indicate that group counseling creates a supportive environment that enables students to share experiences, gain insights, and build adaptive strategies to enhance academic enthusiasm. This study highlights the role of the humanistic approach in counseling to foster motivation, and contributes to educational psychology by providing evidence of group counseling effectiveness in vocational context.

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INTRODUCTION

Vocational High School students engage in a variety of activities, both academic activities such as completing school assignments and practical work. Students are required to achieve good academic performance, but they must also develop non-academic competencies to prepare themselves for life in the future. One of the main drivers in the learning process and achievement of academic performance is academic motivation. Students with good academic motivation tend to be more persistent, independent, and able to develop their own learning strategies, making them better prepared to face academic challenges and more likely to achieve good academic performance (Lima Lima Taís Elena Oliveira de et al., 2022; Steinmayr et al., 2019).

According to Deci and Ryan (in Susanto et al., 2024), academic motivation is both an internal and external drive that motivates individuals to achieve their academic goals. Vallerand et al. (in Salim et al., 2023) explain that academic motivation arises when individuals feel they have the freedom to act in pursuing what they desire, thereby enabling learning goals to be achieved optimally.

However, in reality, many students face obstacles that impact their academic motivation. Low academic motivation can have negative consequences, such as tending to experience declining grades, reduced engagement in learning, and greater vulnerability to stress and burnout (Gupta & Mili, 2017; Rump et al., 2017; Oláh et al., 2023). In line with the preliminary survey conducted by the researcher with students through interviews, it was stated that:

“I feel I’ve lost my academic motivation because my parents forced me to choose the accounting major, even though my interest lies in the Software Engineering (RPL). So when I’m doing it, it feels forced and I don’t enjoy the learning process” (IB, 16 years old)

“Actually, I feel less motivated not because of pressure from others, but from myself. I often feel that the material presented by the teacher is unclear and uses methods that are difficult for students to understand” (VI, 16 years old)

“There are so many heavy school assignments that sometimes I feel lazy to do them because I don’t understand the subject. I also feel my grades have declined compared to middle school” (SA, 16 years old)

“I feel like I’m not suited for my current major because it doesn’t align with my choices, and I’m not interested in this major, so I feel a bit unmotivated when pursuing it. I chose accounting because my parents told me to, and since I’m not interested, sometimes it’s uncomfortable or difficult to follow the lessons at school. However, the good friends in my class sometimes make me more motivated” (ZF, 16 years old)

“I actually like or am interested in this major because it was my own choice. However, my motivation for academics has weakened due to the unsupportive environment around me, like the material taught by the teacher makes me bored and hard to understand. I tried taking extra classes to improve my academic performance, but I only lasted a short time because I got lazy again and wasn’t consistent” (KP, 17 years old)

Based on the interviews, it can be concluded that low academic motivation is influenced by factors from within oneself (internal) and the surrounding environment (external). These factors include difficulties in learning, lack of clear goals, lack of interest in subjects, boredom in learning, and teaching methods used by teachers that do not align with students’ preferences (Sahara & Isro’i, 2020). Therefore, an appropriate intervention is needed to help students identify the causes and develop strategies to enhance academic motivation sustainably.

Group counseling is one of the effective and efficient methods in helping to resolve issues faced by individuals within a group context (McLeod, 2013). Group counseling involves a group of people guided by a counselor, where they share and interact regarding their respective experiences (Conyne, 2012). The research conducted by Khoirot (2021) found that the use of group counseling as an

intervention method for student learning motivation yielded positive results, where vocational high school students facing motivation barriers were encouraged to develop their personalities through interaction with their peers, thereby gaining insights and overcoming the challenges they faced.

However, the effectiveness of group counseling specifically on the academic motivation of vocational high school students has not been extensively studied. Therefore, the TERANG (Discover Your Passion, Ignite Your Academic Enthusiasm Through Group Counseling) group counseling program was created to help students rediscover the meaning of learning, explore their potential, and build academic spirit in a supportive environment.

Explaining the background, problems, importance of research, brief literature review that relates directly to research or previous findings that need to be developed, and ended with a paragraph of research purposes. A balance must be kept between the pure and applied aspects of the subject.

METHODS

The present study employed a quantitative quasi-experimental design with a non-randomized pre-test and post-test approach to evaluate the effectiveness of the group counseling program TERANG in improving academic motivation. A total of five tenth-grade accounting students at SMK X Semarang were selected using purposive sampling based on their low academic motivation scores and willingness to participate. Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from both the students and their parents.

Academic motivation was assessed using the Academic Motivation Scale – Short Indonesian Version (AMS), adapted from Vallerand et al. (1992) by Natalya (2018). The instrument consists of 15 items measuring intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation, and has demonstrated good reliability (Cronbach's Alpha 0.865–0.876). To enrich the data, structured observations were conducted during the sessions, and semi-structured interviews were carried out to explore the participants background and motivational challenges.

The intervention was delivered in one group counseling sessions, designed to foster a supportive atmosphere through activities such as emotional sharing, reflective discussion, and peer feedback. The AMS was administered at baseline as a pre-test and repeated after the intervention as a post-test to capture changes in academic motivation. Data were analyzed using the paired-sample t-test to compare mean pre-test and post-test scores, with the Shapiro–Wilk test applied to assess normality. Statistical analyses were conducted with JASP version 0.19.3, and significance was determined at $p < 0.05$.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The assessment of academic motivation was conducted using the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) among five first-year students of SMK X Semarang in 2025. The intervention, delivered through the TERANG (Discover Your Passion, Ignite Your Academic Enthusiasm) group counseling program, provided insights into students' motivational changes before and after treatment. As shown in Table 1, all participants initially fell within the moderate category of academic motivation, with pre-test scores ranging from 55 to 64 ($M = 60$). These findings confirmed the initial assumption that students faced significant challenges in sustaining academic drive, particularly due to misalignment of study majors, difficulties in understanding lessons, and insufficient learning support.

Table 1. Pre-test Scores of Academic Motivation (N = 5)

Subject	Pre-test Score	Category
IB	64	Moderate
VI	60	Moderate
SA	55	Moderate
ZF	61	Moderate
KP	60	Moderate

Following the intervention, post-test results revealed a substantial improvement. As presented in Table 2, four out of five participants showed notable increases in motivation, with three (ZF, VI, SA) reaching the high category. The group's average score rose to 73, indicating an overall shift from moderate to high motivation. Only KP remained in the moderate category, though her score increased from 60 to 66.

Table 2. Post-test Scores of Academic Motivation (N = 5)

Subject	Pre-test Score	Category
IB	70	Moderate
VI	71	Moderate
SA	77	Moderate
ZF	80	Moderate
KP	66	Moderate

Statistical analysis further supported these observations. As presented in Table 3 the normality test using Shapiro-Wilk indicated that the data were normally distributed ($W = 0.931$, $p = 0.601$).

Tabel 3. Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

			W	p
Pretest	-	Posttest	0.931	0.601

Note. Significant results suggest a deviation from normality.

A paired sample t-test then confirmed a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores ($t = -3.896$, $p = 0.018$), as shown in Table 4. These results validate the effectiveness of the TERANG group counseling program in improving students' academic motivation.

Tabel 4. Paired Sample t-test

Measure 1	Measure 2	t	df	p
Pretest	-Posttest	-3895	4	0.018

Note. Student's t-test.

Referring to the data in Tables 1–4, it is evident that prior to intervention all students were at risk of declining academic performance due to only moderate levels of motivation. After participating in one sessions of group counseling, however, the majority showed a clear and statistically significant improvement. This demonstrates that even short-term, structured group counseling can serve as a powerful strategy to foster academic enthusiasm and resilience among vocational students

Discussion

According to Deci and Ryan (in Susanto et al., 2024), academic motivation is an internal or external drive that encourages individuals to achieve their academic goals. Vallerand et al. (in Salimet al., 2023) explain that academic motivation arises when individuals feel they have the freedom to act in order to achieve something they desire, thereby enabling them to achieve their learning goals optimally. However, in reality, many students face obstacles that impact their academic motivation. Low academic motivation can have negative consequences, such as a tendency to experience declining grades, reduced engagement in learning, and increased vulnerability to stress and burnout (Gupta & Mili, 2017; Rump et al., 2017; Oláh et al., 2023).

The findings of this study support this picture. Based on the results of assessments and group counseling dynamics, it can be concluded that the low academic motivation of the counselees is the result of a combination of internal and external factors. This aligns with the definition of academic motivation as an internal and external drive to achieve academic goals (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Faristin & Ismanto, 2023). Some counselees experienced a loss of academic motivation because they were forced to choose a major that did not align with their interests, such as counselees IB and ZF, who demonstrated low autonomy. Meanwhile, counselees SA and VI experienced a decline in enthusiasm because they felt incompetent in understanding the material, reflecting weak competence (Hamm & Yeh, 2024). Social support also plays an important role; counselee KP felt more motivated when studying with friends, consistent with the findings of Van Nguyen et al. (2023) that social interaction can enhance motivation. Meanwhile, coping strategies such as sleeping or playing with a smartphone are avoidance-oriented rather than problem-solving, which exacerbates demotivation (Karabulut et al., 2021; Guo et al., 2023). When linked to Vallerand et al.'s theory (in Natalya, 2018), some students demonstrate intrinsic motivation when they enjoy learning, while others are more influenced by extrinsic motivation such as parental demands. However, some also exhibit amotivation, feeling that learning is pointless.

The use of a humanistic approach in the TERANG program gives students greater control over their own learning. This involves granting them freedom to make decisions about how they learn, what they will learn, and how they demonstrate their understanding. In such a learning environment, students feel responsible for the learning they engage in and can be more active in the learning process. These findings align with research by Kristayanti et al. (2013), which shows that the application of existential humanistic counseling can increase the learning motivation of students with low learning responsibility in high school. Group counseling based on a humanistic approach is an effective method that can be used to enhance students' learning motivation. Following the implementation of the TERANG group counseling program, a significant increase in academic motivation was observed, with average academic motivation scores rising from 60 to 73, reflecting a shift from the moderate to high category. The counseling process helped participants recognize issues and design more effective strategies, such as seeking help from peers or changing study methods. This indicates that the TERANG program can serve as an effective intervention in comprehensively enhancing students' academic motivation.

CONCLUSION

The TERANG Program (Discover Your Passion, Ignite Your Academic Enthusiasm Through Group Counseling) has proven effective in enhancing the academic motivation of vocational high school students. Based on the results of data analysis using a paired sample t-test, a significance value of 0.018 ($p < 0.05$) was obtained, indicating a significant increase between pre-test and post-test

academic motivation scores of students after participating in the TERANG program. Interview and observation results also reinforce that this program helps students identify their academic barriers, explore their feelings and thoughts openly, and design more adaptive learning strategies. The humanistic approach in the TERANG group counseling creates a safe and reflective environment, enabling participants to feel more motivated, emotionally supported, and confident in navigating their academic journey.

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