

## The Effectiveness of Group Counseling with Motivational Interviewing Approach to Improve Academic Hardiness

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### Abstract

Academic hardiness as an ability to gain good achievement in learning, have commitment, and control over what they obtain is truly needed by students to face academic challenges. This study strived for examining the effectiveness of group counseling with a motivational interviewing approach to improve the academic hardiness of Senior High School (SMA) students. It used a motivational technique treatment for five sessions and analyzed students' pretest and posttest data using a Wilcoxon test. In terms of subject, this study invited eight students of SMAN 9 Semarang, consisting of four males and four females sampled from 290 students. Findings revealed that this technique was effective to improve the academic hardiness of SMA students. Thus, counselors are recommended to implement the group counseling with a motivational interviewing approach to improve the academic hardiness of SMA students.

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## INTRODUCTION

Hardiness is an ability to control unpleasant situations and give positive meanings to avoid stress (Retnowati & Affandi, 2018). Further, Vogt, et al. (in Kumala & Nasir, 2019) state hardiness is courage and motivation to counter daily life stress.

Maddi, (2013) suggests students must have an ability to cope with obstacles and manage problems to be chances to keep developing. Hardiness is a personal characteristic which makes individuals to be stronger, tougher, more stable, and more optimistic in facing stress. According to Retnowati and Affandi, (2018) students with high level of hardiness consider difficulties as a means of making them tougher.

Students with high hardiness always feel challenged to achieve, commit to academic activities, and consider themselves to have the control over their works and results (Nurhikma & Nuqu, 2020). A study by Mawarni (2017) found SMA students experienced low academic hardiness in the aspect of commitment, control, and challenges.

A study by Faramarzi and Khafri, (2019) shows hardiness plays an important role in students' positive thoughts. Hidayat, herlina, and Damaianti (2018) state the higher hardiness, the lower tendency to cheat will be. It is similar to that of Vinothkumar and Rai (2016) that hardiness is positively correlated with learning achievement, and it makes students able to face stressful situations.

Studies conducted in Pakistan, South Korea, Iran, and Malaysia report that students face academic stress. Of which is a study by Waqas, Khan, Sharif, Khalid, and Ali (2015) which revealed that 77% of medical students in Pakistan experienced very high academic stress. Then, a study by Choi, Lee, Yoo, and Ko, (2019) found that South Korean children show good academic achievement, but experience academic stress and have a low level of subjective well-being.

Abdollahi, Panahipour, Akhavan Tafti, and Allen, (2020) in their study found that

Iranian students have high academic stress, while data on Malaysian students reported that students who experience stress are increasing every year. The increase is due to students suffering from severe anxiety, depression and academic stress (Rajoo, Karam, & Abdul Aziz, 2019). Various studies have showed academic hardiness has a negative correlation with stress and mental health, stress coping, and academic improvement. Subramanian, Velayudhan, and Vinothkumar, (2013); Ngai, et al (2008); S. R. Maddi, (2006); S. R. Maddi et al, (2009).

A study carried out by Nakalema and Ssenyonga (2013) highlights the need for an intervention which focuses on academic stress reduction and academic performance improvement. What is needed in this case is the need for academic hardiness improvement. A possible solution to do so is by conducting a counseling service. Counseling is a professional relationship process done by a counselor and a client (Wibowo, 2019). It can be given in form of group to be more efficient (Wibowo, 2019).

There happened a study to improve academic hardiness by using strength based group counseling (Ramadhoni, Azizah, Wibowo, & Purwanto, 2019). Another technique used in a study by Ubaidah, Tiatri, and Mularsih, (2018) to increase academic hardiness is by using bibliotherapy. Again, a study by (Khoiriyah, Sugiharto, & Japar, 2020) mentions that hardiness can also be improved by group counseling with self-instruction and cognitive restructuring techniques.

Based on Parti, Wibowo, and Mulawarman, (2019) one of the possible counseling approaches to increase academic hardiness is motivational interviewing. A motivational interviewing approach is used to assist clients in identifying ambivalence and encourage potential behavior change. This approach can be adapted in a group format so that it has advantages such as peer support, embarrassment reduction and isolation through group identification. It is, therefore a motivational approach which can produce additional therapeutic effects (Foote et al., 1999). The use of group design to improve

academic hardiness using reality counseling has been effectively proved by (Zamroni, 2018).

A study done by Strait, et al., (2012) indicates motivational interviewing is effective to promote change. In addition, (Dahlia & Rahmi, 2020) found motivational interviewing group counseling is effective in increasing student's empathy.

With regard to the above descriptions, the present study attempted to reexamine the effectiveness of group counseling with a motivational interviewing approach to improve the academic hardiness of SMA students. It is expected that the findings can be a recommendation for counselors to implement this intervention at school to deal with an academic hardiness issue.

**METHODS**

This study involved 290 students of class XI at SMAN 9 Semarang as the subjects. Of those numbers, 8 were chosen using purposively and resulted four male students and four female students.

This study used one instrument, namely Revised Academic Hardiness Scale (RAHS) to measure one's academic hardiness. It refers to the original one by Benishek, et al., (2005) for then being adapted to be in line with Indonesian context and culture. This instrument measures four components, namely commitment, control affect, control effort, and challenge that are covered in 40 items. It uses a scaling score from 1 (strongly disagree) up to 4 (strongly agree). In terms of reliability, this instrument gained the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.963.

Some procedures were taken in the implementation of the group counseling with motivational interviewing approach with the design of pretest-posttest. It was started by using a Wilcoxon test to analyze the data. Then, the intervention was given for five times with the time allotment of 80 minutes for each. In the first phase of session, group was formed, followed by pretest, an introduction to programs, and bonding between group members. Then, the second session focused on

focusing, while the third session was awakening. In the fourth session, the participants had a planning session, and proceeded with evaluation and follow-up in the fifth session, and ended with posttest to re-measure the academic hardiness condition of high school students.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the group counseling with motivational interviewing approach to improve the academic hardiness of SMA students. Table 1 shows an increase in the score of pretests to posttest, namely 96.25 in the pretest and 146.75 in the posttest. In addition, the results of Wilcoxon test indicated an effect of the use of the group counseling with motivational interviewing approach on the improvement of students' academic hardiness ( $Z = -2.52$ ,  $P < .01$ ).

**Table. I** Pretest and Posttest Data

	<i>Pretest</i>	<i>Posttest</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>P</i>
M	96.25	146.75	-2.524 <sup>b</sup>	0.01
SD	3.105	6.585		

The above results indicated an increase of score seen from the condition before and after the treatment was given. Initially, the level of academic hardiness was low, and after the intervention was given it significantly increased.

This finding is in line with a study by (Wagner & Ingersoll, 2015) that motivational interviewing is able to increase client energy for change, reduce reluctance, and reduce the nature of defenses that block change. Readiness to change begins when people recognize and accept the gap between where they are and where they want to be.

Afriwilda and Mulawarman's study, (2021) shows that motivational interviewing has been effective in increasing psychological well-being. Since this result is in harmony with other findings, it can be said that motivational interviewing can increase the well-being of students who have learning difficulties. This

technique also can give positive identification effects and self-control.

From this motivational interviewing counseling, students could better understand their internal thinking, broaden their perspective of thinking to be more positive, resolve their ambivalence, try to determine what action they take, and try to be able to apply it to themselves when they feel a difficult situation that did not match expectations at the time.

Motivational interviewing is a strong approach which can establish a positive therapeutic environment and maximize changes counselees have. It is a series of strategy and technique designed to help counselees resolve their ambivalence about and increase intrinsic motivation to change problematic behavior (Bux, 2011). Motivational interviewing counseling is also an alternative service or intervention that can be used by counseling teachers/school counselors in an effort to improve students' positive character.

As directive approach and humanistic counseling style, motivational interviewing helps students explore and resolve doubt. (Foote, et al., 1999) state a motivational interviewing approach can be applied in form of a therapeutic group.

A group form of motivational interviewing is done in a short period of time. It is implemented in a small group and makes use of individual's motivation as the main element followed by identifying ambivalence to reinforce behavior changes. A group therapy is said practical because many clients can join the activity at the same time. Also, there is a group strength coming from peer support, self-disclosure of group members, and reduction of shame through group identification. These are all compatible with the motivational approach and can produce additional therapeutic effects.

In the session one of the treatment, there found no significant change in the group members, but the leader kept trying to build togetherness and warmth among group members in order to create open acceptance and achieve group dynamics with hope to build awareness so

that the strengths possessed can help solving problems through problem free-talk.

During the exploration of the problems experienced by group members in the second session, the atmosphere began to melt, starting with the group leader asking open-ended questions related to the hope of increasing academic hardiness and being able to overcome academic problems and help members explore the pros and cons of change (decisional balance). Here, the group members and leaders jointly developed specific and concrete goals related to academic hardiness (commitment, challenge, effort control and affection control). Then, in the third session the group leader motivated group members and together summarized the contents of the counseling.

In the fourth session, the group members wrote plans to improve academic hardiness. Next, in the fifth session, the group members showed a positive response by willing to explore feelings, determining goals, and expecting for positive changes. This way would trigger students' motivation to realize the positive changes. Arkowiz and Miller (in (Corey, 2013) revealed that the main purpose of motivational interviewing is to increase internal motivation to change based on individual goals and values of the client.

In session 5, a posttest was carried out to find out to what extent the results obtained in each motivational interviewing counseling session increased academic hardiness. From the results of the posttest, students experienced an increase in progress compared to the pretest.

The motivational interviewing group counseling can be provided by counselors to help improve academic hardiness of high school students. Based on the findings that support these findings, the use of motivational interviewing is proven to be effective in helping students improve academic hardiness.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis regarding the implementation of the group counseling with a motivational interviewing approach at SMAN 9

Semarang, it can be concluded that the motivational interviewing approach is effective to improve the academic hardiness of SMA students.

Regarding the above conclusion, it is suggested that school counselors should apply a group counseling service with motivational interviewing approach to improve students' academic hardiness. Meanwhile, the future researchers are recommended to conduct further studies by involving a control group and wider subjects.

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