



Contents lists available at [Journal IICET](https://journal.iicet.org)
Jurnal EDUCATIO (Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia)
ISSN: 2476-9886 (Print) ISSN: 2477-0302 (Electronic)
Journal homepage: <https://jurnal.iicet.org/index.php/jppi>



Solution-focused brief counseling to improve student's social-emotional skills and psychological well-being

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Jan 26th, 2024
Revised Feb 22th, 2024
Accepted Mar 09th, 2024

Keyword:

SFBC
Student's social-emotional skills
Psychological well-being

ABSTRACT

Indonesian education has transformed along with the current situations. Through the implementation of guidance and counseling service, schools should facilitate students to develop various non-cognitive skills and ensure that student's mental health can well-achieved. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of solution-focused brief counseling (SFBC) to improve student's social-emotional skills and psychological well-being. Following the experimental pretest-posttest control group design procedure, 64 junior high school students were involved as research subjects. Instruments in this study used 71-item social-emotional skills questionnaire and 42-item psychological well-being scale. The experimental group will be following 9 sessions of counseling, while the control group will not involve in any intervention. Data analysis in this study was carried out using one-way ANOVA and MANOVA. Results of this study found that (1) SFBC is effective to improving student's social-emotional skills, (2) SFBC is effective to improving student's psychological well-being, and (3) SFBC is simultaneously effective to improve student's social-emotional skills and psychological well-being. The findings of this study have implications for the use of SFBC model as an intervention method to improve student's non-cognitive skills and psychological well-being.



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Introduction

Student's mental health and well-being is one of the main issues that currently has becoming concern in education. The urgency to improve student's mental health also prioritized by the global pandemic aftermath, which has been emerged the prevalence of psychological disorders among society, including in adolescent (students) (Ifdil et al., 2021; Roy et al., 2020; Septinda, 2021; Shidhaye, 2023; S. Taylor & Asmundson, 2020; Thahir et al., 2020). In Indonesian educational context, through the implementation of "*Kurikulum Merdeka*", school is currently aims to provide opportunities for every student's to develop their critical thinking, creativity, communicative, and collaborative skills, as well as other various non-cognitive skills (Indarta et al., 2022; Jufriadi et al., 2022).

Social-emotional skills are one important skill that student need to have because in adolescent age, students are experiencing rapid development, and also vulnerable to experiencing problems in various aspect of their lives including psychological problems, academic problems, and risky behaviors, such as juvenile delinquency, drugs abuse, and crime (Danneel et al., 2019; Valeria et al., 2020). Study by Alzahrani et al., (2019) found that the

student's social-emotional skills influence learning outcomes and student's ability to developing more adaptive behavior. Good social-emotional skills were also found to have positive effect on student's ability to establish healthy relationship by build their interpersonal relationship with peers and others adults around them (Wang et al., 2019).

The shift of educational paradigm in Indonesia has impact to the purpose of school education that should balancing the development of cognitive aspect development along with non-cognitive aspects. This means that school does not only focus on ensuring students to have academic knowledge and competence, but also helps students to develop character, soft-skills, and also pays attention to student's psychological well-being. However, various study reported that students in Indonesia still experience difficulties in achieving good psychological well-being. The results of Indonesia-National Adolescent Mental Health Survey in 2022 found that 34,9% Indonesian teenagers (students) experienced psychological problems and only 2,6% had accessed counseling services (I-NAMHS, 2022). Another study by Addini et al., (2022) that involving middle and high school Indonesian student's also found that 46% of students experienced anxiety symptoms while another 58% experienced depression symptoms.

A review from empirical studies related to the phenomenon of behavioral and psychological disorders that still occur among students further strengthens the urgency of school role in helping students to develop social-emotional skills and improve psychological well-being. School-based intervention is one effort that can be carried out through social-emotional learning which aims to help students to acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes that improve personal development, social relationships, and ethical behavior (Elias, 2014; R. D. Taylor et al., 2017). Guidance and counseling should take a part in order to helping student to achieve optimal development and becoming fully-functioning person.

Solution-focused brief counseling (SFBC) is a strength-based counseling model that aims to help clients find solutions that are currently available and focus on the future. This model believe that clients have the strength, competence, resources to make changes, and direct clients to focus on building solutions (de Shazer in Sobhy & Cavallaro, 2010). The implementation of SFBC in school settings is highly recommended because it tends to use more efficient time with more effective results (De Jong & Berg, 2013).

Several studies have reported the effectiveness of SFBC. Gingerich & Peterson (2015) found that SFBC is an effective psychological intervention that can be implemented on a wide range of subject, and is more efficient that other counseling models because can implemented in brief time. SFBC is also recommended to be applied in counseling practices that required briefly sessions such as counseling service in school (Haron et al., 2020). SFBC has also been widely used as a psychological interventions method to treat various psychological problems in students (Naraswari et al., 2021).

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of SFBC to improve student's social-emotional skills and psychological well-being. This study has the urgency that schools have an important role in developing student's social-emotional skills and psychological well-being. This study also relevant to efforts to respond to society's needs in the current era, regarding the presence of more efficient and effective guidance and counseling service.

Method

Research Design

This study conducted by following pretest-posttest control group design that involving two groups of subjects namely the experimental group and control group. Both groups took pretest to measure social-emotional skills and psychological well-being before treatment and posttest after the treatment ended. The experimental group will involve in SFBC while the control group will not give any treatment.

Research Subject

The selection of subject in this study was carried out through an intact group. The total subjects in this study we 64 students. The subjects were divided into two groups, namely experimental group with 32 students (16 male, 16 female), and control group with 32 students (18 male, 14 female).

Research Instrument

The instruments in this research used (1) 71 items of social-emotional skills questionnaire, and (2) 42 items of the psychological well-being scale. The social-emotional skills questionnaire has very high reliability with a Cronbach Alpha value of 0,91, and the psychological well-being scale has very high reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0,95 (Suranata et al., 2021).

Treatment Procedure

This research adapts the SFBC procedure proposed by De Jong & Berg, (2013); and de Shazer et al., (2007), which consists of three stages including (1) initial stage, (2) middle stage, and (3) final stage. The counseling techniques used in this research were selected taking into account the relevance of these techniques to the development of students' social-emotional skills and psychological well-being. The implementation of SFBC was carried out in 9 sessions.

Data Analysis

Data in this research will be analyzed through one-way ANOVA and Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) assisted by SPSS for Windows V.27.

Results and Discussions

A summary of the frequency distribution of data on social-emotional skills and psychological well-being in each group in the pretest and posttest is described as follows.

Table 1 <Frequency Distribution of Pretest and Posttest Data on Social-Emotional Skills for Experimental and Control Groups>

		Groups	
	Category	Experimental fo (%)	Control fo (%)
Pretest	Low ($x \leq 178$)	25 (78,1)	23 (71,9)
	Medium ($178 < x \leq 248$)	7 (21,9)	9 (28,1)
	High ($x > 248$)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Posttest	Low ($x \leq 178$)	0 (0)	23 (71,9)
	Medium ($178 < x \leq 248$)	2 (6,3)	9 (28,1)
	High ($x > 248$)	30 (93,8)	0 (0)

The distribution of social-emotional skills scores of experimental groups ($n = 32$) on pretest distributed at the level of social-emotional skills with 25 people (28.1%) in the low category, 7 people (21.9%) in the medium category (%), and there are no students in the high category (0). In the control group ($n = 32$), the students' social emotional skills pretest scores were distributed in the low social skills level of 23 people (71.9%), the medium category of 9 people (28.1%), and there were no students in the high category (0). Meanwhile, the distribution of students' social-emotional skills scores in the experimental group after counseling (posttest) showed that the frequency of students distributed in social skills in the high category was 30 people (93.8%), medium 2 people (6.3%), and none students in the low category (0). In the experimental group, the frequency of students with posttest scores on social-emotional skills in the low category was 23 people (71.9%), medium 9 people (28.1%), and there were no students with scores in the high category.

The frequency distribution of pretest scores on social-emotional skills between the experimental group and the control group does not appear to be significantly different, that distributed in the medium and low categories. The average score of social-emotional skills after attending counseling (posttest) in the experimental group experienced an increase, namely being distributed in the medium and high categories, while there was no significant increase in the control group which tended to be distributed in the medium and low categories. Based on the analysis of frequency distribution data, it can be found that students in the experimental group who took part in brief solution-focused counseling achieved significant improvements in social-emotional skills, observed from pretest to posttest. This is different from the social-emotional skills of students in the control group who did not experience significant changes in the pretest and posttest. Furthermore, data on the frequency distribution of pretest and posttest psychological well-being scores in the experimental group and control group are presented in table 2.

Table 2 <Frequency Distribution of Pretest and Posttest Data on Psychological Well-being for Experimental and Control Groups>

		Group	
	Category	Experimental fo (%)	Control fo (%)
Pretest	Low ($x \leq 105$)	25 (78,1)	23 (71,9)
	Medium ($105 < x \leq 147$)	7 (21,9)	8 (25,0)
	High ($x > 147$)	0 (0)	1 (3,1)
Posttest	Low ($x \leq 105$)	0 (0)	23 (71,9)
	Medium ($105 < x \leq 147$)	22 (68,8)	8 (25,0)
	High ($x > 147$)	10 (31,3)	1 (3,1)

Data on the frequency distribution of psychological well-being scores of experimental group students ($n = 32$) before participating in brief solution-focused counseling (pretest) were distributed in the low psychological well-being category, 25 people (78.1%), medium 7 people (21.9%), and there are no students in the high category (0). In the control group ($n = 32$), students' pretest psychological well-being scores were distributed in the low category of 23 people (71.9%), medium 8 people (25%), and high 1 person (3.1%). Meanwhile, the distribution of students' psychological well-being scores after attending counseling (posttest) in the experimental group showed that the frequency of students in the psychological well-being category was high, 10 people (31.3%), while 22 people (68.8%), and none students in the low category (0). In the control group, the distribution of posttest scores was the same as the pretest scores, namely 23 people (71.9%) in the low category, 8 people (25%) in the medium category, and 1 person (3.1%) in the high category.

The frequency distribution of pretest psychological well-being scores between the experimental group and the control group does not appear to be significantly different, tending to be distributed in the medium and low categories. The average psychological well-being score after attending counseling (posttest) in the experimental group increased, namely being distributed in the medium and high categories, while there was no significant increase in the control group. Based on the analysis of frequency distribution data, it can be found that students in the experimental group who took part in brief solution-focused counseling achieved a significant increase in psychological well-being, observed from pretest to posttest. This is different from the psychological well-being in the control group which did not experience significant changes.

There are three hypotheses proposed in this research, namely (1) SFBC effective to improve students' social-emotional skills, (2) SFBC effective to improve students' psychological well-being, and (3) SFBC effective simultaneously improving students' social-emotional skills and psychological well-being. Hypotheses 1 and 2 was carried out through One-way ANOVA by adding effect size. The results of the One-way ANOVA are presented as follows.

Table 3 <ANOVA Results for Hypotheses 1>

SES	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Between Groups	167485,563	1	167485,563	570,810	0,001
Within Groups	18191,875	62	293,417		
Total	185677,438	63			

SES: social-emotional skills

The ANOVA results in table 3 show an F value = 570.810 with a significance value (p value) < 0.05 , so it can be concluded that there is a difference in the average social-emotional skills score between the experimental group and the control group. This can be interpreted as SFBC effective to improve students' social-emotional

skills. The effect size calculation result is 5.85. This value is consulted with the effect size interpretation criteria which states that an ES value ≥ 0.8 is a high effect size category (Dantes, 2017). Based on the results of the ANOVA and effect size calculations, it can be interpreted that SFBC has high effectiveness in improving students' social-emotional skills.

Table 4 <ANOVA Results for Hypotheses 2>

PWB					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Between Groups	50850,250	1	50850,250	156,081	0,001
Within Groups	20199,188	62	325,793		
Total	71049,438	63			

PWB: *psychological well-being*

The ANOVA results in table 4 show F value = 156,081 with a significance value (p value) < 0.05 , so it can be concluded that there is a difference in the average psychological well-being score between the experimental group and the control group. This can be interpreted as SFBC effective to improve students' psychological well-being. The effect size calculation result is 3,03. This value is consulted with the effect size interpretation criteria which states that an ES value ≥ 0.8 is a high effect size category (Dantes, 2017). Based on the results of the ANOVA and effect size calculations, it can be interpreted that SFBC has high effectiveness in improving students' psychological well-being. Furthermore, results of multivariate analysis (MANOVA) are presented in table 5 below.

Table 5 <MANOVA Results>

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	0,995	6533,754 ^b	2,000	61,000	0,000	0,995
	Wilks'	0,005	6533,754 ^b	2,000	61,000	0,000	0,995
	Lambda						
	Hotelling's Trace	214,221	6533,754 ^b	2,000	61,000	0,000	0,995
	Roy's	214,221	6533,754 ^b	2,000	61,000	0,000	0,995
Group	Largest Root						
	Pillai's Trace	0,922	362,818 ^b	2,000	61,000	0,000	0,922
	Wilks'	0,078	362,818 ^b	2,000	61,000	0,000	0,922
	Lambda						
	Hotelling's Trace	11,896	362,818 ^b	2,000	61,000	0,000	0,922
	Roy's	11,896	362,818 ^b	2,000	61,000	0,000	0,922
	Largest Root						

a. Design: Intercept + Group
b. Exact statistic

In table 5, the F value for Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root is significant (p value < 0.05) which can be interpreted that there is a significant influence of group differences or the treatment of each group on the two dependent variables. In this case, there is a significant simultaneous effect of SFBC on students' social-emotional skills and psychological well-being. The effect size of Partial Eta Squared (η^2) is 0.995, which is a very large effect size (Field, 2017; Hair Jr et al., 2019). This can be interpreted that SFBC is very effective simultaneously in improving the social-emotional skills and psychological well-being of students.

The findings in this study indicate that SFBC is effective for improving student's social-emotional skills and psychological well-being. In more detail, improvements in the social-emotional skills of students who involved in SFBC are demonstrated through improvements in aspects of social-emotional skills. The first aspect, namely self-awareness, is demonstrated by the development of students' ability to identify strengths, strengths, potential and resources they have but have not yet realized, as well as the development of students' ability to identify the

relationship between thoughts, feelings and behavior. The second aspect, namely self-management, is shown by the development of students' ability to identify situations/conditions related to emotions and situations that cause stress and find the closest solution that can be done to be in a better condition. This aspect is also shown by the development of students' ability to plan/organize a more ideal daily routine.

Improvements were also found in the social-awareness and relationship skills aspects, which were demonstrated by the development of students' ability to express their thoughts, feelings and needs, both verbally and non-verbally, freely without feelings of fear, anxiety and worry in an effort to build positive relationships with others, friends of the same age. Furthermore, in the aspect of responsible decision making, improvement is shown by the development of students' skills to solve problems and make decisions rationally, as well as being able to find alternative solutions systematically and responsibly.

The increase in the psychological well-being of students who involved in SFBC also demonstrated by the development of students' abilities related to aspects of students' psychological well-being. Increasing aspects of self-acceptance and purpose in life is demonstrated by the development of students' ability to imagine and plan an ideal future and connect it with things that can be done now to make it happen. Improvement can also be observed in aspects of autonomy and environmental mastery which are demonstrated by students' ability to develop independence in empowering their potential, resources and competencies to adapt to daily routines. Regarding the aspect of positive relations with others, it can be observed that students have been able to know and develop interpersonal skills in relationships with peers.

The findings of this research provide empirical support for the SFBC model. The findings in this study are in line with the results of previous research which has found that SFBC carried out in educational settings provides positive benefits for the development of students' non-cognitive abilities and psychological health (Choi & Easterlin, 2018; Dewan et al., 2020). The effectiveness of a strengths-based approach to improving social-emotional skills has been found in several previous studies, including a study by Garwood & Ampuja (2019) which found that strengths-based interventions help students to empower better thought patterns so they are able to achieve emotional development, who are more positive and able to adapting in their environment. In line with a study by Darbani & Kamdin (2023) which found that the strength-based counseling model was effective in increasing student resilience which is closely related to the ability to manage emotions, being able to find adaptive solutions in various difficult situations, and being able to establish positive relationships with peers, and other people around them.

Regarding the effectiveness of a strengths-based approach to improve psychological well-being in students and adolescents, the results of a study by Proctor et al., (2011) found that students who participated in strengths-based interventions experienced significantly increased life satisfaction and psychological well-being. being. Another study by Ebrahimi et al., (2023) also revealed that strengths-based interventions are empirically effective on students' psychological well-being. Study by Caldarella et al., (2019) emphasize the effectiveness of school-based interventions in efforts to improve students' social-emotional skills as indicated by a decrease in symptoms of psychological and behavioral disorders. In line with Shoshani & Steinmetz (2014) which found that a school-based positive psychology approach significantly contributed positively to improving students' mental health.

The results of previous study are relevant to the findings in this research which also found that SFBC as a strengths-based approach and in line with the positive psychology paradigm, has proven effective in improving the social-emotional skills and psychological well-being of students. This research also has limitations, including that the research sample involved is still limited to junior high school students. Comparisons of gender and socio-economic conditions before counseling was provided were also not carried out so that the generalization of the findings in this study to other junior high school student populations needs to be considered, so further research is needed with a wider population and involving subjects from various backgrounds.

Conclusions

The findings in this study have implications for the implementation of SFBC as a strengths-based approach that can be applied in educational and school settings as an effort to provide assistance to students to improve non-cognitive skills, as well as supporting the achievement of more optimal psychological well-being and student happiness. This is in line with the current transformation of education, especially in Indonesia, which does not only focus on efforts to develop students' academic abilities, but is in line with the development of non-cognitive aspects and competencies which are believed to contribute positively to students' mental health in order to create Indonesian students who are able to develop life satisfaction, having positive emotions, being able to develop good social skills, and not experiencing any psychological disorders.

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