

GROUP COUNSELING USING THE SOLUTION-FOCUSED BRIEF COUNSELING APPROACH IN OVERCOMING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PROBLEMS

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Abstract

Group counseling is one of the effective methods in providing psychological support and problem solving for individuals experiencing various psychological challenges. One approach that has received widespread attention in the context of group counseling is the Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) Approach. Solution Focused Brief Counseling is a counseling approach based on a postmodern approach which is also called constructive therapy, besides that this SFBC approach also focuses on discussing solutions provided or offered in the counseling process. This literature study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of group counseling using the SFBC approach in overcoming various psychological problems. The research method used is a literature study, by searching and analyzing various articles, books, and scientific journals related to group counseling and the SFBC approach. The Brief Solution Focused Counseling (SFBC) approach is an effective approach in helping individuals find solutions to psychological problems, especially when applied in a group setting. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of SFBC may vary depending on the specific characteristics and problems of the counselee.

Keywords: Solution Focused Brief Counseling Approach, Group Counseling, Brief Counseling

Abstrak

Konseling kelompok merupakan salah satu metode yang efektif dalam menyediakan dukungan psikologis dan pemecahan masalah bagi individu yang mengalami berbagai tantangan psikologis. Salah satu pendekatan yang telah mendapatkan perhatian luas dalam konteks konseling kelompok adalah Pendekatan Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC). Solution Focused Brief Counseling merupakan pendekatan konseling yang berdasarkan pada pendekatan postmodern yang juga disebut terapi konstruktif, selain itu pendekatan SFBC ini juga berfokus pada diskusi solusi yang diberikan atau ditawarkan pada proses konseling. Studi literatur ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi efektivitas konseling kelompok menggunakan pendekatan SFBC dalam mengatasi berbagai masalah psikologis. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah studi literatur, dengan melakukan pencarian dan analisis terhadap berbagai artikel, buku, dan jurnal ilmiah yang berkaitan dengan konseling kelompok dan pendekatan SFBC. Pendekatan Konseling Berfokus Solusi Singkat (SFBC) merupakan pendekatan yang efektif dalam membantu individu menemukan solusi untuk masalah psikologis, terutama saat

diterapkan dalam setting kelompok. Meskipun demikian, keefektifan SFBC dapat bervariasi tergantung pada karakteristik dan masalah spesifik konseli.

Kata kunci: Pendekatan Konseling Solution Focused Brief, Konseling Kelompok, Konseling Singkat

INTRODUCTION

Counseling is a professional assistance process that is interpersonal, systematic, and aims to facilitate optimal individual development. Conceptually, counseling is understood as a collaborative relationship between counselor and client that is built on empathy, trust, and respect for human dignity. In this process, counselors help clients understand themselves, recognize their potential, clarify their personal values, and make constructive decisions for their lives. A. Juntika Nurihsan (2006, in Potabuga, 2020) explains that counseling is not merely a process of providing assistance, but rather a professional interaction designed to improve the effectiveness of individual behavior through understanding of oneself and one's environment.

From a developmental psychology perspective, counseling has preventive, curative, and developmental functions. This means that counseling is not only intended to overcome problems that have already arisen, but also to prevent new problems from arising and to develop individual potential in a sustainable manner. An effective counseling relationship requires open two-way communication, unconditional positive regard, and empathy from the counselor. Therefore, the quality of the therapeutic relationship is the main foundation for the success of the counseling process.

In practice, counseling uses various theoretical approaches that have developed in line with the dynamics of psychology. Each approach has basic assumptions about human nature, the sources of problems, and the intervention strategies used. One approach that has developed rapidly and is widely applied in educational and clinical contexts is Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) or Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) when applied in a counseling setting.

Group counseling with the SFBT approach is a solution-oriented and future-focused counseling method, rather than an in-depth analysis of the causes of problems. This approach emphasizes that change can occur quickly if the client is directed to identify their strengths, resources, and previous successes. Unlike traditional approaches that tend to explore the root causes of problems at length, SFBT assumes that understanding the causes of problems is not always a prerequisite for change.

Sucipto et al. (2020) state that group counseling with the SFBT approach is relatively simple and easy to apply because the focus is on constructing solutions rather than analyzing problems. In practice, counselors help clients formulate specific, realistic, and measurable goals. This process is carried out through specific techniques such as miracle questions, scaling questions, exception questions, and coping questions. These techniques are designed to explore positive experiences and build clients' hopes for the future. Philosophically, SFBT is rooted in the postmodern paradigm.

This paradigm rejects claims of singular truth and emphasizes the construction of subjective and contextual meaning. In the context of counseling, the postmodern approach

views individual reality as shaped by language, narrative, and social interaction. Therefore, change can occur through the reconstruction of a more adaptive and empowering self-narrative.

SFBT was first developed in the early 1980s at the Brief Therapy Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, United States, by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg along with their team, including De Jong, Miller, Cade, Bill O'Hanlon, Lipchik, and Murphy (Nelson & Jones, 2006, in Potabuga, 2020). This approach was born in response to criticism of traditional therapy, which was considered too focused on pathology and the past. SFBT offers a more pragmatic, concise, and results-oriented alternative.

Chris Iveson (2002, in Potabuga, 2020) explains that SFBT is a therapy known for its effectiveness in a short period of time. The main focus of this therapy is to build solutions through exploring the client's hopes, strengths, and resources. Instead of delving deeply into past trauma, counselors in SFBT help clients imagine their desired future and identify small steps they can take to achieve it. According to Gingerich (in Wibolt, 2011, in Potabuga, 2020), SFBT is a therapeutic approach that emphasizes achieving goals quickly and efficiently. The counselor plays an active role in facilitating solution-oriented conversations, but does not create long-term dependence. Once the client has found and applied a solution to their problem, the counselor's role naturally ends. This shows that SFBT is oriented towards the empowerment and independence of the client. One of the famous metaphors used by Steve de Shazer is the metaphor of a key and a locked door. He likens problems to locked doors, and the task of counseling is not to analyze why the door is locked, but to find the key to open it (Sharf, 2012, in Potabuga, 2020). This metaphor emphasizes that the main focus of SFBT is practical solutions that can be immediately applied, not exploring the etiology of the problem. In the context of group counseling, the SFBT approach has its own advantages. Group dynamics allow members to share experiences, provide support, and learn from each other's successes. When one group member shares a small success in overcoming a problem, other members can see the possibility of change in themselves.

This process creates a positive social modeling effect. Group counseling with the SFBT approach is also effective in increasing the self-efficacy of group members. By identifying past successes and internal resources, clients become more confident in facing challenges. The basic principle of SFBT states that every individual has the strength and capacity to change. The counselor's job is to help clients realize and optimize that capacity. In addition, this approach emphasizes the use of positive and constructive language. The language used in counseling sessions is directed at building hope and strengthening the positive identity of the counselee. For example, instead of asking "Why did you fail?", the counselor might ask, "When was the last time you successfully dealt with a similar situation?" This shift in language significantly affects how counselees interpret their experiences. In educational practice, SFBT is widely used to help students overcome behavioral problems, learning difficulties, low motivation, and interpersonal conflicts. Due to its concise and structured nature, this approach is suitable for application in school settings with limited time.

School counselors can use scaling questions to monitor student progress quantitatively and qualitatively. However, the SFBT approach also has limitations. Critics of this approach argue that not all problems can be solved by focusing solely on solutions without a deep understanding of the root causes. In cases of severe trauma or complex psychological disorders, a more exploratory approach may be necessary. Therefore, the counselor's competence in choosing the appropriate approach is a crucial factor. Overall, group counseling with the SFBT approach offers a new paradigm in modern counseling practice. This approach emphasizes strengths rather than weaknesses, hope rather than despair, and solutions rather than problems. With a postmodern philosophy that emphasizes the construction of meaning, SFBT provides space for clients to become agents of change in their own lives. Through this approach, counseling is no longer seen as a long process focused on pathology, but rather as a brief yet meaningful interaction that empowers individuals to find the keys to their own solutions. Thus, SFBT has become a relevant and adaptive approach in responding to contemporary counseling needs.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design. The qualitative approach aims to understand phenomena in depth through the interpretation of various textual data sources. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2012, in Dartina et al., 2024), qualitative research focuses on a comprehensive understanding of the quality of relationships, activities, or specific situations, resulting in rich and meaningful descriptions. The SLR method was chosen because it allows researchers to systematically and structurally identify, evaluate, and synthesize previous research results. Kitchenham and Charters (2007, in Dartina et al., 2024) explain that SLR is a methodological procedure for reviewing previous research in a transparent, replicable, and protocol-based manner to minimize bias in the literature review process.

This research procedure followed the three main stages of SLR, namely: (1) planning, (2) conducting, and (3) reporting. In the planning stage, the researcher formulated research questions related to the concept, development, procedures, techniques, and advantages and disadvantages of the Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) approach. In the implementation stage, the researcher conducted a literature search through relevant national journals, proceedings, and scientific books, such as the works of Mulawarman (2019), Sucipto et al. (2020), Rostini (2021), and Hamdi et al. (2022). The articles selected were based on their relevance to the topic, the credibility of the sources, and their contribution to the study of SFBC in a group setting. The final stage was reporting, which involved the synthesis and thematic analysis of the research findings that had been reviewed. The results of this SLR were used as a conceptual and empirical basis for understanding the effectiveness, procedures, and implementation of SFBC in the context of group counseling.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. General Synthesis of Systematic Literature Review Results

Based on the results of a review of various literature sources that have been systematically selected, it was found that the Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) approach

shows significant effectiveness in various counseling settings, especially in group formats. The literature analyzed included national journal articles, scientific proceedings, and conceptual books such as the works of Mulawarman (2019), Sucipto et al. (2020), Rostini (2021), Nugroho et al. (2020), and Hamdi et al. (2022).

The synthesis results show that SFBC has the following main characteristics:

- a. Focus on solutions and the future (future-oriented).
- b. Strength-based approach.
- c. Goal-directed intervention.
- d. Use of reflective and constructive questioning techniques.

This approach does not focus on in-depth exploration of the etiology of the problem, but rather on the construction of realistic solutions that can be achieved in a relatively short time.

2. Findings Based on Aspects of Study

A. Definition and Conceptualization of SFBC

The literature shows a consistent definition that SFBC is a brief counseling approach that focuses on solutions rather than problems. Mulawarman (2019) explains that SFBC emphasizes small but significant changes (small change strategy) as the starting point for behavioral transformation. Sucipto et al. (2020) emphasize that this approach is effective in improving psychological well-being because clients are guided to identify their internal resources.

Analytical findings:

This approach is in line with the postmodernism paradigm, in which reality is viewed as a social construct that can be reconstructed through language and dialogue. Thus, the counseling process becomes a space for co-constructing solutions between the counselor and the client.

B. Development of SFBC

Historical studies show that SFBC developed from the Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) approach pioneered by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg at the Brief Therapy Center, Milwaukee. In the Indonesian context, SFBC has been adapted by integrating cultural and religious values (Rostini, 2021). Pangestuti (2018) shows that SFBC can be used for the internalization of multicultural values, while Sumarwiyah et al. (2015) emphasize its effectiveness in family counseling.

Analysis:

The development of SFBC shows theoretical flexibility. This approach is adaptive to various social, cultural, and institutional contexts.

C. Effectiveness of SFBC in Group Settings

Hamdi et al. (2022) found that group counseling using the SFBC approach significantly improved employees' understanding of their duties and functions. Aisyah et al. (2023) reported an increase in students' career maturity after SFBC-based group intervention.

Nugroho et al. (2020) showed an improvement in students' academic self-concept.

Common findings on effectiveness include:

- a. Increased self-esteem
- b. Increased motivation to learn
- c. Increased psychological well-being
- d. Increased career maturity
- e. Increased self-concept

In-depth analysis shows that group dynamics reinforce the effects of SFBC because of:

- a. The existence of modeling among members
- b. The process of collective reflection
- c. Social support
- d. Validation of experiences

3. Findings Related to SFBC Procedures

Based on the literature (Liana, 2023; Swandevi et al., 2020), SFBC procedures in a group setting generally include:

- a. Identification of goals
- b. Miracle Question
- c. Scaling Question
- d. Exception Question
- e. Feedback and reinforcement
- f. Evaluation of change

Procedural Analysis

The *miracle question* technique has been proven effective in helping counselees build a picture of their desired future. The *scaling question* technique helps measure progress quantitatively in a qualitative context. The *exception question* technique encourages counselees to realize that problems are not always permanent.

Table 1. Summary of SFBC Literature Review Results

NO	RESEARCHER	RESEARCH FOCUS	SUBJECT	KEY FINDINGS	IMPLICATI ONS
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1	Mulawarman (2019)	SFBC Concept & Procedure	Theory	Effective SFBC based on solutions & small changes	Strong conceptual foundation
2	Sucipto et al. (2020)	Psychological well-being	Inmate	Improves psychological well-being	Effective in specific populations
3	Nugroho et al. (2020)	Academic self-concept	Students	Significant improvement in self-concept	Relevant to school settings
4	Hamdi et al. (2022)	Understanding of the Role of Leadership	Employees	Improved regulatory understanding	Effective on the organization
5	Aisyah et al. (2023)	Career maturity	Students	Increased career maturity	Support career planning
6	Liana (2023)	Self-esteem	Broken home students	Self-esteem opinion cat	Preventive interventions

4. In-depth Thematic Analysis

Based on thematic coding of all literature, five major themes were identified:

Theme 1: Future Orientation

All literature indicates that SFBC directs counselees to develop a vision for the future as a strategy for change.

Theme 2: Strengthening Internal Resources

This approach assumes that clients have the intrinsic capacity to solve problems.

Theme 3: Time Efficiency

Most studies show that interventions last 4–8 sessions.

Theme 4: Group Dynamics as a Reinforcing Factor

The group setting accelerates solution construction through social interaction.

Theme 5: Contextual Flexibility

SFBC can be applied in educational, family, correctional, and organizational settings.

5. Strengths and Weaknesses Based on the Literature

Strengths

- a. Concise and efficient
- b. Focus on potential
- c. Easy to apply
- d. Adaptive to various contexts

Disadvantages:

- a. Not in-depth enough for severe trauma cases
- b. Does not explore the roots of complex problems
- c. Depends on the verbal abilities of the counselee

6. Analytical Integration

Epistemologically, SFBC is within the postmodern-constructivist paradigm. Language is the main tool for change. The counselor acts as a facilitator of solution-focused dialogue, not a pathological analyst. In the context of group counseling, this approach reinforces the principle of co-construction of meaning. Group members not only receive interventions, but become agents of change for one another. The results of this SLR show consistency across studies that SFBC is effective in improving various psychological and behavioral variables in a relatively short time.

7. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretical Implications:

- a. Strengthens the position of SFBC as a postmodern strength-based approach.
- b. Supports the incremental change theory.

Practical Implications:

- a. Recommended for school counseling.
- b. Effective in career development.

Suitable for preventive interventions and character building.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of various studies on the application of Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) in a group counseling setting, it can be concluded that this approach shows a consistent level of effectiveness in helping clients achieve positive change in a relatively short period of time. Findings from various empirical studies indicate that SFBC contributes significantly to improvements in self-esteem, academic self-concept, career maturity, learning motivation, and psychological well-being. This approach emphasizes a focus on solutions and the future, rather than an in-depth exploration of the causes of problems.

Key techniques such as the miracle question, scaling question, and exception question have proven effective in helping counselees identify goals, recognize internal resources, and develop realistic steps for change. In the context of group counseling, the dynamics of interaction among members reinforce the process of solution construction through social support, shared reflection, and validation of experiences. Theoretically, SFBC is in line with the postmodern-constructivist paradigm, which views reality as a socially constructed outcome that can be reconstructed through dialogue and language. Practically, this approach is relevant for application in educational settings, organizations, and preventive interventions due to its efficient, flexible, and individual strength-based nature. Thus, SFBC in group counseling can be recommended as an effective intervention approach for developmental and adjustment problems, although cases with high clinical complexity require additional, more in-depth and comprehensive approaches.

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