



The Effectiveness of Group Counseling in Improving Students' Social Interaction: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT: Students' social interaction is a fundamental aspect of social and academic development; however, many students experience difficulties in establishing effective interpersonal relationships in the school setting. Group counseling has been widely implemented to address this issue; however, empirical findings remain fragmented and have not been systematically synthesized. This study aims to review and synthesize empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of group counseling in improving students' social interaction. The study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design based on the PRISMA framework. Literature searches were conducted using Google Scholar with the keywords "group counseling" and "student social interaction", focusing on articles published between 2014 and 2024. Following a rigorous screening process, five eligible studies were selected for analysis. The findings indicate that group counseling consistently improves students' social interaction through various approaches, including role playing, modeling, and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). Group dynamics play a central role in facilitating behavioral and cognitive change. In conclusion, group counseling is an effective and adaptable intervention for enhancing students' social interaction, providing important implications for school counselors in designing evidence-based counseling programs.

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INTRODUCTION

Humans are naturally inclined to interact with others, driven by inherent social desires that encourage them to build relationships and engage in interpersonal interaction (Warsah, 2018). Social interaction reflects the interconnectedness and mutual influence between individuals, resulting in reciprocal relationships that may occur between individuals, between individuals and groups, or among groups (Xiao, 2018). Social interaction begins as soon as two individuals encounter one another and may take various forms, such as greeting, conversing, cooperating, or even experiencing conflict (Yudiarti et al., 2018). Even in the absence of verbal communication or physical contact, interaction can still occur, as the mere awareness of another person's presence may trigger emotional and neurological responses influenced by sensory factors such as sound, scent, or movement. In essence, social interaction involves dynamic relationships in which individuals influence and are influenced by others through social contact and communication (Putri et al., 2022).

In the context of education, social interaction plays a crucial role in shaping students' social competence and personal development. However, the current national education curriculum in Indonesia tends to emphasize cognitive development while paying less attention to students' social and emotional growth (Trikeyani, 2019). As a result, students often become overly focused on academic achievement, limiting their opportunities to engage in meaningful social interactions within their school and community environments. In fact, social competence can only develop optimally when individuals actively participate in open social interactions with others and within the wider community (Chandra, 2014). Successful social interaction, therefore, requires not only the ability but also the confidence and courage to initiate social contact, whereas low self-confidence may hinder students' willingness to socialize or engage effectively with others.

Considering the diverse characteristics and large number of students in school environments, students are expected to learn how to socialize and understand one another to build confidence in broader social

settings. Nevertheless, differences in social interaction abilities among students are inevitable and do not necessarily indicate conflict but rather varying levels of social skills. Previous studies reveal that a significant number of students exhibit low social interaction skills, such as difficulty collaborating in group tasks, preference for working alone, social withdrawal, limited peer interaction, difficulty expressing opinions, or being ignored by classmates (Sari et al., 2019; Khotimah & Cristina, 2013). This condition is concerning, as teachers are responsible not only for fostering students' cognitive development but also for supporting their social interaction skills as an integral part of holistic education (Aini & Mulawarman, 2022). Therefore, appropriate and systematic interventions are required to help students overcome these difficulties.

One effective intervention to address students' social interaction difficulties is group counseling. Group counseling is a guidance and counseling service that enables students to discuss and resolve personal and social issues through structured group dynamics (Amelia & Silvianetri, 2023). Through active participation in group processes, students are encouraged to exchange information, share personal experiences, and collaboratively explore solutions to their problems. Group dynamics create a lively and interactive atmosphere in which members influence one another, fostering openness, cooperation, and mutual understanding (Aini & Mulawarman, 2022; Gaho et al., 2021). Within this dynamic environment, students engage in multiple interpersonal interactions that are expected to enhance their social skills, including communication, empathy, and cooperation (Novialdi et al., 2021).

Through Group counseling services, students are provided with opportunities to express themselves, share experiences, and understand others' feelings and perspectives. During the counseling process, students are trained to communicate their thoughts, emotions, and expectations confidently and constructively. This interaction allows students to gain deeper self-awareness while simultaneously sharpening interpersonal communication skills that are essential for social life. Moreover, group counseling fosters mutual respect, empathy, and solidarity among students, enabling them to adapt more effectively to various social situations and build healthy relationships with peers, teachers, and the wider community. Ultimately, Group counseling contributes to the creation of a supportive

school culture characterized by cooperation, shared learning, and positive social engagement.

Although numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Group counseling in improving students' social interaction, previous research still reveals a significant gap regarding the variation of counseling techniques and approaches that are most effective across different educational levels. Most existing studies focus primarily on general improvements in social behavior, while comparative analyses of specific Group counseling techniques—such as role playing, modeling, and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy—remain limited. Furthermore, literature reviews on Group counseling are predominantly narrative in nature and often lack systematic procedures for searching, selecting, and analyzing empirical studies. Consequently, there is no comprehensive research mapping that systematically examines the types of techniques used, participant characteristics, and consistency of findings related to students' social interaction improvement. Addressing this gap, the present study offers novelty by conducting a systematic literature review that critically synthesizes empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Group counseling services in enhancing students' social interaction, thereby providing a stronger theoretical and practical foundation for the development of guidance and counseling practices in educational settings.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to synthesize empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of group counseling in improving students' social interaction. The SLR approach was selected because it enables a structured, transparent, and replicable process for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing findings from previous studies (Cahyono et al., 2019; Andriani, 2022). To ensure methodological rigor, this review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, which provide a standardized framework for reporting literature search and selection processes.

The primary intervention examined in this review was group counseling services aimed at improving students' social interaction. Literature searches were conducted using Google Scholar, Google, and Google Cendekia, as these databases provide broad access to national and

internationally indexed journals in the field of guidance and counseling. The search strategy employed a combination of keywords, namely “group counseling” and “student social interaction”. The search was limited to articles published between 2014 and 2024, a period considered representative of contemporary developments in counseling practices within educational settings.

The article selection process followed four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, as outlined in the PRISMA framework. During the identification stage, a total of 40 articles were retrieved based on the defined search keywords. In the screening stage, titles and abstracts were reviewed to assess their relevance to the research focus, resulting in 20 articles retained for further evaluation. At the eligibility stage, 15 articles were excluded because they did not meet the predefined criteria, including the absence of full-text access, lack of focus on student social interaction, or the absence of group counseling as the main intervention. Consequently, 5 articles met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final analysis. The detailed selection process is illustrated in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1).

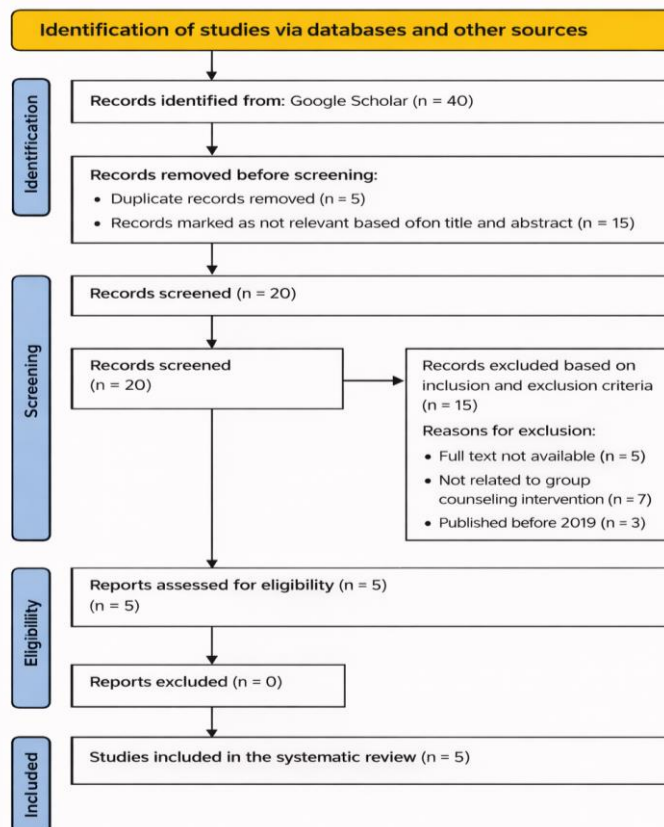


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Article Selection Process

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To ensure consistency and relevance, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were established before the review process. Articles were included if they were peer-reviewed journal publications, written in English or Indonesian, published within the last ten years, focused on student populations, employed empirical research designs (experimental, quasi-experimental, classroom action research, or evaluative studies), and examined the effectiveness of group counseling interventions in improving students' social interaction. Articles were excluded if they were conceptual papers, opinion articles, proceedings, theses, dissertations, books, or studies that did not directly address the research question. A detailed overview of these criteria is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria Category	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Publication Year	Articles published within the last 10 years (2014–2024).	Articles published before 2014.
Language	Published in English or Indonesian.	Articles written in other languages
Document Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles with full-text PDF available.	Abstract-only articles, proceedings, theses, dissertations, or books
Research Focus	Studies examining group counseling interventions to improve students' social interaction	Studies not focusing on group counseling or social interaction
Population	Participants are students (school-aged participants)	Non-student populations (e.g., teachers, university students, general population)
Methodology	Empirical studies (experimental, quasi-experimental, classroom action research, or evaluative studies)	Conceptual papers, opinion articles, or studies without empirical data
Accessibility	Full-text articles are available online and accessible.	Articles without full text, paywalled without access, or missing key data.
Relevance to Research Question	Studies directly addressing the effectiveness of group counseling on students' social interaction	Studies not relevant to the research question

Following the inclusion stage, the selected articles were analyzed using a descriptive-analytic synthesis approach. Each study was examined

to identify its research context, participant characteristics, counseling techniques employed, methodological design, and key findings. Similarities and differences among the studies were then compared to identify patterns and thematic consistencies related to the effectiveness of group counseling interventions. This synthesis process enabled a comprehensive understanding of how various group counseling techniques contribute to the improvement of students' social interaction and provided a robust foundation for the subsequent results and discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the systematic literature review process, five peer-reviewed journal articles that met all inclusion criteria were analyzed to examine the effectiveness of group counseling services in improving students' social interaction skills. The reviewed studies, summarized in Table 2, consistently demonstrate that group counseling interventions contribute positively to students' interpersonal communication, social confidence, and peer engagement across various educational settings.

Table 2. Literature review table

Title	Authors	Year	Sample/ respondent	Finding/ Summary
The Effectiveness of Group Counseling Services Using the Role-Playing Technique in Improving Social Interaction among Grade X Students of SMA Negeri 1 Lahusa	Jidarahati Gaho, Kaminudin Telaumbanua, Bestari Laia	2021	The population in this study consisted of all 27 tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Lahusa.	The results of hypothesis testing showed a calculated t-value of 3.41 > t-table value of 1.03. Since t-calculated > t-table, it can be concluded that group counseling services are effective in improving students' social interaction.
Improve Self-Confidence in Students' Social Interaction at Madrasah Aliyah Purwoasri-Kediri	Nikmatul Khotimah	2022	Al-Hikmah Purwoasri-Kediri, who had low self-confidence in social interaction.	Based on data analysis using the sign test, there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of students' self-confidence in social interaction. Since the post-test scores were higher than the pre-test scores, it can be concluded that the use of

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The Effectiveness of Group Counseling Services Using the Role-Playing Technique in Improving Students' Social Interaction	Andrian Novialdi, Kaminudin Telaumbanua	2021	Data were collected through a literature study by examining relevant theories on group counseling with the role-playing technique to enhance students' social interaction.	REBT-based group counseling effectively increased students' self-confidence in social interactions. The findings indicate that group counseling services using the role-playing technique are effective in improving students' social interaction.
The Influence of Group Counseling Services on Students' Social Interaction at SMA Negeri 9 Bengkulu City	Intan Permata Sari, Pudji Hartuti, Illawaty Sulian	2023	The sample consisted of 8 students from Grade XI IPS 3 at SMA Negeri 9 Bengkulu City.	The results showed a significant effect of group counseling services on students' social interaction. The Wilcoxon test yielded a z-value of -2.524 with a significance level of 0.012 (< 0.05), indicating that group counseling services had a significant influence on students' social interaction.
The Effectiveness of Group Counseling Using the Modeling Technique to Improve Students' Social Interaction	Evi Zuhara	2020	The study involved 8 student participants. Data were collected using the Guttman scale through questionnaires.	The results showed that the modeling technique had a significant effect on students' social interaction, as reflected in an increase in the mean pre-test score (78.12) to the mean post-test score (97.00), with a difference of 18.88. This indicates an improvement in students' social interaction after receiving the modeling technique. The study concludes that the modeling technique is effective and can serve as a reference for guidance and counseling teachers in developing group

counseling programs to enhance social interaction.

Across the reviewed literature, group counseling services were implemented using different intervention techniques, including role-playing, modeling, and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). Despite these variations, all studies reported statistically significant improvements in students' social interaction following the interventions, as evidenced by pre-test and post-test comparisons using both parametric and non-parametric statistical analyses (Gaho et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2019). This convergence of findings suggests that group counseling is a robust intervention for enhancing social interaction, regardless of the specific technique employed.

From an analytical perspective, the effectiveness of group counseling appears to be rooted in the therapeutic dynamics of the group process itself, rather than in any single counseling technique. Group settings provide students with opportunities to interact directly with peers, receive immediate feedback, and engage in shared problem-solving, which collectively foster social learning and emotional regulation. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing that group counseling facilitates social development by creating a supportive environment that encourages self-expression and mutual understanding (Ireel et al., 2018; Edmawati et al., 2023).

Role-playing-based group counseling emphasizes behavioral rehearsal, allowing students to practice appropriate social responses in simulated interpersonal situations. Studies employing this technique reported improvements in students' verbal communication, assertiveness, and responsiveness during peer interactions (Gaho et al., 2021; Novialdi et al., 2021). These findings indicate that role playing is particularly effective for students who experience difficulties in expressing themselves or initiating social contact.

In contrast, group counseling interventions using modeling techniques focus on observational learning, enabling students to internalize adaptive social behaviors by observing examples demonstrated during counseling sessions. Zuhara (2020) found that modeling-based group counseling significantly enhanced students' ability to cooperate and interact positively with peers, suggesting that this technique is especially

beneficial for students who lack social role models or appropriate behavioral references.

Meanwhile, REBT-based group counseling targets the cognitive and emotional dimensions of social interaction by helping students identify and modify irrational beliefs, negative self-perceptions, and anxiety related to social situations. Studies applying REBT within group counseling contexts reported notable improvements in students' self-confidence and emotional control, which subsequently facilitated more effective social engagement (Khotimah, 2022; Sari et al., 2019). These results support the view that cognitive restructuring plays a critical role in addressing internal barriers to social interaction.

Importantly, the reviewed studies indicate that students' social interaction difficulties are multidimensional, encompassing behavioral, cognitive, and emotional components. Consequently, the effectiveness of group counseling is influenced by the alignment between counseling techniques and students' dominant needs. Action-oriented techniques such as role playing and modeling tend to be more effective for students with observable behavioral deficits, whereas cognitively oriented approaches such as REBT yield stronger outcomes for students experiencing anxiety, low self-esteem, or maladaptive beliefs (Zuhara, 2020; Khotimah, 2022).

Despite the consistent positive outcomes reported across studies, this review also identifies a significant limitation in the existing literature. Most studies examined single counseling techniques in isolation, with limited comparative analysis across different approaches. As a result, empirical evidence regarding the relative effectiveness of various group counseling techniques remains insufficient. This limitation highlights the need for future research employing comparative, mixed-methods, or meta-analytic designs to provide a more nuanced understanding of how different group counseling strategies function under specific educational contexts.

Overall, the synthesis of findings confirms that group counseling services represent an effective and flexible intervention for improving students' social interaction. By integrating behavioral, cognitive, and emotional components within a structured group setting, group counseling not only enhances observable social behaviors but also strengthens students' internal readiness to engage constructively with others. These findings underscore the importance of strategically selecting counseling

techniques based on students' needs to maximize the educational impact of group counseling interventions.

CONCLUSION

Studies on the effectiveness of group counseling in improving students' social interaction consistently demonstrate highly promising results within contemporary educational settings. By providing a structured environment for group-based interaction, group counseling plays a crucial role in developing interpersonal communication skills, expanding positive social networks, and fostering harmonious relationships among students. Through shared experiences and collective support, students learn to express themselves more effectively, cultivate empathy and mutual understanding, manage social differences, and resolve conflicts constructively. These processes contribute to increased self-confidence, emotional regulation, and a stronger sense of belonging within the school community.

The findings of this study carry important implications for school-based counseling practices. Group counseling services can function as an effective strategy for creating a positive social climate, strengthening peer solidarity, and enhancing students' adaptive capacities in navigating social dynamics. Therefore, guidance and counseling teachers are encouraged to optimize the use of group counseling by applying varied techniques – such as role playing, modeling, and cognitive restructuring – tailored to students' developmental needs. In this regard, group counseling serves not only as an intervention for addressing social difficulties but also as a sustainable approach to fostering students' social character development and supporting the creation of inclusive, supportive, and conducive learning environments.

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