

Enhancing Students' Problem-Solving Skills Through Group Counseling: A Case Study

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Abstract: This study explores the effectiveness of group counselling services in improving students' problem-solving skills within the environment of the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra. The background of this research is based on preliminary findings indicating that some students experience difficulties in addressing and resolving problems they encounter, both in school and in daily life. This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method, allowing the researcher to deeply observe the counselling intervention process in its natural context. The research subjects consisted of several students selected purposively based on initial assessments that revealed low levels of problem-solving skills. Data collection was conducted through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, carried out continuously over six group counselling sessions. Each session was designed to guide students in systematically identifying problems, exploring alternative solutions, considering the consequences of each option, and making rational and responsible decisions. The findings of the study show a significant improvement in key aspects of students' problem-solving skills, as reflected in changes in their attitudes and behaviours when facing problematic situations at school and at home. These results reinforce the view that group counselling can serve as an effective intervention strategy to help students develop critical thinking abilities and adaptive social skills. Based on these findings, it is recommended that schools and educational institutions integrate group counselling services into their student development programs, particularly in fostering life skills. Furthermore, school counsellors are encouraged to design structured, student-centred counselling sessions to enhance the effectiveness of the services provided.

Keywords: Group Counselling, Guidance Services, Problem-Solving Skills

A. Introduction

Problem-solving skills are one of the essential competencies that students must possess to face various academic and social challenges in the school environment (Wibowo & Purwanto, 2024). These skills not only support academic success but also foster independence and resilience in making sound decisions (Hasibuan & Purba, 2024). However, in reality, many students struggle with problem-solving, which

may lead to stress, low academic motivation, and deviant behaviour (Umi Kalsum, 2023). In this context, group counselling serves as an effective approach that school counsellors can use to enhance these skills.

Group counselling is a psychological support process conducted in small groups where students can share experiences, provide emotional support, and learn from one another (Lubis, Budianti, & Zulpadlan, 2022). Group interaction creates a conducive atmosphere for students' personal and social growth. According to (Lubis & Siregar, 2023), group counselling offers a space for self-exploration, reflection, and learning new skills, including problem-solving. Through group dynamics, students are guided to recognize the problems they face, identify alternative solutions, and evaluate the consequences of each decision (Anggraini & Harahap, 2023).

Several studies have shown that group counselling effectively enhances students' cognitive and emotional abilities in dealing with problems. For instance, (Rosada & Apriyani, 2024) found that group counselling using a problem-solving approach significantly improved students' ability to identify problems, formulate solutions, and make decisions. Similarly, (Fatchurahman & Syarif, 2025) emphasized that group counselling also boosts students' self-confidence in dealing with interpersonal conflicts and academic pressure.

The effectiveness of group counselling in this context can be explained through Bandura's social learning theory, which highlights the importance of learning through observation and social experience (Ayilzi Putri, 2025). In a group setting, students learn not only individually but also through modelling and feedback from their peers. This process reinforces understanding and the acquisition of new skills (Nasution & Siregar, 2023). Thus, group counselling has proven to be an effective intervention for improving students' problem-solving abilities. To achieve optimal outcomes, it is crucial for school counsellors to design systematic counselling sessions that include stages such as problem identification, solution exploration, decision-making, and evaluation (Rushing & Khurshid, 2024). Moreover, attention should be given to group dynamics, individual characteristics, and the creation of a safe and supportive environment.

A similar situation was observed at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra, where several students showed difficulties in dealing with academic and social problems. These challenges were evident through behaviours such as passive participation in learning, conflicts with peers, and dependence on others when making decisions. If left unaddressed, such conditions may negatively impact students' personality development and academic achievement.

Group guidance is one of the effective services within guidance and counselling to develop students' social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Through group dynamics, students learn not only from their own experiences but also from those of their

peers. This technique enables students to explore problems, identify alternative solutions, and make wiser decisions with the assistance of a facilitator or school counsellor. Therefore, group guidance is considered a relevant approach for use as an intervention strategy to improve students' problem-solving skills.

Previous research has shown that group guidance positively impacts various aspects of student development, including social skills, emotional regulation, and decision-making ability. A study by (Qudsiyah & Pernama, 2024) demonstrated that group guidance services effectively enhance critical thinking skills among junior high school students in Jakarta. Meanwhile, (Damayanti, 2023) found that group guidance could reduce aggressive behaviour and increase self-control among junior high school students. These findings support the idea that group interventions can be a relevant strategy in student personality development.

However, there remains a research gap in the literature, particularly regarding the effectiveness of group guidance in enhancing problem-solving skills among students in Islamic educational settings, such as the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra. Most previous studies have only focused on general aspects of students' social or emotional behaviour without specifically examining the development of problem-solving skills through group dynamics within religious and value-laden contexts.

Moreover, only a few studies have employed in-depth case study approaches to comprehensively explain how group guidance is implemented and how it affects individuals within morally and spiritually enriched educational environments. In fact, religious values can significantly influence how students perceive and resolve problems, indicating that group guidance approaches should be tailored to such contexts (Mardhotillah & Shaputra, 2023).

Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on improving problem-solving skills as a primary outcome of group guidance services, its implementation in an Islamic educational institution an area rarely explored in previous studies and the use of an in-depth case study approach to examine the processes, dynamics, and outcomes of group guidance among students with strong religious values. This research not only enriches the scientific literature on the effectiveness of group guidance but also provides practical contributions to the design of contextual, humanistic, and value-based guidance services. This is essential for fostering more comprehensive and meaningful problem-solving skills among students.

This study was conducted as a case study to explore the effectiveness of group guidance in improving problem-solving skills among students at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra. This research is significant given the strategic role of group guidance services in supporting learning success and character development.

Furthermore, the findings are expected to provide practical contributions for school counsellors in designing programs that address students' needs.

B. Methods

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a case study method. The selection of this approach was based on the study's aim to explore in depth the students' experiences in participating in group counselling services and the changes that occurred in their problem-solving skills. The case study method was deemed suitable as it allows for a holistic understanding of the intervention process and the dynamics that occur within the students' natural context (Sugiyono, 2022). The study took place at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra, an Islamic-based educational institution located in Medan City. The research was conducted over a two-month period, from February to April 2025. This location was chosen because the institution has an active counselling program and provides a supportive environment for the implementation of group counselling services.

The research subjects consisted of six junior high school students who were selected purposively. The selection criteria were based on the results of an initial assessment of problem-solving skills and recommendations from guidance and counselling teachers. The students involved were those who demonstrated low scores in problem-solving abilities based on the preliminary questionnaire and were willing to participate in the entire counselling process. Purposive sampling was chosen as it allows the researcher to intentionally select individuals who are likely to provide relevant data aligned with the study's objectives (Creswell, 2020).

The first step taken by the researcher was to identify students with low problem-solving skills. This process involved collaboration with guidance counsellors and classroom teachers through observation and the distribution of a problem-solving assessment instrument based on the problem-solving model by (D'Zurilla & Goldfried, 1971). Once the subjects were identified, the researcher developed a structured plan for the group counselling sessions. The program consisted of six sessions, each lasting approximately 60 minutes, designed based on the principles of problem-solving therapy (Nezu, 2004).

Each group counselling session focused on the development of specific skills such as identifying problems, exploring alternative solutions, weighing the consequences of each option, and making effective decisions. The counselling sessions were actively facilitated by the researcher using a nondirective approach, which allowed students to freely explore their thoughts and feelings (Corey, 2016).

To obtain comprehensive data, the researcher used several instruments, including a semi-structured interview guide, student behaviour observation sheets, and activity documentation such as session notes, student reflections, and audio recordings (with

participants' consent). Additionally, pre-test and post-test problem-solving questionnaires were used to measure general changes in students' thinking and decision-making abilities.

The data collected from various sources were analysed using thematic analysis. The analytical process began with repeated readings of interview and observation results, followed by identifying meaningful codes. These codes were then grouped into major themes representing improvements in problem-solving skills, such as increased self-confidence, reflective ability, and resilience in dealing with difficult situations (Moleong, 2000).

To ensure data validity, the researcher applied source and technique triangulation, which involved comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checking was also conducted by seeking participants' confirmation of the researcher's interpretations, thereby maintaining the validity and accuracy of the data (Creswell, 2020). Through this method, the researcher was able to understand not only the outcomes of the group counselling intervention but also the process that students underwent in developing their problem-solving skills. This study is expected to serve as a reference for guidance and counselling practitioners and educational institutions in designing more effective and contextual counselling services.

C. Results and Discussion

Group Counseling and Problem Solving

Based on observations conducted during the group counselling sessions at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra, it was found that students' problem-solving abilities improved gradually yet significantly. This progress was evident through several stages observed throughout the sessions. In the initial sessions, most students appeared passive and struggled to identify the core issues they were facing. However, as the sessions progressed, a positive shift in their mindset and behaviour became noticeable. Students began to participate more actively, both in expressing their opinions and in attentively listening to their peers' perspectives.

The first notable improvement was in the skill of problem identification, where students gradually became more capable of articulating their problems clearly and systematically. In subsequent sessions, students demonstrated progress in generating alternative solutions and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each option. Group discussions, facilitated through open-ended and reflective techniques, enabled students to consider various perspectives and develop more logical and realistic problem-solving strategies.

Observations also revealed improvement in decision-making abilities, as students became more thoughtful and deliberate in selecting solutions, rather than acting impulsively. Additionally, there was a marked enhancement in evaluative skills students increasingly showed the ability to assess the effectiveness of the solutions they had applied to real-life situations. Overall, the group counselling process served as a conducive environment for nurturing problem-solving skills. The group dynamics fostered during the sessions helped students learn from one another, build empathy, and strengthen the social competencies necessary for effective problem resolution.

These observational findings were further supported by interview data. A guidance and counselling teacher remarked: *“Before participating in the group counselling sessions, most students appeared confused when facing problems, especially those related to social relationships and academic pressure. After several sessions, I began to notice changes: they became more open, were able to identify the root causes of their problems, and started to find solutions independently, without relying on teachers or peers. I am confident that group counselling has significantly helped them learn to think critically and act independently.”*

This was reinforced by an interview with one of the student participants of the group counselling sessions: *“At first, I joined because I was asked to, but over time I began to enjoy it. I realized that I wasn’t the only one with problems. In the group, I could share my story and also listen to others’. Now, when I face a problem, I don’t panic right away. I try to think first, identify the cause, and look for a solution step by step.”*

This finding is also supported by a statement from a homeroom teacher: *“I noticed a change in student behaviour after they participated in the group counselling sessions. They became calmer, and when minor problems occurred in class, they no longer reacted emotionally. Some students who used to be quiet are now more active and able to engage in discussions with their peers. I believe this program has had a positive impact, especially in helping students think before acting and resolve problems in a more mature way.”*

Based on these observations and interview findings, it can be concluded that group counselling services have made an effective contribution to enhancing students’ problem-solving abilities at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra. This improvement occurred gradually and encompassed key aspects of problem-solving skills, including problem identification, generating alternative solutions, evaluating options, and making more rational and responsible decisions.

The findings of this study indicate that group counselling services at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra have a positive and significant impact on enhancing students’ problem-solving abilities. Through observations conducted over several sessions, the researcher noted that this improvement occurred gradually yet consistently, particularly in four key areas of problem-solving skills: identifying

problems, generating alternative solutions, evaluating options, and making rational decisions.

At the beginning of the sessions, students tended to be passive and had difficulty identifying the core issues they were facing. They appeared unfamiliar with reflecting on their experiences in a logical manner. This finding aligns with the study by (Wolf, 2023), which explains that problem-solving abilities do not develop instantly but rather through a gradual process influenced by environmental factors, emotional support, and systematic reflective thinking exercises.

However, as the sessions progressed, noticeable shifts in students' thinking patterns and behaviours emerged. They began to participate more actively in discussions, express their thoughts, and listen attentively to the perspectives of their peers. This process highlights the crucial role of group dynamics, which allow for social learning and experience sharing. (Anggraini Masnur, 2024) emphasizes that in group counselling, warm and open relationships among members can accelerate the development of interpersonal skills, including critical thinking and problem-solving. The most significant change was observed in students' ability to clearly and systematically formulate problems. While initially they tended to express issues in vague and emotional terms, after several sessions they were able to articulate the root causes and context of their problems more logically. This is consistent with (Fauziyah & Srianturi, 2024), who stated that group counselling is effective in helping participants structure their thoughts through reflective processes and social support.

Students also began to demonstrate the ability to develop alternative solutions and consider the consequences of each proposed option. Group discussions using open and reflective facilitation techniques provided space for students to explore various perspectives and approaches. This finding is supported by research from (Taharani & Wibowo, 2025), who noted that a supportive and open group process can broaden members' ways of thinking, enabling them to solve problems more rationally and avoid rigid thinking patterns. Another area of growth was decision-making and the evaluation of solution effectiveness. Students became more thoughtful and reflective when choosing actions. They no longer acted impulsively but considered the impact and chose the most appropriate course of action. These results support the findings of (Mulawarman & Sutoyo, 2024), who emphasized that well-facilitated group counselling can enhance students' self-regulation and rational decision-making skills.

In addition to cognitive skills, this study also noted improvements in students' social and emotional competencies, such as empathy, openness to feedback, and the ability to collaborate in groups. Through intensive group interaction, students learned from one another's experiences and began to realize they were not alone in facing difficulties. These findings are in line with (Liza, 2023) concept of vicarious learning,

which suggests that individuals can learn effectively through observation and social interaction within a supportive environment.

Statements from the guidance counsellor and homeroom teacher interviewed support these observations. They reported that students became calmer, less prone to panic, and demonstrated more mature thinking after participating in group counselling sessions. Even previously quiet students became more active in classroom discussions and were able to express ideas and solutions with greater confidence. This reinforces the view of (Fitriani & Nurasyah, 2025), who stated that group counselling plays a vital role in improving self-efficacy, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving within academic and social contexts.

Student interviews also revealed a shift in attitudes toward problems. They reported becoming more structured in their thinking and less emotionally reactive. The processes of problem identification, solution-seeking, and decision-making were carried out more systematically and responsibly. These results affirm the role of group counselling as an educational and transformative medium that facilitates students' holistic development (Hosin, 2024).

Overall, the findings of this study reinforce existing literature suggesting that group counselling is an effective intervention for developing students' problem-solving skills especially when implemented through participatory, reflective, and consistent approaches. Group counselling serves not only as a means of addressing problems but also as a platform for long-term social, emotional, and cognitive learning.

Problem Solving in Group Guidance

Observations of the implementation of group counselling services at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra indicate that group dynamics play a crucial role in enhancing students' problem-solving abilities. This improvement occurred gradually and was influenced by interpersonal interaction, emotional support within the group, and the facilitation methods employed by the counsellor. In the initial sessions, students exhibited passive behaviour and struggled to express their problems openly. They appeared hesitant and lacked confidence in identifying the root causes of their difficulties. However, as the sessions progressed, significant behavioural changes were observed: students began to show openness, courage in expressing their opinions, and active participation in group discussions. These dynamics reflect the emergence of a sense of psychological safety and trust within the group key prerequisites for effective collaborative problem-solving.

The first notable improvement observed was students' ability to identify problems more specifically and logically, in contrast to earlier explanations that were vague and emotionally charged. Gradually, students also developed the capacity to generate alternative solutions and discuss the potential consequences of each

proposed option. Observations indicated that students were slowly adopting a more systematic approach to thinking breaking down problems, considering alternatives, and evaluating outcomes. Beyond cognitive development, the group dynamics also fostered affective dimensions such as empathy, a sense of responsibility, and openness to constructive criticism. The open and facilitative discussion environment allowed students to learn from one another's experiences, broaden their perspectives, and practice tolerance toward differing opinions. This process strengthened their ability to make decisions not impulsively, but based on rational considerations and social values.

The process reached a peak when students began evaluating the solutions they had implemented in real-life situations and reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of their problem-solving strategies. Observations also revealed that students became calmer when facing problems, were less prone to panic, and adopted more focused approaches to handling academic and social conflicts. Thus, the dynamics formed within the group counselling sessions not only enhanced technical problem-solving skills but also nurtured reflective, communicative, and solution-oriented thinking. This demonstrates that a well-managed interactive group process can serve as a medium for behavioural and cognitive transformation, helping students approach life's challenges with greater independence and maturity.

This conclusion is supported by interview data from a guidance and counselling teacher, who stated: *"Group dynamics are essential in this process. At first, students tended to be passive and seemed unsure of where to begin when asked about their problems. However, after a few sessions, they became more open, confident, and comfortable. I believe this happened because a sense of psychological safety and mutual trust developed within the group. The interactions among members became warmer, which helped students think more clearly and logically when solving problems."*

This was further supported by feedback from a student participant: *"At first, I felt shy and didn't know what to say, especially about personal problems. But after seeing my friends open up and support each other, I became braver. Now I think carefully before making decisions. I don't panic like I used to. I've also realized that there's more than one way to solve a problem. Sometimes, my friends offer suggestions that I hadn't even considered."*

Interviews with parents also provided valuable insights: *"I've noticed that my child is now calmer when dealing with problems, not as reactive as before. He often shares that in his group, he's learned to think more logically and less emotionally. I see that he's starting to listen to others, becoming more patient, and is now willing to express his feelings without fear of being judged. I believe activities like this are great for building children's character."*

Based on observations, interviews, and analysis of the implementation of group counselling at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra, it can be concluded that group dynamics play a vital role in enhancing students' problem-solving

abilities. This improvement did not occur instantly, but rather through a gradual process shaped by the quality of interpersonal interactions, emotional support among group members, and the effectiveness of the counsellor's facilitation. In the initial stages, students tended to be passive and reluctant to disclose personal issues. However, as positive group dynamics emerged marked by psychological safety and mutual trust a critical foundation was established, enabling students to become more open, express their thoughts courageously, and participate actively in discussions. This transformation indicates that a supportive group environment can stimulate meaningful changes in students' behaviour and thinking patterns.

Cognitively, the group counselling sessions helped students refine their ability to identify problems more specifically, formulate alternative solutions, and evaluate the consequences of various options. They began to demonstrate more systematic and reflective thinking, as evidenced by their ability to analyse problems, consider outcomes, and make more rational decisions. Affectively, the group dynamics also reinforced values such as empathy, responsibility, openness to feedback, and tolerance for differing opinions. Through intensive and constructive interaction, students not only learned from their own experiences but also gained valuable insights from the perspectives and feedback of their peers. This contributed to the development of character traits that are more communicative and solution-oriented when facing various challenges.

Ultimately, the group counselling process did more than improve technical problem-solving skills; it also fostered students' emotional and social maturity. They became calmer, less reactive, and more capable of reflecting on their experiences as a basis for future decision-making. Therefore, when implemented effectively, group counselling serves as both an educational and transformative medium for the holistic development of students' personal, social, and cognitive competencies. Problem-solving is a critical aspect of cognitive and social development, essential for navigating the complexities of academic and personal life. Group counselling represents a strategic and proven approach to cultivating these skills, particularly when delivered through participatory and humanistic methods.

The findings of this study demonstrate that group dynamics within group counselling play a crucial role in enhancing students' problem-solving abilities. This process occurs gradually, facilitated by strengthened interpersonal relationships, emotional support among group members, and the counsellor's effective facilitation skills. This aligns with the work of (Wibowo & Purwanto, 2024), who emphasizes that the effectiveness of group counselling greatly depends on the creation of an atmosphere of mutual trust and emotional support among members, which forms the foundation for deeper and more open exploration of personal issues.

During the initial stages of group counselling at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra, students tended to exhibit passive behaviour, hesitancy, and

difficulty in identifying the root of their problems. This condition reflects common barriers faced by new group participants, as described by (Ayilzi Putri, 2025), who found that new members often experience anxiety and a sense of insecurity, leading to resistance and limited self-expression. However, after several sessions and the development of positive group dynamics, observable behavioural improvements occurred. Students began to express personal issues more openly, actively participated in discussions, and demonstrated empathy and receptiveness toward others' opinions.

These findings are supported by (Rosada & Apriyani, 2024), who argue that the success of group counselling is strongly influenced by the creation of a psychologically safe environment that fosters students' self-confidence, communication skills, and empathy. An open and accepting group setting enables students to listen, respond, and learn from others' experiences, which directly enhances their ability to think more logically and reflectively.

Furthermore, observations revealed that students became increasingly capable of identifying problems in specific and logical terms, as opposed to the previously vague and emotionally-driven explanations. This suggests cognitive growth in their problem-solving process. According to (Damayanti, 2023), effective problem-solving skills encompass the ability to define problems, generate alternative solutions, evaluate consequences, and choose the most appropriate course of action. These improvements were evident as students began breaking down problems into manageable components, considering various available options, and assessing the outcomes of their decisions.

In parallel, group dynamics also contributed to affective development, including increased empathy, a stronger sense of responsibility, and greater openness to constructive feedback. (Fitriani & Nurasyah, 2025) highlight that group settings serve as effective social environments for developing interpersonal values, as they allow individuals to engage in repeated social learning through shared discussion and reflection.

From a practical standpoint, the counsellor's participatory and humanistic facilitation played a key role in the success of this process. (Fatchurahman & Syarif, 2025), in his person-centred counselling approach, emphasizes that the presence of an empathic, genuine, and accepting counsellor greatly supports the psychological growth of group members. In this study, the counsellor acted as a facilitator who not only guided the discussions but also created a safe space for students to develop emotionally and socially.

These findings are also consistent with (Mardhotillah & Shaputra, 2023), who found that group counselling services in schools can enhance students' emotional regulation and rational decision-making, particularly when conducted intensively

using a structured, solution-focused approach. Additionally, interviews with students, school counsellors, and parents reinforce the conclusion that the problem-solving skills acquired during the counselling sessions were not confined to discussions alone but were also applied to real-life situations. This reflects the concept of *transfer of learning*, as described by (Nurhidayah, 2024), which refers to students' ability to apply knowledge and skills learned in one context to other relevant areas of life.

Ultimately, this study confirms that group counselling serves not only as a psychological intervention but also as a transformative educational medium. The process not only improves students' technical problem-solving skills but also helps shape their character by strengthening values such as empathy, tolerance, self-reflection, and effective communication. This supports the perspective of (Muzamil, 2023), who state that group counselling holds great potential in fostering students' personal and social competencies comprehensively.

In conclusion, the implementation of group counselling services at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra demonstrates that group dynamics play a vital role in enhancing students' problem-solving abilities. This improvement progressed gradually, starting from students' initial passive attitudes and lack of confidence, eventually evolving into openness, the courage to express opinions, and active participation in discussions. Students showed significant development in clearly identifying problems, generating alternative solutions, and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of available options. Beyond systematic thinking, they also improved affectively, developing empathy, responsibility, and openness to feedback. The safe and supportive group environment served as a crucial platform for students to learn from each other's experiences and to develop reflective thinking skills.

This progress affected not only students' cognitive and emotional aspects but was also evident in their real-life behaviours. They became calmer in the face of problems, less emotionally reactive, and more capable of making well-considered decisions. Interviews with teachers, students, and parents support these findings, showing that the changes were tangible and had a positive impact on students' character development and independence. Overall, group counselling has proven to be an effective approach for holistically enhancing students' problem-solving skills cognitively, emotionally, and socially while shaping more mature thought patterns and behaviours for navigating life's various challenges.

The Impact of Group Guidance on Religious Students

The findings of this study indicate that group counselling integrated with students' religious values effectively fosters a safe, supportive, and meaningful discussion environment. Students appeared more willing to share their academic, social, and

emotional experiences when the facilitator's approach aligned with Islamic language and values. The inclusion of Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and spiritual reflections during sessions served as a crucial bridge, enhancing students' emotional and cognitive engagement in the group process.

In the initial sessions, some students exhibited caution and a tendency to maintain a religious self-image, which made them reluctant to discuss sensitive personal issues. However, as trust developed within the group and emotional support among members increased, the group dynamics became more open and inclusive. Students began to identify their problems more honestly, showed empathy toward the experiences of their peers, and were able to provide constructive, faith-based feedback.

Cognitively, students demonstrated improved problem-solving abilities, incorporating not only logical reasoning but also ethical and religious considerations. They learned to assess the broader implications of their decisions, including their spiritual and social dimensions. Group discussions often evolved into reflective spaces where students sought not only technical solutions but also spiritual insight into the challenges they faced.

Significant progress was also observed in the affective domain. Students became better at managing negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, or disappointment through more patient and sincere approaches. Emphasizing concepts such as *tawakkul* (trust in God), *sabr* (patience), and *shukr* (gratitude) became part of the problem-solving strategies developed during the group counselling process. This highlights that integrating religious values into counselling not only strengthens the technical effectiveness of the intervention but also fosters students' psychological and spiritual resilience.

In conclusion, group counselling conducted within a strong religious context, such as at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra, offers distinct advantages. Integrating Islamic values into the facilitation process deepens the psychological impact of the intervention, strengthens group cohesion, and enhances overall personal development. Therefore, religion-based group counselling is highly relevant and should continue to be developed as a model that holistically addresses students' cognitive, emotional, and spiritual needs.

This conclusion is supported by an interview with the school counsellor, who stated: *"In the group counselling sessions here, I observed that integrating Islamic values helped foster emotional closeness among group members. When the facilitator shared stories of the prophets or quoted verses from the Qur'an, the students became more emotionally moved and open. They began to view their problems not merely as worldly issues, but as part of their spiritual growth. This significantly accelerated the process of self-understanding and acceptance."*

A similar sentiment was shared by one of the student participants, who stated: *“At first, I was hesitant to join the group counselling because I thought I would have to talk about personal matters. But it turned out to be a comfortable environment, and my peers were supportive. What I appreciated most was how the facilitator connected our issues with Islamic teachings. For example, when we were confused about making decisions, the facilitator reminded us about salat istikharah and the importance of patience. That made me feel more at ease, knowing that my problems were being addressed not only logically, but also through a religious perspective.”*

Parents also expressed the same sentiment: *“I’ve noticed a significant change in my child after participating in group counselling. They’ve become more open in facing challenges, more patient, and less easily stressed. My child often says the group is supportive and that many discussions revolve around religious values. I believe this is very beneficial, as it teaches not only how to solve problems, but also how to grow closer to God during difficult times.”*

This study affirms that group counselling integrated with Islamic values is highly effective in enhancing students’ problem-solving skills while simultaneously strengthening their affective and spiritual dimensions. Observations of group dynamics revealed that facilitation aligned with Islamic teachings through verses from the Qur’an, Hadith, stories of the Prophets, and spiritual concepts such as *tawakkul* (trust in God), *sabr* (patience), and *shukr* (gratitude) created a group environment that was safe, open, and meaningful. Within such a context, students felt fully valued not only as individuals facing challenges but also as spiritual beings on a journey of personal growth.

Although students initially appeared reserved and cautious in maintaining their religious image, the growing trust within the group fostered openness, empathy, and constructive engagement. This growth extended beyond emotional aspects and was also evident in their more systematic and reflective cognitive approaches to problem-solving. Students began to explore solutions through rational thinking framed by ethical and spiritual values, demonstrating cognitive maturity that aligned with Islamic character development.

This finding is supported by a statement from the school counsellor, who noted that the Islamic approach in group facilitation helped students internalize life’s challenges as part of a spiritual journey. Fathur Rahman, a 12th-grade student, shared that group counselling became more meaningful for him because it enabled him to face problems calmly not only with logic but also with spiritual guidance. Meanwhile, Nurlaili, one of the parents, observed visible positive changes in her child, particularly in emotional regulation, openness, and spiritual connectedness, after participating in group counselling.

Thus, it can be concluded that religion-based group counselling at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra is not only effective in improving students' problem-solving abilities but also contributes significantly to character formation, emotional resilience, and spiritual development. This service represents a contextual and relevant psych pedagogical intervention model, particularly in educational environments that uphold Islamic values.

These findings are also consistent with existing literature. The integration of Islamic values into group counselling sessions emphasizing spiritual reflection and religious meaning—has been shown to significantly enhance students' problem-solving abilities. This aligns with the research of (Fatchurahman & Syarif, 2025), which found that religious-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) group counselling significantly improved self-efficacy and self-regulation among junior high school students in Kudus. Self-efficacy is closely linked to problem-solving skills, as it empowers students to generate solutions with confidence when facing challenges. Moreover, research in the field of social problem-solving emphasizes that a positive orientation toward problems and the use of systematic strategies contribute to better psychological adaptation. Religious approaches serve as both moral and strategic frameworks in supporting this process.

Observations also revealed that supportive group dynamics enabled students to manage negative emotions such as anxiety and anger by practicing patience (*sabr*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), and gratitude (*shukr*). This reflects the concept of collaborative religious coping discussed by Felma and Silalahi (2024), in which students engage with God and draw on social support, leading to enhanced resilience and well-being. Similarly, studies on group counselling based on prophetic values in Islamic boarding schools have found that incorporating religious values improves students' psychological well-being. These findings support the view that religion-based counselling is an effective medium for developing emotional and spiritual resilience.

The group served as a space for meaning-making and the internalization of religious values. Through collective discussion, students not only identified technical solutions but also reflected on the spiritual wisdom behind their personal experiences representing a strong form of moral reflection and value transmission. Research on collaborative learning by (Hananto & Wibowo, 2020) found that peer interaction deepens problem-solving strategies. When combined with religious values, this model yields a more holistic approach in which cognitive, social, and spiritual dimensions operate synergistically.

The development of moderate religious attitudes and ethics through group counselling also contributes to the formation of tolerant and responsible character traits. A study by (Nurhidayah, 2024) revealed that group counselling focused on religious moderation improves students' tolerance and national commitment.

Findings from the Islamic Centre study similarly demonstrated increased tolerance and empathy, highlighting moderation as an integral component of students' mental and moral maturity.

Overall, these findings suggest that Islamic values-based group counselling is not merely a technical approach but a comprehensive psycho-spiritual intervention. The results reinforce the importance of integrating religious CBT to enhance self-efficacy and self-regulation (Putri & Salsameywa, 2024), employing collaborative religious coping to reduce emotional stress and foster resilience (Pargament), and embedding spiritual values into group structures to deepen reflective, faith-oriented problem-solving. Promoting religious moderation also helps shape students into tolerant, inclusive, and responsible individuals (Felma & Silalahi, 2024).

Field data from the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra, when connected with scholarly literature, clearly demonstrates that group counselling incorporating Islamic values such as Qur'anic verses, Hadiths, prophetic stories, and spiritual concepts provides dual benefits: enhancing students' problem-solving capacity while nurturing mental well-being, emotional intelligence, and strong spiritual character. This model is highly suitable for Islamic educational settings and should serve as a reference for professional counselling practice and further research in religious education and counselling psychology.

Group counselling that integrates Islamic values has proven effective in improving students' problem-solving skills while also reinforcing their emotional and spiritual well-being. Counselling conducted in a religious atmosphere fosters a safe, open, and meaningful environment, encouraging students to share personal experiences with honesty and reflection. The alignment of counselling content with Islamic teachings helps students connect more deeply both emotionally and cognitively thereby strengthening their engagement and facilitating more thoughtful decision-making.

Throughout the sessions, students demonstrated progress in logical reasoning, ethical consideration of solutions, and emotional regulation through patience, gratitude, and trust in God. The group dynamic also nurtured empathy, responsibility, and openness to differing opinions. The shared values between the facilitator and group members created a collective learning environment that addressed not only technical problems but also enriched students' spiritual growth. The transformation experienced by the students extended beyond academic and social domains and was evident in their daily behaviour, which became calmer, wiser, and more self-aware. Therefore, value-based group counselling within Islamic educational settings proves to be a highly relevant and beneficial model for shaping cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually resilient individuals.

D. Conclusion

Based on the overall findings of this study, it can be concluded that group counselling implemented at the Islamic Centre Foundation of North Sumatra significantly contributes to the enhancement of students' problem-solving abilities. The counselling process unfolded gradually, beginning with students' reluctance and passive attitudes in expressing their problems, and progressing toward openness, active participation, and the development of logical and reflective thinking. This improvement was not limited to the cognitive domain but also encompassed affective and spiritual dimensions, which evolved in parallel with the establishment of psychological safety, emotional support among group members, and an empathetic and structured facilitation approach.

One of the key findings is that the integration of Islamic values into the counselling process had a profound impact on students' emotional and spiritual engagement. When the counselling sessions incorporated verses from the Qur'an, Hadiths, and prophetic stories as tools for reflection, students felt that their experiences held deeper spiritual meaning. They were guided not only to solve their issues logically but also to understand the religious values behind each situation. This enriched the counselling process, transforming it from a purely psychological intervention into a meaningful journey of inner learning and spiritual development.

These findings make a significant contribution to counselling practices, particularly in religious-based educational settings. The study demonstrates that systematically designed group counselling, delivered through a spiritual approach, can effectively strengthen students' problem-solving competencies in a holistic manner. Furthermore, this approach fosters character development, enhances empathy, improves interpersonal communication skills, and cultivates emotional resilience in dealing with academic and social pressures.

Based on these results, several practical recommendations can be proposed. First, schools should formally integrate group counselling into the guidance and counselling curriculum to ensure that all students have access to services that foster social and emotional development from an early stage. Second, school counsellors are encouraged to develop value-based group counselling models, especially those rooted in religious principles that align with the students' cultural and spiritual backgrounds. Third, intensive training for counsellors and guidance teachers on value-based spiritual counselling is essential to ensure consistent, effective, and context-sensitive implementation. Fourth, institutional support from school leadership and parents is vital in creating an environment conducive to the success of group counselling programs.

In terms of future academic development, further research particularly longitudinal studies is needed to examine the long-term sustainability of the positive effects of

group counselling. Future studies are also encouraged to compare the effectiveness of religion-based group counselling with other approaches across different contexts, including variations in cultural background, educational level, and student characteristics. This will allow for the development of counselling models that are more comprehensive and adaptable to the psychosocial needs of learners. In conclusion, group counselling based on Islamic values has been proven not only as an effective psychological intervention but also as a profound means of character and spiritual education. This approach is highly relevant in educational environments that uphold moral and religious values and holds great potential to be developed as a contextual, holistic, and transformative counselling model.

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