

## **Group Guidance with Alternative Interpretation Techniques to Enhance Social Self-Acceptance in Vocational Students**

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**Abstract:** This quasi-experimental study evaluated the effectiveness of group guidance with alternative interpretation techniques to enhance social self-acceptance in 16 vocational students (Vocational High School PAB 12 SAENTIS, Indonesia). Using a pretest-posttest control design, social self-acceptance was measured via a Likert-scale questionnaire based on Sheerer's (2010) framework. Results showed significant improvement in the experimental group (pretest  $M = 68.75$ , posttest  $M = 127$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with normality (Shapiro-Wilk  $p > 0.05$ ) and homogeneity (Levene's  $p = 0.564$ ) confirmed. Qualitative findings highlighted increased self-confidence and peer support. The study demonstrates that alternative interpretation techniques effectively improve social self-acceptance, addressing a gap in non-Western educational settings. Despite its promising results, the study is limited by a small sample size, short intervention duration, and lack of long-term follow-up. Future research should involve larger and more diverse populations and explore sustained behavioral outcomes over time. The findings have practical implications for integrating structured cognitive techniques into school counseling programs to support students' psychosocial development.

**Keywords:** Alternative Interpretation Techniques, Group Guidance, Social Self-Acceptance

### **A. Introduction**

Vocational education plays a strategic role in preparing human resources that are ready to work, independent, and adaptive to the demands of the industrial world. However, behind the preparedness of technical competencies, there is a psychosocial aspect that is often overlooked, one of which is social self-acceptance (Damayanti, Isriyah, & Fauziyah, 2025). Social self-acceptance reflects the extent to which an individual can accept themselves in social relations, feel worthy of being valued by others, and be able to establish healthy and meaningful social relationships (Filda & Hikmah, 2023).

In facing the challenges of 21st-century education, it is not enough for vocational students to only possess technical skills (Umi Kalsum, 2023). They must also have

strong psychological resilience and social skills to be able to compete and adapt in the workforce (Munte & Arsini, 2024). One important aspect underlying this ability is social self-acceptance, which is the ability to value oneself in the context of social interactions, to accept one's uniqueness, and to develop healthy relationships with others (Sabrina & Suminar, 2024).

Low social self-acceptance can be a serious barrier to the personal and professional development of students (Siregar & Hasibuan, 2024). Students who do not accept themselves socially tend to experience social anxiety, feel inferior, have difficulty communicating, and may withdraw from their environment (Surbakti & Harahap, 2024). Therefore, an appropriate guidance service strategy is needed to support the growth of this aspect. Group guidance services become one of the effective forms of service as they provide opportunities for students to learn from the experiences of others, build empathy, and reflect on themselves through group dynamics (Asvadzadeh, Safarzadeh, & Homaei, 2023).

In this service, the use of alternative interpretative techniques becomes highly relevant. This technique aims to transform automatic and inaccurate negative thought patterns into more positive, logical, and constructive interpretations (Arwansyah & Suharyanto, 2025). Through this approach, students are invited to recognize their cognitive errors such as overgeneralization or labeling and replace them with thoughts that support self-acceptance and social openness.

At Vocational High School PAB 12 SAENTIS, as a vocational school based on science and technology, the demands for high academic performance and practical skills often create psychological pressure. Initial observations and interviews with guidance counselors indicate that some students have difficulty in socially accepting themselves. They tend to feel insecure in interactions, negatively compare themselves with peers, and exhibit symptoms of social withdrawal. This condition reflects a low level of social self-acceptance, which, if left unaddressed, can impact learning motivation, engagement in school activities, and even job readiness.

One of the interventions that can be done to address this issue is through group counseling services using alternative interpretation techniques (Thompson, 2003). This technique is part of a cognitive approach aimed at helping individuals recognize negative thought patterns and replace them with more adaptive and realistic interpretations (Guo & Niu, 2025). In the context of group guidance, alternative interpretation techniques provide space for students to share social experiences, reflect on automatic thoughts that hinder self-acceptance, and collectively build a more positive mindset towards themselves and their social environment (Topan Iskandar, 2023).

In recent years, the issue of self-acceptance has continued to attract attention in educational psychology and counseling studies. Self-acceptance is seen as an

important component in the personality development of adolescents, especially in supporting social and emotional functioning in the school environment (Rambe & Harahap, 2024). Nevertheless, most of the studies conducted have still focused on self-acceptance in general, without specifically examining the aspect of social self-acceptance, which is the individual's ability to accept themselves in social relations and feel worthy of being valued by others (Habsy & Valencya, 2024). In fact, the social dimension of self-acceptance plays an important role in shaping self-confidence, social engagement, and readiness to communicate in the workplace, especially for students at vocational levels. Furthermore, the literature review results indicate that the context of vocational education has not received much attention in research related to the development of self-acceptance. Previous studies have tended to be conducted on high school students or college students (Kristiana, Purwoko, & Habsy, 2024). On the other hand, vocational high school students, especially in science and technology-based schools like Vocational High School PAB 12 SAENTIS, face their own psychosocial challenges. The academic environment that demands technical achievements and industry readiness from an early age often leads to pressures that result in a decline in social confidence, anxiety in interactions, and doubts about self-acceptance within social groups (Nuha & Hidayah, 2024).

From the perspective of intervention approaches, several studies have examined the effectiveness of cognitive techniques such as cognitive restructuring and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in improving aspects of self-concept and emotional well-being of students (Arifyanto, 2025). However, alternative interpretation techniques, which are part of a cognitive approach to challenge negative automatic thoughts and replace them with healthier and more realistic ways of thinking, are still rarely applied in group guidance formats. A study by (Li & Wang, 2025) states that this technique tends to be used in individual counseling, so its effectiveness in the context of collaborative and reflective group interactions is not yet widely known. In fact, group guidance has the advantage of providing social experiences that support interpersonal learning, strengthen empathy, and build self-acceptance through peer support (Wijaya, 2025). Therefore, the integration of alternative interpretation techniques into group counseling services can be an innovative and relevant approach, especially in enhancing the social self-acceptance of vocational students who face various forms of socio-emotional challenges in educational settings and daily life.

Starting from this gap, this research presents novelty in several key aspects. First, this study specifically targets the aspect of social self-acceptance, which has not been deeply examined in previous studies. Second, the use of alternative interpretation techniques in a group guidance format becomes a new approach that offers a participatory, contextual, and empowering cognitive-based intervention model for students through group dynamics. Third, this research is conducted on vocational high school students with scientific and vocational backgrounds, who have different guidance needs compared to students at general education levels. Thus, this research not only fills a gap in the academic literature regarding the development of social self-

acceptance in vocational students, but also offers practical contributions to the development of innovative and applicable counseling service models in the context of contemporary vocational education.

## **B. Methods**

This research uses a quantitative method with a quasi-experimental design of the pretest-posttest control group design, aimed at testing the effectiveness of group guidance with alternative interpretation techniques on improving social self-acceptance among vocational students. This design is used because in practice it is not possible to fully randomize the selection of group members, but it still allows for control of important variables that affect the results (Sugiyono, 2022). The research subjects are 71 students from class X of Vocational High School PAB 12 SAENTIS. Based on the initial selection results using the social self-acceptance scale, 16 students who met the criteria as participants were obtained, namely those who showed low to moderate levels of social self-acceptance. Purposive sampling technique was used to select research subjects with such characteristics, in accordance with the selection approach based on the research objectives (Kartika & Siregar, 2023). The sample was then divided into two groups: 8 students as the experimental group and 8 students as the control group.

The research instrument used to measure social self-acceptance is the Social Self-Acceptance Scale developed based on theory of (Sheerer, 2010), includes seven main indicators: (1) feeling equal to others, (2) believing in one's own abilities, (3) being responsible for one's actions, (4) being outward-oriented, (5) having strong convictions, (6) being aware of one's limitations, and (7) accepting human nature. The instrument is structured in the form of a Likert scale with five response options, from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree', for both positive (favorable) and negative (unfavorable) statements (Creswell, 2020). The content validity of the instrument is tested through expert judgment, and the reliability test results using the SPSS program show a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.873, indicating that this instrument has a high level of reliability. More clearly, this can be seen in the table below.

**Table 1. Research Instrument Response Categories**

Respondent's Answer	The score given for each statement	
	Favorable (+)	Unfavorable (-)
Very appropriate	SS 5	1
According to	S 4	2
Quite Appropriate	CS 3	3
Not Appropriate	TS 2	4
Very Inappropriate	STS 1	5

The research procedure consists of several stages. First, a pretest is conducted on both groups to determine the initial condition of social self-acceptance. Second, the experimental group undergoes group guidance interventions using alternative

interpretation techniques for six sessions. Each session lasts 60-75 minutes and is facilitated by researchers who have been trained in the application of this technique. Each session is designed to help participants identify, evaluate, and reconstruct negative automatic thoughts in a social context into more realistic and positive interpretations. Meanwhile, the control group does not receive any interventions. After the intervention is completed, both groups are given a posttest using the same instrument (Siregar, 2023).

The data obtained was analyzed using SPSS version 25. The first stage is normality testing with Shapiro-Wilk to ensure data distribution. Next, a paired sample t-test was conducted to examine the differences in pretest and posttest scores within each group, as well as to compare the effectiveness between groups. This test is used because it is suitable for measuring changes in small groups in a pretest-posttest design (Nasution & Siregar, 2023). With this methodological approach, the research is expected to provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of group guidance with alternative interpretation techniques in significantly enhancing vocational students' social self-acceptance.

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **Results of Pretest Data of Experimental and Control Group Students**

The score categories in this research are determined based on the calculation results of the score range from a questionnaire consisting of 30 statement items with a Likert scale of 1-5. The rules for scoring and classifying the assessment results are as follows:

1. Determining the ideal maximum score obtained from the sample  
Ideal Maximum Score = Number of items X Highest score
2. Determining the ideal minimum score obtained from the sample  
Ideal Minimum Score = Number of items X Lowest score
3. Finding the ideal score range obtained from the sample  
Score Range = Ideal Maximum Score - Ideal Minimum Score
4. Finding the score interval  
Score Interval = Score Range: 4.

Based on the above opinion, the criterion interval can be determined, with a maximum score of 150 ( $30 \times 5$ ) and a minimum score of 30 ( $30 \times 1$ ), resulting in a score range of 120. This range is then divided into five categories with an interval of 24. Based on this calculation, the classification is determined as follows: scores of 30-54 is categorized as very low, 55-79 low, 80-104 medium, 105-129 high, and 130-150 very high.

**Table 2. Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Pre-test Results**

Category	Interval	Frequency Experiment	Percentage	Frequency Control	Percentage
Very High	130-150	0	0	0	0
High	105-129	0	0	0	0
Currently	80-104	0	0	0	0
Low	55-79	8	100%	8	100%
Very Low	30-54	0	0	0	0

Table 2 shows that it was found that if the students' scores have an interval of 55-79, they fall into the low category in terms of social self-acceptance. Thus, it can be seen that the results of the pretest of the first meeting with 8 students from the experimental class and 8 students from the control class are in the low category with a percentage of 100%. This study aims to measure the effectiveness of group guidance services in improving students' social self-acceptance. The study was conducted over four meetings, each involving 8 students from the experimental and control classes.

In the initial pretest, both groups showed low average scores of social self-acceptances (experimental class 68.75 and control class 70.87). However, after a series of treatments, the results showed a significant increase in the experimental class, particularly after the application of the Alternative Interpretation technique in group guidance. The average score in the experimental class increased from 68.75 to 127, while in the control class it increased from 70.87 to 119. Additionally, the category of social self-acceptance improved from 'low' to 'high' and then to 'very high', indicating an improved understanding of the concept of self-acceptance among students and their ability to manage past social experiences. The pretest results of social self-acceptance for both the experimental and control classes before receiving group guidance services at Vocational High School PAB 12 SAENTIS are shown in the following table.

**Table 3. Average of Pre-test dan Post-tests**

Meeting	Type of Test	Experimental Class	Experimental Category	Control Class	Control Category
I	Pre-test	68,75	Low	70,87	Low
II	Pre-test	103	Medium - High	101	Medium - High
III	Pre-test	111	High	111	High
IV	Pre-test	120	High - Very High	119	High
I	Post-tests	103	Medium - High	101	Medium - High
II	Post-tests	107	Medium - High	103	Medium - High
III	Post-tests	118	High - Very High	119	High
IV	Post-tests	127	High - Very High	119	High - Very High

The data from the pretest and posttest in the experimental class and control class show a significant difference in the improvement of students' social self-acceptance. At the beginning of the meeting (meeting I), the average pretest score for social self-acceptance in the experimental class was 68.75, which falls into the low category, while

the control class had an average score of 70.87, also in the low category. This indicates that both groups had relatively equal initial conditions before the intervention was given.

As the intervention progressed through group counseling services using the Alternative Interpretation technique in the experimental class, there was a progressive increase in social self-acceptance scores and categories. From the second to the fourth pretest sessions, the experimental class scores consistently improved, from 103 (moderate-high category) to 120 (high-very high category), indicating a positive response to the initial counseling sessions. Although the control group also showed a slight score increase in the pretest phase (from 70.87 to 119), this improvement was not accompanied by specific interventions and tended to stagnate in the high category only. The differences are more clearly seen in the posttest results. In the first meeting posttest, the experimental class's score remained stable at 103 (medium-high category), but it continued to increase until it reached a highest score of 127 in the fourth meeting posttest, which is in the high-very high category. Meanwhile, the control group only experienced a slight increase from 101 to 119, with categories maintaining at the high and high-very high levels, without showing any significant jumps.

Thus, this data indicates that the experimental class experienced more consistent and significant development compared to the control class, especially in terms of the transition of social self-acceptance categories, which moved from low to very high in a relatively short period of time. This provides strong evidence that the Alternative Interpretation technique in group guidance is capable of changing students' negative mindsets towards themselves in social contexts into more positive, adaptive, and constructive ones. These findings reinforce the effectiveness of cognitive approaches in improving the psychosocial quality of vocational students and emphasize the need for broader implementation of these services in educational settings.

### **Normality Test**

To ensure the validity of the research data usage, the researchers evaluated the pretest and posttest data using homogeneity and normality tests. The normality of the findings can be seen in the decision-making when  $\text{sig} > 0.05$ , indicating that the data is normally distributed. If  $\text{sig} < 0.05$ , the data is said to be not normally distributed. The results of the data found from the normality test analysis are presented in Table 4 as follows.

**Table 4. Results of Normality Test**

Class		Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Results of Social Self-Acceptance	Pretest	0,266	8	0,101	0,844	8	0,083
	Experiment						
	Posttest	0,159	8	,200*	0,973	8	0,918
	Experiment						
	Pretest Control	0,211	8	,200*	0,928	8	0,501
	Posttest Control	0,155	8	,200*	0,972	8	0,913

The results of the normality test show that all data from the experimental class and control class, both in the pretest and posttest, have significance values (Sig.) above 0.05. In the experimental class, the pretest significance value is 0.083, and the posttest is 0.918. Meanwhile, in the control class, the pretest significance value is 0.501, and the posttest is 0.913. Since all Sig. values are > 0.05, it can be concluded that the data are normally distributed. This normal distribution indicates that the data from the measurement of social self-acceptance in each group meets the normality assumption, allowing for further analysis using parametric statistical tests, namely the t-test. These results support the validity of the analysis process carried out and enhance the reliability of the final conclusions regarding the effectiveness of group guidance interventions using the Alternative Interpretation technique.

### Homogeneity Test

Testing for the normality or non-normality of data distribution in a sample requires researchers to conduct tests for the homogeneity of several parts of the same sample. Testing the homogeneity of samples becomes crucial if researchers intend to generalize the results of their research and if the research data is collected from separate groups originating from a single population. The results obtained from the homogeneity test analysis are presented in Table 5, as follows.

**Table 5. Results of the Homogeneity Test**

		Levene Statistic	df		Sig.
			1	df2	
Results of Social Self-Acceptance	Based on Mean	0,694	3	28	0,564
	Based on Median	0,603	3	28	0,619
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	0,603	3	24,761	0,619
	Based on trimmed mean	0,691	3	28	0,565

Based on the analysis results in the table, it is known that the significance value (Sig.) in various approaches whether based on mean, median, median with adjusted degrees of freedom, or trimmed mean all show values greater than 0.05. Specifically, the Sig. Based on Mean is 0.564, Based on Median is 0.619, and Based on Trimmed Mean is 0.565. Since all Sig. values are > 0.05, it can be concluded that the variance between the experimental class and the control class is homogeneous. Thus, the assumption of homogeneity is met, meaning both groups have equal variance in social self-

acceptance data. This reinforces the validity of further analysis results using parametric tests and supports the conclusion that the differences found between groups are not caused by differences in variance distribution, but by the treatment/intervention provided, namely group guidance using the Alternative Interpretation technique.

### ***Paired Sample T-Test***

To determine the validity of the research hypothesis, a paired samples t-test can be used. This test is conducted to evaluate the mean differences between the experimental and control groups before and after the treatment to assess the success of the treatment. If the significance score is less than the 5% significance level (significance < 0.05), then the data is considered significant. SPSS is used to calculate the results of each test. The findings of the paired samples t-test for the experimental and control classes are shown in table 6 below.

**Table 6. Results of the Paired Sample t-Test**

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest Experiment - Posttest Experiment	-57,75000	9,93910	3,51400	-66,05930	-49,44070	-16,434	7	0,000
Pair 2	Pretest Control - Posttest Control	-47,62500	6,54517	2,31407	-53,09690	-42,15310	-20,581	7	0,000

Based on the analysis results using the Paired Sample t-Test, it is known that there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores in both groups, both the experimental group and the control group. The test was conducted at a significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ , and the processing results show that the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) in Pair 1 (Experimental Pretest-Posttest) is 0.000, with a t-value of -16.434, while in Pair 2 (Control Pretest-Posttest) the significance value is also 0.000, with a t-value of -20.581. Since the significance value < 0.05 in both groups,  $H_a$  is accepted and  $H_0$  is rejected, which means there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest results in each group. However, when viewed from the mean difference, it is evident that the experimental group experienced a greater increase. The mean difference value for the experimental class is -57.75, while for the control class it is -47.63. This negative difference indicates that the posttest scores are higher compared to the pretest, and the increase is more significant in the experimental group. The larger difference suggests that the intervention provided, namely group counseling services using the Alternative Interpretation technique, contributed more significantly to the improvement of students' social self-acceptance compared to the regular learning that took place in the control group. Thus, the results of this analysis

strengthen the conclusion that group guidance using the Alternative Interpretation technique is significantly effective in improving the social self-acceptance of students at Vocational High School PAB 12 SAENTIS. This technique has been proven to produce real positive changes in students' understanding of themselves in a social context, improving mindset, and enhancing self-confidence in social interactions.

### *Independent Sample t-Test*

The Independent Sample Test is a test to determine whether there is a difference in the average social self-acceptance of students in the control class compared to the experimental class. Therefore, we must establish the hypothesis (assumption) of the research. The results of the independent sample test can be detailed in the following table 7.

**Table 7. Results of Independent Sample t-Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Social Self-Acceptance	Equal variances assumed	0,708	0,414	2,172	14	0,048	8,000	3,684	0,099	15,901
	Equal variances not assumed			2,172	12,769	0,049	8,000	3,684	0,027	15,973

Based on the results of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, a significance value of 0.414 was obtained. This value is greater than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that there is no significant difference in variances between the two groups (experimental and control). Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met, and the results of the t-test analysis can proceed using the row Equal variances assumed. Furthermore, in the Independent Samples Test section, a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.048  $< 0.05$  was obtained. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the average between the experimental group and the control group in terms of social self-acceptance.

The mean difference between the two groups is 8.000 with a standard error difference of 3.684. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from 0.099 to 15.901, which does not include a value of zero. This reinforces the conclusion that the difference is significant. Thus, it can be concluded that group counseling services using the Alternative Interpretation technique significantly improve students' social self-acceptance compared to the group that did not receive such services.

This study shows that group counseling services using the Alternative Interpretation technique are significantly effective in enhancing students' social self-acceptance. This can be seen from the change in social self-acceptance scores of the experimental group students, which initially were in the low category, increasing to the high and very high categories after participating in group counseling services. The Alternative Interpretation technique used in this study has a positive impact as it is able to change students' perspectives on social situations that were previously seen as obstacles into opportunities to understand themselves and others more rationally and constructively.

The improvement of social self-acceptance in the experimental group students is evident from the average pre-test score, which initially was only 68.75 and increased to 127 in the post-test, indicating an improvement in aspects such as feeling equal to others, believing in one's abilities, being responsible for actions, having convictions, and accepting one's limitations. Meanwhile, the control group that only received group counseling services without the Alternative Interpretation technique also experienced an increase from an average score of 70.87 to 119, but not as optimally as the experimental group. This shows that the techniques used in the counseling process greatly affect the effectiveness of the service.

The paired sample t-test statistical test reinforces this finding with a significance value (sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000 in both groups, indicating a significant difference between the pretest and posttest in both the experimental and control groups. However, the higher increase in the experimental group suggests that Alternative Interpretation contributes more significantly in helping students understand and accept themselves in a social context. This technique assists students in replacing negative thoughts with more positive interpretations of their social experiences, thereby enhancing their self-confidence and openness towards others.

This finding makes an important contribution to the field of guidance and counseling in schools. The Alternative Interpretation technique can be used as an approach that can be applied by Guidance and Counseling teachers in helping students overcome social and emotional problems. By providing space for students to understand themselves positively and realistically, this approach plays a role in creating a more inclusive, tolerant, and supportive school environment.

The implementation of group guidance using the Alternative Interpretation technique consists of four meeting sessions that are systematically and gradually designed, with the main goal of improving students' social self-acceptance. Each session has a structure that includes stages of formation, transition, core activities, and closure, which helps counselors and clients achieve optimal results.

In the first meeting, students were invited to get to know themselves and identify social experiences that made them feel less confident or inferior. They wrote and

shared those stories, and then began to realize that everyone has similar experiences in social life. In the second meeting, students were asked to revisit those experiences from various perspectives. They made four types of interpretations: positive, neutral, negative, and unique. This activity helped students think more openly and not immediately draw negative conclusions about themselves.

In the third meeting, students chose the most reasonable and good interpretation for themselves. They also learned to recognize the evidence and reasons behind that perspective. This helps students make healthier and more rational judgments about themselves and their social situations. Finally, in the fourth meeting, students were trained to delay judgment when facing unpleasant social events. They learned to take time before concluding something so as not to hastily blame themselves. They also shared new ways of viewing an incident more wisely.

The four group guidance sessions showed progressive and significant dynamics in improving students' social self-acceptance. Starting from the disclosure of personal experiences, the search for alternative meanings, rational decision-making, to the application of adaptive mindsets, students demonstrated growth in thinking and attitude. These results support the effectiveness of the Alternative Interpretation technique as a cognitive intervention method that can shape a healthier and more constructive perspective towards oneself and their social environment.

This research is consistent with the results of the study (Khoiriah, Suarni, & Dantes, 2023) which found that the use of cognitive reframing effectively reduces negative self-thoughts and strengthens a healthy self-perception among adolescents. The Alternative Interpretation technique, which emphasizes the creation of alternative interpretations of social events, has proven to help students view negative experiences in a more constructive and realistic way. Furthermore, (Putri, Setyaputri, & Puspitarini, 2024) explains that interpretive strategy in group guidance can enhance students' empathetic ability and flexible thinking towards social conflicts. This result reinforces those students in the experimental group not only learn to accept themselves but also increase social openness through changes in thinking.

Research (Nabilla & Syafriafdi, 2024) They show that counseling with a cognitive approach can enhance students' self-confidence and positive perception of their limitations. This is also evident in this study, where the aspect of acceptance of self-limitations is one of the indicators that shows a significant increase post-intervention. In a broader context, (Mandiri & Hidayat, 2024) emphasizes that the success of group guidance is greatly influenced by structured stages and the establishment of a conducive group dynamic. This study adopts systematic stages: formation, transition, core, and termination, which have been proven to enhance the effectiveness of interventions in achieving cognitive and affective change.

Study (Sofiannisa & Mori, 2025) highlighting the importance of developing a positive self-perception through metacognitive learning and reframing. The Alternative Interpretation technique in this study creates a reflective space for students to revisit their personal experiences, then construct empowering alternative meanings. These results are also reinforced by findings (Cao, 2024), which shows that a positive interpretation of past experiences can reduce social shame and increase students' courage in new social situations. The process of recognizing emotions, reframing them, and choosing the best interpretation is the core of the effectiveness of this approach.

Research by (Lim, 2024) to prove that gradual cognitive modification through group guidance increases self-acceptance and strengthens students' social functions within the group. This is consistent with the results of this study which show that students in the experimental group not only improved self-acceptance but also exhibited more open social behaviors. Research by (Vittenberg & Weintraub, 2023) emphasizing that the provision of alternative interpretation techniques has a positive impact on improving social adjustment, especially among students who tend to evaluate themselves negatively in competitive situations. This is also evident in the third and fourth meetings in this study, where students began to replace negative assumptions with rational views.

Research by (Tsurkan, 2023) emphasizing the importance of training to delay instant judgments in social thinking processes. The fourth meeting in this research, which trained students to delay judgments about negative events, significantly contributed to the improvement of emotional regulation and adaptive social behavior. Nevertheless, these results are not in line with various other studies that raised different approaches and did not directly address cognitive aspects or social self-acceptance.

Research by (Rahayu & Warsono, 2023) which studies the influence of the lecture method on students' social ethics show less significant results. The one-way lecture approach appears to be unable to deeply change students' attitudes or ways of thinking, in contrast to the Alternative Interpretation approach which is participatory and reflective. A similar phenomenon is also seen in the study (Krisnandari & Irawan, 2024) which explores reward systems in enhancing learning motivation. Although motivation increases, no significant changes were found in self-understanding or students' social skills, because the motivation built is extrinsic, not arising from internal awareness as fostered through alternative interpretation techniques.

In addition, the research (Febriani & Hariko, 2023) regarding the use of educational games in mathematics learning focuses only on the academic cognitive aspects without touching on the psychosocial areas. In this context, the approach used in this study is more relevant to address psychological issues such as inability to accept oneself, as it targets the restructuring of thoughts related to social identity. Similarly

to the studies. (Aulia & Dasalinda, 2025) which focuses on classroom management strategies to reduce aggressive behavior, their approach is repressive and behavioristic, rather than reflective and constructive like the techniques used in this study.

Research by (Jannah, 2024) about the influence of the physical school environment on student comfort is also not directly related, because although a comfortable environment can support self-confidence, it does not directly shape social self-acceptance. This research actually shows that changes in social perception require systematic cognitive-based interventions. The same thing is seen in the study (Zakki, Nirwana, & Hariko, 2024) about the use of roleplay in social studies learning. Although it involves social interaction, the main purpose is to understand the material, not to change self-meanings in a social context.

The findings of this study emphasize that group counseling services using the Alternative Interpretation technique have a significant impact on enhancing students' social self-acceptance. This is demonstrated by the increase in the average score of social self-acceptance in the experimental group from 68.75 to 127, far exceeding the control group which only increased from 70.87 to 119. These findings indicate that a systematic cognitive approach to reinterpret social experiences contributes directly to changing students' perspectives of themselves and their social environment.

#### **D. Conclusions**

The results of this study show that group counseling services using the Alternative Interpretation technique are effective in enhancing social self-acceptance among students of Vocational High School PAB 12 SAENTIS. This intervention helps students identify and change negative thought patterns that have hindered their openness and self-confidence in social interactions. After participating in a series of counseling sessions, students in the experimental group experienced significant improvements in their ability to accept themselves in a social context, as evidenced by the change in scores moving from a low category to high and very high. Moreover, statistical analysis indicates a significant difference between the pretest and posttest results, with a greater increase observed in the experimental group compared to the control group.

This finding shows that the Alternative Interpretation technique, which focuses on cognitive restructuring of maladaptive automatic thoughts, can be an effective intervention strategy in helping students develop a more rational, healthy, and positive attitude towards themselves in a social environment. Group dynamics also play an important role in this process of change, as interactions among members create a reflective space and emotional support that reinforce the internalization of social values.

As a follow-up to these results, this study recommends that the Alternative Interpretation technique be integrated into guidance and counseling programs in schools, particularly to strengthen the psychosocial aspects of students. Additionally, the use of peer group approaches is also considered potentially beneficial to enhance student engagement in the guidance process, strengthen self-confidence, and build a supportive social climate in the school environment. With systematic and sustainable implementation, this intervention is believed to have a long-term positive impact on the personal and social development of students at the vocational education level.

Although the research results show the effectiveness of the Alternative Interpretation technique in improving students' social self-acceptance, there are several weaknesses that need to be addressed. This study was conducted within a limited scope, namely in only one school with a relatively small number of participants, making the results not yet generalizable on a larger scale. In addition, the short duration of the intervention without follow-up measurements makes the sustainability of the intervention effects uncertain. The use of self-report instruments also carries the risk of subjective bias. External factors such as family environment and the students' social interactions that were not controlled could also affect the outcomes. Finally, the success of the intervention highly depends on the skills of the counselor, which was not analyzed in depth in the study.

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