

Improving the Psychological Well-Being of Social Media Users Through Group Counseling Services Using Stress Inoculation Techniques on Students

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Abstract: This study aims to determine the effectiveness of group guidance services using the Stress Inoculation Training (SIT) technique in enhancing the psychological well-being of social media users at Budisatrya High School Medan. The research adopts a quantitative approach with a one-group pre-test - post-test design to evaluate changes before and after the intervention. The participants consisted of eight students identified with varying levels of psychological well-being, as assessed through an initial screening process. The intervention was conducted through a series of structured group counseling sessions integrating SIT phases: conceptual education, skills acquisition, and application. The statistical analysis revealed a significant improvement in psychological well-being, with the average score increasing from 91.00 (pretest) to 107.63 (post-test). The normality test indicated that the post-test data were normally distributed, while the pretest data were not. The homogeneity of variance was confirmed with a significance value of 0.533, allowing the use of parametric tests. The paired sample t-test yielded a value of $t = -13.749$ and $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$, indicating a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. These findings suggest that group guidance services incorporating SIT are effective in improving students' psychological well-being, particularly in managing stress related to excessive social media use. The study underscores the importance of integrating psychological resilience training into school-based mental health programs to address the growing psychosocial challenges in the digital era.

Keywords: Adolescent Mental Health, Group Guidance, Social Media

A. Introduction

The development of information technology has brought significant changes in daily life, including in social interactions through social media. Although social media offers various benefits, such as ease of communication and access to information, excessive use can have negative impacts on mental health, particularly on individuals' Psychological Well-Being (PWB) (Kartika & Siregar, 2023). Several studies indicate that the use of social media has a negative impact, especially on a person's psychological well-being (Siregar, 2019) which found that the use of social media

causes a decline in PWB that is worse, particularly in the dimension of positive relations with others, resulting in users becoming more isolated due to hidden communications on features such as direct messages and limited opportunities to engage with other users due to hidden comments.

Research (Nasution & Siregar, 2023) also found that Instagram has the worst impact on the health and psychological well-being of young people in terms of body image and bullying compared to YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat. Some other studies also show the negative impact of Instagram on the psychological well-being of its users, such as research (Iskandar, 2022) which found that social media, including Instagram, can have a negative impact on the psychological well-being of its users in the dimension of self-acceptance, such as making them feel unhappy due to dissatisfaction with life. From (Rahmananda & Marjo, 2025) It was also found that viewing posts of other individuals who have slim and perfect bodies makes Instagram users dissatisfied with their own appearance, which negatively impacts the psychological well-being of those individuals, especially in the dimension of self-acceptance.

Psychological well-being represents a healthy, good, and fully functioning condition (Kotijah & Ramadina, 2024). Meanwhile (Auliya & Setiyowati, 2024) It is stated that psychological well-being is a construct that involves one or all positive indicators of psychological adjustment, such as happiness, positive emotions, life satisfaction, and high self-esteem, as well as the absence of indicators of psychological maladjustment, such as negative emotions, symptoms, and psychopathological diagnoses. Individuals with high psychological well-being feel happy, capable, well-supported, and satisfied with life.

PWB is a concept that describes an individual's psychological health based on the fulfillment of positive psychological functions. According to (Dartina & Nabila, 2024), PWB includes positive evaluation of oneself and life, personal growth and development, belief that life has meaning and purpose, ability to manage the environment, autonomy, and positive relationships with others (Silviawi & Darmayanti, 2024). SIT is a psychotherapy technique designed to help individuals manage stress by preparing them to face stressful situations through coping skills training. Research by (Ricky & Gading, 2023) SIT is an effective approach to enhancing students' resilience, which is the individual's ability to rise and adapt positively in the face of stress or life difficulties. SIT works through a gradual process that includes education about stress, coping skills training, and the application of those skills in real-life situations.

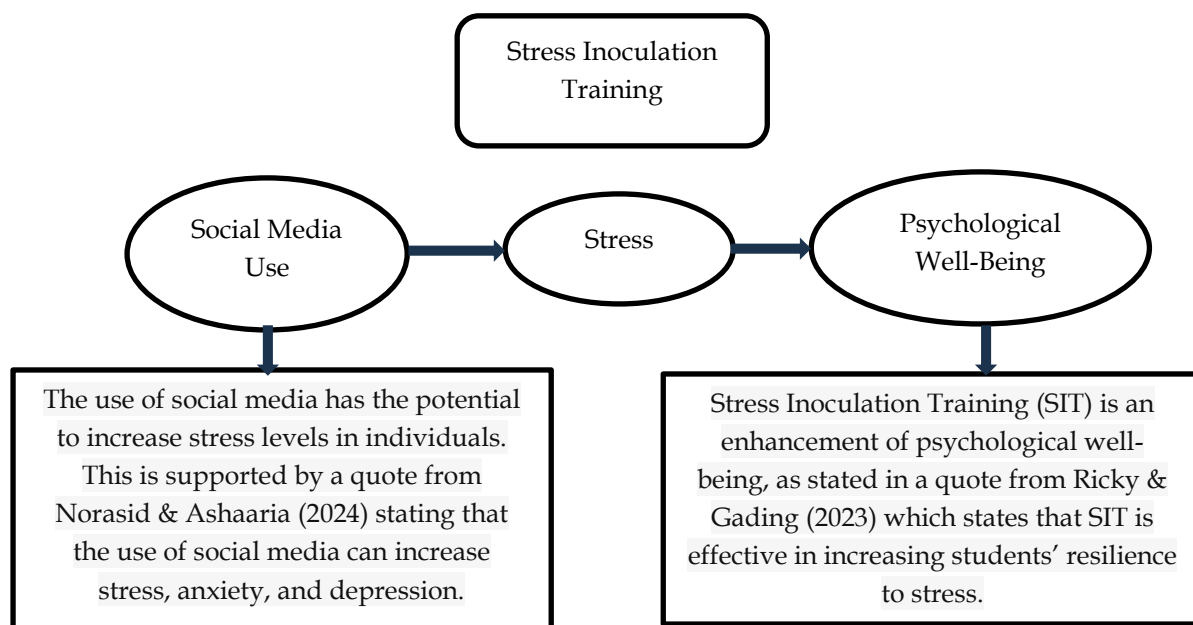


Figure 1. Conceptual Social Media, Stress, and the Role of SIT

This phenomenon is also evident among students at Budisatrya High School Medan. Based on observations and preliminary assessments, several students exhibited symptoms of stress, excessive anxiety, and a decline in academic motivation, which appeared to correlate with the intensity of social media use. In this context, school guidance and counseling services play a crucial role in helping students manage these negative effects and improve their psychological well-being. Considering the high level of social media use among students and its impact on their mental health, this study is deemed necessary. The aim is to examine the effectiveness of group counseling services using the Stress Inoculation technique in enhancing the psychological well-being of social media users at Budisatrya High School Medan. This research is expected to provide both scientific and practical contributions to the development of guidance programs that are responsive to the needs of adolescents in the digital era.

Various studies have been conducted to understand the impact of social media use on individuals' psychological well-being. One study conducted by (Norasid & Ashaaria, 2024) highlighting the role of social media usage in influencing psychological well-being, emphasizing that social media use can increase stress, anxiety, and depression, which in turn affects an individual's psychological well-being. Additionally, research conducted by (Hashi, 2025) expresses that self-esteem and social media dependency play important roles in the psychological well-being of adolescent social media users. This study shows that high self-esteem and low social media dependency can enhance the psychological well-being of adolescents. Meanwhile, a study conducted by (Azyz & Huda, 2022) Examining the impact of social media use on the mental well-being of students. This study shows that the use of social media can affect the mental well-

being of students, with varying impacts depending on the way it is used and the interactions on the platform.

This research aims to explore and analyze various factors that contribute to the enhancement of psychological well-being among social media users, particularly among high school students. Along with the increasing intensity of social media use among teenagers, various psychological challenges such as stress, social anxiety, and low self-esteem arise. Therefore, this study specifically explores how the social skills possessed by individuals can act as a protective factor that helps students maintain healthy psychological well-being, even though they actively use social media at a high frequency. Social skills such as the ability to build positive interpersonal relationships, manage emotions, and communicate effectively are important components in maintaining psychological balance amidst complex digital interactions.

B. Methods

This research uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental method, which aims to test the effect of a treatment on certain variables in conditions that are not fully controlled (Creswell, 2020). The research was conducted at Budisatrya High School Medan, involving students aged 16 to 18 who are active users of social media such as Instagram and Twitter. Respondents were selected through purposive random sampling technique, which is a sampling method based on specific considerations and criteria that have been established in advance (Sugiyono, 2022) The criteria include late adolescent age and possession of an active social media account.

The first step in this research is to determine the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group is given treatment in the form of group guidance services using the stress inoculation technique, while the control group is given no treatment at all. The stress inoculation technique itself is a psychological strategy designed to help individuals develop resilience to stress through three main stages: education, skill training, and application (Meichenbaum, 2017).

The instrument used in this research is a psychological well-being scale developed based on theory (Ryff, 1989), with six main aspects, namely: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. This scale is organized in the form of statements with a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from a score of 1 (Never) to a score of 6 (Always). The instrument was distributed online through Google Forms shared with students via social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram.

After the group guidance service was completed, data were collected from the pretest and posttest results for both the experimental and control groups. The obtained data was then analyzed using validity and reliability tests to ensure the quality of the instruments. Subsequently, classical assumption tests were conducted, such as

normality and homogeneity tests, to ensure that the data met the requirements for further analysis. To determine the effectiveness of the treatment, a t-test was used, both paired t-test to observe changes within the group, and independent t-test to compare between the experimental and control groups.

All stages of this research are systematically designed to test the extent to which group guidance services using stress inoculation techniques can enhance psychological well-being among adolescents who actively use social media. By using a quantitative approach and a quasi-experimental method, the results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more adaptive guidance services to the psychological challenges faced by adolescents in the digital age.

C. Results and Discussion

This research aims to determine the effect of group counseling services using the Stress Inoculation technique on the improvement of the psychological well-being of social media users at Budisatrya High School in Medan. To test the effectiveness of the intervention, an analysis of pretest and posttest data obtained from 8 students was conducted using various statistical tests.

Category of Students' Initial Psychological Well-Being

Before the implementation of group guidance services using stress inoculation techniques, an initial measurement was carried out to determine the category of the psychological well-being level of students who use social media. The grouping was done into three categories: low, moderate, and high, based on the established score range.

Table 1. Categories of Initial Psychological Well-Being of Students

Category		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	19	19,6	19,6	19,6
	Being	57	58,8	58,8	78,4
	Hight	21	21,6	21,6	100,0
	Total	97	100,0	100,0	

Based on the results in the table above, it is known that out of 97 students measured:

1. A total of 57 students (58.8%) are in the moderate category,
2. 19 students (19.6%) are in the low category, and
3. Only 21 students (21.6%) fall into the high category.

This indicates that most students are at a level of psychological well-being that is not yet optimal, and there is still a significant proportion that falls into the low category, making interventions through guidance services very relevant to be implemented.

Descriptive Statistics

The initial step in the analysis is to look at the general description of the data, namely the average value, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, and the distribution of pretest and posttest scores. This data illustrates the tendency of the scores and the extent of the differences after the intervention has been carried out.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Class				Statistic	Std. Error
Value	Pre-Test	Mean		91,00	0,732
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	89,27	
			Upper Bound	92,73	
		5% Trimmed Mean		90,94	
		Median		90,00	
		Variance		4,286	
		Std. Deviation		2,070	
		Minimum		89	
		Maximum		94	
		Range		5	
	Interquartile Range		4		
	Skewness		0,773	0,752	
	Kurtosis		-1,204	1,481	
	POST TEST	Mean		107,63	0,944
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	105,39	
			Upper Bound	109,86	
		5% Trimmed Mean		107,58	
		Median		107,50	
		Variance		7,125	
		Std. Deviation		2,669	
Minimum			104		
Maximum			112		
Range			8		
Interquartile Range		5			
Skewness		0,296	0,752		
Kurtosis		-0,652	1,481		

Based on the test results in the table above, it is known that there is an increase in the psychological well-being score of students from an average of 91.00 (pretest) to 107.63 (posttest). This indicates a positive influence of group guidance services with the stress inoculation technique.

Normality Test

Before conducting the t-test, a normality test is required to determine whether the data is normally distributed. This test is performed using the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov methods, which are suitable for small samples.

Table 3. Results of Normality Test

Class Value	Tests of Normality						
		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Value	Pre-Test	0,310	8	0,022	0,819	8	0,046
	Post-Test	0,104	8	.200*	0,984	8	0,978

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
 a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the test results in the table above, it is known that the pretest data is not normally distributed (Sig. < 0.05), while the posttest data is normally distributed (Sig. > 0.05). This should be taken into account when choosing further statistical tests.

Q-Q Plot Visualization

To support the results of normality testing visually, a Q-Q Plot (Quantile-Quantile Plot) is used. This graph shows how closely the data follows a normal distribution by comparing observed values with theoretical values.

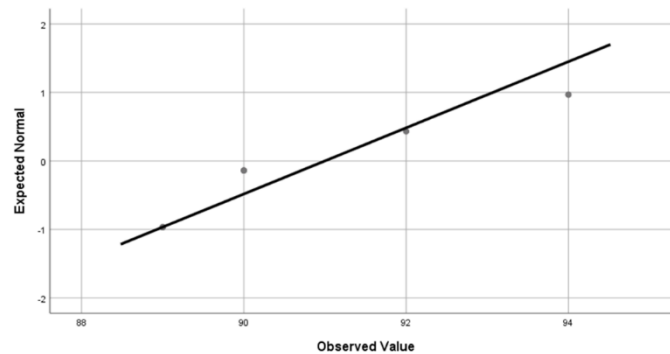


Figure 1. Q-Q Plot Pre-test

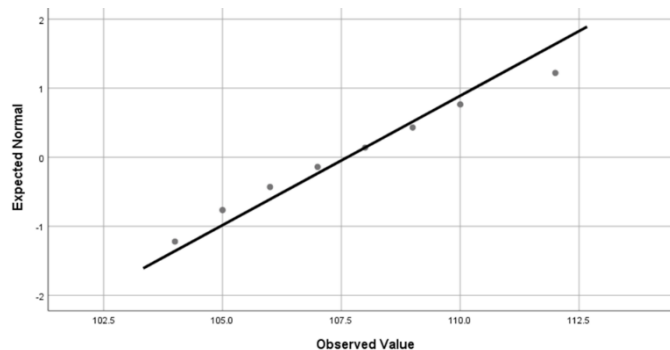


Figure 2. Q-Q Plot Post-test

Based on the image above, it is known that the Q-Q Plot reinforces the results of the previous normality test. The points in the posttest data are more aligned with the

diagonal line, indicating a more normal distribution, compared to the pretest which deviates from that line.

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

The next step is to test whether the variance of the two data groups (pretest and posttest) is homogeneous or not. This test is important to determine the suitability of further parametric tests. The test is conducted using Levene's Test.

Table 4. Results of the Variance Homogeneity Test

Test of Homogeneity of Variance					
VALUE		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
	Based on Mean	0,409	1	14	0,533
	Based on Median	0,646	1	14	0,435
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	0,646	1	13,557	0,435
	Based on trimmed mean	0,430	1	14	0,522

Based on the test results in the table above, it is known that the significance value for all approaches (mean, median, trimmed mean) is > 0.05 . This means that the variances of the two groups are homogeneous, so the homogeneity condition is met.

Paired Samples T-Test

After it is known that the data has homogeneous variance and at least one normal distribution, a Paired Samples T-Test is conducted. This test aims to determine whether there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores in the same group.

Table 5. Results of the T Test

Paired Samples Test		Paired Differences		Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair		Mean	Std. Deviation		Lower	Upper			
1	Pretest - Posttest	-16,625	3,420	1,209	-19,484	-13,766	-13,749	7	0,000

Based on the test results in the table above, a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000 was obtained, which indicates that there is a very significant statistical difference between the pretest and posttest. The average posttest score is higher by 16.625 points,

indicating that group counseling services using the stress inoculation technique are effective in improving students' psychological well-being.

The results of this study indicate that group counseling services integrating the SIT technique significantly contribute to the improvement of the psychological well-being of students who actively use social media at Budisatrya High School Medan. Students who participated in group counseling sessions with the SIT approach showed noticeable improvements in several aspects of psychological well-being, including self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, environmental mastery, and life purpose.

The findings also highlight those social skills serve as a crucial mediating factor in enhancing well-being. Students with stronger interpersonal communication abilities demonstrated greater improvements in the affective and social dimensions of psychological well-being. They became more capable of building healthy online relationships and were less susceptible to the negative dynamics often associated with social media interactions.

Moreover, the study confirms that regulating the intensity of social media use plays a role in reducing student stress levels. Students who consciously reduced screen time, limited access to negative content, and established specific offline periods showed a significant decrease in their stress scores. The counseling intervention also helped students develop a deeper understanding of the importance of self-control and digital media regulation as preventive strategies against stress.

Furthermore, the research found that social support formed during group interactions throughout the counseling process and the sharing of experiences among participants had a positive effect on psychological well-being. The sense of being heard, understood, and accepted by peers in the counseling group provided emotional reinforcement that strengthened interpersonal connections and enhanced self-confidence.

Overall, this study reinforces that group counseling services using the SIT technique are an effective approach to helping students manage psychological pressures related to social media use, while also enhancing their psychological well-being. These findings have important implications for school guidance and counseling practitioners in developing service programs that are contextual, need-based, and responsive to psychosocial challenges in the digital age.

These findings can be further understood through Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Model, which includes six key dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal growth. The SIT technique facilitates self-acceptance, fosters positive group relationships, strengthens self-regulation in digital environments, and encourages the development of clearer

life goals and meaning. In addition, students demonstrated psychological growth through more adaptive stress and emotional management skills (Ryff, 1989).

PWB is a mental condition that describes a person's psychological balance in facing everyday life. According to (Ulviyani, Netrawati, & Karneli, 2023), PWB consists of six dimensions, namely: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. In the context of adolescents, PWB is greatly influenced by social, academic, and digital pressures, including excessive use of social media.

Social media, although it offers space for communication and self-expression, also carries psychological risks such as social anxiety, feelings of insecurity, negative social comparisons, and digital stress. Therefore, psychological interventions that can help adolescents build mental resilience are important (Lianti, Daharnis, & Ifdil, 2024). One effective technique that has been proven is SIT, which is a cognitive approach developed by Meichenbaum. SIT helps individuals prepare to face stress through three stages: education, coping skills training, and application of strategies in real situations (Nurlia & Aulia, 2025).

Based on the research results, group guidance services using stress inoculation techniques can improve the psychological well-being of students who use social media. Before the intervention, out of a total of 97 respondents, only 21 students (21.6%) were classified in the high category, while the majority, 57 students (58.8%), were in the moderate category, and 19 students (19.6%) were in the low category. This indicates that the initial condition of students' well-being is not optimal and requires systematic intervention.

After the intervention, the results of the descriptive analysis showed an increase in the average score from 91.00 (pretest) to 107.63 (posttest). This increase of 16.63 points reflects an improvement in students' ability to manage stress, think positively, and build healthier relationships, particularly in the context of social media use. The maximum posttest score reached 112, an increase from the maximum pretest score of 94. The variance of the scores also slightly increased, but remained within stable limits (pretest variance = 4.286; posttest = 7.125).

The results of the normality test show that the posttest data is normally distributed (Shapiro-Wilk = 0.978, Sig. > 0.05), while the pretest data is not normally distributed (Sig. = 0.046). This indicates that after the intervention, the distribution of students' psychological conditions became more uniform and stable. This is supported by the Q-Q Plot, where the points on the posttest graph follow the normal line more closely compared to the pretest.

The homogeneity test of variances with Levene's Test shows that the pretest and posttest data have homogeneous variances (Sig. = 0.533 > 0.05), allowing for the use

in t-test analysis. The results of the t-test indicate a significant difference between the pretest and posttest with a t value of -13.749 and sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000. This statistically proves that the increase that occurred is not a coincidence, but a real effect of the intervention.

This finding is in line with the research (Auliazalsini & Addawiyah, 2024) which shows that there is an effect of group guidance on the emotional regulation of adolescents in the XI Rambung Putih Simpang Mancang area of Pekan Selesai village, Langkat district. Another study by (Abadi, 2022) group guidance services with problem-solving techniques can reduce students' academic stress. Meanwhile, (Fausta, Muslihati, & Indreswari, 2024) The findings indicate that SIT is effective in reducing academic stress among students.

Before the intervention, the average stress score in the experimental group was 95.10 (high category), but after attending 10 SIT sessions, the score dropped to 62.20 (low category). In contrast, the control group did not experience significant changes. The results of the t-test showed a t-value of 8.195 and a significance of 0.000, which proves that the decrease in stress in the experimental group is statistically significant. Based on the theoretical and empirical analysis results, it can be concluded that group guidance services using the stress inoculation technique are effective in improving the PWB of students who use social media.

PWB has become one of the important indicators in assessing the mental health of individuals, especially adolescents. PWB reflects the extent to which a person is able to manage emotions, establish healthy relationships, feel a sense of purpose in life, and experience personal growth (Zamroni & Gudnanto, 2024). In the context of high school students, psychological challenges are becoming more complex due to academic pressure, social expectations, and excessive exposure to social media (Sayyidhina & Maharani, 2025).

This study proves that group guidance services with SIT techniques are effective in improving the PWB of students who use social media. This is supported by the results of statistical tests showing a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000 in the paired sample t-test, with an average score increase of 16.625 points. This increase is not only statistically significant but also psychologically meaningful as it reflects an enhancement in students' mental resilience in facing daily stress.

SIT developed by (Kamilah, Faridatul, & Zakiyah, 2025) is a cognitive approach that targets changes in individual thought patterns towards stress through three phases: education, coping skills training, and the application of strategies in real-life situations. This approach has proven effective in various stress contexts, including academic, social, and digital stress (Mulia, Karneli, & Netrawati, 2024).

Before the intervention, only 21 students (21.6%) were in the high PWB category. After the intervention, there was a significant increase in both the average scores and the distribution of PWB scores. This shows that SIT not only reduces stress but also enhances important components of PWB such as self-acceptance, positive relationships, and environmental mastery (Bidayah & Netrawati, 2023).

The effectiveness of this intervention is also demonstrated through the normality test, where the posttest data shows a normal distribution, unlike the pretest. This indicates a more even psychological stability after the intervention was given. The homogeneity of variance test with Levene's Test also supports the use of the t-test, and the results of this test further confirm that the improvements observed are the result of systematic treatment, not coincidence.

This research reinforces previous findings (Hamzati & Naqiyah, 2023) It shows that group guidance can enhance the emotional regulation of adolescents. Abadi (2022) proved that problem-solving techniques in group guidance are effective in reducing academic stress. (Hawari, Syahfitri, & Lesmana, 2024) even specifically researching the use of SIT which shows a significant decline in stress scores from 95.10 to 62.20.

In addition, the increase in subjective well-being in the context of social media has also been studied by (Syarofudin & Kusumadewi, 2024), which found that cognitive interventions can reduce the negative effects of social comparison. A study by (Yulianti & Putri, 2023) also shows that SIT enhances self-efficacy and cognitive flexibility in students. Thus, it can be concluded that group counseling services using SIT techniques are not only beneficial in improving students' mental resilience to stress but also play an important role in strengthening the dimensions of psychological well-being in the digital era that is filled with social pressures.

However, several studies are considered not relevant to this research. For example, the study by (Lee & Cho, 2022) developed an artificial intelligence system to detect negative emotions from social media activity and recommend digital breaks. While innovative, this study is not aligned with the current research because it does not employ a group counseling approach or psychological techniques such as SIT. The solution proposed is entirely algorithm-based, lacking the psychological empowerment and interpersonal interaction emphasized in this study.

Similarly, (Chong & Tan, 2023) explored how strict time restrictions on social media usage through parental control could reduce students' stress levels. However, this approach focuses more on external control and does not involve the internalization of coping skills as fostered through SIT. The absence of self-directed learning or group dynamics renders this study irrelevant to the active psychological intervention model used in this research.

Additionally, the study by (Ahmed & Rahman, 2022) examined the impact of social media from a digital sociology perspective, emphasizing the formation of youth identity and power relations. Although it discusses adolescents and social media, it does not explicitly address intervention strategies or psychological well-being. Therefore, it does not align with the focus of this research on intervention-based improvement and the measurement of psychological well-being.

In contrast, the conclusion of this study confirms that group counseling services using the Stress Inoculation Training (SIT) technique are effective in improving the psychological well-being of students who actively use social media. This intervention helps students manage stress, enhance self-regulation, and strengthen social relationships and life purpose. Group support and the reduction of social media intensity also contribute to significant improvements in students' psychological conditions. SIT has proven to be a relevant and adaptive approach in addressing psychosocial challenges in the digital age.

D. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that group counseling services utilizing the Stress Inoculation Training (SIT) technique are effective in improving the psychological well-being of social media-using students at Budisatrya Senior High School in Medan. The effectiveness of the intervention is evidenced by the increase in the average score from 91.00 (pretest) to 107.63 (posttest), with the paired sample t-test showing a t-value of -13.749 and a significance level of 0.000. This highly significant difference indicates that SIT interventions help students manage stress, develop positive thinking patterns, and enhance psychological resilience in response to the pressures of intensive social media use. These findings emphasize the urgency of developing guidance and counseling services that are adaptive to digital-era challenges. As a structured cognitive approach, SIT has been proven to strengthen key dimensions of psychological well-being, such as self-acceptance, healthy social relationships, environmental mastery, and life purpose. Schools should integrate SIT techniques into the counseling curriculum and provide training for school counselors and homeroom teachers in digital literacy. This step is essential so that educators can not only understand the dynamics of students' social media use but also offer preventive and targeted interventions for the psychological issues that arise. With SIT training, teachers can equip students with sustainable, evidence-based coping skills. The broader implication of these findings supports the importance of school-based adolescent mental health programs as part of national education policy. Government and local education authorities must develop policies that promote the strengthening of psychological services in schools, including the integration of interventions like SIT into counseling programs. In addition, digital literacy should be incorporated as a core component of efforts to enhance students' mental resilience so that they can use social media wisely and avoid its negative psychological effects. In conclusion, SIT is not only relevant in individual contexts but also holds systemic potential for building an

educational ecosystem that supports students' psychological well-being in the digital age.

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