International Journal of Education, Vocational and Social Science
https://e-journal.citakonsulindo.or.id/index.php/IJEVSS
E-ISSN : 2963 4954
IJEVSS

The Effectiveness of Group Counseling Using Behavioral Contracting and Reinforcement Techniques to Enhance Students' Learning Interest

Renni Purwaningsih
Magister Bimbingan dan Konseling, Sekolah Pascasarjana, Universitas PGRI Madiun
Ratih Christiana
Magister Bimbingan dan Konseling, Sekolah Pascasarjana, Universitas PGRI Madiun
Asroful Kadafi
Magister Bimbingan dan Konseling, Sekolah Pascasarjana, Universitas PGRI Madiun

Corresponding Author: rennipurwa.2025@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of group counseling using behavioral contract and reinforcement techniques in improving students' learning interest at SMK Negeri 3 Surakarta. This research employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design using a pre-test and post-test non-equivalent control group design. The research sample was selected through purposive sampling and consisted of an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received group counseling treatment using behavioral contract and reinforcement techniques, while the control group received self-control counseling treatment. Data were collected using a learning interest questionnaire administered before and after the treatment. Data analysis was conducted using the paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test. The results showed that the experimental group experienced a significant improvement in learning interest with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), while the control group showed no significant improvement with a significance value of 0.052 ($p > 0.05$). The independent sample t-test results also indicated a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), meaning that there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups after the treatment. These findings indicate that group counseling with behavioral contract and reinforcement techniques is effective in improving students' learning interest. This technique is able to build structured learning commitment while consistently strengthening positive learning behaviors, making it a practical alternative for guidance and counseling services in schools.

Copyright at authors some right reserved this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License

International Journal of Education, Vocational and Social Science
https://e-journal.citakonsultindo.or.id/index.php/IJEVSS
E-ISSN : 2963 4954
IJEVSS

Keywords: Behavioral Contract, Group Counseling, Learning Interest, Reinforcement

INTRODUCTION

Numerous efforts have been made to enhance students' learning interest through various approaches, spanning both instructional methods and guidance and counseling services. Conventional approaches—such as fostering motivation through lectures and advice—remain common; however, research indicates that these strategies tend to impact only cognitive and affective aspects without yielding sustainable behavioral changes (Sardiman, 2020). Lecture-based interventions demonstrate a relatively low effect size compared to action-oriented (behavioral) interventions.

Research by Hidayat & Widodo (2023) indicates a positive correlation between high learning interest and students' learning outcomes and vocational competence. Students with a strong interest in learning tend to be more focused, possess intrinsic motivation, and are better able to develop skills relevant to their fields of expertise. Furthermore, a study by Putri et al. (2024) demonstrates that a supportive learning environment and appropriate counseling approaches can significantly boost learning interest.

However, this ideal state has not yet been fully realized in practice. Various studies indicate that learning interest among Vocational High School (SMK) students remains low. Research by Rahmawati (2022) found that approximately 62% of SMK students fell into the low category for learning interest, characterized by a lack of attention during lessons, frequent procrastination on assignments, and low classroom participation. Meanwhile, a study by Nugroho & Sari (2023) revealed that about 55% of students experienced a decline in learning interest due to monotonous teaching methods and a lack of positive behavioral reinforcement from teachers.

The issue of low learning interest is a matter of serious concern, particularly within the Vocational High School (SMK) sector. SMK represents a form of formal education designed to equip graduates with the competence and readiness to enter the workforce. The primary objective of SMK education is to produce human resources who are professional, disciplined, skilled, and productive in their respective fields of expertise (Kemendikbud, 2016). Consequently, SMK students are expected not only to master vocational skills but also to cultivate the attitudes and learning interest necessary for a successful educational experience.

Empirical observations at SMK Negeri 3 Surakarta have revealed issues regarding students' low interest in learning. This is evidenced by behaviors such as failing to complete assignments, a lack of willingness to study at home, studying only in preparation for exams or tests, and leaving

Copyright at authors some right reserved this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License

the classroom while lessons are in progress. Preliminary survey results indicate that a significant number of students struggle with low learning interest (Sawaludin et al, 2026). If this issue is not addressed promptly, it could negatively impact academic achievement and the students' readiness for the workforce.

Since every student possesses unique characteristics and faces different challenges, services capable of providing appropriate and sustained support are essential. In this context, the role of the guidance and counseling (BK) teacher is crucial, particularly in delivering counseling services focused on developing positive learning attitudes and behaviors. Group counseling is one such service that can help students overcome issues related to learning interest; it enables them to share experiences, gain social support, and learn through group dynamics.

This initiative addresses the urgent need to tackle the issue of low learning interest among vocational high school (SMK) students, as learning interest is a key psychological variable determining student engagement in the learning process. In modern educational theory, interest serves not only as an initial impetus but also as a reinforcer of learning consistency (Hidi & Renninger, 2020).

Active learning approaches—such as problem-based learning and cooperative learning—have been widely implemented to boost student interest in learning. Although these strategies have proven effective in increasing student engagement in the short term, they do not always succeed in fostering consistent study habits (Richard M. Ryan & Edward L. Deci, 2020). Within the framework of Self-Determination Theory, increasing learning interest requires support for intrinsic motivation; however, without behavioral reinforcement, such motivation often fails to persist in the long run.

Regarding guidance and counseling services, conventional non-directive counseling approaches also face limitations in bringing about tangible changes in student behavior. According to Gerald Corey (2021), counseling that lacks specific, structured techniques tends to produce changes at the level of understanding but is less effective at altering established behavioral habits.

Several alternative approaches, such as modeling and self-management, have been developed to address these limitations. Albert Bandura's (2020) social learning theory explains that individuals can learn through observation and imitation, suggesting that modeling techniques can enhance learning interest. However, their effectiveness relies heavily on the individual's ability to internalize the observed behavior. Meanwhile, the self-regulated learning approach proposed by Barry Zimmerman (2020) emphasizes the importance of self-control in learning, yet it proves less effective when applied to students with low levels of discipline and motivation. In contrast to

Copyright at authors some right reserved this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License

the aforementioned approaches, behavioral contracting and reinforcement techniques—grounded in behaviorist theory—offer more concrete and measurable mechanisms for change. From the perspective of Applied Behavior Analysis, behavior can be shaped through the relationship between stimulus, response, and consequence (John O. Cooper et al., 2020). Behavioral contracting techniques facilitate clear agreements regarding behavioral targets, thereby enhancing student commitment to change. Meanwhile, reinforcement serves to strengthen positive behavior through consistent consequences, allowing that behavior to be maintained in the long term.

A study by Paul R. Pintrich (2021) demonstrates that positive reinforcement can significantly enhance students' motivation and self-regulation. Furthermore, research by Robert H. Horner et al. (2020)—conducted within the framework of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)—indicates that the systematic use of reinforcement can increase positive learning behaviors by more than 40%.

Compared to previous approaches, the combination of behavioral contracting and reinforcement techniques offers distinct, comprehensive advantages. First, these techniques not only raise student awareness but also foster concrete actions through structured agreements. Second, reinforcement facilitates habit formation through the repetition of consistently reinforced behaviors. Third, combining these two techniques strikes a balance between external control and the development of internal habits—a balance absent in conventional approaches (such as B.F. Skinner’s reinforcement theory).

Consequently, a behaviorist approach utilizing behavioral contracting and reinforcement is considered more effective in addressing low student interest in learning, as it directly targets behavioral aspects—the core of the learning process. Therefore, integrating these techniques into group counseling represents a relevant and promising strategy for sustainably boosting the learning interest of vocational high school (SMK) students.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative method, which qualifies as a scientific approach because it adheres to established scientific principles: being concrete/empirical, objective, measurable, rational, and systematic. Regarding the research design, an experimental approach was selected from among various types—such as pre-experimental, true experimental, factorial, and quasi-experimental designs. Specifically, a quasi-experimental design was chosen because the study involves both a control group and an experimental group (Sugiyono, 2019). The experimental

Copyright at authors some right reserved this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License

group received an intervention aimed at addressing learning interest through group counseling services utilizing the behavioral contract technique, while the control group received an intervention focused on learning interest using self-control strategies.

The study utilizes a non-equivalent control group pre-test and post-test experimental design, structured as follows:

1. Pre-test Phase: The purpose of the pre-test is to identify students at SMK N 3 Surakarta who exhibit low learning interest prior to the intervention.
2. Intervention (Treatment) Phase: The intervention targets students selected via purposive sampling based on the highest frequency of relevant occurrences over the course of a semester. The behavioral contract technique is implemented within group counseling sessions using a direct approach—specifically, group discussion. The intervention is planned to span six stages, with each session lasting 30–45 minutes; the schedule remains flexible to accommodate situational conditions.
3. Post-test Phase: In this stage, the researcher administers a questionnaire to the students following the completion of the intervention. In addition, the results of the questionnaire for students with low learning interest were compared between the pre-treatment and post-treatment stages.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Hypothesis Testing

This test was used to determine the difference between pretest and posttest scores for each group. For the experimental group, a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) was obtained, indicating a significant difference between the pretest and posttest. This signifies an increase in learning interest following the intervention. In contrast, the control group yielded a significance value of 0.052 ($p > 0.05$), indicating no significant difference between the pretest and posttest. This demonstrates that, in the absence of the intervention, the increase in learning interest was not significant.

Independent Sample t-test

This test was used to determine the difference between the experimental group and the control group following the intervention. The test results showed a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant difference between the two groups. Thus, it can be concluded that

Copyright at authors some right reserved this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License

the group receiving the intervention experienced a greater increase in learning interest compared to the group that did not receive the intervention.

DISCUSSION

The research results indicate that group counseling utilizing behavioral contracting and reinforcement techniques is effective in enhancing students' interest in learning. This is evidenced by a significant improvement observed in the experimental group compared to the control group. This improvement stems from the combination of two complementary techniques: behavioral contracting and reinforcement. Behavioral contracting helps students establish clear learning commitments, providing them with a structured direction and purpose in their studies (Fikri, 2022). Meanwhile, reinforcement serves to strengthen positive behaviors through consistent application.

These findings align with the behaviorist theory proposed by B.F. Skinner, which posits that behavior can be shaped through reinforcement. Furthermore, according to Raymond G. Miltenberger (2020), reinforcement is an effective technique for increasing the frequency of desired behaviors (Aprianti & Abdi, 2021).

Compared to previous approaches—such as motivational lectures and conventional counseling—this technique is more effective because it not only enhances student understanding but also brings about tangible changes in learning behavior. While earlier approaches tended to address only cognitive aspects, the behaviorist approach directly modifies behavior through stimulus-response mechanisms.

These results are also consistent with prior research demonstrating that the use of behavioral contracting and reinforcement in group counseling can significantly boost students' interest in learning. This highlights the advantage of the behaviorist approach in fostering more consistent and sustainable behavioral change. Thus, it can be concluded that group counseling employing behavioral contracting and reinforcement techniques is an effective strategy for increasing the learning interest of vocational high school (SMK) students.

CONCLUSSIONS

The research results indicate that group counseling utilizing behavioral contracting and reinforcement techniques is effective in enhancing students' learning interest. This is evidenced by a significant improvement observed in the experimental group compared to the control group. Based on these findings regarding the effectiveness of this approach for vocational high school

Copyright at authors some right reserved this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License

(SMK) students, the researcher offers several recommendations: school principals should support the implementation of guidance and counseling services—specifically group counseling using behavioral contracting and reinforcement—as an alternative intervention to boost student learning interest; meanwhile, guidance and counseling teachers are advised to apply these techniques in a more structured manner during group counseling sessions, particularly for students with low learning interest.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The findings of this study are expected to serve as an empirical reference for developing a behavioristic approach to school guidance and counseling services, particularly in efforts to enhance the learning interest of vocational high school (SMK) students. Furthermore, this research can provide a foundation for developing group counseling intervention models that are more innovative and adaptable to the needs of students in the modern educational era.

REFERENCES

Albert Bandura. (2020). *Social learning theory*. New York: General Learning Press.

Aprianti, C., & Abdi, S. (2021). Efektivitas layanan bimbingan kelompok teknik positive reinforcement berbasis online terhadap peningkatan minat belajar siswa pada era covid-19. Guidance: Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling, 18(01), 1-7.

B.F. Skinner. (1953). *Science and human behavior*. New York: Macmillan.

Barry Zimmerman. (2020). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement. *Educational Psychologist*, 35(1), 3–17.

Emda, A. (2021). Motivasi belajar dalam pembelajaran. *Jurnal Pendidikan*, 12(2), 145–157.

Fikri, A. (2022). Penerapan teknik kontrak perilaku untuk mengurangi perilaku membolos siswa di SMA Negeri 11 Sidrap.

Gerald Corey. (2021). *Theory and practice of group counseling* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Hidayat, A., & Widodo, S. (2023). Hubungan minat belajar dengan kompetensi vokasional siswa SMK. *Jurnal Pendidikan Kejuruan Indonesia*, 8(2), 121–132.

Horner, R. H., Sugai, G., & Anderson, C. M. (2020). Positive behavioral interventions and supports. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 22(3), 145–158.

John O. Cooper, Heron, T. E., & Heward, W. L. (2020). *Applied behavior analysis* (3rd ed.). Pearson.

John Hattie. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.

Copyright at authors some right reserved this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License

Kemendikbud. (2016). *Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia tentang Standar Kompetensi Lulusan Pendidikan Menengah Kejuruan*. Jakarta: Kemendikbud.

Nugroho, A., & Sari, M. (2023). Faktor-faktor penyebab rendahnya minat belajar siswa SMK. *Jurnal Konseling Pendidikan*, 7(1), 65–79.

Paul R. Pintrich. (2021). Motivation and self-regulated learning in education. *Educational Psychology Review*, 33(4), 879–902.

Putri, N., Rahman, D., & Setiawan, F. (2024). Pengaruh lingkungan belajar terhadap minat belajar siswa SMK. *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia*, 9(1), 44–58.

Rahmawati, S. (2022). Analisis rendahnya minat belajar siswa SMK. *Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling Indonesia*, 6(2), 101–113.

Richard M. Ryan, & Edward L. Deci. (2020). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Press.

Raymond G. Miltenberger. (2020). *Behavior modification: Principles and procedures* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Sardiman. (2020). *Interaksi dan motivasi belajar mengajar*. Jakarta: Rajawali Pers.

Sawaludin, N., Kadafi, A., & Christiana, R. (2026). The Effectiveness Of Behavioral Contract Group Counseling In Improving The Discipline Of 11th-Grade Students At Pilangkenceng State High School, Madiun Regency. Jurnal Konseling Pendidikan Islam, 7(2). https://doi.org/10.32806/jkpi.v7i2.1816

Sugiyono. (2019). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.

Sugiyono. (2022). *Metode penelitian pendidikan*. Bandung: Alfabeta.

Suzanne Hidi, & K. Ann Renninger. (2020). Interest development and learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 55(1), 15–28.

Copyright at authors some right reserved this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License