

Self-focused brief counseling designed to increase students' enthusiasm for learning in the face of academic stress

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Abstract

The density of independent learning activities while at school creates a burden for some students. Not all students have to deal with the demands that they should. Most students claim to be less productive in several topics because they have less excitement for learning because of the demands of excessive learning activities. SFBC can help students overcome a certain kind of procrastination by giving them an option for how to approach cognitive challenges and provide answers that are appropriate for the given situation. The current study aims to conduct a literature review on how to channel Self-focused brief counseling to increase students' enthusiasm for learning while dealing with academic stress. This work employs a research methodology that combines multiple studies with related issues and applies solutions to address these issues in a literature review. It is thus intended that this essay will offer readers an alternative viewpoint on the published research findings.

Keywords: Academic stress; enthusiasm; learning; self-focused brief counseling.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Academic stress plays a major role in contributing negatively to students' mental health, emotional condition, general psychological functioning, and learning ability (Barker et al., 2018; El-Khodary et al., 2021). Pressure arises as a result of various triggering factors related to academic demands. Data from various reports, including the National College Health Assessment Association in the United States, shows that more than 58% of students in the United States experience difficulties and pressure due to academic demands.

First-year students in various European countries, such as Germany, Poland, and Bulgaria, also reported experiencing high levels of academic stress related to future academic demands. Students' perceptions of the workload of lectures which require great effort to complete one course and self-assessment due to expectations are also major factors in determining the level of stress in students, which in turn has an impact on the level of happiness and subjective well-being of students (Cheung et al., 2020; Jahara et al., 2022).

Beliefs and perceptions of academic demands can also cause academic stress to emerge which produces psychosomatic reactions in students (Ningsih, 2014; Arslan & Asıcı 2022; Sahmurova, Arikan, Gursesli, & Duradoni, 2022). This reaction is reinforced by stress symptoms associated with the lecture period, such as the finding that academic stress tends to increase around exam time, for example, midterm and final exams (Rezaei & Mousanezhad Jeddi, 2020). Manifestations of academic stress not only impact psychosomatic conditions but also influence impulsive behavior. Findings from Yeo and Lee's (2017) research indicate that 66.8% of students in South Korea responded to high levels of academic stress by self-harming, such as pinching themselves, as a form of outlet (Yoo, 2018).

Other research also reveals a significant relationship between students' academic stress, maladaptive behavior, and low psychological quality. These findings highlight that academic stress contributes 6% to students' life satisfaction. In addition, research shows a significant relationship between academic stress and self-efficacy, where increasing levels of academic stress tend to reduce students' levels of self-efficacy (Kristensen et al., 2023). Furthermore, the research results confirm that academic stress can predict the emergence of high anxiety among students (Sahmurova, Kiyak & Budak, 2017; Yan et al., 2018; Gao, 2023; Sahmurova, Arikan, Gursesli, & Duradoni, 2022).

Findings regarding academic stress in Indonesia are in line with findings from abroad. According to the National Commission for Child Protection and the Ministry of Health, from 2011 to 2015, there was an increase of more than 90% in the number of students experiencing stress every month. In Padang City, more than 13% of students reported experiencing high levels of academic stress.

To reduce the academic stress conditions experienced by students, the Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) approach is considered a strategic step. This approach can help students strengthen self-autonomy, focus thinking on solutions, formulate responsibilities, develop independence, increase self-control, and increase the quality of positive resources within students.

SFBC differentiates itself from traditional approaches by focusing on solutions without delving into the details of the problem. This approach emphasizes treating problems at a less severe level, draws from the client's successful experience in resolving previous problems, and focuses on the present and future, not the past. Thus, SFBC is an approach that is expected to provide an effective and fast solution to academic stress. The Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) approach has five basic principles that underlie its practice:

Constructive Change: The counseling approach is directed at achieving constructive change in the client's thoughts, actions, or behavior patterns.

Exception Process: In searching for a solution, there is always an exception process to identify situations where the problem does not exist, which helps the client find a gradual solution to the problem.

Small and Positive Changes: This principle emphasizes that small and positive changes can bring about more significant and positive changes in the client's life.

Using Previous Successes: All clients are assumed to have the ability to solve their problems by detailing and replicating previous successes.

Exciting and Measurable Goals: Counseling goals need to be stated in enjoyable and measurable terms, and establish an active voice. This approach is also known to be effective in treating various problems related to maladaptive behavior, including conditions of anxiety, stress, and depression (Koorankot et al., 2022).

1.1. Purpose of study

This research is focused on evaluating the extent to which SFBC can reduce the level of academic stress experienced by students, with a special focus on first-year students. First-year students were chosen because they have the highest levels of academic stress symptoms, and this study will consider more symptom-forming variables in this group. Thus, this research aims to understand the potential of SFBC in overcoming academic stress in vulnerable student groups.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

This research is a literature analysis that adopts the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) method. Literature collection was carried out via Publish or Perish (PoP) by accessing several databases, such as Google Scholar, Crossref, and Semantic Scholar. The search was carried out systematically using keywords such as "solution-focused brief therapy, solution-focused brief counseling, SFBC, SFBT, and school counseling". The search series involved literature published between 2010 and 2022. The search results were then analyzed using Vos Viewer to produce a visualization of frequently researched terms related to SFBC and the identification of researchers who have explored this topic.

Of the 950 studies related to these keywords, selection was carried out based on a review of the abstracts of each article. The inclusion criteria applied involved (1) availability and accessibility of full papers, (2) experimental nature of the research, (3) research conducted in an educational setting, and (4) application of at least one counseling technique. In contrast, exclusion criteria consisted of (1) unavailability of full papers or difficulty of access, (2) studies not published in reputable journals, and (3) types of studies such as meta-analytic, systematic, narrative reviews, or book chapters.

This study was prepared independently by the author using a two-step process. The first stage involves screening and selection based on article titles and abstracts. At this stage, relevant articles are selected for further processing. The second stage involved screening and selection based on full papers from previously selected articles. The data was then extracted and entered into a spreadsheet taking into account elements such as author, year of publication, research design, research subject, psychological problems/symptoms, counseling techniques, and learning outcomes (Moher et al., 2009). The results of the systematic review are summarized in tables and synthesized narratively to provide a comprehensive picture.

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3. RESULTS

The results of the analysis of short counseling focused on Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) related to symptoms of academic stress carried out by Zahrian Ardi and his colleagues showed a decrease in students' academic stress levels after receiving a series of SFBC counseling interventions (Barker et al., 2018). Graph 1 illustrates that during the five SFBC treatment sessions, there was a significant reduction in students' academic stress levels.

In the first treatment, all research subjects showed high levels of academic stress (above a score of 136). However, a decrease was seen in several subjects after the second treatment, and all subjects showed changes after being given this treatment. These findings reflect the positive contribution of the SFBC approach in reducing students' academic stress levels (Mache et al., 2016).

These results are consistent with the basic concept of the SFBC counseling intervention, which emphasizes a reduced focus on past problems and a greater emphasis on finding successful solutions. This approach focuses on success and solutions and views that each individual has strengths, resources, and problem-solving skills. In the SFBC framework, these skills are considered assets that clients will bring with them throughout the counseling process, creating an environment that supports positive changes in dealing with academic stress.

Research conducted by Widiastuti et al., (2023) revealed that the Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) technique had been used in 9 studies. In addition, the scaling question technique was reported to be used in 7 studies, while coping questions were only used in 2 studies. In contrast, pre-therapy change techniques were reported as the least frequently used, appearing in only one study (Widiastuti et al., 2023).

The results of the literature review also identified several psychological problems or disorders that could be intervened with the SFBC model. Some of these include reducing academic procrastination, as reported by Kusumawide et al., (2019), handling aggressive behavior in students, and reducing anxiety and academic stress by Ardi, 2021). The SFBC model is also used to overcome problems of low self-esteem and self-regulation. Some other psychological problems that can be addressed with the SFBC model include student technostress, substance abuse, and trauma

Based on the literature review, the SFBC model is widely used in educational environments, both at schools and universities. These findings are in line with recommendations Gingerich & Peterson, (2013) and Bakar & Suranata (2020) which suggest using the SFBC model in the educational environment because the implementation time tends to be short. The most frequently used techniques in the SFBC model are the exception question technique and the magic question technique. Thus, SFBC has proven effective in overcoming various psychological problems, including academic procrastination, aggressive behavior, self-regulation, and other problems.

Research on the use of Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) to reduce academic procrastination conducted by Kusumawide et al., (2019) produced findings that support the research hypothesis. Analysis using the Wilcoxon test shows that there are significant positive changes in overcoming academic procrastination in class VIII students at SMP Negeri 1 Pesawaran in the 2018/2019 academic year, especially after being provided with SFBC group counseling services.

Comparison of the pretest and post-test results between the experimental group and the control group showed significant changes, which confirmed that SFBC group counseling had a positive impact in reducing the level of academic procrastination in students. Therefore, the hypothesis that the problem of academic procrastination can be overcome with SFBC group counseling can be proven.

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The suggestion made based on the findings of this research is for future research to consider the use of a more heterogeneous service target population, not just limited to students. Thus, the generalization of research results can be broader and can make a greater contribution to understanding the effectiveness of SFBC group counseling services in dealing with various psychological problems in more diverse groups.

4. CONCLUSION

In discussing the problems contained in several studies related to the main problem, namely the anxiety in the way of thinking experienced by students in dealing with academic stress using the self-focused brief counseling technique. Whether the technique used can have a significant impact on the main problems of students or not. Therefore, this research study is needed to test the practice of this theory in related problems.

This research concludes that the self-focused brief counseling technique can have an impact on reducing academic stress experienced by students. By applying appropriate techniques to several other types of research that discuss the same main problem, the results provide a similar conclusion that the self-focused brief counseling technique can reduce the academic stress behavior experienced by students, by prioritizing solutions rather than thinking about the problems faced by these students.

The author's views regarding the focus of thinking on the general problems researched by the author are expected to provide new thinking regarding the use of theory and related new problems. According to the author, among these updates, it is possible to use a more in-depth study of techniques than usual and combine them with creative applications, for example with mini-games or adding positive reinforcement to students.

Ethical Approval: To maintain the integrity and ethical rigor of the research process, the ethical considerations for this study were carefully taken into account.

Author contribution: Authors in this research include: Harun Ismail, Nur Hidayah, and Fitri Wahyuni at the State University of Malang.

Conflict of Interest: This journal is used to fulfill the final semester exam assignment in the counseling approaches and techniques learning course.

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