

Effectiveness of Group Guidance Using Reframing Techniques to Reduce Toxic Disinhibition among Junior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of group guidance services using the reframing technique in reducing toxic disinhibition behaviour among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Panyabungan. This behaviour involves aggressive and inappropriate expressions in digital interactions, often triggered by perceived anonymity and low social control. The study employed a quantitative approach with a one-group pretest-posttest pre-experimental design. A total of six students (n=6) identified with toxic disinhibition behaviour participated in the intervention. Data were collected using a 30-item questionnaire, validated with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability score of 0.734. The intervention consisted of two group guidance sessions, each lasting 40 minutes. The results showed a reduction in the average score from 99.67 to 84.33. The Wilcoxon test yielded a significance value of 0.028 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a statistically significant difference before and after the intervention. The results suggest that the reframing technique effectively helps students reflect on their thinking patterns and build better self-control in digital contexts. This study recommends incorporating reframing into school counselling as a strategic approach to address deviant behaviour in the digital age. The findings also support using cognitive behavioural strategies in adolescent counselling interventions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical transitional phase in student development, particularly during junior high school (SMP). This period is marked by identity exploration, emotional instability, and heightened sensitivity to environmental influences. Adolescents exhibit characteristics distinct from both children and adults, undergoing complex physical, emotional, social, and cognitive changes that collectively shape their maturity [1], [2], [3].

These developmental dynamics often make adolescents more vulnerable to external pressures, including those originating from their digital environment.

Emotional volatility and the strong desire to gain peer acceptance often drive teenagers to express themselves openly, especially in digital environments [4], [5]. This tendency is further amplified among Generation Z students who have grown up in tandem with rapid technological advancements [6], [7]. For them, social media serves as a primary space for communication, self-expression, and the pursuit of social validation. As a result, the digital realm becomes both a platform for exploration and a space prone to risky behaviours.

However, digital freedom of expression does not always yield positive outcomes. One increasingly prevalent issue is toxic disinhibition, a phenomenon where individuals engage in inappropriate or harmful behaviours online—such as swearing, cyberbullying, spreading hoaxes, or provocative content—that they would not typically display in face-to-face interactions [8], [9]. Factors such as anonymity, perceived social distance, and lack of immediate consequences contribute to the emergence of this behaviour [10], [11]. Victims often suffer psychological impacts, including diminished self-esteem, depression, and social withdrawal. In the long term, such exposure can impair students' academic engagement and socio-emotional well-being.

In school settings, toxic disinhibition can erode the learning climate. Preliminary observations in a grade VIII-2 classroom revealed behaviours such as online name-calling, harsh language, and disseminating harmful content, which ultimately spilt into classroom dynamics, reducing student focus and increasing interpersonal conflict [12], [13]. These behaviours indicate a pressing need for preventive interventions within the school's psychosocial support system.

Schools play a strategic role in mitigating these issues through guidance and counselling services. As part of their preventive and developmental function, group guidance, in particular, provides a platform for students to share experiences, gain peer insight, and receive structured support from school counsellors [14], [15]. Students can improve social interaction skills, emotional regulation, and decision-making abilities within this group setting. It fosters empathy, responsibility, and critical reflection [16], [17]. Moreover, group dynamics allow students to learn vicariously through others' experiences and to build a sense of shared accountability.

One promising method to enhance the impact of group guidance is the Reframing technique, a cognitive-behavioural strategy aimed at helping individuals view their problems from alternative, more constructive perspectives [18], [19]. Reframing enables students to reinterpret negative digital experiences and transform destructive responses into adaptive behaviours. It encourages cognitive restructuring, allowing students to approach online conflict rationally and reduce emotional intensity [20], [21]. This makes it particularly suitable for addressing emotionally charged online interactions.

Previous research supports the efficacy of Reframing in improving self-perception and coping mechanisms, particularly among bullying victims and students facing interpersonal challenges. However, few studies have explored the application of Reframing techniques within group guidance services specifically targeting toxic digital behaviours

among adolescents, especially in junior high school settings. This represents a significant research gap in digital-era school counselling [22]. Addressing this gap is essential for developing responsive and contextually relevant intervention models.

Therefore, the present study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of group guidance services integrated with Reframing techniques in reducing toxic disinhibition behaviour among junior high school students. The focus is on students exhibiting digital misconduct, with indicators including: (1) the use of harsh language online, (2) participation in cyberbullying, (3) the spreading of provocative content, (4) dissemination of hoaxes or false information, and (5) use of anonymous accounts to target others. These indicators were selected based on observed behaviour trends and relevant literature.

The structured sessions explore students' digital experiences, identify negative thought patterns, and help them construct healthier responses. A participatory approach ensures active student involvement, promoting self-reflection and intrinsic motivation for change. This approach aligns with humanistic principles, emphasising student agency in the behavioural change process.

Research Question: How effective is the implementation of group guidance services using the Reframing technique in reducing toxic disinhibition behaviour among junior high school students?

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of practical, context-sensitive counselling models for addressing toxic online behaviour. It aims to support a collaborative effort among counsellors, teachers, students, and schools to create a healthier and safer educational environment in the digital age. It also seeks to strengthen digital character education for comprehensive student development.

2. METHOD

Research Approach and Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design, a research method used to determine the effect of an intervention on a subject group without the use of a comparison (control) group [23], [24]. The primary aim of this approach is to observe changes before and after the intervention within the same group of subjects.

The research design applied was the One Group Pretest–Posttest Design, in which a single group is given a pretest (O_1), followed by an intervention (X), and then a posttest (O_2). This design allows the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention by directly comparing pretest and posttest results.

Table 1. One Group Pretest–Posttest Design

Group	Pretest (O_1)	Treatment (X)	Posttest (O_2)
Experiment	O_1	Group guidance on reframing techniques	O_2

Population and Sample

The population in this study consisted of all 36 eighth-grade students in class VIII-2 at SMP Negeri 2 Panyabungan during the 2024–2025 academic year. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, which selects participants based on specific criteria. The criteria included students who demonstrated moderate to high levels of toxic

disinhibition behaviour based on pretest results. Based on these criteria, six students were selected as the research sample.

Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a toxic disinhibition behaviour questionnaire consisting of 30 statements. The items were constructed based on indicators of toxic disinhibition behaviour and used a four-point Likert scale:

- a. Always (4)
- b. Often (3)
- c. Sometimes (2)
- d. Never (1)

The questionnaire measured the following aspects:

- a. Excessive emotional disclosure
- b. Aggressive confrontation on social media
- c. Deviant behaviour triggered by digital anonymity
- d. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the following formula was used:

$$r_{11} = \left(\frac{n}{n-1} \right) \left(1 - \frac{\sum \sigma_i^2}{\sigma_t^2} \right) \quad (1)$$

with: n = number of questions

σ_i^2 = item variance

σ_t^2 = total variance

Data Sources and Collection Techniques

The primary data sources in this study were obtained from student responses to the questionnaire administered before and after the intervention. Data collection techniques included:

- a. Pretest and posttest using the toxic disinhibition behaviour questionnaire
- b. Direct observation during group guidance sessions
- c. Activity documentation as supporting data

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analysed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. To categorise the levels of toxic disinhibition behaviour, the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) were calculated through the following steps:

1. Calculate the total score of each student
2. Calculate the average score (mean)
3. Calculate the standard deviation (SD)

Based on the calculated mean and SD values, the levels of toxic disinhibition behaviour were categorised as follows:

Table 2. Toxic Disinhibition Behaviour Categories

Category	Interval Formula
Very Low	$X < M - 1.5SD$
Low	$M - 1.5SD < X \leq M - 0.5SD$
Currently	$M - 0.5SD < X \leq M + 0.5SD$
Tall	$M + 0.5SD < X \leq M + 1.5SD$
Very high	$M + 1.5SD < X$

Student scores were classified based on the categories above to determine the distribution of behaviour levels. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was applied to assess group guidance's effectiveness using the Reframing technique, as the data were ordinal and the sample size was small (< 30). The decision-making criteria were as follows:

If $p < 0.05$, the intervention has a statistically significant effect on students' toxic disinhibition behaviour.

The data from the toxic dishinhibition behaviour questionnaire of students in the experimental group and the control group, which were analysed descriptively, were presented in percentage form to see the level of the toxic dishinhibition behaviour questionnaire, and were formulated as follows:

$$NP = \frac{R}{SM} \times 100 \tag{2}$$

Where:

N is a percentage score

S is the raw score obtained by the student

SM is the ideal maximum score of the questionnaire

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

Instrument Reliability

The study employed a 30-item toxic disinhibition behaviour questionnaire as the primary research instrument. A reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha was conducted to ensure internal consistency.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.734	30

The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.734 indicates a satisfactory level of reliability. In social science research, a reliability coefficient above 0.70 is considered acceptable. This confirms that the items within the questionnaire are internally consistent and suitable for measuring the construct of toxic disinhibition behaviour.

Descriptive Statistics

Data from six students were analysed descriptively to compare toxic disinhibition behaviour before and after the intervention.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Summary

Test Type	N	Total Score	Mean
Pretest	6	598	99.67
Posttest	6	506	84.33

The average score decreased from 99.67 (pretest) to 84.33 (posttest), suggesting a mean reduction of 15.34 points. Although the posttest standard deviation increased significantly, this suggests variability in individual responses to the intervention.

Table 3. Pretest and Posttest Scores by Student

Student	Pretest	Posttest
1	109	67
2	97	90
3	94	102
4	103	90
5	96	61
6	99	96

Five students demonstrated decreased scores; one student (Student 3) showed an increase in the posttest score.

Behaviour Category Distribution

Table 4. Toxic Disinhibition Category (Pretest)

Category	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
High	≥ 99.67	2	33.33%
Moderate	90–99	4	66.67%
Low	≤ 89	0	0%

Table 5. Toxic Disinhibition Category (Posttest)

Category	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
High	≥ 99.67	1	16.67%
Moderate	90–99	3	50.00%
Low	≤ 89	2	33.33%

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was performed to determine the statistical significance of the behaviour change.

Table 6. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Summary

Statistic	Value
Z	-2.201
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.028

The significance value ($p = 0.028$) is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. All six participants demonstrated behavioural improvement.

3.2. Discussion

The results show that group guidance services using the Reframing technique led to a measurable and statistically significant reduction in toxic disinhibition behaviour among eighth-grade students. The initial high and moderate levels of toxic disinhibition behaviour were successfully lowered in most participants, validating the effectiveness of the intervention.

The instrument used in this study was reliable, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.734. This ensured that the observed scores reflected actual behavioural change rather than measurement error.

The descriptive data show a downward trend in the mean score, alongside individual variations. While one student experienced an increase in posttest score, five others improved—some significantly. This variation can be attributed to differing levels of receptivity, personal readiness for change, or socio-emotional background.

The Wilcoxon test confirmed the significance of the results, with all participants scoring lower after the intervention. The absence of any positive rank (i.e., score increase) and tie further strengthens the reliability of the intervention's impact.

These findings align with previous studies showing the efficacy of Reframing techniques in addressing psychosocial issues:

1. At Ibnu Katsir 1 Jember Islamic Boarding School, Reframing improved social sensitivity using Wilcoxon analysis [25].
2. At SMPN 1 Banda Aceh, Reframing significantly reduced internet addiction among 7th graders through a pre-experimental design [26].
3. At MTsN 3 Banda Aceh, Reframing enhanced self-regulation, with a t-count of 54.222 and $p < 0.000$ among 30 students [27].

The key strengths of this intervention were:

1. The constructive nature of Reframing allows students to reinterpret challenges rather than feel judged.
2. Supportive peer dynamics during group counselling foster empathy and shared reflection.
3. A safe, counsellor-led environment that encouraged open dialogue and trust.

However, this study has limitations. The sample size was small ($N = 6$), limiting generalizability. The short duration of the intervention (two 40-minute sessions) also

restricts conclusions about long-term change. Future studies should consider larger samples, longer interventions, and longitudinal designs.

Despite these limitations, the intervention demonstrated a positive shift in students' self-control and awareness of the consequences of their digital behaviour. Participants reported a deeper understanding of how online communication can impact real-life relationships. This cognitive shift is critical for the development of digital citizenship.

Implications

This study supports the integration of Reframing-based group counselling into school guidance programs as a practical, low-cost, and impactful method for addressing toxic digital behaviour. Counsellors and educators are encouraged to use Reframing sessions to promote ethical media use, emotional regulation, and critical reflection among adolescents.

Moreover, the findings suggest embedding digital citizenship and communication ethics into counselling curricula. Collaboration between counsellors, teachers, and parents is crucial to sustain behavioural improvement across online and offline contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the effectiveness of group counselling services employing the Reframing technique in reducing toxic disinhibition behaviour among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Panyabungan. The intervention, implemented over two structured group sessions, proved successful in helping students recognise and regulate their emotional responses, particularly in digital contexts where impulsive behaviour often dominates.

Quantitative findings showed a substantial reduction in toxic disinhibition scores, with the average dropping from 99.67 (pretest) to 84.33 (posttest). The improvement was confirmed as statistically significant based on the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test ($p = 0.028$). These results affirm that the intervention produced meaningful behavioural changes, driven by a structured process of cognitive restructuring rather than chance or external fluctuation.

In addition to statistical outcomes, qualitative observations revealed enhanced self-awareness, emotional regulation, and reflective thinking among participants. Students reported a greater understanding of online interactions' social and ethical consequences and demonstrated a shift from reactive to reasoned digital behaviour. These findings are consistent with the cognitive-behavioural paradigm, supporting reframing strategies in school-based interventions targeting emotional and behavioural regulation.

Practical Implications

The success of this intervention suggests that the Reframing technique can be effectively integrated into school counselling programs to mitigate the psychological and social effects of toxic online behaviour. It offers a low-cost, adaptable, and reflective framework for helping adolescents develop healthier cognitive patterns, improve emotional intelligence, and cultivate responsible digital citizenship. School counsellors are

encouraged to adopt this method in preventive and developmental guidance models to address behavioural risks associated with unmoderated digital engagement.

Recommendations for Future Research

Despite its promising outcomes, this study has limitations, including a small sample size (N=6) and a short intervention period. Therefore, future studies should consider larger-scale implementations using randomised controlled trials to validate these findings further. Additionally, longitudinal research is needed to assess the sustainability of behavioural changes and explore how the Reframing technique can be adapted across different age groups, educational levels, and cultural contexts. Investigating the integration of digital tools (e.g., journaling apps, discussion forums) may also enhance the reach and impact of the intervention.

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