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Effectiveness of Group Counseling with Behavioral Contract Technique to Enhance Vocational Students' Work Readiness

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of group counseling using the Behavioral Contract Technique (Group Counseling with Behavioral Contract Technique / GC-BCT) in improving the work readiness of vocational high school students. The study employs a quasi-experimental design with a pretest–posttest control group model. The research sample consists of 30 students selected purposively and divided into two groups: experimental and control, each comprising 15 students. The instrument used is the Work Readiness Scale with high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.91). Data analysis was conducted using paired t-tests and independent t-tests with the assistance of SPSS version 25. The research results indicate that there was a significant increase in students' work readiness after participating in group counseling services using the behavioral contract technique, with a calculated t-value of 4.280 and a Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.001 (< 0.05). Improvements occurred in the aspects of discipline, responsibility, communication, and achievement motivation. These results demonstrate that GC-BCT is effective in enhancing vocational high school students' work readiness, as it promotes behavioral commitment and collective responsibility through social reinforcement within the group.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of science and technology in the era of globalization demands the education sector to produce human resources who not only possess academic abilities but also practical skills and mental readiness to enter the workforce [1]. Vocational High Schools (SMK), as vocational education institutions, have a strategic responsibility to prepare students to be ready to work according to their field of expertise. However, the reality on the ground shows that many SMK students still do not have optimal work readiness, both in terms of attitude, discipline, responsibility, and work skills.

The initial observation results at SMKS Bandung 1 PS Tuan Deli Serdang show that some students experience difficulties in demonstrating work behaviors that meet the demands of the industrial world. Some students lack discipline in carrying out work practices, show low motivation in completing tasks, and have not yet developed commitment and responsibility for their work outcomes. This condition indicates that students' work readiness still needs to be improved through guided and systematic mentoring and training efforts.

Work readiness is a psychological and behavioral condition that indicates the extent to which a person has the ability and willingness to adapt to the demands of the workforce [2]. According to Caballero and Walker (2010), work readiness includes cognitive, affective, and conative aspects related to an individual's ability to adapt, communicate, collaborate, and demonstrate responsibility and a good work ethic. Vocational high school students with high work readiness will find it easier to be accepted into the industry and have greater opportunities for career success [3].

One approach that can be used by guidance and counseling teachers to enhance students' work readiness is group counseling using the behavioral contract technique. Group counseling provides a space for students to share experiences, build motivation, and strengthen personal responsibility in a supportive and open environment. Meanwhile, the behavioral contract technique is a counseling method that emphasizes an agreement between the counselor and the counselee to make certain behavioral changes within a specific period with clear consequences [4]. Through a behavior contract, students are trained to set goals, monitor their own progress, and take responsibility for the commitments they have agreed upon. In the context of group guidance, this technique encourages the formation of social reinforcement among group members, making behavioral changes more effective and sustainable [5].

Several previous studies have attempted to enhance students' work readiness through various counseling and training approaches. Research by Cerolin et al., which utilized group career guidance services with a problem-solving approach, has been proven effective in improving students' understanding of career choices and planning [6]. Similarly, Dodd et al. applied behavioral counseling with reinforcement techniques to improve students' discipline and responsibility, both of which are important components of work readiness [7]. However, most of these studies still focus on improving cognitive and motivational aspects, while the aspect of behavioral commitment, namely how students maintain consistent behavior in preparing themselves for the workforce, has not been optimally studied.

International research, such as that conducted by Baharum et al., indicates that the implementation of behavior contracts can significantly improve task completion and student compliance with objectives in educational and training contexts [8]. Similar results were also found by Ezeuduji et al., who demonstrated that behavior contracts effectively enhance students' discipline and goal orientation when applied individually [9]. However, there is a research gap in terms of integrating Behavioral Contract Techniques in group counseling, especially in vocational high school (SMK) settings, where peer support, role modeling, and group accountability have the potential to reinforce positive behavioral changes.

In terms of novelty, this study provides significant contributions both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the study develops an understanding of how behavioral contract principles can be operationalized in group counseling settings, thereby enriching the literature on behavioral counseling in the context of vocational education. This research also bridges the conceptual gap between behavior modification theory and employability readiness development through a structured yet collaborative approach. Practically, the study offers a new counseling intervention model for guidance and counseling teachers in vocational high schools (SMK), in the form of a measurable, contextual, and relevant method to foster students' responsibility, discipline, and work readiness tangibly.

Thus, this study not only expands the research on the effectiveness of Group Counseling using Behavioral Contract Techniques but also offers an innovative counseling service model that is adaptive to the social and cultural context of vocational schools in Indonesia. The results of this study are expected to serve as an initial step in developing evidence-based, behavior-oriented, and practical counseling interventions aimed at preparing vocational high school students to become more ready, competent, and competitive individuals in the workforce.

2. METHOD

This study uses a quasi-experimental design with a pretest–posttest control group design. This design was chosen because it is considered the most appropriate for testing the effectiveness of an educational intervention and counseling services, where the researcher can observe changes in students' work readiness levels before and after the treatment is administered [10]. Two groups were formed in this study, namely the experimental group, which received group counseling services using the Behavioral Contract Technique, and the control group, which did not receive such treatment. Both groups were given a pretest to determine their initial work readiness level, and a posttest after the treatment to assess the improvements that occurred.

The population in this study consisted of all 11th-grade students at SMKS Bandung 1 PS Tuan Deli Serdang for the 2024/2025 academic year, totaling 320 students. Considering that the focus of this study is on students with low work readiness, purposive sampling was used to determine the research subjects. The first step taken was to administer the Work Readiness Scale to all students. Based on the results of this measurement, 30 students with the lowest work readiness scores were selected as the research sample.

To maintain the equivalence of characteristics between groups, the 30 students were then grouped based on their pretest scores and gender, before being randomly assigned into two groups: 15 students as the experimental group and 15 students as the control group. This division aims to reduce potential selection bias and ensure that both groups have relatively balanced initial abilities.

The main instrument in this study is the Work Readiness Scale, which was adapted from a model developed by Hasibuan [11]. This scale consists of six dimensions that describe aspects of work readiness, namely: Work ethic and responsibility, Communication skills, Ability to work in a team, Discipline and time management, Adaptability, and Achievement motivation.

This scale was developed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Before being used in the main study, this instrument was first tested on 40 students outside the research sample. The validity test results showed that the item-total correlation coefficients ranged from 0.42 to 0.78, indicating that all items had good validity. Meanwhile, the reliability test results using Cronbach's Alpha were 0.91, demonstrating a very high level of internal consistency, making the instrument suitable for measuring the work readiness of vocational high school students.

The treatment in this study consisted of group counseling services using the behavioral contract technique, conducted over six sessions, each lasting 60–90 minutes, with a frequency of twice a week for three weeks. The structure and focus of each session are described as follows: Session 1: Establishing a trusting relationship (rapport building), explaining group rules, conducting a pretest, and identifying work readiness issues experienced by students. Session 2: Introducing the concept of the Behavioral Contract and setting behavioral goals related to improving work readiness. Session 3: Developing a specific, measurable, and time-bound behavioral contract; each member signs the agreement, witnessed by other group members. Session 4: Monitoring progress and group discussions about emerging obstacles, as well as reinforcing students who show improvement. Session 5: Implementation of ongoing monitoring and peer support, accompanied by behavior observation according to contract indicators. Session 6: Final evaluation, joint reflection on behavior changes, administration of the post-test, and giving rewards and positive reinforcement for the achieved results. Meanwhile, the control group does not receive special treatment but participates in the routine counseling activities organized by the school [12].

This research was conducted with attention to the principles of educational research ethics [13]. All participants and their parents/guardians were provided with a participation consent form (informed consent) containing information about the objectives, procedures, benefits, and the rights of participants in the study. Student participation was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw at any time without academic consequences. The researchers also ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the data by replacing participants' names with numerical codes. This study had received approval from the school authorities and the research ethics committee prior to implementation.

Before conducting hypothesis testing, a statistical assumption test was first performed, including a normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method and a homogeneity of variance test using Levene's Test. The results of these two assumption tests ensure that the data meet the requirements for parametric analysis. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using parametric statistical techniques with the assistance of SPSS version 25. To examine the differences between pretest and posttest scores within each group, a paired-sample t-test was used, while to compare the differences in posttest results between the experimental and control groups, an independent-sample t-test was used. In addition, Cohen's d was calculated to determine the effect size of the treatment given on the improvement of students' work readiness. [14].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Normality Test

Based on Table 1 of the normality test results, it is known that the data for both research variables show significance values (Sig.) greater than 0.05. For the variable of Group Guidance with Behavior Contract Technique, the significance value in the Shapiro-Wilk test is 0.163, while for the variable of Work Readiness, it is 0.108. Since both values are greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the data are normally distributed. Therefore, the data used in this study meet the normality assumption and are suitable for analysis using parametric statistical tests such as the t-test.

Table 1. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Group Counseling Behavioral Contract	.256	30	.119	.906	30	.163
Workforce Readiness	.273	30	.109	.781	30	.108

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Source: Data processed 2025

3.1.2. Validity Test

Based on Table 2, the validity test results show that all items in both research variables are considered valid. The Group Guidance with Behavior Contract Technique variable (X) consists of six statements with r-values ranging from 0.921 to 0.958, while the Work Readiness variable (Y) also contains six statements with r-values between 0.931 and 0.950. Since all r-values are greater than the table r (0.361) at a 5% significance level, each item in both instruments meets the validity criteria. Thus, the instruments used in this study are considered capable of measuring the studied variables accurately and consistently.

Table 2. Validity Test Results (Summary)

Variable	Number of Items	r-table	Range of r-count	Criteria
Group Guidance with Behavior Contract Technique (X)	6	0.361	0.921 – 0.958	All items are valid
Work Readiness (Y)	6	0.361	0.931 – 0.950	All items are valid

3.1.3. Reliability Test

Based on Table 3, the reliability test results show that both research variables have very high Cronbach's Alpha values, namely 0.993 for the Group Guidance with Behavioral Contract Technique variable and 0.994 for the Work Readiness variable. Since both values are well above the minimum threshold of 0.6, it can be concluded that all items in this research instrument are reliable. This means that the instrument used is capable of providing consistent, stable, and trustworthy measurement results in assessing both variables.

Table 3. Reliability Test

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliabilitas
Group Counseling Behavioral Contract	0,993	Reliabel
Workforce Readiness	0,994	Reliabel

Source: Data processed 2025

3.1.4. Comparison of Work Readiness Levels Before and After

Based on Table 4, it is known that the Work Readiness variable has a maximum score of 60 and a minimum score of 12. From these results, a hypothetical mean (π) of 36 and a standard deviation (σ) of 8 were obtained. This hypothetical mean indicates the theoretical average level of student work readiness based on the possible score distribution, while the standard deviation illustrates the level of spread or variation of scores from the mean. Thus, this data serves as a basis for determining categories of student work readiness, such as low, medium, and high.

Table 4. Score Description Table

Variabel	Skor Max.	Skor Min.	Mean (π)	SD (σ)
Workforce Readiness	60	12	36	8

Source: processed data 2025

Figure 1 below illustrates the comparison of average pretest and post-test scores between the Experimental Class and the Control Class in the study on the *Effectiveness of Group Counseling with Behavioral Contract Technique to Enhance Students' Work Readiness*. The chart shows two sets of bars for each class. In the Experimental Class, the average pretest score was 22.5, which increased significantly to 47.3 in the post-test. This indicates a remarkable improvement in students' work readiness after participating in group counseling using the behavioral contract technique.

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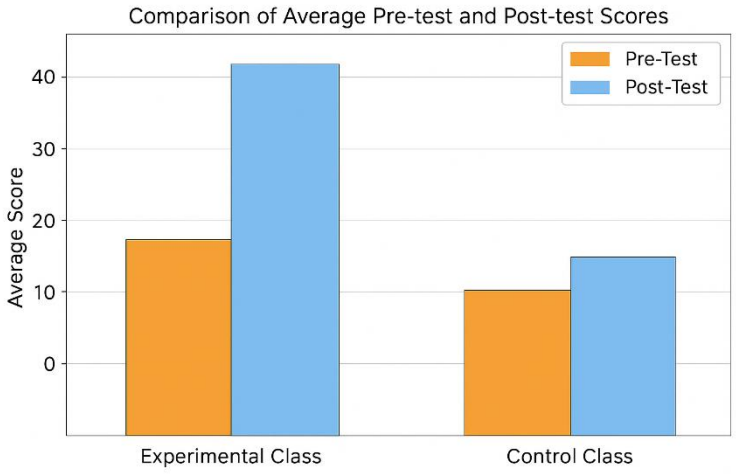

Figure 1. Comparison of Average Pretest and Post-test Scores

In contrast, the Control Class shows only a slight increase from 20.3 in the pretest to 21.2 in the post-test, suggesting minimal progress among students who did not receive the

intervention. Overall, the visual representation clearly demonstrates that the Behavioral Contract Group Counseling technique effectively enhanced students' readiness for work, as evidenced by the substantial score improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group.

3.1.5. Homogeneity Test

Based on Table 5, the results of the homogeneity test using Levene's Test indicate that the significance values (Sig.) for all calculation methods, whether based on the mean, median, or trimmed mean, are all above 0.05, namely 0.438, 0.373, and 0.399, respectively. Since all significance values are greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the data have homogeneous variances. This means that there is no significant difference in variance between the experimental group and the control group. Therefore, the data meet the homogeneity assumption and are suitable to proceed to the hypothesis testing stage using the parametric t-test.

Table 5. Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Result	Based on Mean	.613	1	38	.438
	Based on Median	.813	1	38	.373
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.813	1	35.651	.373
	Based on trimmed mean	.728	1	38	.399

Source: Data processed in 2025

3.1.6. Hypothesis Test Results

Based on Table 6, the results of the descriptive statistical test show an increase in the average scores between the pretest and post-test in the experimental group. The pretest mean was 72.62, while the post-test mean increased to 85.77 after receiving an intervention in the form of group guidance using a behavior contract technique. In addition, the standard deviation for the pretest was 21.02 and for the post-test was 20.73, indicating that the data distribution among participants was relatively consistent. Overall, these results indicate an improvement in students' work readiness after participating in the intervention, suggesting that the treatment provided had a positive impact on their behavioral change and preparedness for the workforce.

Table 6. Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PreTest	72.6154	15	21.01800	5.82934
	PostTest	85.7692	15	20.72902	5.74920

Source: processed data 2025

Based on Table 7, the results of the Paired Samples Test indicate a significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores in the experimental group. The mean difference of -13.15 shows that the scores after the treatment (post-test) increased compared to before the treatment (pretest). The calculated t-value = 4.280 with degrees of freedom (df) = 12 and a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) = 0.001, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the pretest and post-test results.

Therefore, it can be concluded that group guidance services using the behavior contract technique are effective in improving the work readiness of SMKS Bandung 1 PS Tuan Deli Serdang students, as there was a significant increase in scores after the intervention was administered.

Table 7. Paired Samples Test

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	PreTest - PostTest	-13.15385	11.08186	3.07356	-19.85055	-6.45714	4.280	12	.001

Source: Data processed 2025

Based on Figure 2 below, it can be seen that all subjects in the experimental class experienced an increase in scores after being given treatment in the form of positive self-talk. The average pretest score (blue) was in the low to medium category, while the post-test score (orange) showed a significant increase to the medium to high category.

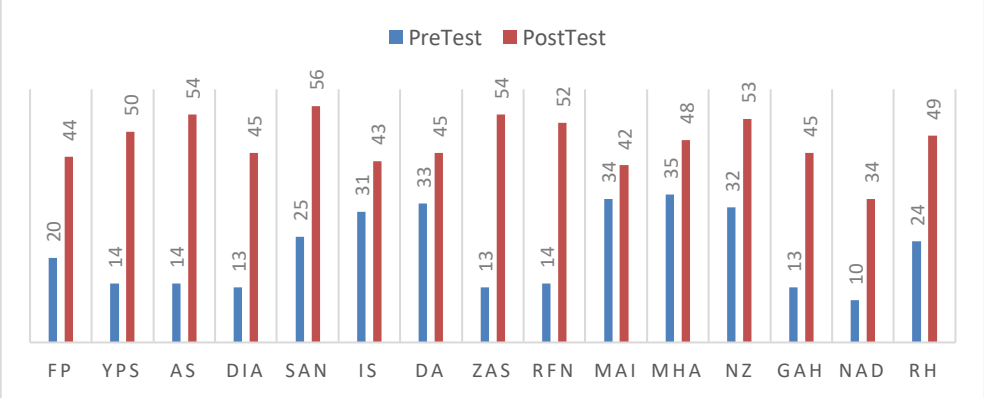

Figure 2. Comparison Chart of Pretest and Post-test Scores of the Experimental Class

Some subjects, such as S3, S8, and S5, experienced a significant increase in scores, moving from a low range to a high range. Meanwhile, other subjects like S6, S7, S10, and S11 also showed improvement, although not as pronounced as the others. This fact indicates that the intervention provided was effective in enhancing students' Work Readiness, as evidenced by the noticeable differences between pretest and post-test results across all subjects. As for the control class, it can be seen from the following figure:

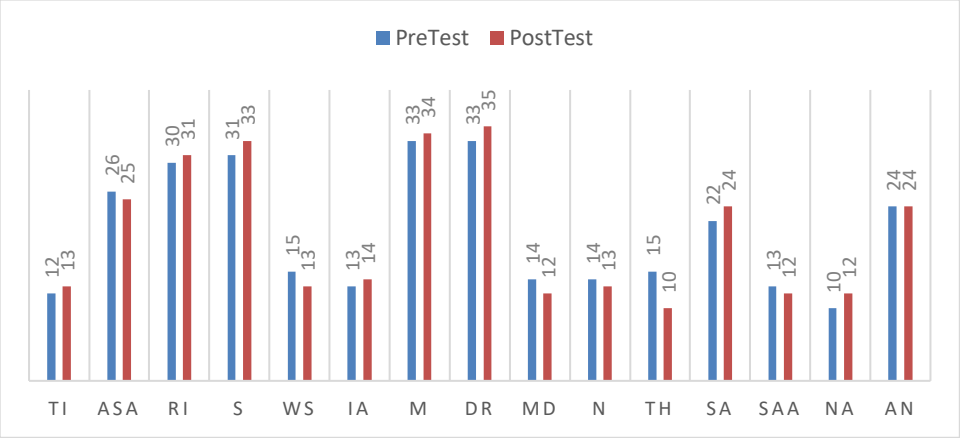

Figure 3. Comparison Graph of Pretest and Post-test Scores of the Control Class

Based on Figure 3 above, it can be seen that the pretest and post-test scores in the control class did not show significant changes. Most subjects only experienced a slight increase, such as S4, S8, S12, and S14, with an increase of around 1–2 points. However, some subjects actually experienced a decrease in scores, such as S2, S5, S9, S10, S11, and S13, with subject S11 experiencing a particularly drastic drop from 15 to 10. In addition, some subjects, like AN, did not experience any change in scores at all. This indicates that without treatment in the form of positive self-talk intervention, students' readiness for the workforce in the control class tends to remain stagnant or fluctuate randomly. Thus, it can be concluded that significant improvement only occurred in the experimental class, while the control class did not show any meaningful development.

3.1.7. Follow-Up Results After Group Counseling on Behavioral Contract

Follow-up activities are conducted to observe the continuity of the impact of Group Counseling services using the Behavioral Contract technique on improving students' readiness for the workforce. This follow-up process involves several stages that are adjusted according to the steps of the intervention implementation, as follows:

a. Identification of Target Behaviors Relevant to Job Readiness

At the initial stage, the counselor, together with group members, reviewed the target behaviors that had previously been identified, such as punctuality, responsibility in completing tasks, ability to cooperate, and self-confidence. The follow-up results showed that most students still maintained these positive behaviors in daily learning activities, and their application even began to be seen in school work practice activities.

b. Preparation of a Clear, Specific, and Measurable Behavior Contract

Pre-established behavior contracts, such as punctual attendance, task completion according to certain standards, and maintaining good communication, were reviewed for their effectiveness. Students stated that written contracts helped them stay more focused and motivated to maintain consistent positive behavior. Some students even adapted these contracts for personal use outside of counseling activities.

c. Implementation of Behavior Contracts through Group Counseling Activities

During the implementation process, students reported their experiences in applying behavioral contracts in school activities as well as fieldwork practice. During the follow-up, students stated that group interactions and the presence of shared commitments made them feel more responsible and motivated to maintain the behavioral changes they achieved.

d. Monitoring Behavioral Progress According to the Contract

The counselor conducts post-intervention monitoring by asking students to fill out a behavioral development reflection sheet. The monitoring results show that more than two-thirds of the students are able to maintain consistency in the agreed-upon behaviors, such as time management, cooperation in group tasks, and increased achievement motivation.

e. Group Evaluation of Contract Achievement

In the evaluation session, students, together with the counselor, reflected on behavioral achievements according to the contract. Most students acknowledged significant changes, especially in terms of discipline, responsibility, and the courage to take initiative. However, there are still some students who require further guidance as they tend to have difficulty maintaining consistency when there is no direct supervision.

f. Reinforcement and Reflection of Results

The counselor reinforces the form of appreciation and positive feedback to students who successfully maintain behavior in accordance with the contract. In addition, joint reflection is conducted to instill awareness that the behavioral changes achieved are not only useful for school needs but also serve as an important asset in facing the working world.

To enrich the findings, the researcher conducted brief interviews with several students during the follow-up stage. Here are excerpts from their statements:

1) FP Student: “I used to be often late to class, but since having a behavior contract, I have become more disciplined. I am afraid of not keeping my promise in front of my friends. Now I am used to waking up earlier.”
2) SAN Student: “At first, I lacked confidence speaking in front of people, but because of group encouragement, I have started to dare to present. Even during field work practice, I can explain my tasks well to the supervisor.”
3) ZAS Student: “The contract we made makes me more serious about completing tasks on time. It feels satisfying when I can report results according to the schedule.”
4) RH Student: “Without a contract, I might still tend to procrastinate. Nevertheless, because I have to report, I feel more responsible.”

This student's statement shows a significant behavioral change after the intervention, particularly in terms of discipline, responsibility, communication, and self-confidence. Meanwhile, in the control group that only received regular counseling services, no significant changes were observed. Some students still exhibited old habits such as arriving late, lacking self-confidence, and being undisciplined in completing tasks. This indicates that intervention using the Behavioral Contract technique is more effective than regular counseling services in preparing students to face the demands of the working world.

3.2. Discussion

The bar chart in Figure 1 shows a comparison of the average pretest and post-test scores between the experimental class and the control class in a study on the Effectiveness of Group Counseling with Behavior Contract Techniques to Improve Vocational High School Students' Work Readiness. Based on the data processing results, it is evident that the experimental class experienced a significant increase from an average score of 22.5 in the pretest to 47.3 in the post-test. In contrast, the control class only showed a very small increase, from 20.3 to 21.2. These differences in results confirm that the group counseling intervention using behavior contract techniques has a substantial positive effect on students' work readiness.

According to Ying Zhang and Xu, group counseling is an effective therapeutic process because it facilitates social interaction and interpersonal learning experiences that support positive behavioral change [15]. In the context of vocational education, this service plays an important role in fostering a sense of responsibility, discipline, and the ability to adapt to the working world [16]. Thus, the significant increase in scores in the experimental group can be attributed to the heightened self-awareness and behavioral regulation of students after participating in the counseling sessions.

The behavioral contract technique applied in group counseling services functions as a reinforcement tool for students to control their behavior and achieve agreed-upon targets [17]. Through a behavior contract, students are encouraged to make measurable personal commitments regarding their attitude, work ethic, and responsibility towards assigned tasks. This aligns with the opinion of Tan et al., that behavior contracts effectively enhance internal motivation and the consistency of individual behavior in achieving the desired changes [18].

In addition, the results of this study reinforce the findings of several previous studies. For example, research by Hong and Kim showed that the application of behavioral contracts in group counseling can improve students' learning discipline and academic responsibility in high school [19]. Similarly, research by Zammitti et al. found that behavior contract techniques are capable of fostering independence and work readiness among students in vocational school environments [20]. This indicates empirical consistency between previous research and the findings of this study.

In the context of work readiness, the main factors influenced through group counseling interventions include the development of soft skills, self-management, and the ability to make decisions independently [21]. Through group sessions, students receive social support and self-reflection that help them understand the values of discipline, responsibility, and the ability to face challenges in the workforce. Thus, group counseling services not only focus on behavioral change but also foster a positive mindset and psychological readiness to enter the workforce [22].

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce the behavioristic approach in guidance and counseling, which emphasizes the importance of positive reinforcement, habituation, and individual commitment to change [23]. In this case, a behavior contract serves as a concrete form of the principles of operant conditioning, where individuals learn through systematically regulated consequences.

Thus, the significant improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group indicates that group counseling using behavior contract techniques is an effective and applicable approach in the context of vocational education. These results have important implications for guidance and counseling teachers in developing intervention programs oriented towards work readiness, particularly in shaping productive, independent, and responsible behavior in vocational high school students.

The results of this study indicate that group counseling services using behavioral contract techniques are proven effective in improving the work readiness of vocational high school students. A significant increase in the average score of the experimental class compared to the control class signifies a positive change in terms of responsibility, discipline, and work motivation of the students after participating in group counseling interventions. However, these results are not entirely consistent with some previous studies that had different focuses or showed less consistent results regarding the effectiveness of this technique.

Research by Chigbu & Nekhwevha highlights that the implementation of behavior contracts in the context of online learning does not show significant results in enhancing students' learning motivation [24]. They argue that the success of this technique largely depends on the intensity of teacher supervision and the individual's level of discipline, which is difficult to control in a non-counseling environment. This result differs from the findings of this study, which was conducted in a face-to-face context and facilitated by professional counselors, allowing students better to understand the commitment in the agreed-upon behavior contract.

Similarly, the study by Lee et al. found that the use of behavior contracts in group counseling in elementary schools is ineffective because students are still at a stage of moral development that is not mature enough to understand the concept of personal responsibility [25]. This indicates that the effectiveness of behavior contract techniques also heavily depends on the cognitive and moral development levels of the participants, who in this study (vocational high school students) were already in the late adolescent development phase and were better able to understand and consistently adhere to behavioral commitments.

Furthermore, Borg et al., in their research on the influence of group counseling on students' self-adjustment, found that group dynamics factors (such as openness, mutual trust, and member support) have a greater impact on behavioral change than the techniques used [26]. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the success of behavior contract techniques is also supported by healthy group dynamics, where students feel safe to commit and engage in self-reflection together.

Another finding from Aprilianti mentions that individual counseling interventions with a cognitive-behavioral approach are more effective than group counseling in changing students' work behavior because they provide space for a more intensive personal approach [27]. However, this difference actually strengthens the added value of this research, as it demonstrates that group counseling can still achieve significant results when combined with the right techniques, such as behavior contracts that foster a sense of collective responsibility among group members. Based on this comparison, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of behavior contract techniques in group counseling is greatly influenced by factors such as

age, implementation context, and group dynamics. This study provides a new contribution by showing that vocational high school students who are preparing to enter the workforce respond positively to interventions that require commitment and self-control.

4. CONCLUSION

The research results indicate that the study data met the assumptions of normality and homogeneity, and the instruments used were valid and reliable, with a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.99, indicating high reliability in measuring the variables of group guidance using behavioral contract techniques and work readiness. The paired sample t-test results showed a significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores (Sig. 0.001 < 0.05), meaning that group guidance services with behavioral contract techniques effectively increased the work readiness of students at SMKS Bandung 1 PS Tuan Deli Serdang. This improvement is reflected in aspects of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and student self-confidence, which were maintained in the follow-up stage. Theoretically, these findings reinforce the behavioral counseling theory that positive behavior change can be achieved through reinforcement and personal commitment. Practically, behavioral contract techniques can serve as an effective strategy for school counselors in shaping the work readiness of vocational high school students. Nevertheless, this study has limitations due to a small sample size, a short intervention duration, and the lack of consideration for external factors such as family support and fieldwork experience. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve more schools, employ a mixed methods approach, extend the follow-up period, and integrate behavioral contracts into the school career guidance program to achieve more comprehensive and sustainable results.

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