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The Effectiveness of SMART Technique Group Counseling in Reducing Peer Pressure Among Campus Organization Students

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ABSTRACT

Students are in a developmental phase that is full of challenges, both academically and socially-psychologically. Peer pressure is one of the dominant factors influencing students' decision-making, especially in campus organisation participation. Many students join organisations not out of personal interest but rather due to social pressure to be accepted in their environment. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of group counselling using the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) technique in reducing peer pressure while also increasing students' interest in organising. The research method uses a quantitative approach with a One-Group pretest-posttest design experimental setup. The study subjects consisted of six third-semester students from BKPI-2 UINSU who were identified as having high levels of peer pressure. The research instruments used were the Peer Pressure Scale and the Organisational Participation Interest Scale, which have been validated and are reliable. The intervention was carried out through six sessions of SMART-based group counselling. The analysis results using a paired sample t-test showed a significant decrease in peer pressure from high to low ($p < 0.05$) and a significant increase in organisational interest from low to high ($p < 0.05$), with a very large effect size. These findings prove that the SMART technique of group counselling effectively reduces social pressure and enhances students' intrinsic motivation. This research has implications for developing counselling services in higher education, particularly in helping students make more independent social decisions that align with their personal goals.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Students are in a development phase filled with challenges, not only in academic aspects but also in social, emotional, and psychological aspects [1]. The transition period from late adolescence to early adulthood places students in a stage of identity exploration, where they begin to learn to make decisions for themselves, build more complex relationships, and set life goals independently [2]. In this process, the pressure from the

surrounding environment significantly influences mindset and behaviour. One of the most dominant forms of social dynamics in campus life is peer pressure. This pressure often manifests in invitations to participate in certain activities, persuasion to join organisations, and discomfort when refusing a friend's request [3]. Students who lack self-confidence or clarity in their life direction tend to go with the flow to gain social acceptance and recognition from their surroundings [4].

Student participation in campus organisations is one of the areas vulnerable to peer pressure influences. Many students join not out of personal interest, but rather due to social encouragement to appear active, accomplished, or recognised within the community [5]. A number of recent studies by Harefa et al. indicate that such decisions can have negative impacts, such as stress, decreased motivation to learn, role conflicts between organisational activities and academic demands, and even identity confusion [6]. This condition emphasises the importance of psychological support that helps students recognise their values and aspirations to make decisions more independently.

One relevant approach is group counselling, which has proven effective in helping students cope with social pressure. In a structured group environment supervised by a counsellor, students have a safe space to share experiences, practice assertive communication, and develop empathy [7]. Through group dynamics, students acquire problem-solving strategies and strengthen their reflective abilities to review their life choices objectively. Research by Herawati et al. also shows that group counselling positively impacts a sense of togetherness, strengthens self-identity, and empowers students to resist external pressures that do not align with their personal goals [8].

In this framework, the application of SMART techniques (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) becomes very relevant. SMART, which was initially used as a goal-setting strategy, is now widely adopted in the fields of education and counselling because it can enhance the clarity of goals, self-awareness, and self-control abilities of students [9]. Theoretically, the relationship between SMART and the reduction of peer pressure can be explained through several factors, namely goal clarity that helps students differentiate decisions based on personal interests or social influence, the ability to measure progress and set realistic steps to avoid being trapped by external demands, and the establishment of deadlines that reinforce life direction while increasing psychological resilience. With SMART, students have a stronger foundation to reject invitations or pressures that do not align with their principles and life plans [10].

Starting from this problem, this research aims to answer the question: Is group counselling with the SMART technique effective in reducing peer pressure among college students in campus organisation participation? Furthermore, how does the SMART technique enhance goal clarity, self-control, and psychological resilience in students facing social influences? Thus, this study not only tests the effectiveness of counselling services but also strengthens theoretical contributions by linking SMART as a goal-setting framework with efforts to reduce peer pressure. The research findings are expected to enrich the literature on educational counselling while providing a contextual and adaptive practical model for higher education institutions to design guidance services that align with today's students' social realities.

2. METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with a One-Group Pretest–Posttest Design experimental type [11]. This design was chosen to measure the effectiveness of the treatment by comparing the results before (pretest) and after the intervention (posttest). The research population includes 36 students from the BKPI-2 class at UINSU, with a sample size of 6 students identified as experiencing peer pressure concerning campus organisational participation. The sample selection was done using purposive sampling techniques based on specific criteria: students with high peer pressure scores. Out of the 36 students who participated in the initial questionnaire, 6 met the criteria and were made research subjects.

The main instrument in this research is the Peer Pressure Scale adopted from the study of Irmayati [12]. This research uses a quantitative approach with a survey research type. The research population consists of students from the Non-Formal Education study program (PLS) at FIP UNM from the 2010, 2012, and 2013 cohorts, totalling 134 individuals, with a sample of 36 students. The research instrument is a questionnaire that has previously undergone content validity testing by an expert lecturer, as well as reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha with a coefficient result of 0.81, indicating a high level of reliability. The data analysis technique used is descriptive analysis with percentage formulas. The results show that the interest of PLS students at FIP UNM in intra-campus organisations falls into the high category. Factors influencing this interest include the desire to gain new experiences, learning responsibility, expanding social relations, channelling ideas and aspirations, and increasing awareness of the community and environment.

From the ethical research perspective, the implementation of this study has obtained approval from the University Research Ethics Committee, along with an official approval letter number. Each participant was provided with a research information sheet containing an explanation of the purpose, procedures, benefits, and potential risks that may arise. Participants were then asked to sign an informed consent form as a form of conscious agreement to participate in the study. The confidentiality of participants' identities is maintained using a special code, and they can withdraw at any time without negative consequences [13].

The treatment provided is group counselling based on the SMART method, conducted in six sessions lasting 60 minutes each, over six consecutive weeks. Each session is guided by a professional counsellor with a Master's degree in Guidance and Counselling who has experience in group facilitation, along with a research assistant. The session materials include orientation and counselling contracts, introduction to peer pressure concepts, assertive skills training through role-play, stress management strategies, action planning to cope with group pressure, and evaluation and follow-up. The approach combines psychoeducation, reflective discussion, behavioural practice, and homework assignments. To maintain consistency in the intervention, the facilitators use a structured session guideline and systematically document the course of the activities [14].

The data were analysed using a paired sample t-test to determine the significant changes between the pretest and posttest scores. Normality tests were conducted first to ensure the assumptions were met, and if not, the nonparametric Wilcoxon test was used. In addition, the effect size was also calculated to see the magnitude of the treatment effect [15].

It is worth noting that the relatively small sample size (n = 6) is one of the limitations of this study. This limitation occurred because only a small number of students met the criteria for high peer pressure, and also because group counselling interventions are more effectively implemented in small groups. Nevertheless, the results of this study still have important exploratory value as a preliminary study. Further research with more participants and experimental designs involving control groups is recommended to generalise the findings more broadly.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1. Results

An initial measurement was conducted through a pretest to identify students who are experiencing high levels of peer pressure related to participation in campus organisations. This measurement was carried out by providing a questionnaire to third-semester students of the BKPI-2 class, with a population of 36 individuals. The results showed that there were 6 students categorised as having high levels of peer pressure regarding participation in campus organisations.

Table 1. Pretest Data of Peer Pressure Scale and Interest in Participating in Campus Organisations

No	Name	Peer Pressure (Total)	Category	% (Interval)	Organisational Interest (Total)	Category	% (Interval)
1	IKM	101	High	78%	68	Low	57%
2	Aa	103	High	79%	70	Low	58%
3	AA	102	High	78%	71	Low	59%
4	FAR	100	High	77%	69	Low	58%
5	FAS	100	High	77%	69	Low	58%
6	LTH	102	High	78%	70	Low	58%

Before the implementation of group counselling services using the SMART technique, a preliminary measurement (pretest) was conducted on six participants, namely students with high levels of peer pressure. Based on the data in Table 1, all participants (IKM, Aa, AA, FAR, FAS, and LTH) had peer pressure scores ranging from 100 to 103, all of which fell into the high category. The percentage interval was between 77% and 79%, indicating that the participants felt significant social pressure from their environment to join campus organisations.

However, despite the high social pressure experienced, their interest in joining campus organisations is low. This is indicated by the total interest score that falls within the range of 68-71, categorised as low, and the percentage interval of 57%-59%. This phenomenon shows a discrepancy between the high external pressure and the low internal motivation, which has the potential to cause inner conflict or inauthentic involvement in campus organisational activities.

This data reinforces the basic research assumption that high peer pressure does not always correlate with aligned personal interest. After the group counselling service using the

SMART technique was implemented, follow-up measurements (post-test) were conducted to reassess peer pressure and interest in organising.

Table 2. Post-Test Data of Peer Pressure Scale and Interest in Participating in Campus Organisations

No	Name	Peer Pressure (Total)	Category	% (Interval)	Organisational Interest (Total)	Category	% (Interval)
1	IKM	80	Low	62%	89	High	74%
2	Aa	77	Low	59%	91	High	76%
3	AA	83	Low	64%	89	High	74%
4	FAR	78	Low	60%	90	High	75%
5	FAS	80	Low	62%	90	High	75%
6	LTH	79	Low	61%	90	High	75%

Based on Table 2, all participants experienced a decrease in peer pressure levels with scores ranging from 77 to 83, falling into the low category. The percentage interval decreased to 59%–64% compared to the pretest range of 77%–79%. This indicates that participants started to manage social pressure from their environment after participating in group guidance. Conversely, the interest in joining campus organisations significantly increased. The interest score of participants rose to 89–91 (high category), with a percentage interval of 74%–76%. This means that after the services were provided, participants were more capable of making independent decisions and more intrinsically motivated to engage in organisations without being influenced by peer pressure.

This change indicates that the SMART technique (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) in group guidance services effectively helps participants understand their values and goals while reducing undesired external influences. The SMART technique allows participants to formulate focused and realistic goals and to commit based on self-awareness, rather than merely social demands.

After obtaining the pretest and post-test data, the next step is to conduct a Paired Sample T-Test using IBM SPSS Statistics 23 to determine whether there are significant differences between peer pressure and interest in organisation before and after group counselling with the SMART technique.

Table 3. Paired Sample T-Test on Peer Pressure Scale

Paired Differences	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean = 21,833	21,536	5	0,000

Based on the Paired Sample T-Test results, an average difference of 21.833 was obtained, indicating a significant decrease in peer pressure scores between the pretest and post-test. The significance value (p = 0.000 < 0.05) indicates that the difference is statistically significant. The 95% confidence interval ranges from 19.227 to 24.439 and does not include zero; thus, this result is valid.

Table 4. Paired Sample T-Test on the Organisation Interest Scale

Paired Differences	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean = -20,333	-41,126	5	0,000

The average difference score of -20.333 indicates a significant increase in organisational interest scores from the pretest to the post-test. The significance value (p = 0.000 < 0.05) also confirms that this difference is statistically significant. The 95% confidence interval ranges from -21.604 to -19.062, which does not include zero, making the results reliable. From both statistical tests, empirical evidence was obtained that group counselling services using SMART techniques effectively reduce peer pressure levels from high to low, and increase organisational interest from low to high. Thus, this service not only helps students identify their personal goals in a specific and realistic manner but also strengthens their independence in making social decisions without environmental pressure.

A Paired Sample T-Test statistical analysis was used to ensure the differences observed. For the variable of peer pressure, the test results showed a t value of 21.536 with p = 0.000 < 0.05, indicating a significant decrease. The mean score difference reached 21.83 points with a 95% confidence interval between 19.23 and 24.44. The effect size calculated using Cohen's d = 8.79 falls into the very large category. Meanwhile, for the variable of interest in organising, a t value of -41.126 was obtained with p = 0.000 < 0.05, which confirms a significant increase. The average score difference was -20.33 points with a 95% confidence interval between -21.60 and -19.06, with an effect size of Cohen's d = 16.79, also classified as very large (see Table 3 and Table 4).

The results of this research empirically prove that group guidance services using the SMART technique are effective in several important aspects, namely: (1) reducing the level of peer pressure experienced by students, (2) increasing students' interest in participating in campus organizations, and (3) helping students make more independent social decisions based on self-awareness, rather than solely due to external pressure.

Thus, applying the SMART technique in group counselling services is beneficial in managing social pressure, fosters intrinsic motivation, strengthens self-awareness, and directs students towards clearer self-development goals. The researcher presented the results in a data visualisation diagram, and the explanation is below.

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The second image shows the change in interest scores in participating in campus organisations. In the pretest results, all participants obtained relatively low scores, ranging from 68 to 71, which falls into the low category. In contrast, after the service was provided, interest scores increased significantly to 89 to 91, placing them in the high category. This change is consistent among all participants, indicating they are freer from social pressure and more intrinsically motivated to engage in campus organisational activities.

Overall, both graphs reinforce a significant change trend: a decrease in peer pressure followed by increased interest in organising. This aligns with the results of statistical tests (paired sample t-test) and effect size (Size), indicating a very large influence. Thus, this visualisation not only strengthens the quantitative findings but also provides a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the SMART technique in guiding students to make more independent social decisions.
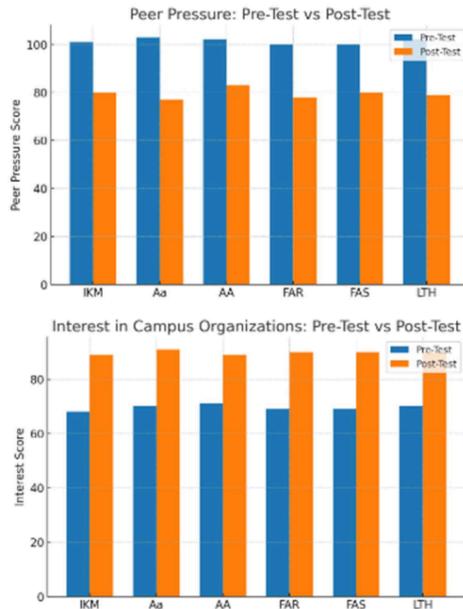

Figure 1. Visualisation of the Comparison of Pretest and Post-Test Scores

3.2. Discussion

The results of this study clearly show that group counselling services using the SMART technique effectively reduce peer pressure and simultaneously increase students' interest in joining campus organisations. The pretest data showed that all six participants were in the high peer pressure category (77%-79%) with low interest in organising (57%-59%). However, after the intervention, the peer pressure scores decreased to the low category (59%-64%), while interest scores significantly increased to the high category (74%-76%). The Paired Sample T-Test statistical analysis confirms that this difference is significant ($p = 0.000$) with a very large effect size, making these results reliable.

The phenomenon found in the early stages of the research is the high social pressure but low personal interest, in line with Zielinski's research, which mentions that peer pressure

often drives superficial involvement, where students participate in campus activities not due to intrinsic motivation, but to meet social expectations [16]. This condition has the potential to cause inner conflict, which is also evident in the six participants of this study.

After the SMART intervention was implemented, the research results showed a change in the direction of student motivation from being predominantly driven by external pressures to being driven by self-awareness. This supports the Self-Determination theory proposed by Yuliana, which emphasises that intrinsic motivation can only grow when individuals have autonomy, competence, and healthy social connections [2]. In this context, SMART provides a concrete framework for students to set clear and realistic goals, allowing them to feel in control of the decisions made.

This finding is also consistent with the results of Anwar's research, which emphasises that goal-setting counselling can enhance students' learning motivation and social participation [9]. SMART as a goal-setting technique has been proven to help students focus on measurable steps that align with their capabilities.

Similar research was conducted by Karaman & Watson, which showed that the application of SMART in counselling increased student engagement in organisational activities because it provided a clear structure in achieving both short-term and long-term goals [17]. This finding parallels this study's results, where students significantly increased interest scores after the intervention.

In the psychosocial realm, the research by Lock & Barrett emphasises that adolescents and college students often experience intense social pressure from peer groups, which, if not managed well, can decrease self-confidence [18]. However, with counselling support, individuals can develop better self-regulation. This study's decrease in peer pressure scores indicates that SMART serves as a self-regulation aide.

In line with this, Ryan found that cognitive-behavioural counselling strategies can reduce the intensity of social pressure by training students to think more rationally [19]. The SMART technique has a similar orientation to the cognitive approach because it encourages students to set logical and achievable goals, so they are no longer easily caught up in irrational social demands.

In addition to psychological aspects, the increasing interest of students in campus organisations has important implications for developing soft skills. Steinberg emphasises that campus organisations are a strategic avenue for building leadership, communication, and cooperation [20]. With students' increased interest after the SMART intervention, it can be assured that this counselling is beneficial psychologically and contributes to strengthening their social skills.

Similar findings were reported by Putri & Andini, who stated that group counselling is effective in reducing conformity and increasing students' courage to express personal interests [21]. This is reflected in this study, where students are more daring to make organisational choices without conforming to peer pressure. In a global context, Gifford & Dean found that Chinese students who participated in SMART-based counselling showed increased self-efficacy in facing social pressure, thus becoming more confident in making social decisions [22]. The similarity of these results with studies conducted in Indonesia shows that SMART is universal and can be applied across cultures.

Finally, the research by Azizah & Kurniawan emphasises that the effectiveness of group counselling lies in the dynamics of interaction among members, which allows participants to learn from one another's experiences [23]. This also occurs in this research, where students provide feedback and reflections to each other, facilitating the internalisation of the values and objectives that have been formulated.

Based on the description, the results of this study not only strengthen the empirical evidence from previous research, but also provide novelty in the context of Indonesian students, namely: (1) affirming that high peer pressure does not always correlate positively with interest in organizing, (2) demonstrating that the SMART technique is effective in shifting motivation from external to internal, and (3) showing that SMART group counseling can be a preventive strategy to reduce inauthentic involvement in campus organizations. Therefore, this research contributes to developing more measurable, contextual, and student independence-oriented higher education counselling practices.

Although the results of this study prove that group counselling services using the SMART technique are effective in reducing peer pressure and increasing interest in organising, some findings from previous research show different results. This difference emphasises that the effectiveness of group counselling and the SMART technique is not always universal, but is greatly influenced by the context, participant characteristics, and the social dynamics.

For example, the research conducted by Wahyuni and Siregar found that applying the SMART technique in group counselling had no significant effect on reducing peer pressure among students. According to them, the pressure from peer groups is often so strong that the need for social acceptance still reduces personal goals set through SMART. This is different from the results of this study, where students succeeded in reducing the levels of social pressure they experienced.

Similarly, Ramadhan & Suryani reported that students' motivation to organise is more determined by external factors such as peer support, campus facilities, and organisational culture, compared to internal factors such as goal setting [25]. These results contradict the findings of this study, which indicate that students' intrinsic motivation significantly increased after participating in group counselling using the SMART technique.

Another study by Clarke & Wilson in South Korea found that goal-setting techniques like SMART are only effective for individuals with high self-efficacy [26]. For students with low self-efficacy, goal-setting creates additional pressure as they feel burdened by specific and measurable targets. This is different from the results of this study, which show an increase in motivation and interest in organising among all participants, regardless of their initial self-confidence levels.

In addition, Fatahillah found that group counselling services are sometimes ineffective in reducing social pressure on students from homogeneous backgrounds with strong group ties [27]. In situations like that, group norms are more dominant than counselling interventions. This is different from the condition of this study, where group counselling interventions managed to weaken the influence of social pressure experienced by students.

From a different perspective, Ardianto et al. revealed that students' interest in organising is more influenced by instrumental factors such as the opportunity to obtain certificates, relationships, or academic benefits, rather than by intrinsic motivation built through counselling [28]. This research contradicts your findings, which show that the increase in interest in organising is due to the drive of self-awareness, not merely instrumental factors.

The results of this unsupported research show that the effectiveness of group counselling with the SMART technique cannot be generalised absolutely. Factors such as cultural background, level of self-efficacy, strength of group norms, and instrumental motivation of students play a significant role in determining whether SMART can have a significant impact. Therefore, the results of this study provide an important contribution by showing that in the context of Indonesian students, particularly in the BKPI-2 class, the SMART technique can reduce peer pressure while increasing intrinsic interest in organising.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that group counselling services with the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) technique proved effective in reducing the level of peer pressure while simultaneously increasing students' interest in participating in campus organisations. Before the service was provided, six students showed a high level of peer pressure with a percentage of 77–79%, while their interest in organising was in the low category with a percentage of 57–59%. After the intervention, the post-test measurement results showed a significant change: a decrease in peer pressure to a low category (59–64%) and an increase in interest in organising to a high category (74–76%). The Paired Sample T-Test statistical test results further confirm these services' effectiveness, with a significance value of $p = 0.000$ (< 0.05) and a very large effect size of Cohen's d. This finding shows that the SMART technique can help students reduce the influence of external social pressures and foster intrinsic motivation in making social decisions.

The implications of this research can be viewed from several aspects. Theoretically, this research expands the understanding that the SMART technique, which has long been used in goal management, can also be effectively applied in guidance and counselling. These findings provide valuable insights for counsellors, lecturers, and student organisations to make SMART-based counselling services a strategy for supporting students to manage social pressures better while increasing their active participation in organisational activities. Furthermore, in terms of policy, the results of this research can serve as a reference for the university in designing student self-development programs, particularly in cultivating student organisations, so that participation occurs not merely due to external pressures but grows from personal awareness and motivation.

Nevertheless, this study does not have several weaknesses. The limited number of participants, only six students, makes the results of this research not widely generalizable. Additionally, the research design using One Group Pretest-Posttest Design without a control group raises the possibility of external factors affecting the results that cannot be fully controlled. The relatively short duration of the intervention is also a limitation, as it cannot

yet be determined whether the positive effects of this service will last in the long term. Furthermore, the study was conducted in only one class within one study program, meaning that the socio-cultural conditions of students in other environments may yield different results.

Based on these limitations, several suggestions can be made for future research. First, research with a larger and more diverse number of participants from various study programs and universities is needed to expand the generalisation of the results. Second, future research should ideally use an experimental design with a control group so that the effects of the intervention can be compared more objectively. Third, longitudinal studies with a longer time frame need to be conducted to determine the consistency of the effects of the SMART services on peer pressure and interest in the organisation. Fourth, these services can be combined with other counselling approaches, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) or bibliotherapy, for more comprehensive effectiveness. Lastly, using qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews or observations, is highly recommended to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological dynamics of students when facing social pressure and making participation decisions in organisations. Thus, this research provides empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the SMART technique in group counselling services and opens up opportunities for further study to enhance the quality of guidance and counselling in higher education.

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