

## Effect of Group Guidance with Self-Affirmation on Students' Body Image Dissatisfaction

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### ABSTRACT

Body image dissatisfaction is a significant issue affecting adolescents' mental health, including lowered self-esteem and increased anxiety. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of group guidance using the self-affirmation technique in reducing body image dissatisfaction among ninth-grade students at MTsS Mandurana Tanjung Botung, Padang Lawas Regency. A quantitative approach with a one-group pretest-posttest design was employed. Eight students were selected purposively based on high to very high levels of body image dissatisfaction. The intervention consisted of four group guidance sessions using self-affirmation techniques over two weeks. Data were collected using a validated body image dissatisfaction scale and analysed using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test with SPSS 26. The results showed that prior to the intervention, 88% of students were in the very high category and 12% in the high category. After the intervention, all students (100%) fell into the very low category. Statistical analysis indicated a significance value of 0.012 ( $<0.05$ ) with an effect size of -0.89, categorised as large, indicating a very strong impact. In conclusion, group guidance with the self-affirmation technique is effective in reducing adolescents' body image dissatisfaction and can be applied in school counselling services. This study provides a basis for developing psychological interventions for adolescents that integrate group support and self-affirmation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalisation and digitalisation, body image has become an issue that is increasingly receiving attention, especially among teenagers [1]. The advancement of information technology and social media has presented beauty standards that tend to be unrealistic, thus encouraging teenagers to constantly compare themselves with the ideal figures often portrayed online [2]. This phenomenon not only affects teenagers' perceptions of their physical appearance but also influences their psychological well-being, self-esteem,

and social behaviour [3]. Body image dissatisfaction becomes one of the common negative consequences in adolescence, characterised by feelings of dissatisfaction with body shape, body size, and overall appearance [4].

The teenage years are a critical period in the formation of self-identity, including perceptions of the body [5]. Teenagers, especially junior high school students, are in a phase of searching for their identity and are very vulnerable to influences from their social environment, peers, and media exposure [6]. The dissatisfaction with body image experienced by adolescents not only has implications for a decline in self-esteem, but can also trigger emotional disturbances such as anxiety, depression, and the emergence of maladaptive behaviours such as eating disorders [7]. Therefore, preventive and curative efforts to address the issue of body image dissatisfaction among adolescents are very important, especially through psychological and educational interventions [8].

One of the services that can be provided in the school environment is group counselling. Group counselling allows students to share experiences, gain social support, and develop self-management skills [9]. In this context, self-affirmation techniques can be integrated into group guidance services as a cognitive strategy to help students view themselves more positively [10]. Self-affirmation encourages individuals to emphasise important and meaningful self-values, thereby strengthening self-confidence, reducing negative feelings towards oneself, and enhancing self-acceptance [11]. Thus, the integration of self-affirmation in group guidance is considered relevant to reduce students' body image dissatisfaction.

MTsS Mandurana Tanjung Botung, Padang Lawas Regency, as an Islamic educational institution, is not exempt from this phenomenon. Based on initial observations, it was found that some students exhibited signs of dissatisfaction with their bodies, such as frequently complaining about their body shape, comparing themselves with their peers, and feeling less confident in social interactions. This condition, if not addressed, can hinder students' psychological development and have a negative impact on their academic performance and social relationships. Therefore, a systematic, structured intervention that meets students' needs is required, namely through the implementation of group guidance with self-affirmation techniques.

In Indonesia, this phenomenon also has a relatively high prevalence. Research shows that about 61.5% of teenage girls express dissatisfaction with their bodies. This condition is exacerbated by a culture of social comparison, peer pressure, and a high intensity of social media use [12]. For teenagers in secondary school, especially in madrasahs, body image dissatisfaction not only impacts psychological aspects but also affects academic performance, social relationships, and overall emotional well-being [13].

In response to that challenge, various interventions have been developed. Positive thinking training has been proven to reduce levels of body image dissatisfaction [14]. Meanwhile, group guidance is believed to be effective in utilising social dynamics to help students cope with psychological issues [15]. However, most previous studies have only emphasised the effectiveness of each approach separately.

Research that attempts to integrate group guidance with self-affirmation techniques is still limited. However, this combination has great potential. Self-affirmation helps

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individuals cultivate a positive perspective of themselves by emphasising their personal values and potential, while group guidance creates a dynamic space for sharing experiences, providing support, and building a sense of community. The synergy of the two is believed to strengthen efforts to reduce body image dissatisfaction among adolescents.

Based on these conditions, this study was conducted to test the effectiveness of group guidance using self-affirmation techniques on body image dissatisfaction among students of MTsS Mandurana Tanjung Botung, Padang Lawas District. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of guidance and counselling services in schools/madrassas, particularly in efforts to prevent and address psychological issues related to body image among adolescents.

## 2. METHOD

The research method used in this study is quantitative research with a one-group pretest-posttest pre-experimental design. The intervention is conducted with two measurements, namely a pretest prior to the treatment to assess the initial condition of the subjects and a posttest after the treatment to evaluate the effects of the intervention [16]. The research design can be illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Research Design

Pretest Treatment Posttest		
O1	X	O2

Where:

O1 = Pretest score (before treatment)

X = Treatment (self-affirmation technique)

O2 = Posttest score (after treatment)

This study has two variables, namely the independent variable self-affirmation (X) as the treatment given to the research subjects, and the dependent variable in the form of body image dissatisfaction (Y) measured using scale instruments. Self-affirmation or positive self-affirmation is provided with the aim of reducing students' body dissatisfaction.

The research participants were ninth-grade students of MTsS Mandurana Tanjung Botung, Padang Lawas Regency, selected using purposive sampling techniques. This selection was based on specific criteria, namely, students who had a high to very high level of body image dissatisfaction according to the pretest results and who were willing to participate in the entire set of interventions. A total of eight participants were involved. The use of this small sample was based on the limited number of students who met the research criteria, as well as the exploratory nature of the research. Therefore, the results of this study are more of an initial description of the effectiveness of the intervention, rather than for broader generalisation.

The research instrument is a body image dissatisfaction scale adapted from Prastika [17]. This scale consists of 16 statements with four response options: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. This instrument has been content-validated by educational psychology experts and has a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87, indicating

high internal consistency. It is also suitable for measuring students' body image dissatisfaction.

The intervention procedure was carried out through four group guidance sessions using the self-affirmation technique over the course of two weeks. Each session lasted approximately 45 minutes. The structure of the activities consisted of an opening for 5 minutes for orientation and motivation, a core activity for 35 minutes focused on self-affirmation exercises such as writing positive statements about oneself, conducting a group reflection, and sharing personal experiences, as well as a closing for 5 minutes, which included a summary, feedback, and assigning daily self-affirmation tasks. Through this series of sessions, students were directed to cultivate awareness of the positive values within themselves, with the hope of reducing dissatisfaction with their body image [18].

Data collection was conducted in two stages, namely before the intervention (pretest) and after the intervention (posttest). The data was then analysed using the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test with the assistance of SPSS version 26 for Windows software, because the sample size was relatively small and the data distribution was not assumed to be normal [19].

The ethical aspects of the research are also taken seriously. The researcher first explains the objectives, procedures, benefits, and possible risks of the research to participants and the school authorities. Informed consent is obtained voluntarily from the students and the school, ensuring that participation can be stopped at any time without negative consequences. The identities of the students are kept confidential using a special code so that the data is anonymous. In addition, this research is conducted only after obtaining official permission from the school as a form of institutional approval. Thus, all stages of the research are carried out in accordance with the principles of educational research ethics.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Results

Based on the results of the pretest administered to the subjects in this study, the distribution of body image dissatisfaction levels was obtained as follows:

Table 2. Pretest Distribution of Body Image Dissatisfaction Levels

Category	Interval	F	%
Very High	55–64	7	88
High	42–54	1	12
Low	29–41	0	0
Very Low	16–28	0	0

Based on Table 2 above, the pretest distribution illustrates the participants' level of body image dissatisfaction prior to the intervention. A total of 7 students (88%) were in the very high category, and 1 student (12%) was in the high category. To reduce the level of body image dissatisfaction, group guidance using the self-affirmation technique was provided. Afterwards, the subjects completed the posttest using the same instrument. Based

on the posttest results, the distribution of body image dissatisfaction levels was obtained as follows:

Table 3. Posttest Distribution of Body Image Dissatisfaction Levels

Category	Interval	F	%
Very High	55–64	0	0
High	42–54	0	0
Low	29–41	0	0
Very Low	16–28	8	100

Based on Table 3 above, the posttest distribution shows the participants' body image dissatisfaction levels after the intervention. It can be concluded that the intervention successfully reduced body image dissatisfaction significantly, from 7 students in the very high category and 1 student in the high category, to all students falling into the very low category.

Based on the pretest and posttest results, the measurement scores of body image dissatisfaction were obtained as follows:

Table 4. Pretest and Posttest Results

No	Subject	Pretest Score	Category	Posttest Score	Category
1	AL	58	Very High	23	Very Low
2	HKH	58	Very High	27	Very Low
3	NH	60	Very High	23	Very Low
4	ND	55	Very High	25	Very Low
5	NA	53	High	26	Very Low
6	NI	58	Very High	25	Very Low
7	RA	58	Very High	25	Very Low
8	RH	54	Very High	27	Very Low

Based on Table 4 above, it can be seen that prior to the intervention using the self-affirmation technique, 7 ninth-grade students at MTsS Mandurana Tanjung Botung were in the very high category, and 1 student was in the high category. After receiving group guidance with the self-affirmation technique, the posttest results show that the students' body image dissatisfaction significantly decreased, with all 8 students falling into the very low category.

In this study, the hypothesis was tested using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test with SPSS version 26 for Windows, as follows:

Table 5. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Analysis

	Posttest – Pretest
Z	-2.527b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.012

Based on the Wilcoxon test, with a significance value of 0.012 ( $< 0.05$ ), it can be concluded that group guidance using the self-affirmation technique has a positive effect in reducing body image dissatisfaction among ninth-grade students at MTsS Mandurana

Tanjung Botung. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted, and the null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) is rejected.

Table 6. Effect Size Calculation Results

Parameter	Value	Formula/Reference	Interpretation
Z	-2.527	Statistical test output	Test result value
N	8	Sample size	Number of participants
r	-0.89	$r = Z / \sqrt{N}$ (Field, 2013)	Effect size
Category	Large	Cohen (1988)	Very strong effect

Effect size was calculated to determine the magnitude of the intervention's impact beyond statistical significance. The calculation was conducted using the formula  $r = Z / \sqrt{N}$  (Field, 2013). Based on the statistical test, the obtained value was  $Z = -2.527$  with a sample size of  $N = 8$ , resulting in  $r = -0.89$ . According to Cohen's (1988) criteria, an effect size of  $0.50 \leq r < 1.00$  is categorised as large. Therefore, it can be concluded that the intervention not only demonstrated statistically significant results but also exhibited a very strong effect in reducing students' body image dissatisfaction. This finding indicates that the intervention is both effective and relevant to be applied in educational and counselling contexts.

### 3.2. Discussion

The results of this study show that group guidance intervention using self-affirmation techniques significantly reduced body image dissatisfaction among ninth-grade students at MTsS Mandurana Tanjung Botung. Before the intervention, the majority of students were in the very high (88%) and high (12%) categories in terms of body image dissatisfaction. However, after the intervention, all students moved to the very low category (100%). The Wilcoxon test yielded a significance value of 0.012 ( $< 0.05$ ). These results indicate that the intervention is not only statistically significant but also has a very large effect size, making it practically relevant in the context of education and counselling.

Theoretically, this finding aligns with the foundations of self-affirmation theory as explained by Steele and further elaborated by Sherman and Cohen. This theory emphasises that self-affirmation in meaningful domains can expand sources of self-esteem so that individuals do not solely depend on their physical attributes for their dignity. Thus, students are able to reduce social pressure related to beauty and appearance standards that often trigger body dissatisfaction [20].

Prastika's research strengthens this finding with evidence that self-affirmation interventions can reduce body dissatisfaction by increasing general self-esteem and reducing dependence of self-esteem on shape and weight [8]. This is in line with the patterns observed in this study, namely the extreme shift from the 'very high' category to the 'very low' category among all participants. The psychological mechanism at work appears to be a shift in the focus of self-esteem from physical attributes to broader personal values.

When compared to other intervention models, such as dissonance-based prevention, the effectiveness of self-affirmation is prominent. Andini's meta-analysis states that dissonance-based programs are effective in reducing the internalisation of beauty standards

and eating disorders, but the average effect size falls within the small to medium category [14]. In this context, the effect size  $r = -0.89$  in this study is very large, although it should be noted that the small sample size ( $N=8$ ) may strengthen the effect estimation. Nevertheless, the consistency of the direction of the results supports the finding that self-affirmation is a promising intervention pathway.

Furthermore, various recent studies emphasise the importance of school-based interventions. Ginting demonstrates success in improving adolescents' body image through collaborative approaches with teachers [4]. The results of this study are consistent with the literature, as the self-affirmation intervention provided in the form of simple group guidance has also been shown to significantly reduce body dissatisfaction. This indicates that schools can be a strategic arena for the implementation of similar programs.

On the other hand, research on self-compassion also shows a close relevance. Usman et al found that self-compassion exercises in adolescents increase body appreciation and decrease body shame [9]. These principles have a similar mechanism to self-affirmation, namely expanding self-worth and reducing negative judgments about the body. In this study, group dynamics allow for the emergence of social validation that reinforces personal value affirmation and encourages self-acceptance.

Mendelson et al, through the BodiMojo application, also found that self-compassion-based interventions can significantly improve the body image of adolescents [21]. This indicates that both digital and face-to-face approaches are equally effective if they contain components of value reflection and self-empowerment. This research, which uses face-to-face group guidance, further demonstrates that simple interventions, if facilitated properly, can yield significant effects.

Furthermore, a systematic review by Markey emphasises that body image interventions in schools, whether face-to-face or digital, produce consistently positive results, especially if they focus on instilling positive values, self-affirmation, self-compassion, and media literacy [22]. Therefore, the results of this study align with the global literature trend that encourages the implementation of value-based interventions in educational settings. However, it is important to emphasise that this study has limitations, particularly the small sample size and the absence of a control group.

This discussion shows that group counselling using self-affirmation techniques is effective in significantly reducing body image dissatisfaction, with a very large effect size. This result is consistent with previous theories and empirical findings regarding the effectiveness of self-affirmation in broadening sources of self-esteem and reducing body dissatisfaction, and it is relevant to be applied in the school context. Thus, this research provides an important contribution to the practice of counselling guidance in secondary schools, while also adding scientific evidence that self-worth-based interventions have great potential to improve the psychological health of adolescents.

The results of this study show that group guidance intervention using self-affirmation techniques has been proven effective in reducing body image dissatisfaction among ninth-grade students at MTsS Mandurana Tanjung Botung. All study participants who were initially in the high to very high category experienced a significant decline to the very low category after the intervention. The effect size obtained was also very large ( $r = -0.89$ ),

indicating that this intervention is not only statistically significant but also has strong practical relevance. However, the results obtained in this study do not fully align with several previous studies that reported the effectiveness of self-affirmation as limited, situational, and in some contexts, not yielding significant results.

Chen & Shen found that positive affirmations can actually have a negative impact on individuals with low self-esteem. For some people, self-affirming statements create psychological tension between the ideal condition expressed and the perceived reality of oneself; thus, instead of increasing self-satisfaction, they actually exacerbate negative feelings [23]. This finding clearly contradicts this study, where self-affirmation through group guidance successfully reduced body dissatisfaction drastically. This difference can be explained by the psychological conditions of the study participants who were relatively ready to receive the intervention, as well as the supportive group atmosphere that minimised the potential resistance to self-affirmation.

In addition, Ihtiar et al. emphasise that the effectiveness of self-affirmation is greatly influenced by cultural context. In several cross-cultural studies, it was found that self-affirmation does not always succeed in more collectivistic societies, as individuals place more emphasis on social identity than on personal self-worth [24]. This is contrary to this research, which instead shows positive results in religious and collective school environments. The findings reveal that cultural context is not merely a barrier, but can also be a strength when self-affirmation values are aligned with prevailing social norms, such as the values of togetherness and religiosity in schools.

Inconsistencies are also evident in the findings of Nirwan & Jauhari, who state that the effect of self-affirmation on health behaviour change is temporary. Interventions can indeed influence individuals' initial responses, but their impacts often do not last in the long term [25]. This is an important note for this research, considering that the results obtained only reflect changes immediately after the intervention without further measurements. Thus, although short-term effectiveness has been shown to be significant, further research with a longitudinal design is needed to ensure the sustainability of the intervention's impact over a certain period.

Wibowo & Awalya's research also reported that although self-affirmation can reduce defensive attitudes in processing threatening information, its effect on actual behavioural change tends to be small [26]. This differs from this research, which produces significant psychological changes in the aspect of body dissatisfaction. The difference in results indicates that the success of the intervention depends on the type of psychological variables targeted. Self-affirmation appears to be more effective in cognitive-affective aspects such as self-acceptance and body image compared to actual behavioural changes.

Furthermore, Sampin & Daulay remind us that the effectiveness of self-affirmation is largely determined by the design of the intervention, particularly the selection of the 'trigger' and the 'channel' used [27]. In this study, self-affirmation was combined with group dynamics so that participants not only reflected on their values individually, but also received social validation from other group members. This is likely to enhance the effectiveness of the intervention compared to previous studies that used an individual format without group support.

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Thus, the differences in results between this study and previous studies that were not aligned can be explained through several factors. First, the relatively healthy psychological conditions of the participants and their readiness to accept self-affirmation. Second, the religious and collective cultural context of the school actually reinforces the acceptance of affirmation values. Third, the success of the intervention is also influenced by the design of group guidance that is able to provide a space for social support. However, this study also has limitations, especially the absence of long-term measurements, so it cannot be ensured whether the positive effects obtained will last in the following periods.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, group guidance services using self-affirmation techniques have proven effective in reducing body image dissatisfaction among ninth-grade students at MTsS Mandurana Tanjung Botung. The pretest showed that most students were in the very high (88%) and high (12%) categories, while the posttest indicated that all students (100%) were in the very low category. The Wilcoxon test results were significant ( $p = 0.012$ ) with an effect size of -0.89 (large), indicating that the intervention had a very strong effect. These findings reaffirm that self-affirmation can improve self-acceptance and positive body image among adolescents, making it relevant to implement it in guidance and counselling services in schools. BK teachers, counsellors, and parents can use this technique as a strategy to support students' psychological health. The limitations of the research include a small sample size (8 students), the research location being limited to one school, the instrument being self-reported, and the short duration of the intervention, so the long-term effectiveness is unknown. For future research, it is recommended to expand the sample and location, conduct longitudinal studies, combine self-affirmation with other techniques, and add qualitative data to explore students' experiences in more depth. Research can also examine the influence of moderator variables such as family support or social media usage on the success of the intervention.

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