



# Effectiveness of Expressive Writing Techniques to Address Academic Stress Through a Group Counseling

Umi Nadrah<sup>(✉)</sup> and Suwarjo Suwarjo

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
nadrah.sarumpaet96@gmail.com

**Abstract.** The study aims to test the effectiveness of group counseling using expressive writing techniques to deal with academic stress for tenth-grade students at Vocational High School 2 Depok. The research was quantitative research with a quasi-experimental research design specifically using a non-equivalent control group design. The population in the study was 60 students in the tenth grade with a sample of 8 students in the control group and 8 students in the treatment group. Determination of the sample was conducted using a purposive random sampling technique with the criteria set according to the study. The data collection method used the academic stress scale instrument which 37 items. The reliability of the academic stress scale was tested using Cronbach's consists of Alpha and a coefficient of 0.844 was obtained which indicated a high level of reliability. In this study, researchers used Wilcoxon non-parametric statistical test to analyze the data. The results of the research hypothesis test between the control and experimental groups showed a value of  $p = 0.012$  less than  $\alpha = 0.05$  ( $0.012 < 0.05$ ); therefore, it can be concluded that expressive writing techniques in group counseling can reduce academic stress of the tenth-grade students at vocational high school 2 Depok.

**Keywords:** Effectiveness · Expressive Writing · Academic Stress · Group Counseling

## 1 Introduction

Adolescence has developmental tasks in their age range. If developmental tasks cannot be carried out properly, adolescents will experience difficulties in life and will not be happy in completing their developmental tasks [1]. One of the tasks of adolescent development can be achieved in the school environment, which is related to academic activities, but not all adolescents can fulfill academic tasks well so that it can cause academic stress. Academic stress is the result of related academic demands that exceed the individual's resources [2]. Academic stress causes many issues with emotional physical health and individual physiological stress responses [3]. Academic stress is a very important factor to be discussed in students pursuing academic achievement, because academic stress can affect health risks related to physical and mental stress [4].

Expressive writing technique can be used to express problems and individual pressure through writing. Expressive writing can produce positive effects on physical and mental health [5]. Students write about negative or stressful events or thoughts, describe as much as possible their deep emotions and feelings, especially regarding academic stress so that it can be concluded that expressive writing techniques can explore emotions, stress and release negative thoughts that affect physical and psychological so that students can release the tensions caused by academic stress [6]. Writing will help someone to get away from things that cause them to feel stressed, so that it can help students in understanding and solving problems and can control themselves tackling problems [7].

Expressive writing is done with group counseling which has the aim that group members learn to solve problems through input obtained from other group members. Thus, individuals will have good self-acceptance and understanding [8]. Group activities are carried out related to developmental tasks and it is group members who will determine the discussion and objectives of the problem [9].

The results of discussions conducted with teachers of Vocational High School 2 Depok that of the 2350 students at Vocational High School 2 Depok, 50% of them had academic stress. The cause of academic stress felt by students is because of the many assignments from various subjects. Online learning that makes students stay at home and requires some additional tools to support learning such as cellphones and internet quotas is one of the barriers for them to do academic tasks. The guidance and counseling teacher explained that some students who did not submit their assignments due to the limited learning facilities at home and a lot of lessons that had to be done simultaneously made them bored and stressed. Before the pandemic occurred, guidance and counseling teachers usually provided classical services, group guidance or group counseling that were personal and social services. The services provided by the guidance and counseling teachers are quite good in schools, but the guidance and counseling teachers have never provided group guidance or counseling services using expressive writing techniques on academic stress to students.

Based on the exposure of the academic stress problem felt by the students of Vocational High School 2 Depok, the researcher wanted to test the effectiveness of expressive writing techniques in group counseling services against academic stress.

## **2 Method**

### **2.1 Types of Research**

This study uses a quantitative approach that is quasi-experimental using a non-equivalent control group design. The non-equivalent control group design consisted of the experimental group as the comparison group and also had the opportunity to obtain pre-test and post-test measures of the subjects in two groups, namely the control group and the experimental group.

## **2.2 Place and Time**

This research took place at SMKN 2 Depok, which is located in Sleman. The research was conducted in January of the 2021/2022 school year, which is located on Mrican Catur Tunggal Street, Depok Sleman, Yogyakarta. The research was carried out in December 2021.

## **2.3 Research Subjects**

This study used a population of class X students at SMKN 2 Depok consisting of 2 classes, computer network engineering A and computer network engineering B in total 60 students where each class consisted of 30 students. Researchers used a purposive non-random sampling technique. The researcher determines the sample according to certain characteristics. There are two groups of samples, namely the group that was given treatment (experimental) consisting 8 students and the control group that was not given treatments with 8 students.

## **2.4 Procedure**

The experimental group is the group that will be given the expressive writing technique group counseling treatment, on the other hand the control group will only get treatment in the form of discussion when treatment is given to the experimental group.

## **2.5 Data Collection Techniques**

The academic stress scale was compiled using a Likert scale which had previously been modified by researchers. The validity used in this study is content validity through expert judgement as validators. The instrument reliability test was carried out using the Cronbach's Alpha variance technique.

## **2.6 Data Analysis Techniques**

Researchers used the Wilcoxon signed rank test to analyze the data in this study. The Wilcoxon signed rank test was carried out to find out the differences and the magnitude of the differences after the pretest and posttest were carried out. Wilcoxon test calculations in this study using SPSS.21 for windows.

# **3 Finding and Discussion**

Class X computer network engineering A and X computer network engineering B, the selection of the class was based on the advice of the guidance and counseling teacher. Students fill in the academic stress scale modified by the researcher who first tested the validity of the content of the instrument by testing expert judgment using Aiken V test, The researcher set a p value  $< 0.05$ , which means that it allows a 5% chance of error, which is 0.92 out of 43 statements, there are 6 items that fall, so there are 37 valid

**Table 1.** Scale Criteria Academic Stress

Interval	Criteria
$111 > X \leq 148$	High
$74 > X \leq 111$	Medium
$X \leq 74$	Low

**Table 2.** Pretest Scores for The Experimental Group and the Control Group

No	Interval			Criteria		
	Name	Pretest Score	Category	Name	Pretest Score	Category
1	AMA	112	High	ZD	113	High
2	HA	112	High	LLE	113	High
3	FAM	118	High	MZK	114	High
4	APM	113	High	RGB	112	High
5	AP	115	High	TOP	112	High
6	IAS	113	High	SMI	113	High
7	IAD	113	High	SNR	116	High
8	AD	116	High	SR	113	High

**Table 3.** Pretest Results Wilcoxon Test Academic Stress Experimental Group and Control Group.

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
PRE KONTROL	8	113.25	1.282	112	116
PRE EKSPERIMEN	8	114.00	2.138	112	118

statements. It is known that the reliability of the academic stress scale is 0.844 which has a fairly high validity. The results of filling out the academic stress scale obtained that many students belonged to the moderate stress category, but there were still students who experienced high academic stress. In taking samples, researchers took a sample of 16 students (Table 1). The 16 students were divided into two groups. The experimental group consisted of 8 students and the control group consisted of 8 students. The following are the results of the experimental and control groups pretest: (Table 2).

Test Statistics	PRE EKSPERIMEN -PRE KONTOL
Z	-.857b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.391

The pretest outcomes of the Wilcoxon test, the academic stress of the experimental group got a score of 114.00 and the pretest of the control group got an average score of 113.25. The results of statistical data on Z count also obtained a value of -857 and a significance of 0.391. This shows that the sig value obtained is 0.391 which is more than 0.05 (5% error rate) (Table 3). Based on this, the researchers concluded that there was no difference seen through the results of the academic stress pretest of the experimental group and the control group before being given treatment (Table 4).

The experimental group was given group counseling treatment using expressive writing techniques in reducing academic stress while the control group only carried out discussions. After the group counseling treatment with expressive writing technique on the student academic stress was carried out, the researcher gave the academic stress scale the same as the scale given before the post test. Changes in the scores on the results of the pretest and post-test become a measure of the success of the treatment (Table 5).

**Table 4.** Post-test of the Academic Stress Scale of Control and Experiment Group.

No	Experiment Group			Control Group		
	Name	Posttest Score	Category	Name	Posttest Score	Category
1	AMA	74	Low	ZD	99	Medium
2	HA	67	Low	LLE	94	Medium
3	FAM	72	Low	MZK	100	Medium
4	APM	83	Medium	RGB	98	Medium
5	AP	72	Low	TOP	95	Medium
6	IAS	80	Medium	SMI	100	Medium
7	IAD	79	Medium	SNR	97	Medium
8	AD	74	Low	SR	94	Medium

**Table 5.** Post-test Results of the Wilcoxon Test of Academic Stress in the Experimental Group and the Control Group.

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
POST EKSPREIMEN	8	75.13	5.194	67	83
POST KONTROL	8	97.13	2.532	94	100

Test Statistics	POST KONTROL-POS EKSPERIMEN
Z	-2.524b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.012
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	

The Table shows that there is a decrease in the academic stress of students. The post test result of the Wilcoxon test on the academic stress of the experimental group was 75.13 and the pretest of the control group had an average score of 97.13. The results of this data analysis show that the average post-test value given to the experimental group after being given group counseling treatment with expressive writing technique on academic stress is greater than the control group which is only given discussion. The statistical results of the data on Z count also obtained a value of 2.524 and a significance of .012. This shows that the value of sig.012 is less than 0.05 (error level 5%), Through the results of the calculations that have been described above, it is concluded that there are visible differences in the posttest results of the experimental group and the control group.

The decrease in academic stress in students can be seen from the positive responses given during treatment and activities carried out with group counseling make individuals more open-minded. This is in line with Oishi's research which shows that expressive writing is a strategy of choice that is considered effective for managing stress management for students in Japan [10]. In line with Levy and Travis research entitled "benefits of expressive writing in reducing test anxiety" in group counseling also shows a positive impact on stress where mindfulness skills in group work can support adolescents in dealing with stress or emotional [11]. So it can be concluded that changes in academic stress carried out by researchers on students through the expressive writing technique group counseling process proved effective in reducing student academic stress because students were serious and tried well during the group counseling process.

## 4 Conclusion

This research uses expressive writing techniques that can be used by guidance and counseling teachers when they want to provide services related to student academic problems or provide other understanding information. This research has implications for the scientific field in the field of guidance and counseling, especially in personal, social and learning fields.

Expressive writing technique group counseling activities can be used for personal, social and learning problems, one of which is about academic stress. Expressive writing techniques can be considered to be applied because expressive writing techniques can improve students from their desires and students feel the need to change the desired behavior, in providing guidance and counseling services.

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