

## EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP COUNSELING SERVICES USING MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE GRIT IN FINAL SEMESTER STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of group counseling services using the Motivational Interviewing technique in increasing grit among final-year students. The research employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental method using a One Group Pretest-Posttest design. The participants consisted of 8 eighth-semester BKPI-2 students who were selected based on low grit levels and their willingness to participate in group counseling. The data collection instrument used a grit scale that measured two main aspects: perseverance and consistency of interest. The analysis results showed a significant increase in grit scores before and after the intervention, as evidenced by the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (sig. value = 0.012 < 0.05). Thus, group counseling services using the Motivational Interviewing technique proved to be effective in enhancing grit among final-year students.

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### INTRODUCTIONS

Education plays a crucial role in fostering positive individual change by fulfilling basic needs such as enthusiasm and perseverance in learning (Tintingon et al., 2023). However, various life problems often weaken individual motivation, thus requiring effective interventions, one of which is counseling services as part of the education system (Fricticarani et al., 2023). Counseling services have a strategic function in helping individuals overcome personal, social, academic, and career-related problems, while also supporting holistic personal development (Harahap et al., 2023; Tarigan et al., 2024). Managed by professionals, these services can be accessed by various communities and institutions, both formal and non-formal, with the aim of improving psychological well-being and life success (Hayati et al., 2023).

One form of counseling service is group counseling, which is conducted through group dynamics. According to Fitri & Darmayanti (2023), this service aims to help individuals solve problems through collective processes within the group. Group counseling involves several important stages, such as shaping better personality traits, increasing self-awareness, and building behaviors based on real experiences. Moreover, it fosters attitudes of mutual trust, understanding, acceptance, and support among group members (Ardila et al., 2024).

This service has two aspects: the core aspect and the face-to-face meeting aspect. The process aspect is characterized by the involvement of more than two people in counseling sessions. The face-to-face aspect is carried out through direct interactions among individuals in the group, enabling them to provide mutual psychological support (Mudiantoro & Muhid, 2022). The basic objectives of this service, which need to be understood by both group leaders and members, include helping individuals modify inappropriate behaviors into positive ones, developing decision-making skills, and forming competencies to prevent potential problems in social and personal development (Syahri et al., 2022). Therefore, implementing group counseling with the Motivational Interviewing technique can be an effective approach to enhance students' grit.

Group counseling using the Motivational Interviewing technique is valuable in helping individuals within the group become aware of their attitudes and feelings simultaneously, thereby fostering inner support to undergo change and achieve personal success. Motivational Interviewing serves as an effort to help individuals discover hidden self-support, enabling them to recognize their own needs for growth, such as persistence in life (Anisa, 2024). This is because, within group counseling using this technique, individuals are granted certain rights, such as determining their own destiny, deciding whether or not to change, setting life goals, and choosing when and where to enhance their perseverance. Thus, the technique acts as an emotional outlet and support system for each individual in the group (Naelakun, 2024).

Motivational Interviewing is a technique used by counselors to help individuals discover and strengthen intrinsic motivation to change for the better (Harijanto & Rudijanto, 2015). This technique seeks to create open and honest conversations between counselor and client, allowing individuals to recognize their own desires to change and to live with greater enthusiasm (Laelatul et al., 2019).

Motivational Interviewing incorporates several components, including MI principles, MI spirit, OARS, and Change Talk. The integration of these elements enables more effective cognitive and behavioral change (Anisah et al., 2020). The MI principles include developing discrepancy, expressing empathy, supporting self-efficacy, and accepting resistance. The MI spirit emphasizes collaboration, evocation, acceptance, and compassion. OARS is an acronym for open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective listening, and summaries. Change Talk refers to the stage in which individuals articulate their readiness and commitment to change (Parti, 2019). The stages of change within this technique include precontemplation (no consideration of change), contemplation (evaluating whether to change or not), determination (preparing for change and being close to taking action), action (committing to change), and maintenance (sustaining long-term change) (Purnamasari, 2019).

Group counseling with Motivational Interviewing can be effectively implemented by analyzing individual problems and needs first, ensuring that the intervention is relevant to resolving personal challenges, such as persistence in achieving life goals (Fatikasari, 2023). Individuals with life goals typically strive to fulfill various needs such as self-esteem, security, love and belonging, physiological needs, and self-actualization (Taormina & Gao, 2013). Those who persistently pursue their goals demonstrate grit (Tualeka et al., 2023). Grit is essential for success as it stems from individuals' interests and talents that should be developed to enhance enthusiasm and perseverance (Rainey, 2014).

Individuals who increase their grit are often recognized by their determination to pursue goals through self-development, while a decline in grit can be identified through failure or setbacks in achieving life goals (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). Therefore, grit requires hard work and perseverance, a clear sense of purpose, resilience, strong interest, and enthusiasm despite failures or obstacles encountered along the way (Christopoulou et al., 2018). Students need to possess a high level of grit because grit—which encompasses perseverance and consistency of interest toward long-term goals—is a non-cognitive factor that strongly determines both academic and career success. Grit enables students to persist despite obstacles, failures, or psychological pressures during their studies. With grit, students are better able to complete their final projects, overcome procrastination, and maintain sustainable learning motivation (Duckworth, 2016; Christopoulou et al., 2018). Conversely, students with low grit tend to give up easily,

lose motivation, and become more vulnerable to academic stress, thereby increasing their risk of failing to achieve long-term goals (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015; Reed & Jeremiah, 2017). Thus, grit is an essential asset that students must develop in order to face academic challenges and future professional life.

The development of grit can be influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include personal interests, practice habits, effort to achieve goals, and individual mindset. External factors consist of family and social environment, individual conditions, and the norms and values of the surrounding context (Reed & Jeremiah, 2017). The components of grit include consistency of interest and perseverance in effort, which determine the increase or decrease of grit within an individual (Duckworth, 2016). This is supported by empirical findings in Indonesia: a study of 51 nursing students at a private university in the Aru Islands revealed that 86.3% had low levels of grit and only 13.7% had high levels (Izaach, 2017). Another study of 62 psychology students at a private university in Lampung reported 6.5% with very low grit, 27.4% low, 45.2% moderate, 16.1% high, and 4.8% very high (Septania et al., 2018). Similarly, research on 423 psychology students at a private university in Bandung found that 93.4% had high grit, while 6.6% had low grit (Vivekananda, 2018). Furthermore, a study of 708 medical students from both public and private universities in Indonesia showed 0.3% with very low grit, 7.3% low, 33.6% moderate, 44.4% high, and 14.4% very high (Rusli et al., 2020). Meanwhile, 226 students at a private university in Purwokerto revealed that 48.5% had moderate grit, 26.3% low, and 16.9% high (Rahayu et al., 2021). These findings indicate variations in grit levels among students in public and private universities in Indonesia, underscoring the need for support in addressing grit-related challenges.

The issue of low grit among students, particularly final-semester students in the BKPI Department at UIN Sumatera Utara, is evident in their lack of persistence in completing final projects. This problem is influenced by two main factors: internal and external. Internal factors include psychological conditions such as low motivation to finish the thesis, declining enthusiasm and self-confidence, confusion in starting or continuing the task, overwhelming personal responsibilities, boredom, fatigue, overthinking, as well as excessive anxiety and fear. External factors include lack of family support, academic administrative barriers, financial difficulties, personal problems, involvement in multiple formal and non-formal activities, unproductive social habits, and challenges in communicating or meeting with academic supervisors. The combination of these factors causes some final-semester students to lose perseverance in completing their final projects. Therefore, this issue needs to be addressed through appropriate interventions, one of which is group counseling with the Motivational Interviewing technique, which has been proven to reignite student motivation and determination to complete their final assignments.

This approach can be applied in this study to enhance the grit of final-semester students in the BKPI Department at UIN Sumatera Utara by focusing on the consistency of interest and perseverance in achieving long-term goals. Grit, as a non-cognitive factor, plays a crucial role in fostering students' enthusiasm to sustain interest and persistence in reaching life goals. This includes increasing motivation during the final semester process, strengthening determination to complete their theses, and equipping them with resilience to face obstacles with persistence and strong will in order to achieve personal goals. Thus, the decline of grit has become a recurring issue among final-semester BKPI students at UIN Sumatera Utara each year, requiring both personal and environmental support to enhance their grit. Based on the above explanation, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of group counseling with the Motivational Interviewing technique in improving grit among final-semester BKPI students at UIN Sumatera Utara.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental research design, which aims to determine the effect of a given treatment on the research subjects, even though it does not use a fully established control group and does not yet meet the criteria of a true experiment (Sugiyono, 2010). The research design applied in this study is the *One Group Pretest–Posttest Design*. This design involves an experimental group without a control group, with comparisons made between the results of the pre-test and post-test (Arikunto, 2014).

Pretest	Treatment	Posstest
O <sup>1</sup>	X	O <sup>2</sup>

The population in this study consisted of eighth-semester students of BKPI-2 Class at UIN Sumatera Utara Medan, totaling 30 students. The sample was drawn from 8 students who were identified as having low levels of grit. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, since the sample selection was based on specific criteria relevant to the objectives of the study (Arikunto, 2014). A total of 30 participants from the BKPI-2 Class completed the grit scale questionnaire. The results revealed that 8 participants obtained low scores on the grit scale.

The data collection techniques in this study included questionnaires, observation, interviews, and documentation. The primary instrument used was a questionnaire based on a Likert scale. The questionnaire consisted of test sheets containing statements that participants were required to respond to. The Likert scale used in this study consisted of four response categories: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Disagree, and (4) Strongly Disagree. In addition to the questionnaire, the researcher also collected data through observation of participants' behavior, interviews to gain more in-depth information, and documentation to complement and strengthen the data obtained from other instruments.

The measurement instrument used in this study was the grit scale, which includes two dimensions: *Perseverance* and *Passion for Long-Term Goals* (Asyroq, 2023). The grit scale questionnaire applied in this study was adopted from a questionnaire previously used by Alfathan Saddam Husyain Asyroq (2022) in his undergraduate thesis entitled "*The Effect of Grit on Academic Procrastination among Students Working on Their Thesis at the Faculty of Da'wah, UIN Salatiga*." This prior research demonstrated that academic procrastination could be predicted by the grit variable, while the remainder was influenced by other factors (Asyroq, 2022). Written permission was obtained from the owner of the questionnaire, allowing the researcher to utilize the instrument in this study. Since the previous study aligns with the issues examined in this research, it serves as a valid reference for the current investigation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

To determine who falls into the category of having a low level of Grit, an initial measurement was conducted using a pre-test by administering a questionnaire to the BKPI-2 class in the eighth semester with a population of 30 students. After that, the results indicated that 8 students were identified as having a minimal level of Grit. The following is the calculation result of the pre-test questionnaire scale for Grit among students.

**Table 1. Pre-test Results of the Grit Scale**

No	Name	Grit Scale
1	ASH	79
2	CT	79
3	DPK	85
4	F	84
5	MF	85
6	SA	84
7	TA	83
8	UH	88

In this study, the grit scores was determined ranging from a minimum

score of 160. The total range of 120 points was then divided into three categories: low (40–80), moderate (81–120), and high (121–160). Based on these guidelines, each student's pre-test score could be grouped according to the corresponding interval. For example, if a student's score fell between 40–80, it was categorized as low; if it ranged from 81–120, it was categorized as moderate; and if it ranged from 121–160, it was categorized as high. Thus, the grit

categorization of students' through score intervals score of 40 to a maximum



scores of the students in the pre-test results table could be classified by matching their obtained scores with the designated intervals.

According to Table 1, the pre-test results of the Grit Scale revealed that all participants (a total of eight students) fell into the low category, with percentage intervals ranging between 63% and 71%. This indicates that before the intervention, the students demonstrated a low level of perseverance and passion for long-term goals (grit). The total scores ranged from 79 to 88. Interval analysis further showed that the participants' consistency of interest and persistence toward long-term goals remained relatively weak. This data highlights that the majority of participants had a very minimal level of grit. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to implement group counseling services using the *Motivational Interviewing* technique to address these issues among the students.

After the intervention was fully administered, the eight research participants were instructed to complete the same questionnaire once again, with the purpose of measuring any changes in the subjects after receiving the intervention. Based on the post-test data collected from the eight participants, the results demonstrated that all participants had shifted into the high category regarding grit improvement. The post-test results are presented in the following table:

**Table 2. Posttest Results of Grit Scale**

No	Name	Grit Scale	Category	% (Interval)
1	ASH	107	High	89%
2	CT	109	High	91%
3	DPK	105	High	88%
4	F	107	High	89%
5	MF	108	High	90%
6	SA	109	High	91%
7	TA	110	High	92%
8	UH	106	High	88%

Based on Table 2, a significant improvement can be observed after the intervention was implemented. All participants experienced score increases and moved into the high category on the Grit Scale. The total scores rose substantially, ranging from 105 to 110, with interval percentages increasing to 88%–92%. For instance, ASH's score rose from 79 (66%) to 107 (89%), while TA's score improved from 83 (69%) to 110 (92%). These results indicate a significant behavioral improvement, particularly in the enhancement of grit.

To assess the effectiveness of the intervention in improving students' grit, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 23, to identify significant differences between pretest and posttest scores.

**Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test**

	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
<b>Posttest – Pretest</b>			
<b>Negative Ranks</b>	0 <sup>a</sup>	0.00	0.00
<b>Positive Ranks</b>	8 <sup>b</sup>	4.50	36.00
<b>Ties</b>	0 <sup>c</sup>		
<b>Total</b>	8		
<b>Posttest –Pretest</b>			
Z	-2.524 <sup>b</sup>		
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.012		

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, it was found that all participants ( $N = 8$ ) experienced an increase in scores from the pre-test to the post-test, as indicated by the number of positive ranks (8) and the absence of negative ranks (0). There were no ties between the pre-test and post-test scores (ties = 0), which indicates that all respondents showed positive changes after the intervention. The test yielded a Z value of -2.524 with a significance level (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) of  $0.012 < 0.05$ , demonstrating that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. Thus, it can be concluded that the treatment or intervention provided in this study successfully improved students' grit.

This finding reinforces that group counseling services with the Motivational Interviewing technique are effective in enhancing student grit. The increase in scores not only reflects quantitative improvement but also qualitatively indicates progress in students' personality aspects, such as perseverance, determination in facing challenges, and the ability to maintain long-term goals. Overall, the data provide strong evidence that the intervention effectively enhanced grit among students, which is an essential factor in supporting resilience, academic success, and future professional achievement.

## Discussion

Group counseling services using the Motivational Interviewing technique proved effective in increasing students' grit. This technique focuses on eliciting intrinsic motivation through empathic and reflective conversations, as well as the use of OARS strategies (open-ended questions, affirmation, reflection, and summary). Such an approach helps students recognize internal barriers such as boredom, overthinking, and low self-confidence, while also encouraging them to rebuild enthusiasm and consistency of interest in completing their thesis. Furthermore, the group dynamic provides space for students to support each other, so they do not feel alone in facing academic challenges (Harijanto & Rudijanto, 2015; Anisah, Aminah, & Fariat, 2020).

Based on the post-test results, all participants (8 students) showed an increase in grit scores to the high category. However, two students demonstrated more significant improvement, namely TA and CT. TA, who initially scored 83 (low category, 69%), increased to 110 (high category, 92%), while CT, from 79 (low category, 66%) rose to 109 (high category, 91%). This indicates that students with lower initial scores experienced greater improvement after the intervention compared to those whose scores were already closer to the medium category prior to treatment.

The significant improvement among students with initially low scores can be explained by their wider margin for growth, making the effects of the intervention more noticeable. In addition, within the group dynamic, students with low grit received more support, motivation, and reinforcement through *change talk* statements that indicate an intention to change. Motivational Interviewing emphasizes the importance of change talk in fostering determination, enabling students who were initially less committed to build renewed perseverance (Parti, 2019; Anisa, 2024).

Theoretically, this improvement aligns with the core principles of Motivational Interviewing, which emphasize eliciting intrinsic motivation and empowering individuals to change through an empathic, reflective, and affirming approach (Harijanto & Rudijanto, 2015). The OARS technique consisting of open-ended questions, affirmations, reflections, and summaries further encourages students to self-evaluate and cultivate consistency in completing their thesis (Parti, 2019; Anisah, Aminah, & Fariat, 2020).

The non-parametric test applied, namely the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, confirmed the positive changes after the intervention. The significance value (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) of  $0.012 < 0.05$  indicates a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, signifying the real effectiveness of the counseling intervention (Sugiyono, 2010; Arikunto, 2014). Psychologically, this intervention facilitated students in recognizing both internal and external barriers, and helped them rebuild self-confidence and a sense of direction (Naelakun, 2024). This is crucial since the final phase of study is often marked by a crisis of motivation and heightened emotional pressure (Tualeka & Bashori, 2023; Reed & Jeremiah, 2017).

This study also reinforces previous findings suggesting that grit is not only influenced by cognitive factors but also by psychosocial aspects such as environmental support, counselor influence, and group dynamics. In other words, through group counseling based on Motivational Interviewing, students were provided a space for collective

reflection, mutual support, and greater self-awareness of the importance of perseverance in achieving life goals (Christopoulou et al., 2018; Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015).

The provision of intervention in the form of group counseling using Motivational Interviewing played a crucial role in fostering meaningful conversations that stimulated change talk and determination for change (Anisa, 2024). This is highly relevant in the context of students facing the challenges of completing their final academic stage (Fatikasari, 2023). Thus, group counseling services with the Motivational Interviewing technique not only provide short-term effects in boosting motivation but also contribute to shaping resilient character (grit), which is essential for navigating both professional life and personal challenges beyond campus (Rainey, 2014; Taormina & Gao, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

Based on this study, it was found that group counseling services using the Motivational Interviewing technique proved effective in enhancing grit among final-semester students of the BKPI Department at UIN Sumatera Utara. This is evidenced by the significant increase in grit scores in the posttest compared to the pretest, as well as by the supporting statistical analysis results. The intervention successfully strengthened students' perseverance and consistency of interest in completing their final projects. Thus, this technique can serve as an alternative counseling approach to assist students experiencing motivational crises and low resilience. The researcher recommends that this technique be more widely implemented in higher education settings, particularly for students facing high academic pressure.

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