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MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING: TECHNIQUES FOR INCREASING STUDENT ACADEMIC INDEPENDENCE IN THESIS COMPLETION

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Abstract

Insufficient independence leads to reduced encouragement and individual drive when it comes to accomplishing goals and resolving issues. This is particularly crucial for students who bear the sole responsibility of completing their thesis. Hence, they must possess the autonomy to tackle and solve it. The objective of this study was to examine the efficacy of motivational interviewing as a technique to enhance academic independence among finalsemester students who are working on their thesis. The research employed an experimental approach, utilizing a design known as non-equivalent control group design. The participants of the study consisted of both an experimental group (N=7) and a control group (N=7). The intervention involved five group counselling sessions. The results of the hypothesis test, conducted using the Mann Whitney U test, revealed that the Asymp.sig (2-tailed) value was 0.002, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the motivational interviewing technique effectively enhances academic independence. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the increase in independence is accompanied by the emergence of intrinsic motivation, which serves as the primary driving force for students to complete their thesis.

Keywords: independence, motivational interviewing, group counselling

Introduction

One area of focus in adolescent development that warrants particular attention is the cultivation of independence. During this stage, adolescents are expected to exhibit emotional autonomy by making choices and assuming responsibility for the outcomes. Independence encompasses three key aspects: emotional autonomy, behavioral autonomy, and values autonomy (Steinberg, 2013). Emotional autonomy refers to an individual's capacity to not rely on others for emotional support. Behavioral autonomy entails making independent decisions and taking responsibility for the consequences. Values autonomy involves the ability to discern ethical principles and distinguish between significant and insignificant matters. Independence, as a developmental facet, encompasses attributes such as high motivation, resilience in the face of challenges, patience in problem-solving, and the willingness to accept outcomes faithfully (Suryanti, Hartini, Utami, 2022).

Preliminary research was conducted at a private university in Solo, involving the administration of academic independence instruments to 150 final-year students. The findings indicated that 60% of students still exhibited emotional dependency on others, particularly peers, when confronted with challenges. Furthermore, 57% of students lacked

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Revised : May 4, 2023 Accepted : May 9, 2023 confidence in making decisions to resolve academic problems. These results highlight the students' low level of independence when encountering difficulties.

Interviews were conducted with three final-year students who were in the process of completing their theses but had not made progress on their thesis proposals. According to the students, the COVID-19 pandemic's impact over the past two years, which necessitated remote learning and reduced interaction with thesis advisors, resulted in diminished academic engagement. Consequently, these final-year students lacked confidence in addressing academic issues. They chose to avoid communication with their supervisors, neglected academic priorities, failed to take initiative in scheduling meetings with their supervisors, struggled with decision-making, and relied on peers for assistance, particularly in academic matters.

Research conducted on student groups at high risk of lacking independence in learning reveals that they struggle with managing their academic workload, fail to engage in study discussions with peers, and frequently engage in procrastination (Eberle, 2021). Indicators of low independence are demonstrated through behaviors that rely on others for direction, seek guidance from others, and depend on external help to solve problems (Zahro et al., 2021). Lack of independence is associated with reduced engagement, motivation, and poor academic achievement (Pattal et al., 2017). Consequently, inadequate independence leads to diminished encouragement and motivation to achieve goals, a lack of decision-making skills, and excessive reliance on others to handle problems.

Independence is a critical developmental task for adolescents, particularly in the context of fulfilling academic responsibilities. According to the Student Independence Competency Standards (SICS), intellectual maturity is achieved by tertiary-level students, enabling them to make decisions and solve problems objectively based on information and data. Independence serves as the foundation for shaping attitudes, making appropriate decisions, and consistently adhering to principles of truth and goodness (Budiman, 2010). Emotional independence serves as the initial basis for developing behavioral independence, and both contribute to the development of value independence (Steinberg, 2013). The presence of independence empowers individuals to make wise decisions, self-manage, and fulfill personal, familial, and communal needs (Spear & Kulbok, 2004). Independence is closely tied to intrinsic motivation in individuals (Lee et al., 2015), and high levels of independence in students are associated with the potential for achieving superior learning outcomes (Zahro, Amilia, Sugito, 2021).

The character education policy in Indonesia emphasizes the need for students to possess an independent character as part of the *Pancasila* student profile. Based on the Ministry of Education and Culture, this independent character consists of self-awareness and self-regulation (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2023). Self-awareness entails reflecting on one's own condition and the situation at hand, including understanding one's emotions, strengths, and weaknesses. This allows individuals to recognize the need for self-development in line with changes and developments. Self-regulation involves the ability to regulate one's thoughts, emotions, and behavior to achieve learning goals. Therefore, an independent character is essential for individuals to achieve success.

Several relevant studies have been conducted to enhance independence among students. These include the implementation of online classical tutoring to increase independence among students affected by COVID-19 (Suryanti et al., 2022), the use of comic media to promote emotional independence (Luawo & Nugroho, 2018), the implementation of self-regulation techniques to enhance student learning independence (Yasdar & Muliyadi, 2018), the impact of group guidance services on emotional independence (Sihotang, Yusuf & Daharnis, 2013), and the use of self-regulated learning techniques to improve self-management and learning independence in online learning environments during the COVID-19 pandemic (Khoirudin, Darminto, Hariastuti, 2022). It

is important to note that most of these studies were conducted before or during the pandemic. Thus, this current study aims to investigate the academic independence of finalyear students in a post-pandemic setting, considering the influence of the pandemic on changes in attitudes and behavior.

Motivational interviewing is one of techniques that can be employed to modify habits and enhance academic independence. Motivational interviewing is rooted in the integration of relationship principles from constructive humanistic therapy and aims to activate cognitive-behavioral strengths in individuals seeking counselling (Rantekata & Nurjanah, 2022). The primary purpose of this technique is to promote autonomy and a sense of responsibility among counselees, enabling them to make decisions, explore their ambivalence, and facilitate behavior change (Swastika et al., 2020). Previous research studies have explored the effectiveness of motivational interviewing in various domains, particularly in modifying individual behaviors (Ma et al., 2014; Morton et al., 2014; Bischof, 2021; Tristiana, 2016). While existing research has primarily focused on the health field and transforming patient behavior and habits, this study aims to apply motivational interviewing techniques in an educational context. Specifically, the study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of motivational interviewing in enhancing the academic independence of final-year students working on their final thesis.

Method

This study adopted a quantitative research approach with a non-equivalent control group design (Cohen, 2007). The target population for this research consisted of all finalyear students, totaling 84 individuals. The sample for this study was selected using purposive sampling, wherein only subjects who met specific criteria were included. The specific criterion pertained to individuals exhibiting a low level of academic independence, as determined by the pre-test results. The research design involved two groups: the experimental group and the control group. Both groups shared similar conditions, with the experimental group receiving an intervention in the form of Motivational Interviewing, while the control group receives the usual guidance intervention.

The instrument employed in this study was the academic independence scale. To establish the validity of the instrument, a validity test using the Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted. The validity and reliability of the academic independence scale were assessed with the participation of 42 students. The initial number of items in the scale was 33, which was subsequently reduced to 26 valid items following the validity and reliability testing. The response choices in the academic independence instrument include: (1) Always, (2) Often, (3) Rarely, and (4) Never.

The results of the validity test for the academic independence instrument are presented as follows:

Aspect	Sub-Aspect	Indicator
Emotional	De-Idealized	Seeing parents are not perfect people
Independence		Realizing that parents also have faults
	Parent as people	Seeing parents the same as other people in general
	Non-dependency	Making your own decisions without involving parents
		COUNSENESIA: Indonesia Journal of Guidance and Counseling 34

		Taking responsibility for his decisions	
Behavioral Independence	Individuation	Feeling have thoughts and feelings that are different from parents	
		Having privacy or personal space as an individual	
	Making Decision	Having to know the source of the problem	
		Bing aware of the risks that will be faced	
		Considering the various before making a decision	
		Couraging to make decisions	
	Not Influenced by Other Parties	Having a firm heart on values and beliefs	
		Not having to change decisions on the influence of others	
Value independence	Abstract Belief	Having to distinguish right from wrong	
		Having religious beliefs as a guide to behavior	
	Principal Belief	Behaving according to principle	
		Understanding the principles that are believed	
	Independent belief	Acting according to your own convictions	

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient in addition to the validity testing. The obtained Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was ≥ 0.6 , specifically 0.805, indicating that the questionnaire items are reliable and consistent in measuring the intended variables.

The research involved a sample of 14 final-year students who were identified as having low academic independence based on the results of the academic independence scale. These 14 students were divided into two groups: the experimental group consisting of 7 students, and the control group also consisting of 7 students. The experimental group received the intervention of motivational interviewing through 5 group counseling sessions, while the control group received the intervention of regular guidance through 5 meetings. Following the interventions, a post-test was conducted by administering the academic independence scale to both groups.

Since the number of research subjects in each group was less than 30, nonparametric statistics were employed for data analysis. Specifically, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to analyze the differences in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores within each group. Additionally, the Mann Whitney U Test was utilized to assess the differences in post-test scores between the experimental group and the control group. The statistical analysis was performed using the IBM Statistics 20 SPSS program.

Result and Discussion

In this study, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was employed to analyze the test data in both the experimental group and the control group, aiming to determine whether there were any significant differences in scores between the pre-intervention and postintervention conditions.

	Experimental Group	Control Group
Asymp Sig. (2-tailed)	0.018	0.317
WITH	-2.371 ^b	-1.000b
Positive ranks	7	1
Mean rank	4.00	1.00
Sum of Ranks	28.00	1.00

 Tabel 2. Hypothesis Testing Results Through Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Analysis

The outcomes of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test indicated that the Asymp.Sig (2-tailed) value was 0.018 for the experimental group and control group. The obtained value of Asymp.Sig (2-tailed) was less than 0.05 (0.018<0.05) in the experimental group, suggesting a significant difference in scores before and after the implementation of motivational interviewing. Conversely, in the control group, the Asymp.Sig (2-tailed) value was 0.317, which is greater than 0.05. This implies that there was no significant difference in scores before and after the reatment was administered.

Furthermore, the post-test hypothesis testing involved the Mann Whitney U Test to examine the experimental group and control group. The analysis of the Mann Whitney U Test revealed an Asymp.Sig (2-tailed) value of 0.002, which is less than 0.05. This indicates a significant difference in scores between the post-test results of the experimental group and the control group. Therefore, the hypothesis that motivational interviewing is effective in enhancing the academic independence of final year students compared to conventional guidance was supported. The following table presents a summary of the Mann-Whitney U Test results.

 Table 3. Analysis of the Mann-Whitney U Test on the post-test scores of the Experiment and Control Group

Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	WITH	Asymp.Sig (2-tailed)	Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]
0.000	28.000	-3.151	0.002	.001.

These findings provide evidence supporting the hypothesis that motivational interviewing is an effective approach for enhancing student academic independence. This aligns with the theory suggesting that the function of this technique is to promote counselee's autonomy and responsibility in decision-making (Nareswari, Khairi, Nafi', 2020). Motivational interviewing can facilitate independence by eliciting and reinforcing the counselee's internal motivation to change (Sayegh et al., 2017). The process of motivational interviewing involves four key stages: (1) engaging, which involves building a therapeutic relationship to foster collaboration between the counselor and the counselee; (2) focusing, which clarifies the counseling purpose and direction; (3) evoking, which entails eliciting motivation from within the counselee through exploration, contemplation, and understanding; and (4) planning, which involves developing commitment and specific action plans (Miller & Arkowitz, 2015). In this study, the intervention of motivational interviewing resulted in changes observed in the counselees during counseling sessions, including an increased willingness and sense of responsibility to complete their final thesis assignment. These changes were reflected in

their behavior, such as actively engaging with their supervisors, adhering to revision deadlines, and collaborating with peers working on related thesis topics. The emergence of willingness and responsibility occurred during the evoking process, which is the core of motivational interviewing. In this intervention, the counselor avoids taking on the role of advocating for change but instead helps the counselee become the agent of their own change (Westra et al., 2016).

The changes in independence among the counselees encompass three aspects: emotional autonomy, behavioral autonomy, and values autonomy. Regarding emotional autonomy, there was a decrease in reliance on others, particularly friends or close family members, in the thesis completion process. The counselees recognized that their thesis was their personal responsibility. This awareness indicates emotional independence, which is achieved by adolescents when they feel confident in setting goals regardless of parental or peer expectations (Luawo & Nugroho, 2018). Furthermore, the presence of emotional detachment indicates adaptive decision-making autonomy, as it is associated with a stronger sense of will (Alonso-Stuyck et al., 2017). After attaining emotional independence, the counselees can develop behavioral autonomy adaptively. This is manifested in their ability to make decisions and handle the consequences during the thesis completion process. For example, some counselees expressed that failing to promptly revise their work would result in setbacks. Individuals who can make independent decisions tend to have better relational qualities (Petegem et al., 2012). While the counselees may receive various alternative solutions from others to assist them with thesis-related problems, they can choose the alternative that best suits their needs.

The internalization of responsibility values within the counselees is associated with values autonomy, which, in turn, enhances their self-motivation. The counselees perceive their actions in completing the final assignment as a form of responsibility, serving as both a reason and motivation to successfully finish the task. When individuals act independently, they deeply understand and internalize the reasons and values underlying their actions (Katz et al., 2018). The need for independence refers to the experience of behavior driven by self-determined will and self-support (Niemic & Ryan, 2009).

Another noteworthy finding of this study is that an increase in academic independence can contribute to the progress and successful completion of final projects by the counselees. This finding aligns with the self-determination theory (SDT), which posits that independence is central to optimal motivation, well-being, learning, and achievement (Patall et al., 2017). The enhanced academic independence observed in final year students can serve as a crucial factor in achieving successful outcomes for their final assignments. This was demonstrated during the fourth session of group counseling, where several counselees exhibited significant progress by successfully completing their proposals and preparing for seminars.

Academic independence is an essential attribute that students need to cultivate. Through the application of motivational interviewing, counselors can effectively facilitate counselees, helping them become aware of their own desired needs and strong reasons for change to become independent individuals. This is in line with the essence of motivational interviewing as a counselor-led approach that focuses on fostering intrinsic motivation within the counselee, allowing them to discover their commitment to change without external interviewing is particularly effective in addressing ambivalence toward positive change, especially when it is present in individuals (Hanum & Sa'adah, 2021). The implementation of this intervention is supported by group interactions and cohesion, which revitalizes the group counseling process. The utilization of group processes offers the benefit of facilitating behavior change (Corey & Corey, 2006).

The application of motivational interviewing facilitates changes in counselee behavior. It helps address problems related to adolescent social skills by promoting exploration, awareness, and understanding of the significance of social skills for adolescents (Hanum & Sa'adah, 2021). Other studies suggest that motivational interviewing approaches for at-risk adolescents can foster independence, self-efficacy, and motivation for change (Czyz et al., 2018), and that motivational interviewing is effective in reducing student aggressiveness (Parti, Wibowo, Mulawarman, 2019). Furthermore, motivational interviewing can enhance engagement and be integrated with other techniques, such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), to alleviate anxiety (Westra et al., 2016).

The results of this study have implications for practitioners, emphasizing the need for counselors to be cautious in positioning themselves as facilitators, avoiding hasty provision of input to counselees, and instead encouraging counselees to make their own decisions regarding their responsibilities in completing the final assignment. A challenging aspect of applying motivational interviewing lies in eliciting the counselee's intrinsic motivation as the foundation for their change process and fostering their awareness without excessive advocacy. One limitation of this research is that it did not measure the counselees' intrinsic motivation directly; it only focused on changes in academic independence and did not assess independence in a broader context. Additionally, the application of this technique was limited to a small scope; further research is needed to explore the implementation of motivational interviewing on a larger scale, integrating it with local wisdom techniques, and examining various aspects of comprehensive independence.

Conclusion

Based on the conducted studies, it can be concluded that motivational interviewing is an effective technique for enhancing students' academic independence in the context of completing their final projects. The implementation of motivational interviewing as a counseling technique aids counselees in exploring, uncovering, and developing their sense of responsibility to make independent decisions, while also facilitating positive changes in cases of ambivalence. In terms of promoting academic independence, this technique fosters intrinsic motivation within the counselee, encouraging self-reliance. The counseler's role in this intervention is crucial, as they play a significant part in guiding the counselee to find motivation from within, while also emphasizing the importance of refraining from excessive advocacy. To further advance this field, future research can focus on testing the application of motivational interviewing in combination with other counseling approaches.

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Author Contributions Statement

FP as the first author has the role of writing and reviewing the discussion based on the results in this article, HR as the second author has the role of studying the phenomena or preliminary studies and the urgency of the topic of this article, PS as the third author has the role of data analyzer conducting statistical tests of the data collected. obtained and helped translate the results.

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