

How to Improve the Self-Esteem of Minangkabau Teenagers Through Agentic Group Guidance?

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Abstract

Self-esteem is now a global psychological issue that influences mental well-being, achievement, and social relationships. However, research linking self-esteem development to a culture-based counseling approach remains limited, especially in the Minangkabau context, which is rich in values of togetherness and independence. This type of research is a quantitative quasi-experimental method with a non-equivalent design. The subjects of this study were 20 students of Batipuh 1 State Senior High School. The research instrument was a self-esteem checklist developed using a Likert scale. Data were analyzed using the N-Gain test, the Wilcoxon test, and the Mann-Whitney test. The results showed that the Agentic group guidance service in the experimental group was "quite effective" in increasing students' self-esteem with an N-Gain of 57.5 while the control group was 32.3. The Mann-Whitney test produced $p = 0.001 (<0.005)$. This research is novel in integrating Bandura's socio-cognitive theory of agentic behavior with Minangkabau cultural values, resulting in a contextual and culturally sensitive agentic group guidance model. This model has the potential to be an effective framework for developing culture-based counseling interventions in a multicultural society.

Keywords: sociocognitive, deliberation, reflective dialogue, significance, virtue

Abstrak

Harga diri sekarang menjadi masalah psikologis global yang memengaruhi kesejahteraan mental, pencapaian, dan hubungan sosial. Namun, penelitian yang menghubungkan pengembangan harga diri dengan pendekatan konseling berbasis budaya masih terbatas, terutama dalam konteks Minangkabau yang kaya akan nilai-nilai kebersamaan dan kemandirian. Jenis penelitian ini merupakan metode kuasi-eksperimental kuantitatif dengan desain yang tidak setara. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 20 siswa SMA Negeri Batipuh 1. Instrumen penelitian adalah daftar periksa harga diri yang dikembangkan menggunakan skala Likert. Data dianalisis menggunakan uji N-Gain, uji Wilcoxon, dan uji Mann-Whitney. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa layanan bimbingan kelompok Agen pada kelompok eksperimen "cukup efektif" dalam meningkatkan harga diri siswa dengan N-Gain 57,5 sedangkan kelompok kontrol 32,3. Uji Mann-Whitney menghasilkan $p = 0,001 (<0,005)$. Penelitian ini baru dalam mengintegrasikan teori sosiokognitif perilaku agen Bandura dengan nilai-nilai budaya Minangkabau, menghasilkan model bimbingan kelompok agen yang kontekstual dan sensitif budaya. Model ini berpotensi menjadi kerangka kerja yang efektif untuk mengembangkan intervensi konseling berbasis budaya dalam masyarakat multikultural.

Kata kunci: sosiokognitif, musyawarah, dialog reflektif, signifikansi, kebajikan

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INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem is a global psychological issue that impacts mental well-being, social relationships, and academic achievement in various countries. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) reports an increase in cases of psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety among adolescents, which are often associated with low self-esteem. Rosenberg (1965) explained that self-esteem is an individual's assessment of their own worth, reflecting the extent to which a person feels worthy and capable. Cross-cultural research shows that adolescents with low self-esteem are more susceptible to emotional problems, deviant behavior, and difficulties with social adaptation (Orth & Robins, 2019). Therefore, improving self-esteem has become an important focus in developmental psychology and educational interventions worldwide.

In Indonesia, low self-esteem among adolescents is also a concern because it affects learning motivation, social engagement, and mental health (Santrock, 2014; Kurniasari, 2024). Rapid social change, academic pressure, and the influence of social media contribute to declining self-confidence among Indonesian adolescents. Local research indicates that family social support and the school environment are significantly related to the development of self-esteem (Khairat & Adiyanti, 2015). However, most psychological interventions in Indonesia still adopt a Western approach that pays little attention to cultural values and social context (Sasmita et al, 2021). This necessitates guidance models that are more relevant to local wisdom.

In the Minangkabau cultural context, adolescents' social identity and self-esteem are shaped by the values of collectivity, deliberation, and the principle of "*Nan tinggi bukit didaki, Nan dalam lurah diselami, Harga diri jangan dimati, Berkawan jangan dicaki.*" (High hills are climbed, deep valleys are dived; self-esteem should not be killed, friends should not be insulted), which emphasizes togetherness and mutual support (Madjo Indo, 1999). Although these values have the potential to strengthen the social aspects of self-esteem formation, research on the application of Minangkabau cultural values in psychological interventions is still limited. Most studies focus on the influence of family and social environment on self-esteem, but few integrate modern psychological theoretical approaches with local cultural values. This gap indicates the need for counseling models that combine Western psychological theories with the Indonesian cultural context to be more relevant and effective.

This study attempts to bridge this gap by developing and testing the effectiveness of agentic group guidance services based on Bandura's (2001) socio-cognitive theory of human agency, which posits that individuals can act reflectively, proactively, and empowered in directing their lives. This approach is then integrated with Minangkabau cultural values such as deliberation, mutual cooperation, and social solidarity, resulting in a contextual and culturally sensitive intervention model. Scientifically, this study is novel in combining agentic behavior theory with local value systems to improve adolescent self-esteem. The results of this study are expected to expand the framework for culture-based counseling interventions and serve as a reference for the development of multicultural guidance programs in Indonesia.

Agentic group guidance is designed to stimulate students' self-agency through a structured and reflective group process. Agentic group guidance specifically leverages key sources of agency and self-efficacy development: direct experience and the experiences of others, particularly successful experiences, imaginative experiences, social persuasion or verbal assessment, and physiological and emotional reactions. Furthermore, specific methods and techniques used by leaders in agentic group guidance



activities include systematic Socratic questioning, imaginative experimentation, reflective dialogue, problem-solving, and guided discovery (Hariko, 2020;2021).

This is in line with the Minangkabau proverb, which says (Indo, 1999), "*Duduak surang basampik-sampik, duduak basamo raceg-lapang*" (sitting alone feels cramped, sitting together feels spacious). Then another proverb says "*Kato surang di buleki, kato basamo dipaiyokan, sairiang batuka jalan, saiyo batuka sabuik, batupang pangka saiyo*" (One's words are considered, the words of all are agreed upon; in line in action, in agreement in speech, and in agreement in making decisions). The same is true of the essence of agentic group guidance that emphasizes the importance of togetherness, cooperation, and mutual support (Hariko et al, 2023)

In the first proverb, it is implied that when someone faces a problem alone, everything feels narrow and heavy, but through togetherness, all matters become lighter and broader. While the next proverb implies the importance of deliberation, unity of opinion, and togetherness in acting and making decisions. Furthermore, another proverb says, "*Mendapik samo balabo, rugi samo barugi, nan ado samo dibagi i*" (Getting is the same as feeling the profit, losing is the same as feeling the loss, what is there is shared together). Furthermore, another proverb "*Labo samo bagi, rugi samo ditajuni, jikok manimbang samo barek, jikok maukue samo panjang, ketek kayu ketek bahannyo, gadang kayu gadang bahannyo*" (Profits are shared together, losses are also borne together; if weighing, the same weight; if measuring, the same length; small wood is also small in material, large wood is also large in material). This proverb emphasizes the values of justice, equality, and shared responsibility in community life.

In Minangkabau culture, everyone is allowed to express an opinion, but the final decision must be made collectively (*kato basamo*). Similarly, in agentic group guidance, each member is encouraged to play an active role, share with others, and become an agent of change for themselves and their environment. The values of solidarity and mutual cooperation embodied in this proverb reflect the primary goal of agentic group guidance in developing empowered individuals who thrive through the power of togetherness.

Based on this, researchers used agentic group guidance services to improve *the self-esteem* of Minangkabau adolescents. This group guidance service is expected to provide knowledge and understanding and to develop new behaviors through support and guidance. This provides students with a place and opportunity to develop positive behaviors.

METHOD

This research method employs a quantitative, quasi-experimental design. Participants were high school students aged 15–17 years, male and female from various classes of Minangkabau ethnicity. Sample selection was done purposively, with the criteria of students having low to very low self-esteem based on the results of the self-esteem scale pretest. The instrument used in this study was a self-esteem questionnaire compiled by the researcher based on Coopersmith's (1967) self-esteem theory. The compilation was carried out by referring to the four main dimensions of self-esteem, namely significance, competence, virtue, and power. This instrument consists of 39 statement items with a score range of 1–5 (Very Appropriate–Not Appropriate). Before use, this instrument underwent a content validity test conducted by guidance and counseling experts, resulting in 52 valid items after the trial. The results of the reliability test showed a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.95, indicating a very high level of internal consistency and that the instrument is suitable for measuring students' self-esteem levels.



Data analysis was carried out using the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test and the Mann-Whitney U Test. The selection of this test was based on the results of the Shapiro–Wilk normality test ($p < 0.05$), which showed that the data were not normally distributed and the sample size was small ($n < 30$). The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$, so the results were considered significant if $p < 0.05$. The experimental group received agentic group guidance over 4 sessions, each lasting 2 x 45 minutes. Each session had a specific objective, and the session used discussion and reflection techniques. The control group followed the Conventional group’s guidance for comparison.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

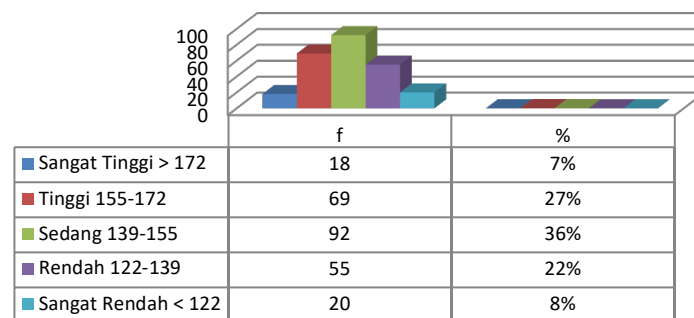
Results

This research began by identifying subjects meeting the criteria of 254 high school students of Minangkabau ethnicity. This study focused on students with very low to low self-esteem. Students were then given a self-esteem questionnaire to assess their level of self-esteem through calculations and categorization (Ardi et al, 2021). The results are as follows.

The overall picture of the self-esteem levels of grade X and XI students at Batipuh 1 State Senior High School, Tanah Datar, is shown in Graph 1.

Graph 1.

Horizontal Bar Chart Showing Distribution of Categories with Percentages

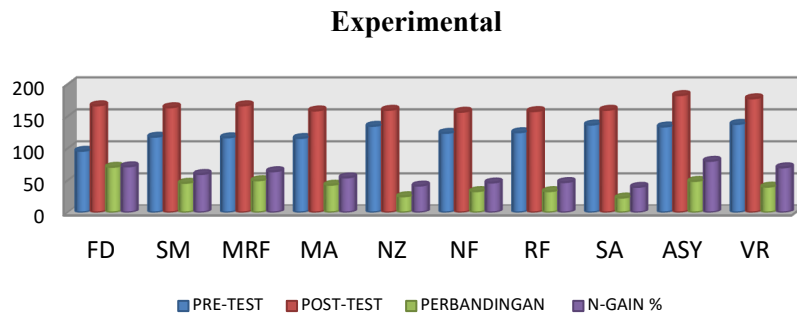


Based on Graph 1 above, it can be seen that students in the very high self-esteem category numbered 18 (7%). Furthermore, as many as 69 students (27%) were in the high category, 92 students (36%) were classified as medium category, and as many as 55 students (22%) were in the low category, and as many as 20 students (8%) were in the very low category. The results of this distribution indicate that the majority of students are in the medium-to-high category. However, around 30% of students are still in the low and very low categories. In line with Coopersmith's (1967) view, individuals with low self-esteem often feel incapable, worthless, and less confident in their potential. This shows that self-esteem needs more attention through counseling, self-strengthening activities, and fostering a supportive learning environment so that they can develop self-confidence and self-esteem.

The purpose of the pretest and posttest is to find out the picture of self-esteem respondents before and after being given agentic group guidance services. The pretest and posttest results were processed using Microsoft Excel. The results of processing the N-Gain Test data from the pretest and posttest for the experimental and control groups are shown in Graph 2.



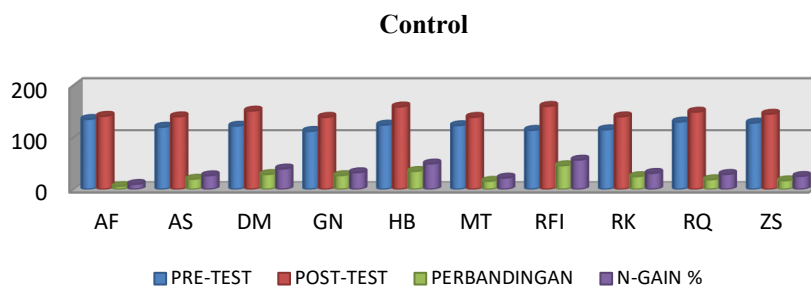
Graph 2.
 Grouped Bar Chart Comparing Pre-Test, Post-Test, Difference, and N-Gain Scores
 Across Experimental Groups



Based on Graph 2, the experimental group's scores increased significantly, from a pretest score of 124 to a posttest score of 165.3, a difference of 41.5 points. This improvement indicates positive changes in students' outcomes following agentic group guidance services. Furthermore, the N-Gain analysis results showed an average of 0.58, which falls within the range $0.3 \leq g < 0.7$. This can be interpreted as indicating that the increase occurred is in the moderate category. Considering the average N-Gain percentage of 57.5%, this result falls into the "quite effective" category (56–75%).

Thus, it can be concluded that agentic group guidance services have a positive impact on student scores, although their effectiveness is moderate rather than very effective. This demonstrates that the intervention can help students improve their self-esteem. The results of processing the N-Gain Test data from the pretest and posttest in the control group are shown in Graph 3.

Graph 3.
 Control Group Performance Bar Chart: Pre-Test, Post-Test, Difference, and N-Gain
 Percentage Comparison



The pretest average was 122, which is in the low category. If viewed from the posttest score classification, 4 students remain in the low category, and 6 are still in the low category, so overall, the changes are not very significant. After treatment, the average posttest score increased to 146.3, a difference of 24.0 points from the initial score. This score is in the medium category, but the increase is still relatively small compared to the experimental group. Furthermore, the results of the N-Gain analysis in the control group showed an average of 0.32, which falls within the range $0.3 \leq g < 0.7$, so it can be categorized as moderate. However, when viewed against the average N-Gain percentage of 32.5%, this result falls into the "ineffective" category because it is below 40%. This shows that although the control group experienced an increase in scores from pretest to posttest, the effectiveness of the treatment is still very limited. This shows that the



treatment in the control group did not significantly improve student achievement compared to the experimental group.

In conclusion, in the experimental group, scores increased from 124 to 165.3, with an average N-Gain of 0.58 (moderate category) and an effectiveness rating of "quite effective". Meanwhile, in the control group, the score increased from 122 to 146.3 with an average N-Gain of 0.32 (moderate category), but the effectiveness was "ineffective". Thus, it can be emphasized that agentic group guidance services are more effective in improving students' self-esteem than those in the control group.

The first hypothesis proposed in this study is " There is a significant difference in the level of self-esteem in Minangkabau ethnic adolescents in the experimental group before and after being given treatment using the agentic group guidance service materials that have been developed. Where the post-test score is higher than the pre-test score". This hypothesis was tested using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test with SPSS version 17.00. Based on this, the calculation results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.

Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Analysis of Differences in Self-Esteem Improvement of Minangkabau Ethnic Students in the Experimental Group in the Pretest and Posttest

Test Statistics^b	
	Posttest - Pretest
Z	-2,805 ^a
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.005
a. Based on negative ranks.	
b. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	

Based on the output of the "Statistical Test" in Table 1, it is known that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.005 < 0.05, because it is less than 0.05, then as the basis for making decisions on the Wilcoxon test, from these results, Ho is rejected, and Ha is accepted, meaning there is a significant difference between the values before and after being given agentic group guidance services in the experimental group. Thus, the hypothesis tested in this study can be accepted, namely "there is a significant difference in the level of self-esteem of Minangkabau ethnic students before and after being given agentic group guidance services treatment". To see the direction of the difference, whether the pretest and posttest are higher, can be seen in Table 2.



Table 2.
 Direction of Difference between Pretest and Posttest in Increasing Self-esteem of
 Minangkabau Ethnic Students in the Experimental Group

		Ranks		
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Posttest - Pretest	Negative Ranks	0 ^a	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	10 ^b	5.50	55.00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	10		

a. Posttest < Pretest

b. Posttest > Pretest

c. Posttest = Pretest

Based on Table 2, a value of 10 means that, of 10 respondents with a mean of 5.50 on positive ranks, as many as 10 students in the experimental group experienced an increase from the pretest score to the posttest score. Therefore, it can be inferred that the experimental group experienced significant changes after participating in the agentic group guidance service.

The next hypothesis is " There is a significant difference in the level of self-esteem on Minangkabau ethnic teenagers in the experimental group before and after being given treatment using the agentic group guidance service materials that have been developed. Where the post-test score is higher than the pre-test score. This hypothesis testing was carried out using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test in SPSS version 17.00. Based on this, the calculation results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3.

Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Analysis of Differences in Self-Esteem Improvement in Minangkabau Ethnic Students in the Control Group in the Pretest and Posttest

Test Statistics ^b	
Posttest - Pretest	
Z	-2,803 ^a
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.005
a. Based on negative ranks.	
b. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	

Based on the "Statistical Test" output in Table 3, it is known that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value is $0.005 < 0.05$, because it is less than 0.05, then as the basis for making decisions on the Wilcoxon test, from these results, H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted, meaning there is a significant difference between the values before and after being given group guidance services to the control group.

Thus, the hypothesis tested in this study can be accepted: "There is a significant difference in the level of self-esteem of Minangkabau ethnic students before and after being given group guidance services in the control group." To see the direction of this difference, whether the pretest and posttest are higher, see Table 4.



Table 4.
 Direction of Differences Between Pretest and Posttest in Increasing Self-Esteem of
 Minangkabau Ethnic Students in the Control Group

		Ranks		
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Posttest - Pretest	Negative Ranks	0 ^a	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	10 ^b	5.50	55.00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	10		
a. Posttest < Pretest				
b. Posttest > Pretest				
c. Posttest = Pretest				

Based on Table 4, a value of 10 means that, out of 10 respondents with a mean of 5.50 on positive ranks, 10 students in the control group experienced an increase from the pretest score to the posttest score. Therefore, it can be inferred that the control group experienced significant changes following participation in agentic group guidance services.

The third hypothesis in this study is "there is a significant difference in the level of self-esteem of Minangkabau ethnic students in the experimental group who were given agentic group guidance services and the control group who were given group guidance." The third hypothesis was tested using the Mann-Whitney Test with the help of the SPSS program version 17.00 to minimize errors in calculations. The results of the statistical calculations can be seen in Table 5 as follows:

Table 5.
 Results of the Mann-Whitney U-Test Analysis of Students' Self-Esteem Levels in the
 Experimental Group and the Control Group

Test Statistics ^b	
	Student self-esteem level
Mann-Whitney University	6,500
Wilcoxon W	61,500
Z	-3,298
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.000 ^a
a. Not corrected for ties.	

b. Grouping Variables: Posttest

Mann-Whitney U-Test analysis obtained Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.001, indicating that the score is smaller than the significance level of 0.05. These results indicate a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in students' self-esteem following agentic group guidance services. The Z value of -3.298 strengthens the results of the calculation, where the negative sign indicates that the decrease in anxiety levels was greater in the experimental group. This means that the agentic group guidance



provided to the experimental group was more effective than the group guidance services provided to the control group.

However, the control group also experienced a decrease in self-esteem after participating in group guidance services, but this decrease was not as large or significant as that of the experimental group. This finding indicates that group guidance still has a positive impact, but its effectiveness increases when combined with the Cognitive-Behavioral approach in agentic group guidance services. Therefore, it can be concluded that agentic group guidance services are more effective at increasing students' self-esteem than control group guidance services.

Discussion

The effectiveness of agency group tutoring services in improving student self-esteem showed significant advantages compared to control conditions, where students who received structured interventions transitioned from the low-moderate self-esteem category to the high category (Hasani et al., 2025). These findings confirm that substantial improvements in self-esteem require deliberate and systematic interventions, rather than relying solely on incidental environmental factors such as daily learning experiences or existing social support (Hutahaeen & Fahrudin, 2023). This difference in results between the experimental and control groups highlights a key principle in educational psychology: although dynamic, self-esteem requires a targeted approach to achieve meaningful improvement.

The success of agency group interventions can be understood through the theoretical framework of Coopersmith's four-factor self-esteem model, which includes significance, competence, power, and virtue (Hutahaeen & Fahrudin, 2023; Ryan et al., 2023). Group tutoring services serve as a mechanism that systematically addresses these four dimensions simultaneously. In a group context, students gain significance through peer acceptance, develop competencies through self-expression and collaborative problem-solving, feel power through active participation in discussions, and internalize virtue through positive values instilled by counselors (Hutahaeen & Fahrudin, 2023). It is this comprehensive multidimensional approach that explains the greater improvement in the experimental group.

The effectiveness of agency group guidance services is strengthened by its alignment with collective cultural values, as reflected in the Minangkabau philosophy, which emphasizes togetherness, mutual respect, and cooperative involvement (Hutahaeen & Fahrudin, 2023). Minangkabau proverbs that teach perseverance, resilience, and confidence in one's own abilities, such as "*Tak lalu dandang diaie, digurun ditanjakan juo*," reflect the characteristics of individuals with high self-esteem (Hutahaeen & Fahrudin, 2023). This cultural alignment creates a bridge between the intervention methodology and the student's lived context, potentially enhancing the program's relevance, acceptance, and overall impact.

The broader literature supports the findings on the effectiveness of structured group interventions. Group behavioral cognitive therapy programs have shown significant effects on the strength of character and self-esteem of school adolescents (Hasani et al., 2025). Similarly, assertive skills training has been shown to be effective in improving emotional, social, academic, and general self-esteem among adolescents (Mirzaei, 2024). Hope therapy and schematic therapy have also shown effectiveness in improving the self-esteem dimension among vulnerable adolescent populations (Hashemian et al., 2022;



Fereydooni & Sheykhan, 2024). The consistency of positive findings across these modalities confirms the principle of superiority of group-based structured interventions.

The quality of guidance services is highly dependent on comprehensive needs assessment practices (Jumail et al., 2024). Proper assessment enables counseling programs to be more effective and relevant in meeting students' specific needs across the academic, social, emotional, and career realms, thereby improving students' overall well-being (Jumail et al., 2024). Intervention programs designed based on in-depth assessments allow for a more targeted approach, ultimately improving students' developmental outcomes. Therefore, the assessment stage is a critical component that precedes and supports the successful implementation of agency group guidance services.

These findings have substantive implications for educational policy and practice, particularly regarding the role of school counselors. Counselors play an important role in implementing structured interventions that address various dimensions of student development (Ajuwon et al., 2024). Effective group tutoring practices contribute to a supportive educational environment, minimize distractions, and promote cooperative problem-solving skills (Ajuwon et al., 2024). By prioritizing well-designed and culturally aligned services, schools can be more effective in fostering students' self-esteem and psychosocial resilience.

The pretest-posttest research design with control groups used in these studies enables precise measurement of the intervention's effects (Golshiri et al., 2023; Hutahaeen & Fahrudin, 2023). This design clearly shows that the experimental group undergoes a transition of self-esteem categories, while the control group shows only marginal shifts. The ability to quantitatively measure these changes, often using instruments such as the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI), reinforces the validity of claims about the effectiveness of interventions (Ryan et al., 2023).

From a psychological perspective, agency group intervention operates by providing a safe space for corrective experiences. Through structured group interactions, students can challenge negative beliefs about themselves, develop new social skills, and receive positive feedback from peers and counselors. This process aligns with the theory of Resource Conservation (COR), in which knowledge and social support gained through group sharing serve as valuable psychological resources, which in turn improve well-being and self-esteem (Hutahaeen & Fahrudin, 2023).

Although this research is rooted in the Minangkabau cultural context, the basic principles of agency group mentoring services, namely multidimensional handling of self-esteem and an emphasis on supportive group dynamics, have the potential to be replicated and adapted in a variety of cultural and educational settings. The key to its success lies in its ability to integrate local values and specific needs into a structured framework, as demonstrated by its alignment with the Minangkabau philosophy.

The conclusions of this synthesis of evidence call for educational practices to prioritize the implementation of structured and culturally aligned group tutoring services as the primary mechanism for fostering student self-esteem. Future research may explore the long-term effectiveness of such interventions, the specific mediator mechanisms (e.g., psychological safety or emotion regulation) that explain their effects, and their adaptation to diverse student populations (e.g., students with disabilities or from different socioeconomic backgrounds). By continually refining and adapting this approach, educators and counselors can be more effective in supporting each student's holistic psychosocial development.



CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate that agentic group guidance services, combined with Minangkabau collectivity values, significantly increase students' self-esteem and are at the "quite effective" level, as evidenced by increases in pretest-posttest scores and a significant difference between the experimental and control groups ($p < 0.05$). This means that this model is suitable for school contexts whose students come from communal cultural backgrounds because it facilitates four sources of self-esteem, social acceptance, successful experiences, a sense of control, and internalization of values that are rarely touched by Western-style guidance and counseling models. These findings strengthen Bandura's theory of social-cognitive agency and show that local cultural enrichment makes the intervention more context-specific. This study still uses a small sample, one school, and a short treatment duration, so generalizations must be made with caution. Future research can increase the number of samples, test in other cultures, and add follow-up tests to see the sustainability of the effects.

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